

Gunner Charles Couzens[©]
Regimental number: 165037
164th Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery

born: 29 May 1886–died: 11 May 1918

Gunner Charles Couzens was the younger of two sons born to Edgar and Mary Couzens.¹ Charles' brother Robert Hall was born 31 March 1885² and Charles followed just over a year later, born on 29 May 1886.³ Edgar, a clerk, had married the former Mary Hall, a dressmaker, on 2 December 1883 at St Anne's Church in Lancaster, Lancashire,⁴ and both boys were born in Lancaster. Their father was born in Ottringham, Yorkshire, on 13 July 1860⁵ and their mother in Lancaster in about 1858.⁶

By 1891, the family had moved about 50 miles north to 19 Ulswater Road in Appleby, Westmorland. Charles was living with his father, then a bookkeeper, and his mother.⁷ At the time of the census in the spring of 1891, his brother was visiting his grandfather, Robert Hall, and his aunt, Fanny Hall, in Forton, near Lancaster.⁸ By 1894, Charles' father was the proprietor of the Midland Hotel in Appleby.⁹



Midland Hotel, Appleby

Source: The Midland Hotel <https://www.themidlandhotelappleby.co.uk/>. Used with kind permission.

Both Robert and Charles attended Appleby St Lawrence British School—both were admitted on 19 February 1894, having previously attended a private school.¹⁰ Then they both left on 16 September 1898 to move to Appleby Grammar School. Robert left this school in 1900 and Charles in 1901.¹¹

In 1901, the family was still living at 19 Ulswater Road and Edgar was still a hotel proprietor, but when the census was taken ten years later, Edgar had retired and he and Mary were visiting in the home of Elizabeth Anne Taylor and her sister Carrie at 69 Bath Street in Southport, Lancashire. Charles was still living in Appleby at Parkin Hill Farms and was working as an auctioneer.

It is not known where Robert was living in 1911, but the following year he married Ada Frances Burne in Westmorland.¹² Ada had been born in about 1884 in Newbiggin, Westmorland, the daughter of Henry and Frances Burne.¹³ Henry was a farmer, farming 293 acres about 15 miles

northwest of Appleby. After Henry's death in 1888, his wife continued to farm the land with her children. In 1913, Robert and Ada had a son, Robert Eric, born on 7 April 1913.

Then, a year later, Charles married Ada's sister, Florence Burne. They were married in East Ward, Westmorland.¹⁴ They probably did not have any children before Charles enlisted.

Charles enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force sometime after May 1917¹⁵ and served with the 164th Siege Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery.¹⁶

The Royal Garrison Artillery was one element of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, which "... developed from fortress-based artillery located on British coasts. From 1914 when the army possessed very little heavy artillery it grew into a very large component of the British forces. It was armed with heavy, large calibre guns and howitzers that were positioned some way behind the front line and had immense destructive power."¹⁷ "Siege Batteries RGA were equipped with heavy howitzers, sending large calibre high explosive shells in high trajectory, plunging fire ... As British artillery tactics developed, the Siege Batteries were most often employed in destroying or neutralising the enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strongpoints, dumps, store, roads and railways behind enemy lines."¹⁸

In early May 1918, Charles' battery was stationed near Pernes in northern France. On 9 May, Charles was gassed and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station. He died there two days later and was buried the same day in Pernes British Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row B, Grave 27) with the Canadian chaplain J. K. Tibbits officiating.¹⁹ He died just before his 32nd birthday.

Pernes British Military Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.²⁰ Charles was one of 331 injured soldiers admitted to No 1. CCCS on 9 May 1918 and one of 115 soldiers to die at the station that month. He was admitted the same day that Chaplain Tibbits arrived at the station from the 10th Stationary Hospital.²¹

The monies owing to Charles from the army upon his death were sent to his wife,²² who was living at Blackleases, Kirkbythore, just north of Appleby, after the war.²³ She had the following inscription placed on his gravestone:

IN GOD'S OWN KEEPING

Charles was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁴

Charles' brother Robert and his wife had two more children after the war. Charles S. was born on 5 January 1919 in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, and presumably was named in memory of his uncle. A daughter, Eda Bourne, was born on 1 December 1920.²⁵ In 1939, the family was living at Moor Lands, in Skipton, in Yorkshire's West Riding.²⁶

Charles' mother died in 1921 and his father in 1949. In 1939, Edgar was living at Edencliffe, Cart Lane, in Grange, Lancashire.²⁷

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¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 13 March 2019), entry for Couzens, Charles, Service No: 165037

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- ² "National School Admission Registers & Log-books 1870–1914," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 March 2019), entry for Robert Hall Couzens, Book type: Admissions, Archive reference: WDS46_14_3, Folio/page no.: –
- ³ "National School Admission Registers & Log-books 1870–1914," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 March 2019), entry for Charles Couzens, Book type: Admissions, Archive reference: WDS71_2_3, Folio / page no.: 12
- ⁴ "Lancashire, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1936," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Edgar Cowzens [*sic*], Register type: Parish register
- ⁵ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Edgar Couzens, Schedule number: 141, Sub-schedule Number: 1, Enumeration district: NUWA, Registration district: 481-1
- ⁶ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 March 2019), entry for Charles Cousins [*sic*], Sub-registration district: Lancaster, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 3465, Folio: 114
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 March 2019), entry for Robert H Cowzens [*sic*], Sub-registration district: Garstang, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 6, Piece: 3461, Folio: 61
- ⁹ "National School Admission Registers & Log-books 1870–1914," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 March 2019), entry for Charles Couzens
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ "National School Admission Registers & Log-books 1870–1914," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 March 2019), entry for Charles Couzens, Book type: Admissions, Archive reference: WDS71_2_3, Folio/page no.: 12
- ¹² "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 15 March 2019), entry for Robert H. Couzens, District: East Ward, County: Westmorland, Volume: 10B, Page: 1363
- ¹³ "1881 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 March 2019), entry for Frances Burne, Registration district: East Ward, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 5199, Folio: 64, Page: 2; "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2019), entry for Florence Burne, Sub-registration district: Appleby, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 4323, Folio: 117
- ¹⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2019), entry for Charles Couzens, Registration district: East Ward, Inferred county: Westmorland, Volume: 10b, Page: 1521
- ¹⁵ Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Charles Couzens
- ¹⁶ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 13 March 2019), entry for Couzens, Charles
- ¹⁷ "The Long, Long Trail: The British artillery of 1914–1918," (<http://www.1914-1918.net/cra.htm>: accessed 2 December 2014)
- ¹⁸ "The Long, Long Trail: The Siege Batteries of the Royal Garrison Artillery," (<http://www.1914-1918.net/siege-battery-index.htm>: accessed 2 December 2014)
- ¹⁹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 13 March 2019), entry for Couzens, C.
- ²⁰ "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 13 January 2015)
- ²¹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/lac-bac/results/images?module=images&SortSpec=score+desc&Language=eng&ShowForm=hide&SearchIn_1=mikanN

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²² "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Charles Couzens

²³ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 13 March 2019), entry for Couzens, Charles

²⁴ "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 16 March 2019), entry for Charles Couzens

²⁵ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Robert H. Couzens, RG101/3816D/003/36, Letter code: KSNE

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 March 2019), entry for Edgar Couzens