

Sapper Albert Edward Cornwell©
Regimental number: 159868
"E" Special Company, Royal Engineers

born: 1883–died: 2 October 1918

Sapper Albert Edward Cornwell was born in 1883 on the Isle of Wight in Hampshire¹ and baptized in St. Helens, on the Isle of Wight on 18 January 1884.² He was one of 11 children born to George James Cornwell and his wife, née Caroline Birch, who had married on 5 May 1867 in Bromley, Kent.³ George was born in about 1841 in Swaffham Prior, Cambridgeshire, and Caroline in about 1844 in Lewisham, Kent.⁴ Albert's siblings were born in various places:

- James George (born in 1869)⁵ and Thomas Henry (born in 1871)⁶ were born in the London area;
- Elizabeth (born in 1873),⁷ Ellen (born in 1874),⁸ Charles William (born on 28 January 1876)⁹ and Caroline (born in 1878)¹⁰ were born in Clutton, near Bristol, Gloucestershire, and
- Homey (born on 11 Jun 1879),¹¹ Henry (born in 1882)¹² and Eliza (born in 1886)¹³ were born in the area of the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth, Hampshire.

At least one of Albert's siblings died in infancy—Thomas Henry died at the age of 1.¹⁴ The identity of the 11th child, who probably also died in infancy, was not found.

Albert's father worked on the railways and that may be why the family moved around quite a bit. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, when the first two children were born, the family was probably living in the London area. For most of the 1870s, based on the births of their next four children, they were near Bristol. By 1881 they had moved to the Isle of Wight, where Albert's father was a railway platelayer.¹⁵ Then, in 1891 and 1901,¹⁶ they were living in Portsea Island in Portsmouth, just opposite the Isle of Wight. By 1901, Albert's father was a foreman and three of his sons had followed him to the railways—Charles, Homey, and Henry were railway engine firemen/stokers.¹⁷

By 1901, Albert had joined the Royal Navy. He was a 1st class boy on the HMS *St. Vincent*, a training ship that was stationed in Portsmouth at the end of March.¹⁸ Ten years later, Albert was a wharfinger, responsible for receiving goods and day-to-day activities at wharfs and working in the Federated Malay States. In early April, he was visiting his parents at 4 Teddington Road in Portsmouth.¹⁹

Albert enlisted in the Expeditionary Force in about May 1916²⁰ in Southwark, Surrey and served with the "E" Special Company of the Royal Engineers.²¹ The Special Companies were set up as the British response to Germany's first use of poison gas in April 1915.²² Ironically, three and a half years later Albert was fatally wounded by a gas shell.

Albert was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 2 October 1918, died the same day and was buried the next day in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Plot 8, Row A, Grave 72), with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding. His father, who was still living at 4 Teddington Road, was notified of his son's death²³ and received the monies owing to him from the army upon his death.²⁴

Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Etrun, near Arras, France. The first burials in the cemetery took place in March 1917.²⁵ No. 1 CCCS arrived at the beginning of September 1918 and

was stationed near Duisans for two months in the autumn of 1918.²⁶ As a result of the serious and urgent nature of the cases admitted to No. 1 CCCS, the death rate was high in October—a total of 83 deaths occurred during the month.²⁷

Albert was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).²⁸

Albert's mother Caroline died in 1920²⁹ and his father George in 1926.³⁰ No information was found about his siblings Henry and Eliza, but the remaining siblings left some traces.

James married Elizabeth Moore in 1892 in Portsea Island,³¹ and in 1911 Elizabeth was living at 7 Clovelly Road, Milton, in Portsmouth, with her ten children. James was not with her.³² Perhaps he had gone to the Far East. Beginning in the 1930s, he and Elizabeth travelled back and forth from England to the Federated Malay States, where he appeared to have lived, working as a civil engineer and/or planter.³³ When Elizabeth died on 27 March 1932 in the Batu Gajah Hospital in Lipis Pahang, James was a retired railway engineer.³⁴ James continued to live in the Malay Federated States and died there on 16 May 1960. Then a former company director, probably of the Federated Malay States railway, James died in Allington Hill³⁵ and was buried in the Ipoh Christian Cemetery in Ipoh, Perak.³⁶

Albert's sister **Elizabeth** left home before 1891 and was a domestic servant in the home of Charles Horn in Portsea.³⁷ She married George Thomas, an engine fitter, at St Jude's Church in Southsea, Portsmouth, on 25 September 1898.³⁸ Sadly, she died the following year at the age of 26 and was buried on 13 June 1899 at Highland Road Cemetery in Southsea.³⁹

Like her sister, **Ellen** went into service and in 1891 was a domestic servant in the home of Robert Pell in St. Andrew the Less, Cambridgeshire.⁴⁰ She married Ambrose Lloyd Maidment in Portsea Island in 1896.⁴¹ Sadly, also like her sister, she died a few years later. Ambrose was a widow and living with his brother in Southampton in 1911.⁴²

In 1903, **Charles** married Florence Elizabeth Nelthorpe in Portsmouth.⁴³ He was a railway engine driver and they were living at 29 St Augustine Road, Eastney, in Southsea.⁴⁴ They were at the same address in 1939.⁴⁵ Charles died in 1962 in Gosport, Hampshire.⁴⁶

Like her two older sisters, **Caroline** went into domestic service—in 1901 she was a cook in the home of J. Kathleen Macadam in Bonchurch, Hampshire.⁴⁷ In 1903, she married John Henry Foa on the Isle of Wight.⁴⁸ Caroline, John and their children immigrated to Canada in 1906⁴⁹ and were living at 10 Louis Street in Brockville, Ontario, in 1911. John was a fireman.⁵⁰ In 1921, the family was living in the same home in Brockville.⁵¹ Caroline died of cardiac failure, after an operation for gallstones, on 18 April 1930 in Brockville.⁵²

Homey became a railway stationary engineman and in 1911 was boarding with Joseph May and his family at 18 Yardley Street in Preston, Sussex. Joseph was also a railway engineer.⁵³ Homey married Edith Reynolds in 1911⁵⁴ and, in 1939, they were living at 11 Linton Road in Hove, Sussex.⁵⁵ Homey died there two years later.⁵⁶

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¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>; accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Cornwell, Albert Edward, Registration district: Isle of Wight, Volume 02B, Page 622

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- ⁵ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Cornwell, James George, Registration district: Rotherhithe, Volume 01D, Page 714
- ⁶ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Cornwell, Thomas Henry, Registration district: Greenwich, Volume 01D, Page 696
- ⁷ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Cornwell, Elizabeth, Registration district: Clutton, Volume 05C, Page 598
- ⁸ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Cornwell, Ellen, Registration district: Clutton, Volume 05C, Page 618
- ⁹ “1939 England and Wales Register,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 14 June 2020), entry for Charles W. Cornwell, Schedule number: 57, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: EBJF, Registration district: 90/2
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- ¹¹ “1939 Register,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Harney [*sic*] Cornwall, Schedule number: 222, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: EJGT, Registration district: Hove 80
- ¹² “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Cornwell, Henry, Registration district: Isle of Wight, Volume 02B, Page 629
- ¹³ “GRO online index–birth,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Cornwell, Eliza, Registration district: Portsea Island, Volume 02B, Page 493
- ¹⁴ “GRO online index–death,” *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Cornwell, Thomas Henry, Volume 05C, Page 449
- ¹⁵ “1881 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 March 2020), entry for George J. Cornwell, Registration district: Isle of Wight, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 16, Piece: 1181, Folio: 16, Page: 26
- ¹⁶ “1891 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 21 March 2020), entry for Albert Edward Cornwell, Registration district: Portsea Island, Sub-registration district: Landport, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 69, Piece: 877, Folio: 5; “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry*, entry for George J Cornwall [*sic*]
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- ²⁶ “War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13–1919/03/31,” *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 17 June 2015)
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- ²⁹ “England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 March 2020), entry for Caroline Cornwell, Registration district: Portsmouth, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 625
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- ³² “1911 England Census,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 March 2020), entry for Charles W. Cornwell, Registration district: Portsmouth, Registration district number: 90, Sub-registration district: Kingston and East Southsea, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 27, Piece: 5548
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- ³⁹ “Hampshire, Portsmouth Burials,” *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 March 2020), entry for Elizabeth Bryant, Archive: Portsmouth History Centre, Archive reference: G/BBH2/8, Page: 59
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- ⁴⁵ "1939 England and Wales Register," Ancestry, entry for Charles W. Cornwell
- ⁴⁶ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 March 2020), entry for Charles W. Cornwell, Registration district: Gosport, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 464
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- ⁴⁸ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 25 March 2020), entry for Caroline Cornwell, Registration district: Isle of Wight, Inferred county: Hampshire, Volume: 2b, Page: 897
- ⁴⁹ "1921 Census of Canada," Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 23 March 2020), entry for Caroline Loan [sic], Province or territory: Ontario, District: Leeds, District number: 98, Sub-district: Brockville (Town), Sub-district number: 59, City, town or village: Brockville Town. This census indicates that they immigrated to Canada in 1906. The 1901 Canadian census indicates they immigrated in 1897. This is not possible, given that they did not marry until 1903 and were in the Isle of Wight in 1901.
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- ⁵¹ "1921 Census of Canada," Ancestry, entry for Caroline Loan [sic]
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- ⁵³ "1911 England, Wales & Scotland Census," Findmypast (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 21 March 2020), entry for Homey Cornwell, Registration district: Steyning, Registration district number: 80, Enumeration district: 13, District number: 13, Sub-district: Preston, Sub-district number: 1, Household schedule number: 16, Piece: 5165
- ⁵⁴ "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," Findmypast (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 26 March 2020), entry for Horney [sic] Cornwell, District: Steyning, County: Sussex, Volume: 2B, Page: 613
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