

**Gunner George Gagie**  
**Regimental Number: 80503**  
**142<sup>nd</sup> Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery**

**born: 1895 - died: 15 November 1918**

George Gagie, born in the first months of 1895 in South Shields, Durham,<sup>1</sup> was the only son of George and Margaret Gagie, who were both from Northumberland.<sup>2</sup> They married in Wooler in 1885.<sup>3</sup> Their first two children were daughters: Jane Rebecca (born in 1889)<sup>4</sup> and Agnes Margaret (born in 1890).<sup>5</sup> George was born six years later.

In 1901, the family was living at 13 Collingwood Terrace, Roman Road, South Shields, Durham.<sup>6</sup> George was a general labourer. Sadly, the following year, George's sister, Jane, died at the age of 13.<sup>7</sup> George's mother Margaret, died the following year and it is possible that his father, George, died the next year in Stockton.<sup>8</sup> If so, by 1911, George and his sister, Jane, were orphaned and were living with their mother's sister, Annie, and her husband, Peter Dunbar, at the Cottage Hotel in Wooler, Northumberland.<sup>9</sup>

George enlisted in the army reserve on 9 December 1915.<sup>10</sup> He was a horseman, aged 21 and 5'11" tall. At the time of his enlistment, his next-of-kin was his sister, Agnes, who was living at 5 Clarence Crescent, Whitley Bay. He was mobilized on 13 May 1916 and joined the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was in England until 9 August, when he left for France.

He served with the 142<sup>nd</sup> Siege Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery. The RGA 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



G Gagie in Auberchicourt cemetery  
(Source: Author)

were positioned some way behind the front line and had immense destructive power."<sup>11</sup> "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."<sup>12</sup>

George survived from 1916 until late 1918. He had had a two-week furlough in England in September 1918 but, on soon after his return, he became ill. On 13 November 1918 he was admitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with influenza.<sup>13</sup> He died there on 15 November and was buried the next day in the British Military Cemetery (Grave 15, Row A, Plot 1) in Auberchicourt with the chaplain, W. O'Neill Fisher presiding.

Influenza accounted for most deaths at the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station after the Armistice. In spite of the horrific number of soldiers killed in World War I, the influenza pandemic, which affected the whole world and scourged

Europe in 1918-1919, killed more people than the war itself.<sup>14</sup> Sixty-seven people (soldiers and civilians) died at the 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS in November 1918. The work of the Centre had shifted from being primarily surgical to medical, to deal with the influenza pandemic.<sup>15</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS war diaries noted for 13 November that “A few isolated cases of wounded still and some wounded and gassed civilians.”

Auberchicourt, a village about 12 kilometres to the east of Douai, was occupied by Commonwealth troops in October 1918.<sup>16</sup> The Auberchicourt British Cemetery, which is just west of the village, was set up at the end of October and was used until February 1919 while the 6<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations were located nearby.

His sister, Agnes, whose address was given as 127 Adelaide Street, Blackpool, was notified of his death. A declaration, signed by his sister, on 10 June 1919, indicated that she was his only surviving relative. His possessions, including letters, photos, pocketbook, religious medallion and book, cigarette case, mirror, purse and cards, were returned to his sister.<sup>17</sup> She also received the monies owing to him from the army following his death.<sup>18</sup>

George was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>19</sup>

When George died, Agnes had lost the last of her family. However, she may have married later in life, perhaps marrying John W. Bramhall, in Durham in 1944.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 March 2015), entry for George Gagie, Registration district: South Shields, Inferred County: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 782

<sup>2</sup> “1901 England Census,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 March 2015), entry for George Gagie, Registration district: South Shields, Sub-registration district: South Shields, ED, institution, or vessel: 07, Piece: 4727, Folio: 26, Page Number: 44, Household schedule number: 275

<sup>3</sup> “England & Wales, FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 11 December 2015), entry for George Gagie, Registration district: Glendale, Inferred County: Northumberland, Volume: 10b, Page: 555

<sup>4</sup> “England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 March 2015), entry for Agnes Margaret Gagie, Registration district: South Shields, Inferred County: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 742

<sup>5</sup> “England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 16 March 2015), entry for Jane Rebecca Gagie, Registration district: South Shields, Inferred County: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 777

<sup>6</sup> “1901 England Census,” entry for George Gagie

<sup>7</sup> “England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 21 January 2015), entry for Jane Rebecca Gagie, Registration district: South Shields, Inferred County: Durham, Volume: 10a, Page: 454

<sup>8</sup> “England and Wales, Death Registration Index 1837-2007,” *FamilySearch* ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org): accessed 18 March 2015), entry for George Gagie, Volume:10A, Page: 43, Line Number: 26

<sup>9</sup> “1911 England Census,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 5 January 2015), entry for Bruno Whittle, Registration district: Glendale, Registration District Number: 568, Sub-registration district: Wooler, ED, institution, or vessel: 7, Piece: 31166 census

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- <sup>10</sup> "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 16 March 2015), entry for George Gagie, Regimental Number: RH 80503, Form Title: Short Service Attestation
- <sup>11</sup> "The Long, Long Trail: The British artillery of 1914-1918," <http://www.1914-1918.net/cra.htm>; accessed 2 December 2014
- <sup>12</sup> "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
- <sup>13</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Library and Archives Canada, (records accessed 2013 & 2015), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 714
- <sup>14</sup> "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918," (<https://virus.stanford.edu/uda/>; accessed 3 February 2015)
- <sup>15</sup> "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=FIN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202\\_e.html&r=1&f=G](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=FIN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G); accessed 15 December 2014)
- <sup>16</sup> "Auberchicourt British Cemetery," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/59509/AUBERCHICOURT%20BRITISH%20CEMETERY>; accessed 3 February 2015)
- <sup>17</sup> "British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920," entry for George Gagie
- <sup>18</sup> "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901-1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 16 March 2015), entry for George Gagie
- <sup>19</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914-1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 26 November 2015), entry for George Gagie
- <sup>20</sup> "England & Wales, Marriage Index, 1916-2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk); accessed 16 March 2015), entry for Agnes M. Gagie, Registration district: Durham North, Inferred County: Durham, Volume Number: 10a, Page Number: 1336