

120: John Cameron

Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: John Cameron

Rank: Air Mechanic 1st Class

Battalion / Regiment: Royal Air Force

Service Number: 55161

Date of Death: 08 June 1921

Age at Death: 44

Buried / Commemorated at: Neston Cemetery, Raby Road

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of Robert and Elizabeth Cameron and the husband of M. Constance Cameron, of The Cross, Neston. Born at Bo'ness.

Although John Cameron died in June 1921, long after WW1 had ended, he is recorded here as he appears on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database as a war casualty.

John Cameron was born in September 1877, the son of Robert and Elizabeth Cameron of Borrowstounness (Bo'ness), a coastal parish in the Central Lowlands of Scotland on the south bank of the Firth of Forth within the (then) county of West Lothian. No record of his early life has been found and the first record is the 1911 census when John and his family were living and working in Antrim:

CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.														
Two Examples of the mode of filling up this Table are given on the other side.														
FORM A.														
No. on Form B. 5														
RETURN of the MEMBERS of this FAMILY and their VISITORS, BOARDERS, SERVANTS, &c., who slept or abode in this House on the night of SUNDAY, the 2nd of APRIL, 1911.														
Number.	NAME AND SURNAME.		RELATION to Head of Family.	RELIGIOUS PROFESSION.	EDUCATION.	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX.		BORN, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION.	PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE.			WHERE BORN.	IRISH LANGUAGE.	If Dumb and Deaf; Blind; or Lame.
	Christian Name.	Surname.				Age of Male.	Age of Female.		Whether "Married," "Widower," "Widow," or "Single."	Completed years the present Marriage has lasted. If less than one year, write "under one."	Children born alive to present Marriage. If no children born alive, write "None" in column 11.	Total Children born alive.	Children still living.	If in Ireland, state in what County or City; if elsewhere, state the name of the Country.
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
1	John	Cameron	Head	Church of Ireland	Read & Write	35	35	Chaffin Domestic Servant	Married	14	5	2	Scotland	
2	Minnie Constance	Cameron	Wife	Church of Ireland	Read & Write	37	37		Married	14	2	2	England	
3	Robert Ian	Cameron	Son	Church of Ireland	Cannot read	2	2		Single				England	
4	Donald Roy	Cameron	Son	Church of Ireland	Cannot read	1	1		Single				Co. Louth	
5	Maggie	Cameron	Niece	Church of Ireland	Read & Write	14	14		Single				Scotland	

I hereby certify, as required by the Act 10 Edw. VII. and 1 Geo. V., cap. 11, that the foregoing Return is correct, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

J. H. Murphy Signature of Enumerator.

I believe the foregoing to be a true Return.

John Cameron Signature of Head of Family.

1911 census (condensed) – 5, Townparks, South Antrim, Ireland [on lands owned by Lord Massereene]

John Cameron	35	chauffeur domestic servant	born Scotland
Minnie Constance	37		born England
Robert Ian	2		born England
Donald Roy	1		born County Louth
Maggie	14	niece	born Scotland

John and Minnie had been married for 4 years (this has been misrecorded as 14) and both their children had survived.

Although John's RAF record has been found, this contains very little information on his military service. However, '*Neston : 1840 – 1940*' [Burton & South Wirral Local History Society, 1966, Ed. Geoffrey W. Place] contains an account of the family and details from that publication are included here.

John Cameron was apprenticed to motor engineers in Falkirk in the early 1890s. It is known that he married Minnie Constance Briscoe at St Mary's Church, Stafford, on 12 February 1907. Although Minnie, in the 1911 census, is recorded as being 37 she was born, in the Oswestry district, in the 1st quarter of 1869 (and this age is confirmed by her grave inscription). In the 1871 census Minnie is recorded as the eighth, and last, child of Joseph and Elizabeth Briscoe of Long Oak, Ruyton; Joseph is recorded as being 53 and a 'blacksmith and register of births and deaths'. By 1881, when Minnie was still living at home, Joseph had expanded to become a 'smith, farmer of 13 acres, and register of births employing two men'. It is understood that Minnie entered domestic service and travelled extensively in Europe, Scandinavia and Egypt before her marriage. The couple had two children:

Robert Ian - born 25 September 1908 in Chelsea, London died 2 February 1997
Donald Roy - born 15 March 1911 in County Louth

It is not known for certain why John and Minnie were living in County Antrim at the time of the 1911 census but it is believed that John was the chauffeur for Lord Massereene of Antrim Castle (sometimes called Massereene Castle). During a grand



ball on 28 October 1922, the castle caught fire and was destroyed. Although much of the evidence pointed to arson by the IRA, the official verdict was not conclusive, thus no insurance claim was paid out. The castle remained as a ruin until its demolition in 1970.

Antrim Castle [Source : <http://lordbelmontinnorthernireland.blogspot.co.uk/>]

The book '*Neston : 1840 – 1940*' records that

When Lord Massereene left Ireland for London, John was left without a job, and he contacted his mother's brother-in-law, R. W. Jones, who was the first head of Neston's council school in Burton Road. With Jones's help, John obtained a shop with a workshop at the back, on the north side of Neston Cross. In 1912 John Cameron established a motor and cycle dealing and repair business there. He also maintained

the electric light plants in large local houses, and had the Raleigh agency. During the First World War, John had to work in a munitions factory at the John Summers steelworks, but in 1916 he was called up and served as an engineer in the Royal Flying Corps. His wife was a very good business woman, and she carried on the business with the help of mechanics.

In fact John Cameron joined the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) on 17 January 1917 when his age was recorded as 39 years 4 months. He was recorded as being 5ft 5ins tall with a 38-inch expanded chest and he joined as an engineer/general fitter.

The RFC was the air arm of the British Army before and during the First World War, until it merged with the Royal Naval Air Service on 1 April 1918 to form the Royal Air Force. During the early part of the war, the RFC supported the British Army, by artillery co-operation and photographic reconnaissance. This work gradually led RFC pilots into



The inscriptions on the marble cross in Neston Cemetery read:

JOHN CAMERON,
Born September 29 1877,
Died June 8 1921
Also
M. CONSTANCE CAMERON,
Wife of the Above,
Who died June 10 1943 in her 75th year
Also their son
ROBERT IAN CAMERON
Born September 25 1908
Died February 2 1997

aerial battles with German pilots and, later in the war, included the strafing of enemy infantry and emplacements, the bombing of German military airfields and later the strategic bombing of German industrial and transportation facilities.

[wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Flying_Corps]

On 1 December 1917 John was promoted to Air Mechanic 1st Class and his pay was then recorded as being 4 shillings per day. On 15 March 1919 he was transferred to the RAF Reserve. Although he died in Wirral on Wednesday 8 June 1921 the circumstances, and exact place, of his death are unknown and no announcement of his death has been found in any local newspaper.

The book '*Neston : 1840 – 1940*' notes that

[Donald] Roy went to his uncle's school in Burton Road, and thence to the City and County School for Boys at Queen's Park, Chester. He was subsequently apprenticed to the Vulcan Motor Engineering Company at Southport, which made cars, buses and lorries. But the depression put the company into financial trouble, and in 1930

Roy got a month's notice. He found work in Chester with the Grosvenor Motor Company and the Dee Motor Company. After two years he joined the family firm in Neston, and at about the same time his brother Ian left Metropolitan Vickers to specialize in the radio and electrical side, part-time at first, while working in Chester. The Camerons acquired the BSA agency, previously held in Neston by W. E. Chrimes where Manning's the cobbler [on Hinderton Road] is now. They sold BSA, Royal Enfield and other motorcycles, which they obtained through Davies Brothers of Chester.

Roy played the organ for Neston Parish Church from about 1930, but he also played at Caldy, Burton, Thornton Hough, Woodchurch and Eastham. He also played the piano for dance bands. When the Second World War came, Ian served as an electrician in the RAF, and Roy became a motor engineer for Birkenhead Corporation Transport Their wives managed the business with the help of an apprentice, and of Roy in the evenings. The shop was sold in 1973, although the workshop behind remained in use some years under different management.

The 1939 Register (29 September) records that John's wife, Minnie, and her two unmarried sons were living on Neston Cross:

Minnie C Cameron	born 10 February 1869	motorcycle, cycle and radio and electrical dealer
Robert I Cameron	born 25 September 1908	electrical and radio engineer
Donald R Cameron	born 15 March 1910	motorcycle and cycle engineer

As noted above, Minnie died on 10 June 1943 aged 74 and unmarried son Robert died on 2 February 1997 aged 88. Donald R Cameron *may* have died in the Bristol area in mid-1961 when his age was recorded as 52.