

# SANDISON FAMILY OF BENSTON

**David C Sandison**, Lieut., R.N.R., *HMS Kosmos*. Benston, South Nesting. Decorations: D.S.O. and Croix de Guerre.

**William Sandison**, Private, Machine Gun Corps. Benston, South Nesting. Wounded at Valenciennes, France, on 28th October, 1918—only a mere fortnight before the end of hostilities.

Their parents were Hugh Sandison and Charlotte Humphray. They had three sisters and four more brothers.

**These machine guns below were the most commonly used by the British in WWI.**



Vickers machine gun



Lewis machine gun

The Vickers Gun, closely modelled on the Maxim Gun, comprised the British Army's standard heavy machine gun at the start of the First World War, following its formal adoption in 1912. Water cooled - via a jacket around the barrel which held approximately one gallon - the Vickers was loaded from a 250-round fabric belt mounted on a tripod. A rubber hose leading to a container condensed steam from the jacket as a means of minimising water wastage. It wasn't unknown for gunners to use urine to cool the gun should they run out of water; it was also rumoured that gun crews would fire off a few rounds just to heat water for making tea—although such tea might have tasted of machine oil. The gun used standard rifle 0.303 inch ammunition and weighed a little under 20kg; it was thus lighter than the German Maschinengewehr 08. It fired some 450 rounds per minute; after some 10,000 rounds had been fired the gun barrel invariably required replacement. The gun itself was usually operated by a team of six men: one fired, one fed ammunition, the rest helped to carry the weapon, its ammunition and spare parts. It was gradually replaced from late 1915 onwards by the lighter Lewis Gun. Even so it gained a reputation as the 'Queen of the battlefield' by men of the British Machine Gun Corps founded in October 1915 and remained in use long into the twentieth century. As a measure of the effectiveness and reliability of the weapon, during the British attack upon High Wood, on the Somme on 24 August 1916 it is estimated that ten Vickers fired in excess of one million rounds over a twelve hour period.

Designed in the United States in 1911 by U.S. Army Colonel Isaac Newton Lewis, the Lewis gun comprised an early light machine gun widely adopted by British and Empire forces from 1915 onwards. Frustrated in his aim of persuading the U.S. Army to adopt his new design Colonel Lewis retired from the army and set sail for Belgium, arriving in January 1913. The Belgian Army was quick to see the merits of the gun and ordered that it be manufactured at Liège using common British 0.303 inch calibre ammunition. Shortly afterwards the Birmingham Small Arms Company also bought a licence to manufacture Lewis' weapon. Weighing 12kg the air-cooled 1914 model Lewis Gun featured a 47 (later 97 for aircraft) cartridge circular magazine. The gun's firing rate could be regulated, ranging from 500-600 rounds per minute, although shorter bursts were more usual. With its adjustable sights and bipod support the Lewis Gun proved effective to some 600 metres. Nicknamed 'the Belgian rattlesnake' by German forces, the Lewis was formally adopted as the standard issue British Army machine gun from the close of 1915. Although in 1915 each British battalion on the Western Front had just four Lewis Guns, by 1917 each infantry section boasted its own Lewis gunner and backup, with battalions by now deploying 46 Lewis guns. As a light automatic machine gun it was considered the best and most reliable available at the time and was soon adapted for use both at sea by the Royal Navy, and for use in the air by aircraft observers. With the advent of armoured cars the Lewis found a ready place, and was similarly used both on tanks and - at the other end of the spectrum - on motorcycles.