

Private Ira Irvin Victor Whalley©

Regimental Number: 73279

Saskatchewan Regiment, 28th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force

born: 14 June 1891 - died: 12 March 1916

Ira Whalley was born in Keighley, Yorkshire, England, on 14 June 1891.¹ One month later, he was baptized in the Keighley Parish Church on 12 July 1891.² In 1907, when he was 16 years old, Ira emigrated to Canada on the *RMS Virginian* with his mother, Emma Jane Whalley, and two of his brothers, Joseph A., aka Joe, (b. 1889)³ and Albert Edward, aka Ted, (b. 1901).^{4,5} Ira's older brother Frederick William (b.1884) appears to have married and remained in England.⁶ Ira's father was Matthew Henry Whalley, also of Keighley, Yorkshire.⁷ Matthew appears to have died sometime before 1901, leaving his wife Emma to raise her family alone. In the 1901 Census, Emma is listed as a widow, living with three of her sons and working as a "chemist shopkeeper" from her home.⁸ She was listed as living on her own account.

After the family arrived in western Canada, they homesteaded south of Woodrow, Saskatchewan. Ira later took a homestead of his own at SW24-11-26-W2, just south of Spring Valley, where he farmed until the beginning of World War 1.⁹

Ira enlisted at Moose Jaw on 24 October 1914 with the Saskatchewan Regiment, 28th Canadian Infantry Battalion.¹⁰ At the time he signed up, Ira was 23 years of age, 5' 7" tall and had hazel eyes, fair hair and a fresh complexion. Ira listed his occupation as farmer.¹¹

Ira trained with his battalion until they all shipped out for Montreal on 29 May 1915 on the SS *Northland*.¹² They arrived in Plymouth, England, on 7 June 1915, where they continued their training at Shorncliffe throughout the summer of 1915.¹³ Ira qualified as a "bomb thrower" on 12 September 1915.¹⁴ A week later, on the 17th, the Battalion left on a night march from St. Martin's Plain to Folkestone harbour, where they embarked for France, arriving in Boulogne the next morning. The crossing had been rough and the soldiers got little sleep, but, after breakfast, Ira's battalion departed for the Front, arriving later that same day. By 25 September Ira and the rest of his battalion were in the trenches, in the pouring rain.¹⁵

Once in the trenches, the battalion rotated in and out of the line for the rest of the winter while they carried out a variety of trench routines. Ira probably took his turn at improving field works, dressing stations and patrolling in "No Man's Land." Weather that fall and winter was rainy and miserable for everyone. The troops had regular rotations and rest periods, and meals at a local convent were a welcome break. Soon after their arrival at the Front the Germans bombarded their trenches and the battalion experienced its first casualty in action.¹⁶

Ira was on the Western Front on 19 December 1915, when the Germans used the poison gas phosgene for the first time. The men of the battalion felt the effects of the gas even though they were billeted seven miles in the rear at the time. Ira was also there on 25 December, to witness the groups of soldiers from both sides of the front, who, for a few moments that Christmas Day, stopped the fighting and sang hymns and carols, then exchanged cigarettes and souvenirs between the trenches. Apparently, many of the 28th Battalion joined in on "Silent Night." Ira may have been one of them.¹⁷

The battalion experienced casualties in early 1916, and by the middle of January their trenches were being heavily shelled. At the end of that month, they attempted a trench raid that was considered to be a success. They killed as many as 39 of the enemy with only the loss of two or

three of their own men. The 28th Battalion was relieved in February and reassigned for rest and training before returning to the trenches in early March.¹⁸

It was quiet in the trenches in the days immediately before Ira died. The war diary for the 28th Battalion on 11 March notes that three men were wounded that day: two slightly and one seriously. Ira was probably the unfortunate soldier who was severely wounded. He suffered shell wounds to his right upper arm and right chest and died at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, 12 March 1916. He was 24 years of age.¹⁹

Ira Whalley is buried at the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord Pas-De-Calais, France in Plot: II. C. 227 northwest of Armentières.²⁰ His sacrifice is memorialized on the Woodrow Saskatchewan War Memorial,²¹ on the Canadian Great War Project²² and on the Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial. His name is also displayed on 23 April each year in the Book of Remembrance found in the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.²³

Ira's mother, Emma, and his brothers Joe and Ted were all still farming in Maple Creek, near Woodrow, Saskatchewan, at the time of the 1921 Census of Canada.²⁴ Emma died in 1931 and is buried in the Mountainview Cemetery in Vancouver, British Columbia,²⁵ near her son Ted who died in 1959.²⁶ Joe died in Woodrow, Saskatchewan, in 1948.²⁷

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¹ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914–1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx: accessed 27 April 2014) entry for Ira Whalley, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 10259-39, Item number: 306902, Paper service file

² "West Yorkshire, Church of England, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1910," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 27 April 2014), entry for Ira Irvin Victory Whalley, Record type: Baptism, Parish: Keighley, Original source: Yorkshire Parish Records

³ "West Yorkshire, England, Church of England, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1910," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 29 April 2014), entry for Joseph Albert Whalley, Record type: Baptism, Parish: Keighley, Original source: Yorkshire Parish Records

⁴ "West Yorkshire, England, Church of England, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1910," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 29 April 2014), entry for Albert Edward Whalley, Record type: Free BMD Birth Index, 1837-1915, Registration district: Bradford, Inferred county: Yorkshire West Riding, Volume: 9b, Page: 54

⁵ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 28 April 2014), entry for Mrs EJ Whalley, Joseph Whaley, Irving Whalley and Albert Whalley

⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 September 2016), entry for Frederick Whalley, Registration district: Leeds, Registration district number: 500, Sub-registration district: Kirkstall, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 28, Piece: 27081

⁷ "West Yorkshire, Church of England, Births and Baptisms, 1813-1910," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 27 April 2014), entry for Ira Irvin Victory Whalley, Record type: Baptism, Parish: Keighley, Original source: Yorkshire Parish Records

⁸ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 18 September 2016), entry for Frederick Whalley, Registration district: Leeds, Registration district number: 500, Sub-registration district: Kirkstall, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 28, Piece: 27081

⁹ *Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial* (svwm.ca/casualty-display/?ID=A000006141: accessed 29 April 2014) entry for Ira Irvin Victor Whalley, C.E.F., Service No: 73279

¹⁰ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914–1918-CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918

[cef/Pages/search.aspx](#): accessed 27 April 2014) entry for Ira Whalley, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 10259-39, Item Number: 306902, Paper service file

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "Timeline (28th Battalion History) - Freepages - Rootsweb, Ancestry," *Rootsweb Ancestry* (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~danddunne/Dand/martin/timeline.htm>: accessed 25 June 2016, entry for 28th Battalion History

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 27 April 2014) entry for I Whalley, C.E.F., Service No: 73279

²⁰ "Global, Find A Grave Index for Burials at Sea and other Select Burial Locations, 1300–Current," *Ancestry* and *Find A Grave*, (www.ancestry.com and www.findagrave.com/ci-bin/fg.cgi: accessed 27 April 2014 and 25 June 2016

²¹ *Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial* (sywm.ca/casualty-display/?ID=A000006141: accessed 29 April 2014), entry for Ira Irvin Victor Whalley, C.E.F., Service No: 73279

²² *Canadian Great War Project* (www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/searches/soldierDetail.asp?ID=10844: accessed 27 April 2014, entry for Ira Irving Victor Whalley, Service Number: 73279

²³ "Veteran's Affairs Canada, Book of Remembrance, Page 181," *Veteran's Affairs Canada* www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/books/page?page=181&book=1&sort=pageAsc: accessed 28 April 2014), entry for Ira Irving Victor Whalley

²⁴ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 28 April 2014), entry for Joe A. Whalley, Province or territory: Saskatchewan, District: Maple Creek, District number: 220, Sub-district number: 27,, City, town or village: T8 R5 W3, Section number: 23, Township number: 8, Range number: 6, Meridian number: 3, Municipality: Wood River

²⁵ "Canada, Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 18 September 2016), entry for Emma J. Whalley

²⁶ "Canada, Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 18 September 2016), entry for Albert Edward Whalley

²⁷ "Saskatchewan, Canada, Burial Index, 1802–2011," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 28 April 2014), entry for Joseph Whalley