

Private Henry Taylor©
Regimental Number: 745492
2nd Battalion, Canadian Infantry

born: 26 September 1891 – died: 22 March 1918

Henry was born in Powick, Worcestershire, England, on 26 September 1891¹ to Thomas and Sarah Taylor.² Thomas had been born about 1847 in Evesbatch, Herefordshire, while Sarah had been born about 1852 in Cradley, Herefordshire. They married about 1875 and shortly thereafter moved to Powick, Worcestershire.³ Although they had migrated between counties, they lived their entire lives within a distance of about 15 miles.

Thomas and Sarah had two children: Ethel May born in the second quarter of 1886,⁴ and Henry, born five years later. In the 1891 Census, the young family were living on the Sandpits Farm under farm bailiff Edwin Burton. Thomas was a farm servant and Sarah was a governess.⁵ By 1901, the family had moved to a nearby farm on Collets Green.⁶ In 1911, the family was on the same farm and Henry, then 20, was a “cowman.”⁷

Perhaps in order to find a better life, Henry emigrated to Canada, departing from London, England, and arriving at Quebec City, Quebec, on 20 May 1913 aboard SS *Corinthian*. He reported that he was 22 and single, that he was a farmer and intended to continuing farming in Canada, and that his final destination was to be Toronto.⁸

Henry settled in Beaverton, Ontario, on the eastern side of Lake Simcoe, and it was here that he signed up for the Canadian Expeditionary Force on 30 October 1915. Henry was fairly short at 5'4½" tall, but was considered fit for service. He enlisted with the 116th Overseas Battalion.⁹ This battalion was recruited in Ontario County and embarked from Halifax on 24 July 1916 aboard SS *Olympic*, arriving in England a week later.¹⁰ Henry was later transferred to the 2nd Battalion, Canadian Infantry.

The war diary for the 2nd Battalion provides some insight into Henry's last several days. From early March 1918 the battalion was training at Les Brebis, France. Training included a long march during summer-like weather, and for some soldiers, musketry practice. On 14 March the “Battalion Concert Party produced a sketch at the Y.M.C.A. Cinema. They were well received and the performance admirably presented considering the short notice, incompleteness of costumes, and especially it being their first appearance.”¹¹ Working parties were employed carrying timbers for reinforcing trenches, and for laying buried cable. They were even paid, and were able to attend religious services on Sunday, 17 March. As a Presbyterian, Henry may have attended the 10:00 a.m. service at the Y.M.C.A. Cinema.¹²

On 20 March 1918 the battalion moved from their billets to the front in the left subsector of the Hill 70 Sector, relieving the 10th Canadian Infantry Battalion. The weather was unsettled. At 5:30 a.m. on 21 March:

... the enemy raided and succeeded in entering our trenches, but was forced to retire after suffering heavy casualties. The raid was carried out under cover of an intense bombardment, the smoke from which and mist obscuring the vision of the sentries. In comparison, our casualties were slight, being, 1 officer wounded, 10 O.R.s killed – 2 O.R.s. subsequently died of wounds, 29 O.Rs. wounded and 4 O.Rs. ‘missing’. Shelling during the

day was more marked than usual, our artillery carried out considerable counter-battery work. Visibility being very good, our aeroplanes were over the enemy's lines in good numbers. At about 11:30 p.m. 2,000 drums of gas were projected. During the projection considerable increase of artillery fire was put on from our guns. Weather: Very Fair.

The following extract from 1st Can. Inf. Bde Orders is given: - "The G.O.C. Brigade desires to extend to the Officers, N.C.Os. and Men of Nos. 2 and 3 Companies, 2nd Canadian Battalion, his congratulations and thanks for their gallantry in beating off the enemy's attack this morning. He desires particularly to compliment the Lewis Gunners who in all cases behaved with courage and initiative. The indications are that heavy casualties were inflicted upon the enemy, who has been made to pay very dearly for his attack."¹³

It was likely during the projection of gas late that evening of 21 March 1918 that Henry was fatally gassed. He was evacuated and admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 22 March, but he died that day. Henry was buried the next day at Houchin British Cemetery, in Row G, Grave 21.¹⁴ On his gravestone is an additional inscription: "In the midst of life, we are in death."¹⁵

Houchin Cemetery was opened in March 1918 when the 6th British Casualty Clearing Station came to Houchin. From April to September the German advance made Houchin unsafe for hospitals, and the cemetery was used by the 55th (West Lancashire) Division. In September 1918, the 6th British Casualty Clearing Station returned to Houchin and was joined by the 15th CCS in October.¹⁶

It is believed that Henry's father, Thomas, died in Worcestershire in late 1920 at the age of 73,¹⁷ and that his mother died in 1925 at Upton on Severn, Worcestershire.¹⁸

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¹ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914–1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 9 March 2017) entry for Henry Taylor, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 9532 - 9, Item number: 271168

² *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Henry Taylor, Service No: 745492

³ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Thomas Taylor, Registration district: Upton on Severn, Registration district number: 378, Sub-registration district: Malvern, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 13, Household schedule number: 206, Piece: 17660

⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Ethel May Taylor, Registration district: Upton on Severn, Inferred county: Worcestershire, Volume: 6c, Page: 332

⁵ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Thomas Taylor, Registration district: Upton on Severn, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 12, Piece: 2332, Folio: 105, Page: 21

⁶ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Thomas Taylor, Registration district: Upton on Severn, Sub-registration district: Malvern, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 13, Household schedule number: 241, Piece: 2783, Folio: 48, Page: 22

⁷ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Thomas Taylor, Registration district: Upton on Severn, Registration district number: 378, Sub-registration district: Malvern, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 13, Household schedule number: 206, Piece: 17660

⁸ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Henry Taylor

⁹ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914–1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 9 March 2017) entry for Henry Taylor, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 9532 - 9, Item number: 271168

¹⁰ "Infantry," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/Documents/infantry%20battalions.pdf>; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for 116th Battalion

¹¹ "War Diaries – 2nd Canadian Infantry Battalion," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=2nd+battalion&s13=&s12=&s11=y&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=3&f=G; accessed 9 March 2017), entries for March 1918

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Taylor, H

¹⁵ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Henry Taylor, Service No: 745492

¹⁶ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Henry Taylor

¹⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 9 March 2017), entry for Thomas Taylor, Registration district: Worcester, Inferred county: Worcestershire, Volume: 6c, Page: 134

¹⁸ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 9 March 2016), entry for Sarah Taylor, Registration district: Upton upon Severn, Inferred county: Worcestershire, Volume: 6c, Page: 188