

Sergeant James Harrison Llewellyn[©]

Regimental number: 402344

31st Battalion, Canadian Infantry

born: 21 November 1892 – died: 28 January 1919

Sergeant James Harrison Llewellyn was born on 21 November 1892 in Walsall, Staffordshire.¹ His parents, James Harrison and Emily (nee Hicklin) Llewellyn were both also born and married in Walsall. James was born in about 1860 and Emily about a year later² and they married in 1883.³ They had six children: Hetty Louisa (born in 1883),⁴ George (born in 1885, but died soon after birth),⁵ George Samuel (born in 1886),⁶ Arthur (born in 1888 but died at the age of nearly two),⁷ James and Harry (born on 10 August 1895).⁸ James Senior was a bridle cutter.⁹

Sadly, James Junior lost both his parents before he was 20. His mother died in 1895, about the time of the birth of her youngest child. James Senior continued living in Walsall with his four children¹⁰ until his death in 1910.¹¹ His son believed that he died of asthma.¹²

At the age of 15, James' older brother George was working as an errand boy in a bridle shop.¹³ By the time his father died, George and his wife Prudence Naomi Davies had immigrated to Canada with \$30. They had married in the spring of 1908¹⁴ and soon afterward had sailed from Liverpool on the SS *Victorian*, arriving in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on 17 April 1908, heading to Woodstock, Ontario, to join George's sister Hetty.¹⁵ Hetty had immigrated to Canada the year before.¹⁶ Soon after her arrival, Hetty married William Daniel Porter, also from Walsall,¹⁷ who had also just immigrated.¹⁸ George and Prudence settled in Woodstock, where George was a labourer on the railway¹⁹ and they had at least three children: James Harrison,²⁰ George Samuel²¹ and Gladys Evelyn.²²

After their father's death, James and his younger brother Harry were living with their aunt—their mother's sister, Louisa, who was then married to Frank Westley—in Walsall.²³ The two young lads, ages 19 and 17, immigrated to Canada in 1912, sailing from Liverpool on the SS *Megantic* on 25 May, arriving in Quebec City.

Three years later, on 16 January 1915, both young men enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.²⁴ When James enlisted in the 34th Battalion, he was a metal polisher, 5' 6" tall and had a dark complexion, brown eyes and black hair.

James' military service was punctuated with illnesses. He went to England sometime before October 1915 because, on 22 October, he was admitted to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital in Woodcote Park for three days, but no diagnosis was indicated. In December, he was admitted to Monks Horton Convalescent Hospital with bronchitis and was not discharged until May 1916.

He transferred to the 31st Battalion of the Canadian Infantry and joined the Western Front in France on 2 July 1916. A month after arriving, he was admitted to No. 7 Canadian Stationary Hospital in Le Havre, again with bronchitis.

In June 1917, he was admitted to No. 5 Canadian Field Ambulance, this time with a fever. He returned to duty five days later, only to be admitted to hospital again with a gunshot wound in his left leg on 30 August 1918. He was discharged to a rest camp on 11 September and later rejoined

his unit. In the middle of October, he had two weeks leave in England. He rejoined his unit just before the Armistice was signed. However, this was not the end of the war for James.

In mid-January 1919, the 31st Battalion moved to Neunkirchen, 240 kilometers south of Bonn, Germany.²⁵ On 17 January 1919, James was taken to No. 4 Canadian Field Ambulance with pyrexia of unknown origin (a fever). The following day, he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with influenza. On 26 January, he was already dangerously ill. The following day his condition worsened and he died on 28 January.²⁶

James' lungs had probably been affected by working with sulphur—likely a hazard of working as a metal polisher. He had suffered an inflammation of the lungs four years before enlisting and was ill for several weeks. He had committed to cut down his smoking but, even late in the war, he was smoking 10 cigarettes a day.

In spite of his illnesses, James had a very positive military career. He was awarded a good conduct badge on 2 March 1917. In November 1917, he was promoted to a lance corporal and then, in May 1918, to a corporal. The following May he was promoted to an acting sergeant and then to a sergeant on 27 August 1918. While still a private, his actions on 27/28 September 1917, resulted in him being awarded the Military Medal:

For conspicuous gallantry and outstanding devotion to duty near AVION, on the night of 27th. / 28th. Sept. /17 An enemy raid was expected on our trenches, which were being heavily shelled. Pte Llewellyn was posted with a Lewis Gun and crew in the front line at this point, and during the bombardment four of the crew, including the N.C.O. in charge, were wounded and the Lewis Gun buried by shells. Pte Llewellyn immediately took the situation in hand, and displaying great courage and coolness, recovered his Gun and brought it into action, using it most effectively against an enemy raiding party which had appeared. His prompt action in dealing with the situation materially assisted in driving back the enemy party.²⁷

James was buried on 30 January 1919 in Poppelsdorfer Cemetery (Grave 14, Block B), probably with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding. Sometime later, his body was exhumed and reburied in Brussels Town Cemetery (Grave Reference: Plot X, Row 11, Grave 4).²⁸ Brussels Town Cemetery is located in the northeast corner of Brussels, Belgium. Brussels was occupied by the Germans from August 1914 to the end of the Great War. There are only 54 Commonwealth Great War graves, which include the graves of 50 prisoners of war whose bodies were brought back from Germany by the Canadian Corps in April 1919.²⁹

His brother George, who was living on Dufferin Avenue in Woodstock, was his next of kin and was notified of his death. He was also identified as his beneficiary in James' will.

James' younger brother Harry also served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Like his brother, Harry was also a metal polisher and, when the two brothers enlisted in January 1915, Harry probably joined the 34th Battalion (Regimental number: 402343).

In August 1915, he transferred to the 9th Battalion and went to England. He transferred to the 49th Battalion and joined the Western Front in France in May 1916. Like his brother, he also had chest problems and suffered from pleurisy in France in 1916. In October 1916 Harry was wounded at Courcellette with a gunshot wound to the right knee and left leg. He was operated on in the field to remove metal from his knee and, although his left leg healed well, his right knee did not and he was

transferred to a convalescent home in Woodcote Park, near Epsom in England. While in England in February 1917, he transferred to the 4th Canadian Labour Battalion. The same month he was promoted to a corporal and then returned to France.

In July 1918 he had a fever, which was later diagnosed as bronchitis, and he was transferred to the Canadian General Depot in Shorncliffe, England. He did not return to the Front before leaving England for Canada in January 1919. He was discharged on 28 February 1919 in London, Ontario, as being medically unfit. At the time of his discharge, he was described as a bridge builder.

James' brother George and his family continued to live in the Woodstock area until at least 1972.³⁰ His brother Harry died on 21 July 1967 in London, Ontario.³¹

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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 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellyn, James, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5689 - 59, Item number: 532743, Digitized service file - PDF format: B5689-S059

² "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for James Harrison Llewellyn [*sic*], Registration district: Walsall, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 30, Piece: 2254, Folio: 19, Page: 32

³ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for Emily Hicklin, Registration district: Walsall, Inferred county: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 872

⁴ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellyn, Hetty Louisa, Volume 06B, Page 772

⁵ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellyn, George, Volume 06B, Page 681; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for George Llewellyn, Registration district: Walsall, Inferred county: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 426

⁶ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellyn, George Samuel, Volume 06B, Page 723

⁷ "GRO online index," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellyn, Arthur, Volume 06B, Page 695; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for Arthur Llewellyn, Registration district: Walsall, Inferred county: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 430

⁸ "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 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellyn [*sic*], Harry, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5690 - 3, Item number: 532760, Digitized service file - PDF format: B5690-S003

⁹ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for James Harrison Llewellyn [*sic*]

¹⁰ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for James Llewellyn, Registration district: Walsall, Sub-registration district: Walsall, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 18, Piece: 2700, Folio: 160, Page: 13, Household schedule number: 80

¹¹ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for James H Llewellyn, Registration district: Walsall, Inferred county: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 333

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- ¹² "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 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellen, James
- ¹³ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for James Llewellen
- ¹⁴ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for George Llewellen, Registration district: Walsall, Inferred county: Staffordshire, Volume: 6b, Page: 1309
- ¹⁵ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for Geo Llewellyn [sic]
- ¹⁶ "1916 Canada Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for Hetty Partes [sic], Sub-district description: Townships 45, 46 and 47, ranges 9, 10, 11 and 12, W. 3. M.
- ¹⁷ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for Hetty Llewellen
- ¹⁸ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for William D Porter
- ¹⁹ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for George Llewellen, Province: Ontario, District: Oxford North, District number: 106, Sub-district: 38–Woodstock, Sub-district number: 38
- ²⁰ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for James Harrison Llewellan [sic]
- ²¹ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for George Sam?? Llewellan [sic]
- ²² "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for Gladys Evelyn Llewellen
- ²³ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for George Llewellen
- ²⁴ "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 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellen, James; "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 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellyn [sic], Harry. Unless otherwise noted, all information on James' and Harry's military careers comes from these sources.
- ²⁵ "War Diaries - 19th Canadian Infantry Battalion," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca>: accessed 17 January 2017) File: RG9-III-D-3, Volume/box number: 4930, File number: 407, Copied container number: T-10730
- ²⁶ The record in the journal of No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station chaplains indicates that he died on 29 ("No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for Llewellen, J) but all other military records indicate his date of death was 28 January 1919.
- ²⁷ "War Diaries – 31st Canadian Infantry Battalion," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca>: accessed 17 January 2017) File: RG9-III-D-3, Volume/box number: 4937, File number: 430, Copied container number: T-10742
- ²⁸ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 6 January 2017), entry for Griffin, G.W.F., Service No: 402344
- ²⁹ "Brussels Town Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 6 January 2016)

³⁰ "Canada, Voters Lists, 1935–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 12 March 2017), entry for George Llewellyn in 1972, Location: Oxford, Ontario, Canada, Electoral district: Oxford

³¹ "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 6 January 2017) entry for Llewellyn [*sic*], Harry