

Sapper Alfred Gayford Wheeler[©]
Regimental number: 887213
2nd Tramway Company, Canadian Engineers

born: 29 May 1892 – died: 28 January 1919

Sapper Alfred Gayford Wheeler¹ was born on 29 May 1892² in Hythe, Kent, England, the son of James and Susannah Wheeler and was baptized in Hythe on 10 July 1892.³ His father James was born in about 1844 in Capel near Paddock Wood, Kent.⁴ His mother Susannah Jane (nee Colling)⁵ was born about 1849 in Hythe⁶ and married James near there in 1881.⁷

The year before Alfred's birth, the family was living at 50 High Street in Hythe, where James was a miller. In 1901, Alfred, was living at 139 High Street in Hythe with his widowed mother and four siblings:⁸ Archie Gordon (born in 1882),⁹ Henry James (born in 1885),¹⁰ Elsie May (born in 1887)¹¹ and Leslie Clarence (born in 1889).¹² He also had at least one step-sibling—Charles Henry Smith (born in 1872).¹³ No evidence was found of James' death, but he apparently died before 1901. In 1911, Alfred's mother was living with her son Henry at Denmark House in Hythe¹⁴ and his sister Elsie was probably working as one of four medical and surgical nurses at Hollenden House in Ipswich.¹⁵

It is not known when Alfred immigrated to Canada but he homesteaded NE32-47-14-W3 south of Glenbush, Saskatchewan, before enlisting to serve in the Great War.¹⁶ He was living in Hillside, Saskatchewan, when he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on 10 April 1916 in North Battleford.¹⁷ He was 25 years of age, 5' 8½" tall and had a dark complexion, brown eyes and black hair.

It is not known when Alfred went to the Western Front, but he was likely there for several years and saw the signing of the Armistice before he was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 22 January 1919.¹⁸ He died there on 29 January of influenza¹⁹ and was buried two days later in Popplesdorfer Cemetery (Grave 14, Plot B) in Bonn, Germany, with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding. January 1919 at No. 1 CCCS was a month of steady medical work, mostly influenza cases, very many accompanied by bronchopneumonia.²⁰ In spite of the horrific number of soldiers killed in World War I, the influenza pandemic, which affected the whole world and scourged Europe in 1918–1919, killed more people than the war itself.²¹

His mother, who was still living at Denmark House in Hythe, was his next of kin and was notified of his death. At some later point, his body was exhumed and buried in the Brussels Town Cemetery (Grave Reference: Plot X, Row 1, Grave 6).²² 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 1919.²³

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¹ Sapper Wheeler was identified as Pioneer Wheeler in the journal of the chaplains at the No. 1 CCCS.

² "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 28 January 2017) entry for Wheeler, Alfred Gayford, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 10266 - 11, Item number: 310574

³ "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 28 January 2017), entry for Alfred Sayford [sic] Wheeler, FHL film number: 1786587

⁴ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 January 2017), entry for James Wheeler, Registration district: Elham, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Piece: 753, Folio: 111, Page: 19

⁵ There are different spellings of Susannah Wheeler's maiden name in different documents: Colling, Collings and Collins

⁶ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 January 2017), entry for James Wheeler

⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 January 2017), entry for James Wheeler, Registration district: Elham, Inferred county: Kent, Volume: 2a, Page: 1491

⁸ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 11 January 2017), entry for Bruno Whittle, Registration district: Elham, Sub-registration district: Hythe, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 8, Piece: 854, Folio: 59, Page: 19, Household schedule number: 114

⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 January 2017) entry for Wheeler, Archie Gordon, Volume 02A, Page 1012

¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 January 2017) entry for Wheeler, Henry James, Volume 02A, Page 1081

¹¹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 January 2017) entry for Wheeler, Elsie May, Volume 02A, Page 1028

¹² "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 January 2017) entry for Wheeler, Leslie Clarence, Volume 02A, Page 1034

¹³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 30 January 2017), entry for James Wheeler; "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 30 January 2017) entry for Smith, Charles Henry, Volume 02A, Page 935

¹⁴ Susannah 1911

¹⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 31 January 2017), entry for Elsie May Wheeler, Registration district: Ipswich, Registration district number: 213, Sub-registration district: Ipswich Western, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Household schedule number: 46, Piece: 10800

¹⁶ "Sapper Alfred Gayford Wheeler," *Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial* (<http://svwm.ca/casualty-display/?ID=A000006147>: accessed 28 January 2017)

¹⁷ "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 28 January 2017) entry for Wheeler, Alfred Gayford. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Alfred's military career comes from his document.

¹⁸ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 28 January 2017), entry for Wheeler, A. G.

¹⁹ His date of death was reported as 29 January in the No. 1 CCCS chaplains' journal. However, all other military records show 28 January.

²⁰ "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13–1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FIND&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02016202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 17 June 2016)

²¹ "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918," (<https://virus.stanford.edu/uda/>: accessed 3 February 2015)

²² *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 December 2017), entry for Wheeler, Alfred Gayford, Service No: 887213

²³ "Brussels Town Cemetery," Commonwealth War Grave Commission (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 22 November 2016)