

Private James William Harrison©
Regimental number: 12632
5th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force

born: 1888 – died: 17 February 1916

Private James William Harrison died at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 17 February 1916,¹ the same day that Private Ernest Harrison, also of the 5th Battalion, died there.² In the journal recording soldiers' deaths, the chaplain included the notation "brothers." However, there is no evidence to suggest that they were brothers, beyond being "brothers in arms."

The two men had different parents and were born in different countries. James was born in the spring of 1888³ in Newcastle, Northumberland, England, the son of Henry and Elizabeth Jane Harrison (nee Rowell).⁴ Ernest, on the other hand, was born in Saginaw, Michigan, in the United States,⁵ the eldest son of Arthur and Ellen Harrison.⁶

James was brought up in England. His parents married in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1883,⁷ but his father probably died about the time that James was born.⁸ So James and his two siblings—John Robert (born in 1885)⁹ and Frederick (born in 1887)¹⁰—were brought up by their mother. In 1891, they were living on Coldwell Street in Felling, near Gateshead, Durham, with his maternal grandmother.¹¹ His mother was a dressmaker. Thomas Elliott, a railway porter, was a lodger in the home. Early in 1896, James' mother married Thomas¹² and, later that year, they had a daughter, Mary Winifred.¹³ In 1901, the family was living at 67 Northbourne Street in Gateshead.¹⁴

Both James and his older brother John came to Canada—possibly together, some time before 1914. In 1914, John married Isabella McQueen at the Presbyterian Church on Stanley Street in Montreal, Quebec.¹⁵

James was a teamster when he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force at the very beginning of the war.¹⁶ He enlisted on 24 September 1914 in Valcartier, Quebec. He was 5'7" tall and had a ruddy complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. He had possibly served one year previously with the Northumberland Fusiliers and two months with the 31st (British Columbia Horse) Regiment.

James joined the 5th Infantry Battalion and sailed to England on 3 October 1914. He joined the Front in France on 15 February 1915. On 3 November of the same year, he forfeited five days' pay for disobedience of an order, but a couple of weeks later he began eight days' leave.

Three months later, James died at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.¹⁷ In February 1917, he was serving with the 5th Battalion, probably near Bailleul, in northern France.¹⁸ The battalion had done a tour in the trenches, before being relieved by the 8th Battalion on 14 February.

James died of shell wounds, a tear of the jejunum (a part of the small intestine), shock and hemorrhage at No. 1 CCCS on 17 February 1916.¹⁹ The day before he died a "[s]hell hit in court yard just outside Orderly Room killing a team of mules, smashing a limber, a watercart [*sic*] & a wheeled stretcher. Wrecked inside of Orderly Room & Officer's [*sic*] mess." Five Other Ranks were wounded that day. Perhaps William or Ernest were among the wounded because the following day, the battalion's war diary notes that "One of the men wounded yesterday died in BAILLEUL today." Altogether, 867 soldiers were admitted to No. 1 CCCS in February 1916, of whom 22 died.²⁰

He was buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord (Grave Reference: Plot II, Row C, Grave 150).²¹ Bailleul is in France, but near the Belgian border, about 15 kilometres southwest of Ypres.²² It was occupied in October 1914 and became an important hospital centre for not just No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station but also for No. 1 Australian and five British Army casualty clearing stations.

His mother, who was living at "Ennerdale," on Brislee Avenue in Tynemouth, was his next of kin and was notified of his death.

James was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre). He probably also received the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915). The medals were sent to his mother, who was living at 79 Northbourne Street in Gateshead-on-Tyne, England.

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¹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 2 January 2017), entry for Harrison, W.

² "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 2 January 2017), entry for Harrison, E. The journal maintained by the chaplains at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station records that both died there on 17 February 1916. However, the war diaries of the No. 1 CCCS records only one death there that day. ("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=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G))

³ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 8 February 2017) entry for Harrison, James William, Volume 10B, Page 67. This record indicates that he was born in 1888, not in 1889, as indicated on his attestation form.

⁴ "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 17 February 2017) entry for Harrison, James William, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 4106 - 43, Item number: 96019, Digitized service file - PDF format: B4106-S043; "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2017), entry for Elizabeth Jane Ronel [sic], Registration district: Newcastle upon Tyne, Inferred county: Northumberland, Volume: 10b, Page: 48

⁵ "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 17 February 2017) entry for Harrison, Ernest, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 4102 - 47, Item number: 443095, Digitized service file - PDF format: B4102-S047

⁶ "1900 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 October 2017), entry for Ernest Harrison

⁷ "England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 26 November 2017), entry for Elizabeth Jane Ronel [sic]

⁸ It is likely that Henry died in the summer of 1888. ("England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 February 2017), entry for Henry Harrison, Registration district: Newcastle upon Tyne, Inferred county: Northumberland, Volume: 10b, Page: 33)

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- ⁹ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 8 February 2017) entry for Harrison, John Robert, Volume 10B, Page 3
- ¹⁰ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 8 February 2017) entry for Harrison, Frederick, Volume 10B, Page 62
- ¹¹ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 27 January 2017), entry for Elize J Rowell, Registration district: Gateshead, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 2, Piece: 4172, Folio: 38, Page: 27
- ¹² "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2008," *Findmypast* (www.findmypast.co.uk: accessed 1 February 2017), entry for Elizabeth Jane Harrison, District: Gateshead, County: Durham, Volume: 10A, Page: 1131
- ¹³ "GRO online index–birth," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 8 February 2017) entry for Elliott, Mary Winifred, Volume 10A, Page 915
- ¹⁴ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 2 February 2017), entry for James William Harrison, Registration district: Gateshead, Sub-registration district: Gateshead, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 28, Piece: 4753, Folio: 197, Page: 39, Household schedule number: 247
- ¹⁵ "Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621–1968," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 February 2017), entry for John Robert Harrison, Event: Marriage
- ¹⁶ "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 17 February 2017) entry for Harrison, James William. Unless otherwise specified, information about James' military service comes from this source.
- ¹⁷ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 1 February 2017), Harrison, W.
- ¹⁸ "War diaries - 5th Canadian Infantry Battalion," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=5th+infantry+battalion&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 23 March 2017)
- ¹⁹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 1 February 2017), entry for Harrison, E.
- 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=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G)
- ²¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 1 February 2017), entry for Harrison, James William, Service No: 12632
- ²² "Bailleul Community Cemetery, Nord," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 January 2017)