

## **Driver (Private) John Ellam<sup>©</sup>**

**Regimental Number: 320909**

**5th Canadian Divisional Ammunition Column, Canadian Field Artillery**

**born: 9 May 1884 – died: 23 March 1918**

John was born on 9 May 1884 in Manchester, Lancashire, England to Joseph Ellam and Clara Sybella Evans.<sup>1</sup> Joseph had been baptized on 18 May 1851 in St. George, Hulme, Lancashire,<sup>2</sup> and Clara had been born in the second quarter of 1858 in Louth, Lincolnshire.<sup>3</sup> They married on 25 December 1879 in Stretford St. Matthew, Lancashire,<sup>4</sup> and had eight children. Most of the family emigrated to Canada.

Joseph and Clara's children were:

- Clarrie, who was born in the last quarter of 1880 in Chorlton, Lancashire;<sup>5</sup>
- Joseph Vesey, who was born in the third quarter of 1881 in Chorlton.<sup>6</sup> He married Florence Kay in Montreal, Quebec, on 28 June 1916;<sup>7</sup>
- John;
- James, who was born on 22 October 1886 in Reddish, Lancashire. Like John, he joined the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force (regimental number 115477) in May 1915 in Regina, Saskatchewan, where he was farming, likely with his brother Charles. James served with the 10th Canadian Mounted Rifles and was awarded a Good Conduct Badge in the Field in March 1917.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, James returned to Canada after the war and on 28 December 1919 married Arvilla Hazel Downey in Lindsay, Ontario;<sup>9</sup>
- Frederick, who was born in about 1890 in Reddish, Lancashire,<sup>10</sup> and married Emily Annie Barnes on 10 June 1921 in Montreal, Quebec;<sup>11</sup>
- Charles Wilfred, who was born on 11 August 1891 in Reddish, Lancashire. He too joined the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force in February 1915 in Regina (regimental number 115020). Charles served with the Fort Garry Horse and the 10th Canadian Mounted Rifles. He was discharged as medically unfit on 1 March 1919 after suffering numerous skin conditions, including scabies and carbuncles.<sup>12</sup> He married Annie White Dickie on 1 January 1921 in Oshawa, Ontario;<sup>13</sup>
- Olive, who was born in the last quarter of 1893 in Manchester, Lancashire;<sup>14</sup> and
- Sybil, who was born on 23 July 1896 in Manchester.<sup>15</sup> On 26 August 1921, Sybil married Charles King in Montreal, Quebec.<sup>16</sup>

John appears to have been the first of his family to emigrate, but the rest of the family followed within a year. He arrived aboard the *Tunisian* on 19 March 1905 at Halifax, Nova Scotia, listing his occupation as bookbinder and his destination as Lindsay, Ontario. His parents and other siblings emigrated in 1906, settling in Montreal, Quebec.<sup>17</sup>

On 24 February 1908, John married Susanna Janet Brown in Montreal,<sup>18</sup> and in 1911 was living in Peterborough, Ontario, with Susanna and his mother-in-law.<sup>19</sup>

On 21 February 1916, at the age of 31, John was living in Peterborough when he enlisted with the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force, 13th Brigade Ammunition Column. His occupation was bookbinder. Previously he had spent three years with the 2nd Manchesters. As was permitted, John had \$20 of his monthly salary paid to his wife in Canada.<sup>20</sup> Permission was granted to soldiers to assign a portion of their pay to their relatives, that portion not exceeding four-fifths of the monthly

amount to a maximum of \$25. In 1914, daily rates of pay for a private were \$1 plus \$.10 for being in the field.<sup>21</sup>

After training, on 18 September 1916 John embarked on the SS *Olympic* from Halifax arriving in Liverpool on 25 September, where he was transferred to the 4th Canadian Division Ammunition Column at Witley Military Camp. In April 1917 the column was redesignated as the 5th Canadian Division Ammunition Column. On 22 August 1917 John and his regiment landed in Havre, France and advanced to the Front. John was alternately identified as a driver, private or gunner.<sup>22</sup>

An ammunition column provided the logistics to ensure that ammunition arrived where and when it was needed. This was a massive task using dedicated military vehicles, including motor, horse drawn, rail and tramways, to carry the artillery and ammunition along the supply chain from manufacture through storage, distribution and provision, to disposal of unexploded ordnance and recovery of re-useable components. Each division's ammunition column kept ammunition moving from the back storage up to the Front. Ammunition dumps and transport near the Front were high priority targets of the enemy's guns and aircraft. As a result, many drivers received bravery awards.<sup>23</sup>



**"2nd Divisional Ammunition Column,"** *RSL Virtual War Memorial*

Although the photo on the left depicts an Australian Ammunition Column convoy, Canadian vehicles such as John would have driven were very similar, but bore Canadian markings.<sup>24</sup>

On 23 March 1918 John was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with compound fractures to both legs resulting from an accident. Sadly, his injuries proved fatal and he died later that same day. John was buried at Houchin British Cemetery, Row G, Grave 27.<sup>25</sup> Houchin British 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.<sup>26</sup>

John posthumously received the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal.<sup>27</sup> The British War Medal was issued to men of the British and Imperial Forces who entered a theatre of war between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918. It was a silver medal, the front of which depicts the head of George V. The recipient's service number, rank, name and unit were impressed on the rim. The Allied Victory Medal is bronze, depicting a winged classical figure representing victory. It was similarly inscribed on the rim with the recipient's service number, rank, name and unit.<sup>28</sup> His wife and mother received the Memorial Cross (commonly known as the Silver Cross) for John's sacrifice. This medal was awarded to the mother and/or widow of Canadian soldiers who died on active duty.<sup>29</sup>



**John Ellam's grave marker, Houchin British Cemetery, France**

Source: "Canada, Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry*

Unfortunately, Susanna died 26 June 1919 and thus John's War Service Gratuity of \$80 was not paid to her or to her estate; nor was it paid to his mother.<sup>30</sup>

John is remembered on a stone in the Houchin British Cemetery, bearing the additional inscription: In Sweetest Memories/He remains with us/Though Sleeping Far Away.

<sup>31</sup> His name is also inscribed on a plaque at the Murray Street Baptist Church in Peterborough, Ontario.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Ellam, J., Service No: 320909

<sup>2</sup> "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Joseph Ellam

<sup>3</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Clara Sybella Evans

<sup>4</sup> "Manchester, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1930," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Clara Sybella Evans

<sup>5</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Clarrie Ellam

<sup>6</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Joseph Vesey Ellam

<sup>7</sup> "Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621–1968," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Ellam; Spouse: Kay

<sup>8</sup> "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 1 June 2017) entry for James Ellam, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 2862 - 34, Item number: 376264, Digitized service file - PDF format: B2862-S034

<sup>9</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1785–1935," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for James Ellam

<sup>10</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Frederick Ellam, Registration district: Stockport, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 29, Piece: 2796, Folio: 98, Page: 21

<sup>11</sup> "Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621–1968," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Ellam; Spouse: Barnes

<sup>12</sup> "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 1 June 2017) entry for Charles Wilfred Ellam, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 2862 - 30, Item number: 376260, Digitized service file - PDF format: B2862-S030

<sup>13</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1785–1935," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Charles Wilfred Ellam

<sup>14</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Olive Ellam

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- <sup>15</sup> "Canada, Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Sybil King
- <sup>16</sup> "Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621–1968," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Ellam; Spouse: King
- <sup>17</sup> "Canada Passenger Lists, 1865–1935," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Joseph Ellam and Sybil Ellam
- <sup>18</sup> "Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621–1968," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.ca](http://www.ancestry.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Ellam; Spouse: Brown
- <sup>19</sup> "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for John Ellam, Province: Ontario, District: Peterborough West, District number: 123, Sub-district: 26–Peterborough, Sub-district number: 26
- <sup>20</sup> "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 1 June 2017) entry for John Ellam, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 2862 - 35, Item number: 376265, Digitized service file - PDF format: B2862-S035
- <sup>21</sup> "Lest We Forget Information Package First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/lest-we-forget/Documents/First-World-War-Information-Package.pdf>: accessed 13 January 2017), Pay and Allowances, page 15
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> "5th Divisional Ammunition Column," (Australia) *RSL Virtual War Memorial* (<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/units/126>: accessed 5 June 2017)
- <sup>24</sup> "2nd Divisional Ammunition Column," *RSL Virtual War Memorial* (<https://rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au/explore/units/311>: accessed 5 June 2017)
- <sup>25</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 1 June 2017), entry for Ellam, J.
- <sup>26</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 2 June 2017), entry for Ellam, John
- <sup>27</sup> See Endnote 22
- <sup>28</sup> "A Guide to British Campaign Medals of WW1," *The Great War 1914–1918*, (<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/medals/ww1-campaign-medals.htm>: accessed 2 June 2017)
- <sup>29</sup> "Memorial Cross," *Veterans Affairs Canada* (<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/medals-decorations/memorial-cross>: accessed 1 June 2017)
- <sup>30</sup> See Endnote 22
- <sup>31</sup> "Canada, Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 3 June 2017), entry for Driver John Ellam
- <sup>32</sup> "Organ Chimes at Murray Street Baptist Church memorialize WWI soldier Harold S. Matthews," *The Peterborough Examiner* ([www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com](http://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com): accessed 4 June 2017), entry in the Life Section of Friday, January 2, 2015