

Private John Maxwell Burr[©]

Regimental number: 802754

8th Infantry Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force

born: 7 February 1897–died: 8 October 1918

Private John Maxwell Burr (known as Maxwell) was born in Middlesex County, Ontario, the youngest son of Daniel Burr and Hannah Stalder Wicket.¹ Both his parents were born in Ontario—Daniel, of Irish descent, in about 1849 and Hannah, of German descent, on 16 March 1860.² Maxwell had three much older siblings: Mathilda, born on 31 May 1879,³ Wilhelmina Mary, born on 25 June 1882,⁴ and William Roland, born on 21 February 1886.⁵ His siblings were 18, 15 and 11 when Maxwell was born on 7 February 1897.⁶

Before Maxwell's birth, the family was living in Parkhill, about 50 kilometres northwest of London, Ontario, where Daniel was a drayman. Ten years later, they were still in Parkhill and Daniel was now a labourer. In 1911, the family was living at 29–31 Anna Street in Parkhill.

When Maxwell enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on 17 January 1916, he was a tinsmith.⁷ He was 5' 11½" tall and had a fair complexion, blue eyes and light brown hair. He joined the 135th Battalion—a battalion based in London, Ontario, that began recruiting in 1915 and went to England in August 1916. Maxwell was with his battalion when it left Canada—he embarked on the SS *Olympic* in Halifax on 22 August 1916, arriving in Liverpool on 30 August.

The battalion was transferred to the military camp in Witley, Surrey, and then to Bramshott, Hampshire. Maxwell remained at Witley and/or Bramshott for 20 months with the 125th Battalion. The battalion's war diaries during that period are filled with days and days of training.⁸

Maxwell transferred to the 8th Battalion and left England on 15 April 1918 to go to the Western Front. He was wounded just five and half months later and was taken to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station⁹ with shrapnel wounds to his head. However, he fought hard and survived for eight days before dying on 9 October.¹⁰ He was buried the same day in Duisans's British Military Cemetery (Plot 7, Row B, Grave 44) with the Canadian chaplain A. D. Reid presiding.¹¹ Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Étrun, near Arras, France. The first burials in the cemetery took place in March 1917.¹²

No. 1 CCCS arrived in Duisans at the beginning of September 1918 and was stationed near Duisans for two months. As a result of the serious and urgent nature of the cases admitted to No. 1 CCCS, the death rate was high in October—a total of 83 deaths occurred during the month.¹³

When the CCCS chaplain wrote to Maxwell's mother to tell her of her son's death, the family was still in Parkhill. In 1921, his parents were living on Station Street and their daughter Wilhelmina was living with them.¹⁴

Wilhelmina had married Howard Mandeville Matthews, a compositor, the year before. Howard, 12 years Wilhelmina's senior, was a widower, born in Urbana, Illinois, in the United States. His wife had died in 1911, leaving Howard with seven children under the age of 18.¹⁵ There is nothing to suggest that his children came to Canada with him; in fact, some were living with their maternal grandmother in 1920.¹⁶ Howard married Wilhelmina in Renfrew, Ontario, on 26 June 1920.¹⁷ She was alone with her parents in 1921; it is not known where Howard was at the time of the census.

Howard died on 15 February 1934 in Parkhill.¹⁸ Wilhelmina lived another 19 years without her husband and died in 1963. She and Howard are both buried in Parkhill Cemetery.¹⁹

Maxwell's eldest sister **Mathilda** (also known as Maud) married Percy Wilkins, a druggist, in Parkhill on 11 February 1901.²⁰ In 1911 they were living at 108 Wharncliffe Street in London, Ontario, where Percy was a dry goods salesman. They had three children: Willis (9), Stanley (3) and Harold (1).²¹ Percy died three years later, at the age of 37, of acute nephritis and was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery in London.²² Some few years later, Maud remarried and, in 1920, was living with her new husband, James Kennedy, a master mechanic, at 188 Parade Street in Erie, Pennsylvania. Maud's three sons were living with them.²³ Maud died in 1980, at the age of 101. She was buried in Northview Cemetery in Dearborn, Michigan.²⁴

Maxwell's only brother **William**, a miller, married Margaret Clarkon on 3 July 1911 in Huron County, Ontario.²⁵ Ten years later, William and Margaret were living at 4 Waterloo Street, in Preston Town, Waterloo South—now Cambridge, Ontario. They had two children: Margaret (4) and William (2).²⁶ William was still living in Waterloo South—in 1963, with his wife and daughter.²⁷

Maxwell's father **Daniel** died of cardiac vascular renal syndrome on 25 November 1930 at the age of 82 and was buried in Parkhill Cemetery.²⁸ His wife **Hannah** died in 1953 and was buried with her husband.²⁹ Their gravestone included a memorial to their son:

In Loving Memory Of
Bandsman
J. Maxwell BURRE
125th. Middlesex Bat. Who
Died in France for King
And Country. Oct.9, 1918.
Aged 21 Years 7 Mos.



Gravestone of Daniel and Hannah Burr,
Parkhill Cemetery

Source: Canada, Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current

© 2021 BIFHSGO

¹ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 April 2021), entry for Jno [sic] Maxwell Burr. In some records, Hannah Wicket is also known as Hannah Stalder or Stalder Wicket. The relationship between Stalder and Wicket is not known.

-
- ² "1901 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 3 April 2021), entry for Maxwell Burr, Province: Ontario, District: Middlesex (North/Nord), District number: 88, Sub-district: Parkhill (Town/Ville), Sub-district number: 3
- ³ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 9 April 2021), entry for Matilda Burr. In later life, Matilda was known as Maud.
- ⁴ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 8 April 2021), entry for Wilhelmina Mary Burr
- ⁵ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 4 April 2021), entry for William Roland Burr
- ⁶ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1948," *Ancestry*, entry for Jno [sic] Maxwell Burr
- ⁷ "Personnel Records of the First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/>; accessed 8 April 2021) entry for Burr, Maxwell, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992–93/166, Box 1311-26, Item number: 77861, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1311-S026. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Maxwell's military service comes from this source.
- ⁸ "War Diaries - 125th Infantry Battalion," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca>; accessed 8 April 2021; accessed 8 April 2021) File: RG9-III-D-3, Volume/box number: 4945
- ⁹ A casualty clearing station was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation. Casualties who did not soon die or could not be adequately treated in the CCS were stabilized before being transported to a field or military hospital. (Casualty Clearing Station," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty_Clearing_Station; accessed 2 May 2020))
- ¹⁰ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca; accessed 5 July 2021), entry for Burr, M. According to the CCCS journal, Maxwell died on 8 October 1918. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission record shows his death as 9 October. (*Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 28 March 2021), entry for John Maxwell Burr)
- ¹¹ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa*, entry for Burr, M.
- ¹² "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 7 October 2015)
- ¹³ "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/>; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ¹⁴ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 4 April 2021), entry for Daniel Burr, Province or territory: Ontario, Enumeration district number: 103, Sub-District: Parkhill (Town), Sub-district number: 32, City, Town or Village: Lot 25 26 27
- ¹⁵ "Mrs. Howard Mathews," *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/>; accessed on Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk; 8 April 2021), *The Champaign Daily Gazette* (Champaign, Illinois), 11 January 1911
- ¹⁶ "1920 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 10 April 2021), entry for Harry Matthews
- ¹⁷ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826–1938," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 8 April 2021), entry for Wilhelmine M Bukk [sic]
- ¹⁸ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 8 April 2021), entry for Howard Mandeville Mathews
- ¹⁹ "Canada, Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 8 April 2021), entry for Lila [sic] Mathews
- ²⁰ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826–1938," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 8 April 2021), entry for Maud M Burr
- ²¹ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 9 April 2021), entry for Percy H Wilkins, Province: Ontario, District: London City, District number: 94, Sub-district: 17, Sub-district number: 17
- ²² "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 9 April 2021), entry for Percy H Williams

²³ "1920 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 April 2021), entry for Maud Kennedy

²⁴ "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 10 October 2021), entry for Maude [*sic*] M. Kennedy

²⁵ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826–1938," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 April 2021), entry for William Roland Burr

²⁶ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 April 2021), entry for William Burr, Province or territory: Ontario, Municipality: Preston, Enumeration district number: 137, Sub-district: Preston (Town) Sub-district number: 37

²⁷ "Canada, Voters Lists, 1935–1980," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 4 April 2021), entry for William Burr in 1963, Reference number: M-5100

²⁸ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 April 2021), entry for Daniel Burr

²⁹ "Canada, Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 3 April 2021), entry for Daniel Burr