

Lieutenant John McClelland Adie[©]
Regimental number: 117103
1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade

born: 1883–died: 1918

Lieutenant John McClelland Adie was born in St. Catharines, Ontario, on 15 July 1883,¹ the third of seven children² born to John Alexander Adie (b. 1851)³ and Frances Maria (known as Fannie), née McClelland (b. 1855).^{4, 5} The others were James (b. 1878), Mabel (b. 1881), Robert (b. 1886), Jane (b. 1889), Archibald (b. 1892), and Allan (b. 1896).⁶

John Alexander was born in Canada of Scottish parents. He was a machinist⁷ who worked for more than 50 years for the Welland Vale Manufacturing Company,⁸ a St. Catharines' enterprise that produced hand tools, edge tools, scythes, forks and axes.⁹ Fannie was born in Canada of Irish parents.¹⁰ They married in 1876.¹¹

The only fact uncovered about John McClelland's life before he enlisted is that in 1901, at age 18, he was living with his parents and working as a post office clerk.¹² He enlisted in Calgary on 15 June 1915, a month before he turned 32; he was 5'4 ½" tall with brown hair and blue eyes, and his trade is given as show card writer.¹³ Show cards were basically handmade advertising signs used in stores, pharmacies, theatre lobbies and other public places.¹⁴

John McClelland enlisted as a private into the 12th Regiment of the Canadian Mounted Rifles, which recruited in Calgary and Red Deer, Alberta, and sailed from Montreal for England on RMS *Missanabie* on 9 October 1915, arriving in England on 18 October.¹⁵ On 1 February 1916 he made a will, leaving everything to his mother. After spending time at the Bramshott training camp and the Shorncliffe staging camp, he was transferred to the Eaton Motor Machine Gun (EMMG) Brigade.



Lieutenant John McClelland Adie
Source: *The Canadian Virtual War Memorial*

This unit was named for Sir John Eaton, the department store owner, who gave \$100,000 (about \$2.7M today) for the purchase of quick-firing machine guns mounted on armoured trucks. The brigade was organized in January 1915, left Montreal in June 1915, and arrived in France on 25 February 1916.¹⁶ It was now a battery, formed from the original brigade members, most of whom were sent to France as drafts for other machine gun units.¹⁷

Private John McClelland Adie joined the EMMG Battery on 29 June 1916. It was stationed in Zillebeke, just north of the French border with Belgium. From 20 January to 3 February 1917 he underwent training at the Machine Gun School at Floringhem. Over the next months the battery, now renamed D Battery of the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade, provided machine gun support in many actions. Notable battles included Vimy Ridge in April 1917 and the Canadian Corps' August 1917 victory at the Battle of Hill 70 near Lens in Northern France, for which it received a letter of appreciation from Lt. General A. W. Currie, the Canadian Corps Commanding Officer.¹⁸

Just prior to that action, Private J. M. Adie had been hospitalized at No. 8 Canadian Field Ambulance with scabies, but he returned to duty after five days. Then, immediately after the Battle of Hill 70, he was granted 10 days leave, returning on 9 September 1917. On 1 November 1917 he was promoted to acting corporal with pay.

In the Spring of 1918, the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade (including the EMMG Battery) played a big role in helping to stall the German great offensive. Here, for the first time, it was able to operate as a mobile motorized unit, no longer restricted by trench warfare in which the men were forced to fight on foot. *The Times* (London) enthused that "Everywhere they went they steadied the line." However, they suffered a casualty rate of over 40% and lost two of the eight original motorized vehicles.¹⁹

On 8 May 1918 Acting Corporal Adie was "struck off strength" [released from his unit] and sent to England to earn a commission at the Canadian Training School Officer Training Corps in Bexhill, Surrey. He was appointed to a commission as temporary lieutenant in the Canadian Machine Gun Corps on 5 August 1918 and transferred to the Canadian Machine Gun Reinforcement Pool in France on 10 October 1918. From there he was transferred on 22 October to the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade, which was located at Dechy, just west of the city of Valenciennes; he arrived on 27 October and was posted to A Battery.²⁰

On 31 October the brigade moved east to Prouvy, just outside Valenciennes, and took up barrage positions. From 1–3 November the brigade provided covering fire for the attack on Valenciennes, the last major French city still in German hands.²¹ During this period, the brigade had one officer and one other rank (OR) killed, and four officers and 70 ORs wounded. One of the wounded officers was Lieutenant J. M. Adie.²²

He was taken to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (CCCS), where he died of gunshot wounds to his left hip and abdomen on 3 November.²³ He was buried that day in the Auberchicourt British Military Cemetery (Grave 11, Plot 1, Row B).²⁴ The inscription on his grave reads:

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Auberchicourt, a village about 12 km to the east of Douai, was occupied by Commonwealth troops in October 1918. The Auberchicourt British Cemetery, which is just west of the village, was set up at the end of October and was used until February 1919, while the 6th, 23rd and 1st CCCSs were located nearby. A CCS was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation.²⁵ Casualties who did not return to their unit, die soon or could not be adequately treated in the CCS were stabilized before being transported to a field or military hospital.

No. 1 CCCS, originally designated as No. 2 Clearing Hospital, was organized at Liverpool, Nova Scotia, and at Valcartier, Quebec, in August and September 1914. It was part of the first contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) sent to Europe, arriving in England in October 1914. CCCSs were not stationary: after being first established at Aire, France, in March 1915, No. 1 CCCS moved 12 times to various locations in France, Belgium and finally, Germany. It ceased operations in February 1919.²⁶

The unit was shelled at least three times in 1916 and 1917. At the conclusion of the war, it was one of the foremost medical units operating on the advance into Germany. An incomplete record of the unit's operations underestimates a total of 42,489 admissions to the unit, of which 37,546 were

transferred to other hospitals, to base, or returned to the field. At least 879 servicemen died at No. 1 CCCS.²⁷

No record was found, but Lieutenant J. M. Adie was eligible to receive posthumously the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918). He is also remembered in the Canadian Virtual War Memorial.²⁸

It was possible to trace the later lives of John's family members. **James**, the oldest child, like his brother John, was living at home in 1901 and working as a post office clerk.²⁹ He left that job in 1904 to take up a position as draftsman with the Westinghouse Electrical Co., of Pittsburgh, Pa.³⁰ Two years later he married Catherine (a.k.a. Katherine) Smith,³¹ daughter of William Wye Smith, a Scottish poet and Congregational minister.³² In 1911, they and their four-year-old daughter Katherine were living in Toronto, where James was working as a draftsman in a foundry.³³

In 1915 the family, now bolstered by son Bryce, emigrated to the United States and settled in New Jersey, where James worked as a mechanical engineer in the manufacturing industry.³⁴ They moved around in the U.S.: first to Bay City, Michigan, where he was a designer in 1929 for the Industrial Brownhoist Corporation,³⁵ which was a major designer of heavy industrial machinery,³⁶ then to Point Pleasant, West Virginia, in 1942, where at the age of 64 he was working for the Marietta Manufacturing Company,³⁷ a shipbuilding company.³⁸ James was living in Fort Pierce, Florida, when he died in 1956.³⁹

Mabel never married. She was also working as a post office clerk in 1901 and living at home with her parents.⁴⁰ She had no occupation in 1911,⁴¹ but in 1931, when still living in the family home with her mother, she was working as a bookkeeper.⁴² She died at the age of 90, still living in St Catharines, in 1971.⁴³

Robert was an accomplished and multifaceted sportsman in his youth, being at various times secretary and president of the Queen's Lacrosse Club of St. Catharines,^{44, 45} president of the Queen's Hockey Club,⁴⁶ and a key member of the winning indoor baseball team of A Company of the 19th Lincoln Regiment.⁴⁷ It is also noteworthy that Sergeant Robert Adie, as he then was, was selected to be one of three soldiers of the 19th Lincoln Regiment to participate in the ceremonies in London, England, for the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary on 22 June 1911.⁴⁸

Robert enlisted in Toronto on 11 November 1914, not long after the start of the First World War.⁴⁹ His attestation form confirms that he was previously in the 19th Lincoln Regiment. This is likely why he was appointed as a lieutenant in the 19th Battalion of the CEF. He sailed with the battalion to England on 6 May 1915 and arrived in France on 14 September 1915.

In April 1916, Robert Adie, now a temporary captain, was wounded in the Battle of the St. Eloi Craters, which was a disaster for the Canadian troops, resulting in no gains and 1373 casualties.⁵⁰ One of the casualties was Captain Adie, who was hit by high explosive shrapnel in the face, lip and right arm.

After recovering from his injuries in England, Captain Adie was transferred to the 35th Battalion on 5 June 1916, then to the 4th Reserve Battalion on 4 January 1917. While in England he met and married Miss Dorothy Wilde of Scarborough, Yorkshire, on 12 May 1917.⁵¹ Captain Adie did not see any further action, and he and his wife arrived back in Canada after the war in January 1919.⁵² He then went to Toronto to work as adjutant of the Dominion Orthopaedic Hospital.⁵³ Robert Adie died in 1952.⁵⁴

Jane, also known as Jennie, was working as a stenographer in a factory office in 1911.⁵⁵ In June 1918 she married John Albert House,⁵⁶ a soldier who had been recently with the 3rd Canadian Machine Gun Company,⁵⁷ so was likely an acquaintance of her brother John. In 1921 they were living with their one-year-old daughter Jane in Guelph, where he was a manager of the street railway.⁵⁸ By 1931 he was the general manager, and the family had grown to four children: a son and three daughters.⁵⁹ Jane died in St. Catharines in 1980,⁶⁰ aged 91, 16 years after her husband.⁶¹

Archibald, also known as Archie, was the last of the sons to enlist—on 11 April 1917 in Toronto.⁶² He had tried to enlist in Calgary near the start of the war, and several times since then, but did not pass the medical exam until this time.⁶³ He, too, had prior service (four years) in the 19th Lincoln Regiment. His occupation on enlistment was given as clerk, though in 1911 the census records him as being a timekeeper in an axe factory,⁶⁴ probably the one where his father worked for more than 50 years.

Private Archibald Adie was assigned to the CEF's 176th Battalion, based in St. Catharines and known as the Niagara Rangers.⁶⁵ After only a couple of weeks of training, Private Archibald Adie and his battalion sailed for England on the SS *Olympic* from Halifax on 28 April 1917, disembarking in Liverpool, England, on 7 May. After some time in England, he joined the 18th Battalion in France at the end of November 1917.

On 4 April 1918 the battalion was in the trenches near Neuville-St-Vaast, just outside Arras in Northern France, when enemy shelling wounded one officer and seven ORs.⁶⁶ One of the casualties was Private Archibald Adie, who was wounded in the face and abdomen. He was treated first at the No. 6 Canadian Field Ambulance, then taken to the Liverpool Merchants Mobile Hospital (also known as the 6th British Red Cross Hospital) in Étaples on 8 April, where he died of his wounds on 10 April. He is buried in Étaples Military Cemetery.⁶⁷

Allan was the youngest son, and the third of the four to enlist, on 5 July 1916.⁶⁸ His occupation was given as clerk, and a newspaper report of his death records that he was working for the Consolidated Optical Company in Toronto prior to enlistment.⁶⁹

Allan Adie was assigned to the 71st Battery, Canadian Field Artillery, as a gunner. After a few months of training, he and his unit sailed from Halifax on 23 November 1916, arriving in Liverpool on 30 November. After a few months in England, he proceeded to France on 18 March 1917, initially to the 1st Canadian Divisional Ammunition Column, but eventually to the 8th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, on 7 July 1917.

On 20 November 1917 the 8th Brigade was near Wieltje, near Ypres, when a fragment of an exploding shell instantly killed Gunner Adie, who was beside his gun. He was buried in the nearby Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery.⁷⁰

John Alexander and Frances Maria Adie thus had three sons killed in the war from enemy action, and a fourth son wounded. Mrs. Adie was honoured with the office of honorary regent of the Silver Cross Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire.⁷¹ She died in 1934,⁷² six years after her husband.⁷³

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