

## **Private Roy Campbell Atkinson©**

**Regimental number: 651760**

**Unit: 47th Canadian Battalion**

**born: 16 June 1896–died: 1 November 1918**

Roy Campbell Atkinson was born in Paisley, Ontario, to Richard and Catherine (Kennedy) Atkinson on 16 June 1896.<sup>1</sup> Roy was their fourth child and third son.<sup>2</sup> Ida, Angus and Burt were the older siblings. Roy was followed by two sisters, Gladys<sup>3</sup> and Zelta,<sup>4</sup> in the following 11 years. Roy's father was a farmer and Roy had followed in those footsteps until he heard the call of duty.

All of his grandparents had died before Roy was born. His paternal grandparents, Thomas Atkinson<sup>5</sup> and Bethia Kidd,<sup>6</sup> were both born in the north of England and emigrated to Canada prior to their marriage in Etobicoke, Ontario, in 1837.<sup>7</sup> Roy's maternal grandparents, Angus Kennedy<sup>8</sup> and Margaret Campbell,<sup>9</sup> were born in Scotland. It is not known when or where they married, but all of their children were born in Ontario, according to the 1861 Census of Canada.<sup>10</sup>

By the time Roy enlisted,<sup>11</sup> he was an uncle several times over. His oldest sister, Ida, married Edgar Anness in 1908<sup>12</sup> and already had three children.<sup>13</sup> Next to marry was Angus, who wed Elsie McDonald in 1910.<sup>14</sup> Their first two daughters were born before Roy enlisted, and their fourth child, born in 1921, was named Roy,<sup>15</sup> likely as a tribute to his late uncle.

Roy signed up with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) in Paisley, Ontario, on 16 February 1916, a few months short of his 20th birthday. Initially, he was assigned to the 160th Overseas Battalion. He was 5'6" tall with sandy hair and brown eyes and was declared medically fit. On 20 August 1916 he signed the simple will required of all soldiers, leaving his estate to his mother. He also had a pay allotment of \$20 per month assigned to her. Little did anyone realize at the time that she would predecease him by a few months. His brother Angus was substituted as next of kin, but no mention was found of Angus receiving any of Private Atkinson's pay after their mother's passing.

Private Atkinson embarked from Halifax on the SS *Metagama* on 17 October 1916 and arrived in Liverpool, England, on 28 October. It would be almost two years before he saw action in France.

Military life was not kind to him in terms of his health. In July 1916, before leaving Canada, he was treated for measles in London, Ontario. Nine months after enlisting, he was treated for bronchitis and pleurisy at Bramshott, England but this diagnosis was retroactively changed to diphtheria. He was once again declared fit for service on 17 May 1918. His time in active service would be short.

On 20 August 1918, Private Roy Atkinson finally arrived in France, where he joined the 47th Battalion, Canadian Infantry.



**Private Roy Campbell Atkinson**

Source: Canadian Virtual War Memorial

The war diaries for the 47th Battalion provided the schedule of activities for the month of November 1918.<sup>16</sup> The battalion would begin by moving from the currently unspecified location to Harly on 1 November and there was to be a march to Valenciennes for a parade on 7 November.

An attack at 5:15 a.m. on 1 November resulted in many casualties. There were 107 wounded and 19 killed: one officer and 18 enlisted men. Private Roy Campbell Atkinson was among those enlisted men, dying just 10 days before the Armistice was declared. His death is recorded as "Died of Wounds - this soldier was wounded in the leg by shrapnel from an enemy shell. His wounds were dressed and he was carried to a dressing station and evacuated to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station where he succumbed to his wounds."<sup>17</sup> The chaplain recorded his death as the result of gunshot wounds to his right leg.<sup>18</sup> He was buried the same day in Auberchicourt Cemetery.

Back in Canada, Roy's family was still mourning the loss of his mother, Catherine, from heart disease on 5 May 1918<sup>19</sup> and his death must have been another heavy blow to the family.

Roy was survived by his father and all five of his siblings. In 1920 his widowed father, Richard, married a widow named Charlotte Venney<sup>20</sup> and was recorded in the 1921 Canadian census as living with her in King Township, York County, Ontario.<sup>21</sup> Richard died 15 November, 1931 in York County Hospital.<sup>22</sup>

Roy's oldest sister, Ida, was living with her husband, their six children and her youngest sister, Zelta, who was only 13 years old.<sup>23</sup> Older brother Burt had recently married Bernice Scrimshaw<sup>24</sup> and was living in Whitby.<sup>25</sup>

Angus Norman Atkinson, the next of kin replacement for his mother after her death, was living in Wingham, Ontario, with his family that included five children and his sister, Gladys.<sup>26</sup>

Private Roy Atkinson might have been the first to be laid to rest in Auberchicourt Cemetery in Grave 1, Plot 1, Row A, just days after the cemetery was opened. The village of Auberchicourt was occupied by Commonwealth troops in October 1918. The cemetery was begun at the end of that month and used until February 1919 while the 6th, 23rd and 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations were in the neighbourhood. These original graves are in Plot I, but the cemetery was enlarged after the Armistice, when graves (mainly from 1918–19, but also from August 1914) were brought in from the surrounding battlefields and smaller burial grounds.

The British War Medal and Victory Medal were awarded posthumously and sent to his father.<sup>27</sup> These medals were awarded to all officers and men of British and Imperial forces who had served for a prescribed period during any stage of the war, or who had died on active service before the completion of this period. Private Atkinson's service is also remembered in the Canadian Book of Remembrance on page 361.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Canada, World War I CEF Personnel Files, 1914–1918," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Roy Campbell Atkinson. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Roy's military service comes from this source.

<sup>2</sup> "1901 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 18 April 2025), entry for Richard Atkinson, District: 130, York North, King Township, Page: 2

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- <sup>3</sup> "Ontario, Canada Births, 1832–1917," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 18 April 2025), entry for Gladys Maud Atkinson
- <sup>4</sup> Ontario, Canada Births, 1832–1917," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 18 April 2025), entry for Zelta Katheline Atkinson
- <sup>5</sup> "England, Select Births and Christenings, 1538–1975," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 16 April 2025), entry for Thomas Atkinson
- <sup>6</sup> "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Angus Atkinson, District: 11, Huron North, Wingham, Ontario, Page: 2
- <sup>7</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Marriages 1826–1942," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 15 April 2025), entry for Thomas Atkinson
- <sup>8</sup> "Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564–1950," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 16 April 2025), entry for Angus Kennedy
- <sup>9</sup> "Scotland, Select Births and Baptisms, 1564–1950," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 16 April 2025), entry for Margaret Campbell
- <sup>10</sup> "1861 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 15 April 2025), entry for Angus Kennedy, District: 12, King Township, Ontario; Page: 149
- <sup>11</sup> "Canada, World War I CEF Attestation Papers, 1914–1918," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 18 April 2025), entry for Roy Campbell Atkinson
- <sup>12</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Marriages 1826–1942," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 18 April 2025), entry for Ida Rose Atkinson
- <sup>13</sup> "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 18 April 2025), entry for Edgar Anness, District: 69, North Bruce, Bruce Township, Ontario; Page: 2
- <sup>14</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Marriages 1826–1942," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 18 April 2025), entry for Angus Norman Atkinson
- <sup>15</sup> "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Angus Atkinson, District: 11, Huron North, Wingham, Ontario; Page: 2
- <sup>16</sup> "War Diaries for 47th Canadian Infantry Battalion," *Library and Archives Canada*, [https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=2005930&q=war%20diaries&q\\_exact=47th&ecopy=e001114797](https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Record?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=2005930&q=war%20diaries&q_exact=47th&ecopy=e001114797), accessed 13 April 2025), entry for 1 November 1918
- <sup>17</sup> "Private Roy Campbell Atkinson," *Canadian Great War Project* (<https://canadiangreatwarproject.com/person.php?pid=34428>: accessed 21 April 2025)
- <sup>18</sup> "Name Index," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 6 August 2024), entry for Atkinson, R. C., No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station
- <sup>19</sup> Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1952," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Catherine Atkinson
- <sup>20</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Marriages 1826–1942," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Richard Atkinson
- <sup>21</sup> "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Richard Atkinson, District: 143, King Township, Ontario; Page: 10
- <sup>22</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1952," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 15 April 2025), entry for Richard Atkinson
- <sup>23</sup> "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Edgar Anness District: 69, North Bruce, Bruce Township, Ontario; Page: 2
- <sup>24</sup> "Ontario, Canada, Marriages 1826–1942," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Burt Atkinson
- <sup>25</sup> "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Burt Atkinson, District: 109, Whitby, Ontario; Page: 8
- <sup>26</sup> "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Angus Atkinson,

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District: 11, Huron North, Wingham, Ontario; Page: 2

<sup>27</sup> "British War Medal," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_War\\_Medal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_War_Medal): accessed 15 April 2025)

<sup>28</sup> "Books of Remembrance," *Veterans Affairs Canada* (<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/books>: accessed 13 April 2025), entry for Pte Roy Campbell Atkinson