

**Serjeant Reginald William Conn**<sup>©</sup>  
**Regimental number: 29725**  
**1st Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment**

**born: 21 July 1899–died: 14 October 1918**

Serjeant Reginald William Conn was born on 21 July 1899 in Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, the son of Martha and William Conn, and baptized on 29 October 1899 in the parish church in Winchcombe.<sup>1</sup> William Robert Conn and Martha Annie Stewart had married in the same church on 8 December 1897.<sup>2</sup> Reginald was their second child and first son.

Both parents were born in Winchcombe, as were all their children. Martha was born on 2 February 1869<sup>3</sup> and William in 1864.<sup>4</sup> Their first child, Lilian May, was born on 12 May 1898,<sup>5</sup> but sadly she died at the age of 7.<sup>6</sup> After Reginald there were two more children—Charlie Stewart, born on 31 April 1901,<sup>7</sup> and Catherine, born on 12 September 1902.<sup>8</sup>

Their father was a labourer and, in 1901, the family was living at 154 Vineyard Street in Winchcombe. Ten years later, he was working as an auxiliary postman, but the family was still living on Vineyard Street.

Reginald enlisted in the British Expeditionary Force in about August 1915,<sup>9</sup> probably just after his 16th birthday. He was too young to enlist and may well have lied about his age in order to serve. He joined the 1st Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment and, in spite of his young age, was a serjeant when he died in 1918 at the age of 19.

His battalion began its service in the Great War in November 1914. It is not known when Reginald joined the battalion, which was serving in northern France in the autumn of 1918. No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station<sup>10</sup> was located near Agny-les-Duisans, southwest of Arras in northern France when Reginald was fatally wounded. He had already died by the time he was admitted to No. 1 CCCS on 14 October 1918 with shrapnel wounds to his back. He was buried the next day in the Duisans British Military Cemetery (Plot 7, Row B, Grave 85) with the Canadian chaplain, W. Fisher, presiding. The cemetery is located in Étrun, near Arras, France. The first burials in the cemetery took place in March 1917.<sup>11</sup> No. 1 CCCS arrived 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.<sup>12</sup>

Reginald was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>13</sup>

Reginald's mother was his next of kin and received a letter from the chaplain about her son's death. She and Reginald's father were still living in



**Rim of Serjeant Conn's Victory Medal**

Source: Denise Rains Willis, *FindaGrave*. Used with kind permission



### Serjeant Conn's Victory Medal

Source: Denise Rains Willis, *FindaGrave*. Used with kind permission

and decorator. She had been living with him since at least 1937<sup>18</sup>—four years after George's wife died.<sup>19</sup> Catherine died on 2 June 1967 in the Salterley Grange Hospital in Coberley, Gloucestershire. She was the last member of her immediate family and probate was awarded to her cousin,<sup>20</sup> Alfred James, a retired master baker.<sup>21</sup>

### Postscript

Denise Rains Willis, of Alabama, USA, posted the image of the rim of Reginald's Victory Medal on *FindaGrave*. When she was contacted about including this image in the biography, she graciously agreed and told the story of how she came to have the medal.

In 2017, Denise found, in a box of coins and items inherited from her father (who had died in 2011), two Victory Medals. Her grandfather had been conscripted in the Great War in Britain but did not see any combat action. She then realized that neither of the names engraved on the rims were her grandfather's. One of them was Sgt. R. W. Conn. She knew that this was not a name associated with her family and assumed that her maternal grandfather, who had lived in Cheltenham, very close to Winchcombe, had probably acquired the two medals through his antique business and had given the medals to her father at some point in the 1960s.

Not wanting to keep medals that were presumably important family heirlooms for two other families, she began to hunt for living descendants of the two soldiers. Her search for Reginald's family was exhaustive—beginning with searches on genealogy websites, but then expanding to contacting police departments, historical societies and genealogy groups and searching newspapers and cemeteries—looking in every nook and cranny to locate the family. She eventually found a distinct relative who lived in Michigan and was able to return Reginald's medal to his extended family.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1913," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Reginald William Conn

<sup>2</sup> "Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754–1938," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for William Robert Conn

<sup>3</sup> "England, Andrews Newspaper Index Cards, 1790–1976," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Martha Annie Stewart

Winchcombe. Reginald's father died on 29 November 1929 in Winchcombe<sup>14</sup> and his mother died two years later, on 26 November 1931.<sup>15</sup>

Charlie, William's brother, married in 1931 and, in 1939, he and his wife, the former Mary J. Horner, were living on Fair Oak Road in Eastleigh, Hampshire, where Charlie was a police constable.<sup>16</sup> He died on 22 January 1966 in Fareham, Hampshire.<sup>17</sup>

Their sister Catherine remained single and, in 1939, was incapacitated and living at 14 Shakespeare Road in Cheltenham with a widower, George F. Milton (age 73), a painter

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- <sup>4</sup> "GRO online index (birth)," *General Register Office* (<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>: accessed 20 November 2021) entry for Conn, William Robert, Registration district: Winchcomb, Volume 06A, Page 349
- <sup>5</sup> "Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1913," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Lilian May Conn
- <sup>6</sup> "Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1988," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Lilian May Conn
- <sup>7</sup> "Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1913," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Charlie Stewart Conn
- <sup>8</sup> "Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1913," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Catherine Conn
- <sup>9</sup> Based on "War Gratuity Calculator" (<https://wargratitude.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/gratuity-calculator/>: accessed 18 May 2017); "UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects, 1901–1929," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 19 January 2021), entry for Reginald William Conn
- <sup>10</sup> A very comprehensive description of the casualty clearing stations is presented in the blog "Casualty Clearing Stations During WW1" *Chiddicks Family Tree* (<https://chiddicksfamilytree.com/2021/05/09/casualty-clearing-stations-during-ww1/>: accessed 13 May 2021)
- <sup>11</sup> "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 7 October 2015)
- <sup>12</sup> "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)
- <sup>13</sup> "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Reginald W. Conn
- <sup>14</sup> "Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Burials, 1813–1988," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for William Robert Conn
- <sup>15</sup> "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Martha Annie Conn
- <sup>16</sup> "1939 Register," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Charles S. Conn, Reference: RG101/2328E/018/33 Letter Code: EDGD
- <sup>17</sup> "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Charlie Stewart Conn
- <sup>18</sup> "Gloucestershire, England, Electoral Registers, 1832–1974," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Frederick George Milton
- <sup>19</sup> "England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 17 December 2021), entry for Alice P. Milton, Registration district: Cheltenham, Inferred county: Gloucestershire Riding, Volume: 6a, Page: 678
- <sup>20</sup> "Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813–1913," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for James Richard Conn
- <sup>21</sup> "England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 20 November 2021), entry for Catherine Conn
- <sup>22</sup> Information provided by Denise Rains Willis