

Private John Carlyle Matthews®

Regimental number: 928681

50th Battalion, Canadian Infantry

born: 1895–died: 1918

John Carlyle Matthews, known as Carlyle, was born on 16 August 1895 in Grey Township, Huron County, Ontario, to Samuel Matthews and Margaret, née Miller.¹ He was the third of five children, the others being Murray Alvin (b. 1877), Eva Francis (b. 1893), Don Gladstone (b. 1898), and Wallace Reginald (b. 1901).²

Samuel Matthews was a farmer, whose parents were both born in England.³ In 1886 he married Maggie Miller,⁴ whose parents were from Scotland. Samuel was still working his own farm in 1921 at the age of 60⁵ and died in 1929.⁶ Maggie lived another nine years, passing away in 1938.⁷ According to her obituary she was the great-granddaughter of Lord Bute of Scotland, had a quiet and hospitable manner, and was a member of the Salem United Church and Sunday School.⁸

Little is known about Carlyle before he enlisted. At the time of his attestation on 4 March 1916, he was 20 years old, a farmer, and single.⁹ In December of that year he married Mary Lillian Lambkin,¹⁰ a local farmer's daughter.¹¹ After enlisting, Private Matthews was assigned to the 153rd (Wellington) Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) and spent the next 13 months training in Ontario. During this time, he contracted tonsillitis and was hospitalized in London, Ontario, from 31 January to 7 February 1917.

On 28 April 1917, Private Matthews and the rest of the 153rd Battalion embarked on SS Olympic in Halifax bound for England and disembarked in Liverpool nine days later. They were assigned to a segregation camp in Bramshott, Surrey. Segregation camps were designed to prevent new recruits from infecting more seasoned battle-ready troops with infectious diseases.¹² While still in England Private Matthews received the CEF Good Conduct Badge, for two years of good service (i.e. without disciplinary action).¹³



Carlyle on wedding day
Source: Lynda Matthews

On 28 March 1918 Private Matthews was sent to France and joined the 47th Battalion. A few weeks later he was transferred to the 50th Battalion in the field and joined his unit on 7 June 1918 at Verdrel, just north of Arras and west of Vimy. He was one of 25 new recruits to join that day.¹⁴

Over the next couple of months, the 50th Battalion participated in the Second Battle of the Marne, the Battle of Amiens, and the Battle of Arras.¹⁵ On 17 September Private Matthews was evacuated sick, but he rejoined his unit six days later. Then, on 1 November 1918 the battalion was in a support role for the attack on the city of Valenciennes, the last major French city still in German hands.¹⁶ Private Matthews was acting as a stretcher bearer, mopping up for the 47th Battalion, when he was wounded in the back, buttock, right thigh and arm by shrapnel from an enemy shell. He was taken to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, where he died of his wounds the next day.¹⁷ He was buried that day in the Auberchicourt British Military Cemetery (Grave 1, Plot 2, Row B).¹⁸ The inscription on his grave reads:

FOREVER WITH THE LORD

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 Canadian casualty clearing stations were located nearby. A casualty clearing station (CCS) was a military medical unit behind the front lines, usually located near transportation.¹⁹ Casualties who did not die or could not be returned to their unit or 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 sent to Europe, arriving in England in October 1914. Casualty clearing stations 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. 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 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.²⁰

Private John Carlyle Matthews received posthumously the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre) and the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918).

Murray, Carlyle's oldest sibling, was the only one not living at home in 1911, when he was 23.²¹ He may have been in Winnipeg, which is where he resided when he enlisted in 1916, one month before Carlyle. His occupation was listed as motorman,²² which could have been the operator of a streetcar.²³

Private Murray Matthews sailed to England from Halifax on 28 June 1916 on SS Olympic, the same ship that Carlyle would travel on the following year. He (Murray) was sent to France on 3 September and joined his unit, the 43rd Battalion, Canadian Infantry. In October he suffered gunshot wounds in his right leg during the Battle of Ancre Heights, on the Somme.²⁴ He was treated at No. 3 Canadian General Hospital in Boulogne before being discharged on 24 October, but on 27 November he was back in hospital, this time at the King George Hospital in London, with gunshot wounds to the head that were suffered at Arras. After spells in different hospitals in England to treat the head wound and subsequently haemoptysis [coughing up blood], he was returned to Canada on 11 June 1917, now with pulmonary tuberculosis.

Back in Canada, he spent more time in hospitals and sanitariums before being discharged from His Majesty's Service on 2 September 1918 as medically unfit for further service. Murray Matthews died in Kitchener-Waterloo, aged 31, on 3 June 1919 at Freeport Hospital,²⁵ which opened in 1916 as a military hospital for tubercular soldiers.²⁶

Eva married Ernest Herbert Scase, a munitions worker, on 16 July 1918, but he died before the end of the year from pneumonia.^{27, 28} They had a son, Graham, born after Ernest died.²⁹ In 1923 she married James Christopher Johnston, a retired farmer.³⁰ They were married for 40 years before he died in 1963.³¹ Eva was married for a third time, in 1965, to Robert Edmund "Ed" Willis, who lived till 1973.³² Eva died in 1979.

Don gave his occupation as a locomotive fireman when crossing into Detroit in 1923, at age 24.³³ That same year he married Mary Ellen Mortimer³⁴, a local farmer's daughter.³⁵ They had a son, Douglas, born about 1925, who was living with Mary's parents in Minto, Ontario, in 1931.³⁶ Another son, Gladstone, born in Windsor, Ontario, died in infancy in 1926.³⁷

Don's next child, Colin, was born in 1935 in New Westminster, British Columbia, to a different mother, Lillian Irene.³⁸ Don became a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) at some point, according to his family who have a photo on the family tree³⁹ of Don in full Mountie uniform with his horse. However, in 1940 he was a farmer in New Westminster.⁴⁰

By 1957 Don was a patient in the Beck Memorial Sanatorium in London, Ontario, for tuberculosis patients.⁴¹ Eleven years later, Don made the newspaper headlines by signing himself out of the Mountain Sanatorium in Hamilton against the advice of the medical superintendent who felt his tuberculosis was still active. A rarely used Ontario law was used to put him back in hospital in the Fort William Sanatorium, which had detention cells.⁴² Don died, back in British Columbia, in 1972.⁴³

Wallace married Kathleen Annie Boyd, a farmer's daughter, in 1923.⁴⁴ Wallace is listed as a farmer on his marriage certificate, in the 1931 Census,⁴⁵ and in voters lists in 1940, 1968, and 1972,⁴⁶ so appears to have farmed in Grey County his whole life. Wallace died in 1988.⁴⁷

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¹ "Ontario, Canada Births, 1832–1917," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 January 2026), entry for John Carlyle Matthews

² "Ontario, Canada Births, 1832–1917," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 January 2026), entries for Alvin Murray, Eva Francis Emily, Dan [sic] Gladstone and Wallace Reginald Matthews

³ "1891 Census of Canada," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 January 2026), entry for Samuel Mathews [sic]

⁴ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826–1943," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 January 2026), entry for Samuel G Matthews

⁵ "1921 Census of Canada," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 January 2026), entry for Samuel Matthews

⁶ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1952," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 January 2026), entry for Samuel G Matthews

⁷ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869–1952," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 1 January 2026), entry for Margaret Matthews

⁸ "The Late Mrs. S. Matthews," newspaper article found in online Ancestry tree of Lynda Matthews, name and date of newspaper unknown, but likely January 1938

⁹ "Canada, World War I CEF Personnel Files, 1914–1918," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 2 January 2026), entry for John Carlyle Matthews. Unless otherwise specified, all information about his military service comes from this source.

¹⁰ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826–1943," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 2 January 2026), entry for John Carlyle Matthews

¹¹ "1901 Census of Canada," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 2 January 2026), entry for John Lambkin

¹² "Segregation Camps," in Report of the Ministry Overseas Military Forces of Canada 1918, Canada.ca ([chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/themes/defence/caf/militaryhistory/dhh/official/book-1918-overseas-en.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/themes/defence/caf/militaryhistory/dhh/official/book-1918-overseas-en.pdf): accessed 22 December 2025), search for Segregation Camp, Seaford

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- ¹⁷ "Canada, War Graves Registers (Circumstances of Casualty), 1914–1948," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 3 January 2026), entry for John Carlyle Matthews
- ¹⁸ Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org: accessed 3 January 2026), entry for J. C. Matthews, Service No. 928681
- ¹⁹ "Casualty Clearing Station," Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualty_Clearing_Station: accessed 2 May 2020)
- ²⁰ "Record of service - Overseas Military Forces of Canada medical units," Government of Canada (www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/officialmilitary-history-lineages/ledgers/ww1-medical-units.html: accessed 17 June 2018), entry for 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station
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- ²² "First World War Personnel Records," Library and Archives Canada (<https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Home/Record?app=PfFww&idNumber=199406&ecopy=491277a>: accessed 4 January 2026), search for Murray Matthews 701058. Unless otherwise specified, all information about his military service comes from this source.
- ²³ "Motorman: It's a Big Job," Interurban Railway Museum (<https://interurbanrailwaymuseum.wordpress.com/2020/04/09/motorman-its-a-big-job/#:~:text=To%20prevent%20distractions%2C%20conversation%20was,by%20the%20entire%20train%20crew>: accessed 4 January 2026), search for motorman
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- ⁴⁴ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1826–1943," Ancestry (www.ancestry.ca: accessed 6 January 2026), entry for William Wallace Matthews
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