

**Private John McAuley©**  
**Regimental number: 808528**  
**50th Battalion (Calgary), Canadian Infantry**

**born: 15 March 1879 or 15 March 1882–died: 1958**

Although another source suggests he was born in 1879, according to the attestation papers that John McAuley signed in Banff, Alberta, Canada, on 1 April 1916, when he joined the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force (CEF), he was born on 15 March 1882 in Birmingham, West Midlands, England, was unmarried and worked as a labourer.<sup>1</sup> He noted that he had experience serving with the 103rd Regiment (Calgary Rifles), a militia unit established on 1 April 1910.<sup>2</sup> He was described as 5' 4" tall, with dark hair and hazel eyes. When John joined the CEF he listed his nephew, Edward Walter McAuley, as his next of kin.

John McAuley was initially assigned to the 137th (Calgary) Battalion. He sailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to England on the SS *Olympic* on 22 August 1916, arriving in Liverpool on 30 August 1916.

On 1 January 1917 John was assigned to the 21st Reserve Battalion (Alberta) at Seaford in East Sussex for training<sup>3</sup> before being sent to France on 20 January 1917 to join the 50th Battalion (Calgary) preparing to attack Vimy Ridge.<sup>4</sup> The Battle of Vimy Ridge began on 9 April 1917 and continued for three days.<sup>5</sup> As part of the 4th Canadian Division, the 50th Battalion was positioned to assault the heavily defended north end of the ridge, specifically Hill 145, the highest point of the ridge (where the Vimy Memorial now stands).<sup>6</sup>

The battalion took heavy casualties before being relieved on 10 April for reorganization; they were moved forward again on 12 April and remained on the front line until the evening of 13 April.<sup>7</sup>

On 18 April 1917, John reported feeling ill and was invalided to England; he was sent to the Bethnal Green Military Hospital, London, where he was diagnosed with trench fever. He was transferred to the Canadian Military Hospital at Bramshott the same day. In May 1917 he was sent to the 2nd Canadian Convalescent Depot at Hastings, East Sussex, but was readmitted to the Bramshott military hospital on 5 September 1917, this time for gonorrhoea. From there John was sent to the Canadian Specialty Hospital for Venereal Disease at Witley Camp, Surrey, in October, returning to Bramshott on 5 December 1917.

It wasn't until September 1918 that he returned to France, where, after a few days in a reinforcement camp, he rejoined the 50th Battalion in the field on 30 September 1918 in the midst of the Hundred Days Offensive (2 August–11 November 1918)<sup>8</sup> that ended World War I.

An entry in the chaplains' records for No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (CCCS) indicates that the body of Private John McAuley, service number 808528, was recovered from the field but that the actual date of his death was unknown. It states that he was buried in Grave 13, Plot 1, Row A of the Emerchicourt Communal Cemetery on 31 October 1918.<sup>9</sup>

However, according to his personnel file, after influenza once again resulted in his being admitted to Canadian convalescent depots at Étaples and Cayeux from 12 November 1918 to 21 January 1919, John McAuley, service number 808528, was transferred to England on 26 January 1919 for demobilization. He was discharged on 16 April 1919. His proposed residence after discharge was 5 Rosefield Terrace, Upper Sutton Street, Birmingham, the city where he had been born.

Who was buried in the grave that was supposedly that of John McAuley? We may never know for certain.

When the bodies of soldiers from Emerchicourt were transferred to their final resting places in the Douai British Cemetery, Cuincy, France, in 1950, the remains of Private Joseph Pelletier (service number 3320908) of the 38th Canadian Battalion and an unknown soldier were exhumed. Although Private Pelletier is not mentioned in the chaplains' journal, both bodies were alongside other soldiers from No. 1 CCCS buried the same day in the Emerchicourt Communal Cemetery.<sup>10</sup> Either body may have been recovered from the grave previously identified as that of John McAuley.

Researching John McAuley was intriguing, not only for the fact that he didn't die, but also because it required following up on many clues that didn't seem immediately related to him and revealed a couple of interesting coincidences. To begin with, there was no information about his parents or any siblings, though John's attestation papers provided a date and place of birth.

That he identified as his next of kin his nephew, Edward Walter McAuley, meant that John had at least one brother. According to the 1921 Census of Canada, Edward, aged 13, lived with his mother, Ada, and his stepfather, J. B. Rushton, in Lower Londonderry, Colchester County, Nova Scotia.<sup>11</sup> With this information it was possible to identify that Edward's father was Walter McAuley, who had married Ada Marr in 1906, listing his parents as John and Mary McAuley.<sup>12</sup> Walter died in 1909, aged about 30,<sup>13</sup> when his son was just over a year old. Unfortunately, even with having the names of John's parents and his brother, no birth records for him were discovered.

Another clue to John's identity was found in his military pay records: for some unspecified reason, John assigned \$15 a month to one Clarence Lindsay of Londonderry, Nova Scotia. Researching this person, it was found that in 1891 Walter McAuley, aged 14, was living in the household of Samuel Lindsay<sup>14</sup> along with Clarence, the family's 24-year-old son. According to this census record, Walter arrived in Canada in 1886. This led the researcher to question how Walter and possibly his younger brother, John, came to be living in Canada as children: did they come with or without their parents? Separately or together?

The answer was found in the Middlemore Index of Home Children on the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa website. (The first coincidence.) John Throgmorton Middlemore opened a Children's Emigration Home in Birmingham, England, in 1872 in the belief that poor children could be rescued from a life of poverty and provided with a healthier environment and greater opportunity in Canada. Approximately 5,200<sup>15</sup> of an estimated 100,000 home children sent to Canada<sup>16</sup> came through Middlemore Homes, the last Middlemore children arriving in 1932.<sup>17</sup>

Library and Archives Canada records indicate that the Macaulay [*sic*] family had fallen on hard times, the parents had separated, and the children were not being well cared for. On 6 February 1886 their father effectively surrendered Walter (10), John (7), Rose (5) and Louisa (3) to the Middlemore Emigration Home on St. Luke's Road, Birmingham.<sup>18</sup> In these records, John's birthdate is shown as 15 March 1879.<sup>19</sup> What happened to the girls is not clear but Walter and John arrived in Quebec City, Canada, on the *SS Lake Superior* on 15 June 1886 to be settled with Joseph Spencer of Londonderry, Nova Scotia.<sup>20</sup> John was still residing with the Spencer family in 1891.<sup>21</sup> It is probable that Walter was moved from this first settlement family when he left school and had to receive wages; Samuel Lindsay was a carriage builder.<sup>22</sup> In 1901, John McAuley was living on his own, working as an agricultural labourer in Londonderry.<sup>23</sup>

Another notation in John's military file stated that after demobilization he could be reached care of Mrs. William Savage at the Rosefield, Birmingham, address. The Midlands Electoral Register for 1920 listed William Savage [the younger], Louisa Savage and William Savage [the elder] as residents at 5 Rosefield Place, Birmingham, England.<sup>24</sup> With the information that John had a sister named Louisa, it could be confirmed that Louisa McAuley married William Savage on 18 May 1907.<sup>25</sup> John had found his little sister!

In 1930 a family that included a John McAuley, his wife Jane, daughter Irene and an adolescent passenger named Lily Pritchett (all on the same ticket), left England to settle in Canada.<sup>26</sup> The clue confirming that this was Private John McAuley was the 1939 England and Wales Register; it listed John, Jane and Irene with John's birthdate the same as his attestation papers, albeit three years earlier, consistent with the Middlemore Home records in Library and Archives Canada.

Further confirmation was found in the marriage of John McAuley and Jane Pritchett in the spring of 1920 in Kings Norton, an area of Birmingham.<sup>27, 28</sup> Jane Pritchett (nee Brookes) had borne a daughter, Lily, in Birmingham in 1917.<sup>29</sup> In January 1922 John and Jane's daughter Irene was born in Kings Norton.<sup>30</sup>

Life in Canada obviously didn't work out because the family that had left in 1930 returned to Birmingham just two years later.<sup>31</sup> On the eve of World War II, John, Jane and Irene were living in the village of Meriden, between Birmingham and Coventry, West Midlands.<sup>32</sup> John McAuley died in Meriden in 1958.<sup>33</sup> Irene McAuley married John Halliday in Coventry in April 1942;<sup>34</sup> she passed away in February 2005 in Dacorum, Hertfordshire, England.<sup>35</sup>

And what became of the child, Edward Walter McAuley (known as Ted), that John named as his next of kin? He emigrated to the United States on 11 June 1929.<sup>36</sup> He married Ella Elizabeth Rogerson, from Tryon, Prince Edward Island, Canada, in Waltham, Massachusetts, on 25 June 1932.<sup>37</sup> (Second coincidence: Ella Rogerson's sister, Margaret, was the mother of the researcher's sister-in-law, who lives in Tryon). Ted and Ella had been married for 68 years when Ted died in Meriden (third coincidence), New Haven County, Connecticut, on 5 December 2000. Ella (later known as Ellen) died in Natick, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, on 27 November 2009.<sup>38</sup> They had four children.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Personnel Records of the First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* ([www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/personnel-records.aspx](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/personnel-records.aspx); accessed 7 February 2019), entry for John McAuley, Reference: Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 6583-60. Unless otherwise specified, all information about his military career comes from this source.

<sup>2</sup> "103rd Regiment (Calgary Rifles)," *Wikipedia* ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org); accessed 10 February 2019)

<sup>3</sup> "World War One at Home, Seaford, East Sussex: Training Soldiers for the Front," *BBC* ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk); accessed 10 February 2019)

<sup>4</sup> "50th Battalion (Calgary), CEF," *Wikipedia* ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org); accessed 10 February 2019)

<sup>5</sup> "Battle of Vimy Ridge," *The Canadian Encyclopedia* ([www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca); accessed 12 February 2019)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

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- <sup>7</sup> "War Diaries–50th Canadian Infantry Battalion," *Library and Archives Canada* ([www.bac-lac.gc.ca](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca); accessed 10 February 2019), File: RG9-III-D-3, Volume/box number: 4941. File number: 441. Copied container number: T-10747<->T-10748
- <sup>8</sup> "Hundred Days' Offensive," *Wikipedia* ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org); accessed 12 February 2019)
- <sup>9</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca); accessed 20 April 2018), entry for McAuley
- <sup>10</sup> "Find War Dead," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<https://www.cwgc.org/find>; accessed 6 March 2019). Reburial records attached to soldiers from No. 1 CCCS who were buried in the Emerchicourt Communal Cemetery on 31 October 1918 and reinterred at Douai British Cemetery list one soldier as "unknown."
- <sup>11</sup> "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 10 February 2019), entry for Edward Walter McAuley, Province or territory: Nova Scotia, District: Colchester, District number: 54, Sub-district: Lower Londonderry, Sub-district number: 28, City, Town or Village: Lower Londonderry 17a
- <sup>12</sup> "Marriages," *Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics* ([www.novascotiagenealogy.com](http://www.novascotiagenealogy.com); accessed 10 February 2019), entry for Walter McAuley
- <sup>13</sup> "Canada, Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 13 March 2019), entry for Walter McAuley
- <sup>14</sup> "1891 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 17 March 2019), entry for Walter McCaullay [sic], Province: Nova Scotia, District number: 29, District: Colchester, Sub-district: Middle Londonderry
- <sup>15</sup> "Middlemore Homes," *Library and Archives Canada* ([www.bac-lac.gc.ca](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca); accessed 5 April 2019)
- <sup>16</sup> "About Home Children," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca); accessed 5 April 2019)
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> "Middlemore Children's Emigration Homes, Application Books, 1876–1954," *Library and Archives Canada* ([www.bac-lac.gc.ca](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca); accessed 27 March 2019), entry for John MacAulay [sic], Reel: A-2104, Volume: 245, Case: 816
- <sup>19</sup> "Name search: Children's (Middlemore) Emigration Homes," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca); accessed 5 April 2019)
- <sup>20</sup> "Middlemore Children's Emigration Homes, History Books, 1873–1891," *Library and Archives Canada* ([www.bac-lac.gc.ca](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca); accessed 27 March 2019), entry for John MacAulay [sic], Reel: A-1999, Volume: 251, Pages: 513–514
- <sup>21</sup> "1891 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 1 April 2019), entry for John McCarday [sic], Province: Nova Scotia, District number: 29, District: Colchester, Sub-district: Middle Londonderry
- <sup>22</sup> "1891 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 17 March 2019), entry for Walter McCaullay [sic], Province: Nova Scotia, District number: 29, District: Colchester, Sub-district: Middle Londonderry
- <sup>23</sup> "1901 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 1 April 2019), entry for John Mccauley [sic], Province: Nova Scotia, District number: 29, District: Colchester, Sub-district: Middle Londonderry
- <sup>24</sup> "Midlands, England, Electoral Registers, 1831–1955," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 17 March 2019), 1920 entry for William Savage Jr., Ward or Division/Constituency: Aston, Street address: 5 Rosefield Place, Residence Place: Birmingham
- <sup>25</sup> "England, Select Marriages, 1538–1973," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 27 March 2019), entry for Louisa McAuley
- <sup>26</sup> "UK, Outward Passengers Lists, 1890–1960," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 6 April 2019), entry for John McAuley
- <sup>27</sup> "England and Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com); accessed 6 April 2019), entry for John McAuley
- <sup>28</sup> "Kings Norton," *Wikipedia* ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org); accessed 6 April 2019)

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- <sup>29</sup> "England and Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 6 April 2019), entry for Lily Pritchett
- <sup>30</sup> "England and Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 6 April 2019), entry for Irene McAulay [*sic*]
- <sup>31</sup> "UK, Inward Passenger Lists, 1878–1960," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 6 April 2019), entry for John McAuley
- <sup>32</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 6 April 2019), entry for John McAuley, Residence place: Meriden, Warwickshire, England, Schedule number: 36, Sub-schedule number: 1, Enumeration district: QFEY, Registration district: 386/2
- <sup>33</sup> "England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 6 April 2019), entry for John McAuley
- <sup>34</sup> "England and Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1916–2005," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 6 April 2019), entry for Irene McAuley
- <sup>35</sup> "England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916–2007," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 6 April 2019), entry for Irene Halliday
- <sup>36</sup> "Massachusetts, State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1798–1950," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) accessed 28 February 2019), entry for Edward Walter McAuley
- <sup>37</sup> "Connecticut, State and Federal Naturalization records, 1790–1996," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 28 February 2019), entry for Ella Elizabeth McAuley
- <sup>38</sup> "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600's–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 28 February 2019), entry for Edward Walter McAuley
- <sup>39</sup> "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600's–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com): accessed 1 March 2019), entry for Ellen Elizabeth McAuley