

## **Private Frederick Mears®**

**Regimental number: 152554**

**1st Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion (Saskatchewan Regiment)**

**born: 1 January 1893–died: 2 May 1918**

Private Frederick Mears came to Canada as a home child in 1902.<sup>1</sup> He was a “pauper child” taken into care at the Edmonton Union in London by Dr Barnardo. He and 15 other children from union workhouses across England, left Liverpool, England, under the auspices of the Barnardo Homes on the SS *Colonian* on 25 September 1902. They arrived at Portland, Maine, on 6 October, heading for Toronto.<sup>2</sup>

From Toronto, he went to the Prairies and was first placed with David More, a farmer in St Ouen’s, Manitoba.<sup>3</sup> The 1903 inspection report prepared on 17 November indicated that all was well:

Age 12 – excellent farm home – employed at general farm work – very best health – good size: growing well – goes to church is now going to school – character: nice, quiet boy, truthful, is slow but sure –  
Terms – Board, clothes and \$125. at end of five years.

The boy is well treated and is in good farm home where he gets the benefit of a good practical farmer’s experience.

17th November, 1903<sup>4</sup>

Although it was reported in 1903 that all was well, by 1906 Frederick had moved to another farm. He was then a hired hand at the home of Frank and Mary Prout near Rapid City in Manitoba. They had five children living at home and two hired hands.<sup>5</sup> Five years later, he was still with the family.<sup>6</sup> It appears that his relationship with the family was good, because Frank Prout was described as a friend and next of kin when Frederick enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1915.<sup>7</sup>

It is not known when Frederick was born or who his birth family was. His Attestation form says he was born in Middlesex on 1 January 1893.<sup>8</sup> When he came to Canada with the Barnardos, he was recorded as being born in about 1891. On the 1911 Canadian census he is shown as being born in January 1893. However, no relevant record for this birth was found.

Frederick, who was living in Rapid City, Manitoba, enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on 16 July 1915 in Brandon, Manitoba, and joined the 79th Overseas Battalion. He was a farmer, 5’ 4” tall and had a ruddy complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. On 24 April 1916, he embarked on RMS *Lapland*, arriving in England on 4 May. Two months later, he landed in France and transferred to the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles on arrival on 29 June 1916.

He was at the battle of La Somme in October 1916 and on 11 October received a gunshot wound to his left thigh. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian General Hospital in Étaples, but four days later he went to England and was admitted to the General Military Hospital in Colchester. On 8 November he was sent to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital in Bearwood, Wokingham, and later that month to the military hospital in Bramshott. He was discharged about a month and a half later.

From December 1916 to August 1917, he was in various establishments in England, in Hasting, Seaford, Whitley and Bramshott. In February 1917, he had scarlet fever and, in August of that year, he was admitted to hospital with syphilis. He was discharged for the last time in September 1917.

On 31 January 1918, he was given permission to marry. He married Jessie E. Butler in Wantage, Berkshire, in early 1918<sup>9</sup> and then rejoined his unit on 29 March 1918. He was in France in early May when he was fatally wounded—about three months after he married and just over one month after he rejoined his unit.

At the end of April 1918, the 1st CRM was stationed near Hill 70, on the outskirts of Lens, in northern France. The Canadian troops had fought a significant battle there in the summer of the previous year. On the evening of 24 April, the battalion moved into the Front Line to relieve the 5th CMR. Working parties were engaged in various tasks, including cleaning trenches, repairing wire entanglements, building trench mortar emplacements and patrolling to the enemy wires. For the most part, the days were described as “FRONT LINE SITUATION NORMAL.”<sup>10</sup> On 1 May, the battalion war diary noted:

At 3 AM enemy fired a large number of quick gas projectors. There was a violent explosion accompanied by a large red flash and the air seem to be full of sparks. Projectors which seem to spread after leaving the point from which they were fired in the area between Hurtle Tr. and the Grave [...]. The projectors were of a small type and a large number burst in the air. Casualties:- two ORs died from the effects of Gas the LIEUT. SMITH was evacuated to hospital with several ORs suffering from gas poisoning.

Frederick may have been one of these. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station on 1 May 1918, suffering from the effects of gas poisoning. On 2 May, he was declared “dangerously ill” and he died the same day. He was buried the following day at Pernes Military Cemetery (Plot 2, Row A, Grave 29) with the Canadian chaplain G. C. d’Easum presiding. A letter was sent to his wife, who was living at Hendred, Steventon, in Berkshire.<sup>11</sup>

Pernes British Cemetery was only set up in April 1918 when No. 1 and No. 4 CCCSs came to Pernes, driven back by the German advance.<sup>12</sup> Frederick was one of 220 soldiers admitted on 1 May 1918 and one of 115 soldiers to die at the station that month.<sup>13</sup>

Frederick was awarded posthumously the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre). His wife requested the following inscription for his gravestone:

FOR EVER WITH THE LORD<sup>14</sup>

After the war, his wife Jessie, who was born on 13 September 1893 in Wantage, Berkshire, was living at The Lodge, Stroud Croft, Eynsham in Oxfordshire. She remarried, marrying Elijah Batten in 1919 in Wantage.<sup>15</sup> They do not appear to have had any children and, in 1939, were living at The Harleys in Hailsham, Sussex, where Elijah was a gardener.<sup>16</sup> Jessie died on 21 May 1983.<sup>17</sup>

Frederick’s family in Canada was still in Marquette, Manitoba, after the war. Mary Prout had died before the war, on 10 November 1909, in Rapid City<sup>18</sup> and Frank died there just months before Frederick was killed. Frank died on 25 February 1918.<sup>19</sup> Frank and Mary’s son William Francis and his young family were still farming in Marquette in 1921.<sup>20</sup>

Frederick is remembered on the Rapid City War Memorial on Fifth Street, Rapid City.<sup>21</sup> Between the late 1860s and 1948, over 100,000 home children came to Canada from the United Kingdom. About 10,000 enlisted to serve in the Canadian Expeditionary Force and over 1,000 sacrificed their lives in the Great War.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Index of Home Children who died in the First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca>: accessed 16 August 2019), entry for Frederick Mears

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; "British Children Emigrated to Canada by Authority of Boards of Guardians," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca>: accessed 16 August 2019), entry for Frederick Mears

<sup>3</sup> "Immigration Program : Headquarters central registry files," *Heritage Canadiana* (<http://heritage.canadiana.ca/>: accessed 28 August 2019), C-7815, Vol. 266, File 222479, p. 288, entry for Frederick Mears. The record indicates that David More lived in St. Owens, but it was likely St. Ouens.

<sup>4</sup> Department of the Interior. List of Pauper Children reported upon by W. J. Kennedy. Arrivals in 1902. "Children Sent to Canada through Boards of Guardians," *Library and Archives Canada* (<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/>: accessed 24 August 2019), Film C-7815, Vol. 266, File 222479, Pg 288

<sup>5</sup> "1906 Canada Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 22 May 2019), entry for Frederick Mears, Province: Manitoba, District: Marquette, Sub-district description: Townships 13, 14, 15 in ranges 19, 20 west, and Rapid City town Sub-district: 02

<sup>6</sup> "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 15 August 2019), entry for Freda Wears [sic], Province: Manitoba, District: Marquette, District number: 19, Sub-district: 32, Ward 1, Sub-district number: 32

<sup>7</sup> "Personnel Records of the First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx>: accessed 22 May 2019), entry for Mears, Frederick, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 6089 - 6, Item number: 192932, Digitized service file - PDF format: B6089-S006. Unless otherwise indicated, all information about his military service comes from this source.

<sup>8</sup> "Personnel Records of the First World War," entry for Mears, Frederick

<sup>9</sup> "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 15 August 2019), entry for Frederick Mears, District: Wantage, County: Berkshire, Volume: 2C, Page: 719

<sup>10</sup> "War diaries - 1st Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/>: accessed 1 September 2019), Date(s): 1915/09/01-1919/02/28, Finding aid no.: 9-52, MIKAN no.: 2004667. Unless otherwise indicated, all information on the battalion's movements comes from this source.

<sup>11</sup> "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* ([www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca): accessed 30 August 2019), entry for Mears, F.

<sup>12</sup> "Pernes British Military Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>: accessed 13 January 2015)

<sup>13</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca>: accessed 28 March 2018)

<sup>14</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org): accessed 3 December 2019), entry for Mears, Frederick, Service No: 152554

<sup>15</sup> "England & Wales Marriages 1837–2005," *Findmypast* ([www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk): accessed 22 May 2019), entry for Jessie E. Mears, District: Wantage, County: Berkshire, Volume: 2C, Page: 1003

<sup>16</sup> "1939 England and Wales Register," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 14 June 2019), entry for Janet E. Batten, Schedule number: 177, Sub-schedule Number: 3, Enumeration district: EKOC, Registration district: 72/2

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<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 1 September 2019), entry for Jessie Eugen Batten

<sup>18</sup> "Canada, Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 September 2019), entry for Mary Prout

<sup>19</sup> "Canada, Find A Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 1 September 2019), entry for Frank Prout

<sup>20</sup> "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 12 March 2019), entry for William F Prout, Province or territory: Manitoba, District: Marquette, District number: 3, Sub-district number: 4, City, Town or Village: S14-R4 N1 Saskatchewan Municipality

<sup>21</sup> "Rapid City War Memorial," *Historic Sites of Manitoba* (<http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/rapidcitywarmemorial.shtml>: accessed 16 August 2019), entry for Frederick Mears

<sup>22</sup> *Canadian British Home Children* (<https://canadianbritishhomechildren.weebly.com/first-world-war-causalities.html>: accessed 1 September 2019)