

Corporal Richard Henry Chapman

Regimental number: 174744

1st Battalion, Canadian Machine Gun Corps

born: 22 December 1895 - died: 27 September 1918

Corporal Richard Henry Chapman was born on 22 December 1895 and baptised on 29 September 1897 at St Thomas in the Moors in Balsall Heath, near Birmingham.¹ He was the son of Joseph Till and Fanny Mary (née Mee) Chapman.² His father, Joseph, was born in September 1870³ and his mother about the same year.⁴ Both were born in Birmingham and married there on 19 May 1890.⁵ They had at least eight children: Joseph Thomas Til (in July 1891),⁶ Ada Ellen (in February 1892),⁷ Thomas Rupert (in about 1894),⁸ Richard, Margaretta (in 1899),⁹ George William (in about 1903),¹⁰ Kathleen Sadie Nellie (in January 1911)¹¹ and Hannah Cleora Jannet (born in June 1913).¹²

The family lived in Birmingham until 1906, where Joseph was a whip maker. In 1891, Joseph and Fanny, newly married and with their first son, Joseph, were living with Fanny's parents, Thomas and Charlotte Mee, at 133 Emily Street in Birmingham.¹³ Ten years later, Joseph, Fanny and three children were still in Birmingham, living at 24 Ten Acre Street.¹⁴ At the time, their two eldest children, Joseph and Ada, were living with their grandfather at 23 Francis Road in King's Norton, just south of Birmingham.¹⁵

In May 1906, Joseph and his son, Joseph, left for Canada, sailing from Liverpool on the Canada and arriving in Montreal, Quebec on 12 May.¹⁶ Then in September, Fanny and the other children (Ada, Thomas, Richard, Maggie and George) followed.¹⁷ They sailed in steerage from Liverpool and arrived in Montreal on 28 September. They were heading to Hamilton, Ontario and so, in 1911, the family was living at 126 Catherine Street in Hamilton.¹⁸ Richard's father was still working as a whip maker.

On 28 July 1915, Richard enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Hamilton.¹⁹ Like his father, he was a whip maker. He was 5' 3½" tall and had a dark complexion and brown eyes and hair. He had previously served in the 13th Royal Regiment Bugle Band. The Regiment had been formed in Hamilton in 1862.²⁰ Richard was a bugler.

After enlisting, Richard joined the 86th Canadian Machine Gun Battalion, a battalion raised and based in Hamilton.²¹ He went with his Battalion to England, leaving Canada on 19 May 1916 and arriving in England on 29 May. The Battalion was stationed at the Risborough Barracks at Shorncliffe, where they completed their training.²²

Just over a month after arriving in England, Richard was hospitalised with the measles. By coincidence, he was admitted on 2 July 1916 to the 1st Southern General Hospital, which was located in Birmingham – the city of his birth. He was discharged on 21 July.

When Richard arrived in England, his Battalion had just been redesignated as the Canadian Machine Gun Depot.²³ On 18 April 1917 he was with the Machine Gun Pool at the Risborough Barracks in Shorncliffe. On 20 April he was with the CMG Pool in Camiers in France. He was probably in Camiers for machine gun courses.²⁴ A week later he was taken on strength with the 13th Machine Gun Company.

On 12 August 1917, he was admitted to the 1st Canadian Field Ambulance with a fever.²⁵ He was discharged four days later and rejoined his unit.

He had two weeks leave at the end of January and beginning of February 1918. On his return he transferred from the 13th Canadian Machine Gun Company to 1st Battalion of the Canadian Machine Gun Corps. Three months later, he was promoted to Corporal.

In September 1918, the Richard's battalion was stationed in Liévin, near Lens in northern France.²⁶ After a few days of enemy shelling, including gas shells, on 27 September the enemy machine gun fire was very much reduced and the Battalion spent an abnormally quiet night, albeit with some indirect fire. Nonetheless, that was the day that Richard was injured and admitted to the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station with shrapnel wounds that penetrated his chest.²⁷ He was dead when he was admitted. He was buried the following day in Duisans British Military Cemetery (Grave 27, Plot 7, Row A.) with the Canadian chaplain W. Fisher presiding.

Duisans British Military Cemetery is located in Etrun, near Arras, in France. The first burials took place in the cemetery in March 1917.²⁸ The 1st CCCS arrived at the beginning of September and was stationed near Duisans for two months in the autumn of 1918.²⁹ A total of 75 patients died at the 1st CCCS in September 1918.

His next-of-kin was his mother, who was living at 137 West Avenue North in Hamilton.³⁰ Richard had signed a will in September 1916, leaving everything to her.³¹

Richard's father, Joseph,³² and his two brothers, Joseph³³ and Thomas,³⁴ all also served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the Great War. However, Richard was the only one to lose his life. All had previously served in the 13th Royal Regiment. Like Richard, both his father and brother, Thomas, enlisted in the 86th Machine Gun Battalion and sailed together from Halifax to Liverpool in May 1916.

His father, Joseph, appears to have signed two attestation forms – one in September 1915 (Regimental number: 174538) and a second in January 1916 (Regimental number: 174798).³⁵ The second time he was 45 years of age and a leather worker. When he arrived in England, he was sent to Shorncliffe. In June 1916, he was promoted to Sergeant. Like his son, he also contracted measles and was hospitalised in Birmingham in July 1917 – a year after his son. He served at the Canadian Machine Gun Depot. He probably did not join the Front. On 5 June 1917 he was sent to the Canadian Discharge Depot in Buxton in Derbyshire.³⁶ From there, Joseph returned to Canada, sailing from Liverpool on 9 June. He was finally discharged on 17 July 1919 as medically unfit for service. His army record notes that he was over 50 years³⁷ and had a flat foot and hallus rigidis³⁸ in his left foot – the result of an accident before he enlisted. The condition was exacerbated by the drills and marches. The Medical Board “determined that he would be able to work if it didn't involve long marches. He can walk comfortably as long as he has arches in his boots. So he could continue as a leather worker and earn a full livelihood.”³⁹ In 1921, Joseph and Fanny were living at 137 West Avenue, Hamilton with their youngest three children. Joseph was once again working as a whip maker.

Richard's eldest brother, Joseph – a whip maker, like his father and brother – enlisted in July 1915, at the same time as Richard, and went to England in October 1915.⁴⁰ Although he took a machine gun course in April 1916, unlike his father and brothers, he does not appear to have served in the Machine Gun Corps. In March 1916, he was with the 36th Battalion and then, in June, transferred to the 29th Battalion. He was hospitalised at the 23rd General Hospital in Etaples in October 1916 with

fever, but was discharged two weeks later. However, in August 1917, he received a gunshot wound to his head and, as a result, was deaf in his right ear. He was determined to be fit for permanent base duty and returned to Canada, sailing from Liverpool in December 1917. In Canada, he was taken on strength at the No. 2 CAS Unit, in the Ravina Barracks in Toronto in February 1918. Before the war, Joseph had married Lilian Carter near Hamilton on 11 July 1914.⁴¹ Lilian was born in about 1890 in Manchester, England, and appears to have spent much of the period of the Great War living in England, in Birmingham and then in Bradford, Yorkshire.⁴² However, in 1921, she and Joseph, now a carpenter, were living in Hamilton.⁴³

Richard's second brother, Thomas, a machinist, enlisted on 7 September 1915, just a couple of months after his brother.⁴⁴ Just months after arriving in England, he was hospitalised at the Canadian Hospital in Moore Barracks, Shorncliffe, with influenza. Although he enlisted with the 86th Machine Gun Battalion, at the end of the war he was with the 2nd Battalion of the Machine Gun Corps and had served two tours in France of twelve and seventeen months. He returned to Canada in August 1919. At the end of 1918, Thomas had married Eva Elizabeth Wall,⁴⁵ the daughter of Elizabeth Gillett and step-daughter of John William Gillett, of King's Norton, near Birmingham.⁴⁶ In 1921, Thomas and Eva were living near Hamilton, Ontario, with their daughter, Margaretta E.⁴⁷

After the war, Richard's parents, his brother, George, and three of his sisters immigrated to the United States. In 1913, Ada married Walter John Robinson,⁴⁸ who had also served in the Great War, and, in 1921, they were living in Hamilton with three children.⁴⁹ Two years later, the family moved to the US and was living in California when, in 1931, all the family became US citizens.⁵⁰

Richard's parents, Joseph and Fanny, followed a year later, immigrating in May 1924, probably with four of their children (Margaretta, George, Kathleen and Annie).⁵¹ Joseph was working as a night watchman when he became a US citizen in 1933. Kathleen married an American, Jack L. Welchel, in 1932 and became a US citizen in 1942.⁵² Margaretta married Jack Clifford Harris in June 1925 and became a US citizen in 1933⁵³ as did George.⁵⁴

Richard's mother was still living in California in 1940.⁵⁵ She was a widow.

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¹ "Birmingham, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 February 2016), entry for Richard Henry Chapman, Reference Number: DRO 70, Archive Roll: 577

² "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 9 February 2016), entry for Richard Chapman, Registration district: Kings Norton, Sub-registration district: Kings Norton, ED, institution, or vessel: 36, Piece: 2807, Folio: 233, Page Number: 32, Household schedule number: 192

³ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 17 February 2016) entry for Joseph Chapman, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1628 – 10, Item Number: 96019, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1628-S010

⁴ "1901 England Census," entry for Richard Chapman

⁵ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869-19138," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 24 October 2016), entry for Kathleen Sadie Nellie Chapman

⁶ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 17 February 2016) entry for Joseph Thomas Til Chapman, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1628 - 20, Item Number: 96028, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1628-S020. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Joseph's military career comes from this source.

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- ⁷ "U.S., Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1795-1972 (World Archives Project)," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Walter John Robinson, Record Type: Petition for Naturalization
- ⁸ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Thomas Rupert Chapman, Registration district: Birmingham, Inferred County: Warwickshire, Volume: 6d, Page: 53. His birth record index indicates that he was born around January - March 1894, but his army record indicates November 1896.
- ⁹ "Birmingham, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Margaretta Chapman, Reference Number: DRO 70, Archive Roll: 577
- ¹⁰ "Birmingham, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1912," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for George William Chapman, Reference Number: EP4/2/2/6, Archive Roll: M381/M382
- ¹¹ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869-19138," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Kathleen Sadie Nellie Chapman
- ¹² "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869-19138," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Hannah Cleora Jannet Chapman
- ¹³ "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 February 2016), entry for Joseph Chapman, Registration district: Aston, Sub registration district: Deritend, ED, institution, or vessel: 15, Piece: 2404, Folio: 38, Page Number: 23
- ¹⁴ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Richard Chapman, Registration district: Kings Norton, Sub-registration district: Kings Norton, ED, institution, or vessel: 36, Piece: 2807, Folio: 233, Page Number: 32, Household schedule number: 192
- ¹⁵ "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Richard Chapman, Registration district: Kings Norton, Sub-registration district: Kings Norton, ED, institution, or vessel: 11, Piece: 2804, Folio: 153, Page Number: 35, Household schedule number: 172
- ¹⁶ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 February 2016), entry for Joseph Chapman
- ¹⁷ "Canadian Passenger Lists, 1865-1935," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 February 2016), entry for Richard Chapman
- ¹⁸ "1911 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 24 March 2016), entry for Richard Chapman, Province: Ontario, District: Hamilton East, District Number: 77, Sub-District: 7 - Ward six, Sub-District Number: 7
- ¹⁹ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 17 February 2016) entry for Richard Chapman, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1629 - 28, Item Number: 96084, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1629-S028. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Richard's military career comes from this source.
- ²⁰ The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment)," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Royal_Hamilton_Light_Infantry_\(Wentworth_Regiment\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Royal_Hamilton_Light_Infantry_(Wentworth_Regiment)): accessed 17 February 2016)
- ²¹ "86th (Machine Gun) Battalion, CEF," *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/86th_\(Machine_Gun\)_Battalion,_CEF](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/86th_(Machine_Gun)_Battalion,_CEF); accessed 17 February 2016)
- ²² "86th (Machine Gun) Battalion, CEF"
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ "Canadian Machine Gun Corps," *Canadiansoliders.com* (<http://www.canadiansoldiers.com/corpsbranches/machineguncorps.htm>; accessed 17 February 2016)
- ²⁵ His diagnosis was PUO or "pyrexia of unknown origin." "Military Abbreviations - Canada, World War I," Alberta Family Histories Societies (http://www.afhs.ab.ca/data/military_abbreviations.html ; accessed 17 May 2016)
- ²⁶ "Canadian Machine Gun Company," *Canadian Great War Project* (<http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/warDiaryLac/wdLacP10.asp>; accessed 17 February 2016)
- ²⁷ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," *Library and Archives Canada*, (records accessed 2013 & 2016), Record Group 9, series IIC10, volume 4556, Record number 683

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- ²⁸ "Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun," Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org; accessed 7 October 2015)
- ²⁹ "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/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINDD&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G; accessed 17 June 2015)
- ³⁰ "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 683
- ³¹ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," entry for Richard Chapman
- ³² "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 17 February 2016) entry for Joseph Chapman, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1628 - 10, Item Number: 96019, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1628-S010. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Joseph's military career comes from this source.
- ³³ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 19 February 2016) entry for Joseph Thomas Till Chapman, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1628 - 20, Item Number: 96028, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1628-S020. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Richard's military career comes from this source.
- ³⁴ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 17 February 2016) entry for Thomas Rupert Chapman, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1630 - 32, Item Number: 96144, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1630-S032. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Thomas' military career comes from this source.
- ³⁵ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," entry for Joseph Chapman
- ³⁶ At the end of 1916, the Canadian army selected Buxton as the location of the Canadian Discharge Depot. The role of the CDD was to arrange the return of discharged and/or disabled and injured Canadian soldiers back to Canada. ("Buxton Military Hospitals," *The War Memorials of Buxton* (<http://buxtonwarmemorials.mrallsophistory.com/hospitals.html>; accessed 17 February 2016))
- ³⁷ Actually at the date of this medical report (28 June 1917), he would have been 46 years of age.
- ³⁸ Degenerative arthritis and stiffness due to bone spurs that affects the joint at the base of the big toe. ("Hallux rigidus," *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallux_rigidus; accessed 17 February 2016))
- ³⁹ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," entry for Joseph Chapman
- ⁴⁰ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," entry for Joseph Thomas Till Chapman, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1628 - 20, Item Number: 96028, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1628-S020. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Richard's military career comes from this source. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Joseph Thomas Till's military career comes from this source.
- ⁴¹ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801-1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Joseph Thomas Till Chapman, Marriage County or District: Wentworth
- ⁴² "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," entry for Joseph Thomas Till Chapman
- ⁴³ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 17 February 2016), entry for Joseph Chapman, Province or Territory: Ontario, District: Hamilton East, District Number: 87, Sub-District: Polling Division No 34, Sub-District Number: 34, City, Town or Village: Hamilton
- ⁴⁴ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 17 February 2016) entry for Thomas Rupert Chapman, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1630 - 32, Item Number: 96144, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1630-S032. Unless otherwise noted, all information about Thomas' military career comes from this source. His attestation form indicates that he was born in 1896 and was 19 years of age. His birth index record indicates that he was born in 1894, which means he was, in fact, 21 years old when he enlisted.
- ⁴⁵ "England & Wales, Marriage Index, 1916-2005," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk; accessed 5 January 2016), entry for Eva E. Wall, Registration district: Kings Norton, Inferred County: Worcestershire, Volume Number: 6d, Page Number: 31

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- ⁴⁶ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2016), entry for Eva Gillett [Eva Wall], Registration district: Kings Norton, Registration District Number: 383, Sub-registration district: Kings Norton, ED, institution, or vessel: 13, Household schedule number: 175, Piece: 17836
- ⁴⁷ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 February 2016), entry for Thomas R. Chapman, Province or Territory: Ontario, District: Hamilton East, District Number: 87, Sub-District: Polling Division No 55, Sub-District Number: 55, City, Town or Village: East Hamilton
- ⁴⁸ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801-1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Ada Ellen Chapman, Marriage County or District: Wentworth
- ⁴⁹ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 17 February 2016), entry for W. J. Robinson, Province or Territory: Ontario, District: Wentworth, District Number: 141, Sub-District Hamilton (City), Sub-District Number: 39
- ⁵⁰ "U.S., Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1795-1972 (World Archives Project)," entry for Walter John Robinson
- ⁵¹ "U.S., Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1795-1972 (World Archives Project)," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Joseph Till Chapman, Record Type: Petition for Naturalization
- ⁵² "U.S., Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1795-1972 (World Archives Project)," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Kathleen Nellie Sadie Whelchel, Record Type: Petition for Naturalization
- ⁵³ "U.S., Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1795-1972 (World Archives Project)," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Margaretta Harris, Record Type: Petition for Naturalization
- ⁵⁴ "U.S., Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1795-1972 (World Archives Project)," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for George William Chapman, Record Type: Petition for Naturalization
- ⁵⁵ "1940 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 19 February 2016), entry for Fanny Mary Chapman