

Private Arthur Edward Conley[©]

Regimental number: 925809

5th Battalion Canadian Infantry, Saskatchewan Regiment

born: 4 August 1887 — died: 16 February 1918

Private Arthur Edward Conley was born 4 August 1887 in Stirling, Ontario.¹ He was the son of Elizabeth Green and Jerome Conley, both of whom died before he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF).² His mother died in 1907³ and his father in 1910.⁴ Like many of the young men who signed up for the war, Arthur came from what today would be considered a large family. He had eleven siblings, eight sisters and three brothers: Anna (b. 1865),⁵ Alice (b. 1879),⁶ Jerome (b. 1867),⁷ Minnie (b. 1872),⁸ Phoebe Elisabeth (b. 1874),⁹ James (b. 1876),¹⁰ Charlotte (b. 1877),¹¹ Alexander (b. 1880),¹² Alberta/Bertha (b. 1883),¹³ and Mable/Lizzie (b. 1886).¹⁴ Arthur was the baby of the family.

Arthur's service record indicates that he enlisted in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, on 22 May 1916 and describes him as weighing 145 pounds, having a ruddy complexion, blue eyes and brown hair and being five feet four inches tall. He was 26 years and 9 months old and employed as a salesman. He gave his next of kin as his brother, Jerome Conley, who at that time was living in Combermere, Ontario. His religion is listed as Methodist.¹⁵ Arthur made a will soon after his enlistment and there he leaves his real estate to be divided between his five living sisters and his personal estate to a Miss Gertrude M. Cock, of Cookeville, New Brunswick.¹⁶ In a later will, he changes his beneficiaries and leaves his real estate to his sister Charlotte and his personal estate to Bertha.¹⁷

After enlisting Arthur was first transferred to the 32nd Battalion, then on 4 January 1917 to the 15th Battalion, and finally in November 1917 to the 5th Battalion.¹⁸ He left Halifax on 3 October 1916 aboard the SS *Missanabie* and arrived in Liverpool on 13 October 1916.¹⁹ He was sent for training at the East Sandling Camp near Folkestone, Kent, and later posted to Bramshott. Arthur had two bouts of illness while still in England but was well enough to proceed overseas to France by 24 November 1917.²⁰

On 16 February 1918, when Arthur was wounded, the war diary states that the weather that day was fine, despite a frosty night, that visibility was excellent, and that the ground was frozen. Arthur's battalion had 336 men working on improving trenches that day. Of these men 22 were doing salvage work for the Brigade and 9 were cleaning a cellar under orders from the Town Major. It was at that point that the German forces dropped a few gas shells in the vicinity of the Headquarters billet. Seven casualties resulted;²¹ Arthur would have been one of them. Arthur was gassed while his unit was in the support area at St. Pierre. He was admitted to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station and died from the effects of that gas that same day.²²

Private Arthur Edward Conley is buried in the Barlin Communal Cemetery Extension— in Plot III, Row E, Grave number 26.²³

Barlin is a village southwest of Bethune between the Bethune-Arras and Bethune-St. Pol roads. The Communal Cemetery and Extension lies to the north of the village on the road to Houchin.

The extension was begun by French troops in October 1914 and when they moved south in March 1916, it was used for burials by the 6th Casualty Clearing Station, largely for Commonwealth casualties. In November 1917, Barlin began to be shelled and the hospital was moved back to Ruitz.

The extension was used again in early 1918 during the German advance on this front. It was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and contains 1095 Commonwealth, 63 French and 13 German burials from the First World War.²⁴

Arthur was predeceased by his sister Phoebe, who died before her first birthday,²⁵ and Alice, who died of influenza in 1910.²⁶ Alice had been married to Charles Webster Dewey in 1895.²⁷

His sister Annie married Abel Gilbert Benedict²⁸ and the couple moved to Detroit. Annie died of breast cancer on 16 April 1918,²⁹ just two months to the day after her brother Arthur was killed in France. Another of Arthur's sisters, Minnie, married Hiram Ibey in 1895³⁰ and the couple settled in the Belleville area.³¹ Minnie died in 1943.³²

Sister Mable/Lizzie, married Fred Roy Sirett³³ and they were living in De Witt, New York at the time of the 1910 United States Census.³⁴ By 1920 they had moved to West Virginia.³⁵ Mable/Lizzie died there on 28 August 1922.³⁶

Brothers Jerome and James both died in 1934.^{37,38}

Charlotte married Frank Hannah³⁹ and the couple were living with their three young children in Weyburn, Saskatchewan in 1921.⁴⁰ Alberta/Bertha, like Arthur and Charlotte, moved west to Saskatchewan, but could not be located in the 1921 Census. It is possible that she had married by that time and changed her surname.

Arthur's brother Alexander enlisted in the CEF on 19 August 1915 in Madoc, Ontario.⁴¹ Alexander was married to Maude Smith.⁴² Alexander left Canada for England in May 1916 and was posted to the Front in France on 19 August 1916.⁴³ The brothers both served in the trenches not far from one another and possibly were able to get together from time to time. Alexander must have heard of his brother's death in February 1918.

Alexander was severely wounded on 2 September 1918 by shell fire, which blew off one of his feet. He died later at No. 7 Casualty Clearing Station⁴⁴ and was buried in the Ligny St. Flouchel British Cemetery outside of St. Pol, France.⁴⁵ The brothers are buried just 25 miles apart.

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¹ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 13 July 2016), entry for Arthur Augstof Conley [*sic*]

² *Ibid.*

³ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Elizabeth Conley

⁴ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Jerome Conley

⁵ "1871 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Anna Conley, Province: Ontario, District number: 62, District: Hastings, Sub-district number: B, Sub-district: Stirling

⁶ "1881 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entries for Alice and Minie [*sic*] Conley, Province: Ontario, District number: 122, District: Hastings North, Sub-district number: B, Sub-district: Stirling

⁷ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Jerome Conley

⁸ *Ibid.*

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- ⁹ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Phoebe Elisabeth Conley
- ¹⁰ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for James Conley
- ¹¹ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Charlotte Conley
- ¹² "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Alexander Conley
- ¹³ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Alberta Conley
- ¹⁴ "Ontario, Canada, Births, 1869–1913," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Mable Conley
- ¹⁵ "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 12 July 2016) entry for Arthur Edward Conley, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1913 - 21, Item number: 112100, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1913-S021
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ "Copy of Will - Arthur Edward Conley, from Saskatchewan, Probate Estate Files, 1887–1931, Conley Family Tree - owner Maureen Manningham," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Arthur Edward Conley
- ¹⁸ "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 Arthur Edward Conley
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ "War Diaries of the First World War: 5th Battalion, Canadian Infantry, 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 12 July 2016).
- ²² "Canada, War Graves Registers (Circumstances of Casualty), 1914–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 13 July 2016), entry for Arthur Edward Conley, Service number: 925809
- ²³ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 17 November 2014), entry for Arthur Edward Conley, Service No: 925809
- ²⁴ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 25 July 2016), entry for Barlin Communal Cemetery Extension
- ²⁵ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Phoebe Elisabeth Conly [sic]
- ²⁶ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Alice Dewey
- ²⁷ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Alice Connelly [sic], Marriage county or district: Hastings, Ontario
- ²⁸ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Annie Caresley/Conley, Marriage county or district: Hastings, Ontario
- ²⁹ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Anna Benedict [sic]
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- ³¹ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Minnie Ibey, Death Place: Belleville, Hastings
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Lizzie Conley, Marriage county or district: Hastings, Ontario
- ³⁴ "1910 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Lizzie Sirett

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- ³⁵ "1920 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 10 October 2016), entry for Lizzie Sirett
- ³⁶ "West Virginia, Deaths Index, 1853–1973," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Lizzie Sirett, Death Place: Wheeling, Ohio, West Virginia
- ³⁷ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Jerome Conley
- ³⁸ "Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869–1938 and Deaths Overseas, 1939–1947," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for James Conley
- ³⁹ "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 19 July 2016), entry for Charlotte Conley and Frank Edward Hannah, Marriage county or district: Hastings, Ontario
- ⁴⁰ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 March 2016), entry for Charlotte Hannah, Province or territory: Saskatchewan, District: Weyburn, District number: 229, Sub-district number: 25, City, town or village: 8-20 W 2
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- ⁴² "Ontario, Canada, Marriages, 1801–1928," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 12 July 2016), entry for Alexander Conly [*sic*] and Maud Smith, Marriage county or district: Hastings, Ontario
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- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*