

Private Charles Forbes Chuck[©]

Regimental Number: 2030288

72nd Battalion (Seaforth Highlanders), Canadian Expeditionary Force

born: 2 December 1894 – died: 26 March 1918

Charles was born 2 December 1894 to Mary Schunn and Thomas Forbes Chuck.¹ Charles indicated on his CEF Attestation that he had been born in London, England, but it appears more likely that he had been born in New York City, USA. Mary had been born in Canada in October 1855, emigrating to the USA in 1862, and Thomas had been born in London, England about 1848, emigrating to the USA in 1867.² Thomas and Mary had married 24 June 1873 at Port Huron, St. Clair, Michigan,³ and as Thomas was a soldier for many years, the family moved several times, such that the children were born in various states. The nine children of Thomas and Mary were:⁴

- Mary, who was born in March 1875 in Michigan;
- Edith, who was born in March 1877 in Minnesota;
- Sarah, who was born in September 1879 in New York. Sarah never married and died in 1936 in Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California;⁵
- Thomas Forbes, who was born 2 June 1882 at Governor Island, New York. He married Belle Knowsley in 1905 in Kings, New York and had three children;⁶
- William, who was born in March 1885 in New Mexico;
- Alice Peavey, who was born 15 June 1888 in New Mexico. Alice died 7 June 1962 in San Antonio, Texas;⁷
- John Campbell, who was born 8 November 1891 in New York. John died 28 January 1970 in Riverside, Los Angeles County, California;⁸
- Charles; and
- George Campbell, who was born 31 December 1897 in New York. He married Suebelle, and died 30 January 1957 in Los Angeles, California.⁹

Interestingly, Charles completed his US Draft Registration on 5 June 1917 in San Francisco, California, claiming to be a British subject, having been born in London, England. He was 23, single, a salesman for Mr. J. S. Kelly.¹⁰ Perhaps preferring to chart his own course, about three weeks later (27 June 1917) Charles enlisted with the CEF at Vancouver, British Columbia. He again identified that he had been born in London, England, and that his address was his parent's home in San Diego, California. Charles was placed with the 72nd Regiment, Seaforth Highlanders as a reinforcement. He was tall at 6'1" and very slender at only 127 pounds.¹¹

Charles sailed overseas from Halifax on SS *Megantic*, arriving in Liverpool, England, on 7 December 1917. After a couple of months of training, he was transferred to the Front in France on 8 March 1918. He had signed his military will on 3 March 1918, leaving his possessions to his mother. As was permitted, Charles had \$15 of his monthly salary paid to his mother.¹² Permission was granted to soldiers to assign a portion of their pay to their relatives, that portion not exceeding four-fifths of the monthly amount to a maximum of \$25. In 1914, daily rates of pay for a private were \$1 plus \$.10 for being in the field.¹³

The war diary for the 72nd Battalion provides some insight into what Charles was facing the last week or so of his life. The weather was mostly fine, and they were working on various projects and training while in billets away from the Front. On the evening of 17 March there was significant enemy shelling on the Front. The enemy had attempted to raid the front lines, but was driven off,

suffering heavy losses. On the evening of 18/19 March, Charles' battalion was ordered to relieve the 78th Battalion at the Front. This occurred without incident.¹⁴

On 20 March, the day passed quietly, but at night there was considerable enemy shelling. The next day, the men worked on improving the trenches and installing 1000 yards of wiring. Enemy trench mortars were fairly active during the night and four men, including Charles, were wounded.¹⁵

Charles received a gunshot wound to his left leg, which fractured his femur just above the knee joint. He was taken on 22 March to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, where he became dangerously ill and died on 26 March. He was buried the next day at Houchin British Cemetery, Row G, Grave 32.¹⁶ Houchin Cemetery was opened in March 1918 when the 6th British Casualty Clearing Station came to Houchin. From April to September the German advance made Houchin unsafe for hospitals, and the cemetery was used by the 55th (West Lancashire) Division. In September 1918, the 6th Casualty Clearing Station returned to Houchin and was joined by the 15th CCS in October.¹⁷

As the war was encroaching on the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, on 27 March it stopped receiving patients, and began the task of moving patients to No. 23 British Casualty Clearing Station and setting up a new site at Pernes.¹⁸

Charles posthumously received the British War Medal and the Allied Victory Medal.¹⁹ The British War Medal was issued to men of the British and Imperial Forces who entered a theatre of war between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918. It was a silver medal, the front of which depicted the head of George V. The recipient's service number, rank, name and unit were impressed on the rim. The Allied Victory Medal was bronze, depicting a winged classical figure representing victory. It was similarly inscribed on the rim with the recipient's service number, rank, name and unit.²⁰ Mary Chuck received the Memorial Cross for her son's sacrifice. This medal was awarded to the mother or widow of Canadian soldiers who died on active duty.²¹



Grave stone of Private Charles Chuck, Houchin British Cemetery

Source: "Global, Find a Grave Index for Burials at Sea and Other Select Burial Locations, 1300s-Current"

Thomas died at the age of 75 on 15 June 1927 at Alameda, California.²² Mary died at the age of 76 on 10 October 1931 at Los Angeles, California,²³ where she had been living with her daughter Sarah.

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¹ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org; accessed 31 March 2017), entry for Chuck, C. F., Service No: 2030288

² "1900 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com; accessed 1 April 2017), entry for Thomas F Chuck

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- ³ "Michigan, Marriage Records, 1867–1952," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 1 April 2017), entry for Thomas Chuck
- ⁴ See endnote 2 for the children's birth dates and locations.
- ⁵ "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 1 April 2017), entry for Sarah Eliza Chuck
- ⁶ "New York, New York, Marriage Index 1866–1937," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 1 April 2017), entry for Thomas Forbes Jr Chuck
- ⁷ "Texas, Death Certificates, 1903–1982," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 1 April 2017), entry for Alice Peavey Kilkoyne
- ⁸ "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 1 April 2017), entry for John Campbell Chuck
- ⁹ "California, Death Index, 1940–1997," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 1 April 2017), entry for George Campbell Chuck
- ¹⁰ "U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 1 April 2017), entry for Charles Forbes Chuck
- ¹¹ "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 31 March 2017) entry for Charles Forbes Chuck, Reference: RG 150 Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1707 - 45, Item number: 100852, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1707-S045
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ "Lest We Forget Information Package First World War," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/lest-we-forget/Documents/First-World-War-Information-Package.pdf>: accessed 31 March 2017), Pay and Allowances, p. 15
- ¹⁴ "War Diaries - 72th Battalion, Canadian Infantry," *Library and Archives Canada* (http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=72nd+Battalion&s13=&s12=1918&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=2&f=G: accessed 1 April 2017), entries for March 1918, pp. 6 to 13
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 31 March 2017), entry for Chuck, C. F. "Global, Find a Grave Index for Burials at Sea and Other Select Burial Locations, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 7 March), entry for Charles Forbes Chuck
- ¹⁷ *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (www.cwgc.org: accessed 31 March 2017), entry for Charles Forbes Chuck
- ¹⁸ "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=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G: accessed 31 March 2017)
- ¹⁹ See endnote 11.
- ²⁰ "A Guide to British Campaign Medals of WW1," *The Great War 1914–1918*, (<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/medals/ww1-campaign-medals.htm>: accessed 1 April 2017)
- ²¹ "Memorial Cross," *Veterans Affairs Canada* (<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/medals-decorations/memorial-cross>: accessed 1 April 2017)
- ²² "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Thomas Forbes Chuck

²³ "U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 7 April 2017), entry for Mary Chuck