

Christopher Choldcroft

1888 - 1916

Born in Oxford

Master bootmaker in Brighton

Emigrated to Canada

Died at Dramoutre, aged 27, on 19 February 1916

Family

Christopher Choldcroft was born in Oxford on 13 March 1888. His parents were Christopher James Choldcroft, born in Hertfordshire, and Laura Barker, born in Norfolk. They married in London and moved to Oxford in 1884 with their two children. Christopher was the third of eight more children, all of whom were baptised at Walton Street Methodist Church.

By 1897 Christopher senior was running his own hairdressing business in Woodstock Road, where the family lived. By 1911 young Christopher was a Master Bootmaker, living in Brighton and working from his one-roomed home, but in 1913 he emigrated to Canada.

War Service: 3rd (Toronto) Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force

Christopher enlisted on 28 October 1914 in Canada and arrived in England on 23 February 1915. He served as a Private with the 3rd (Toronto) Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and was in France by 3 May 1915. His unit was not in major combat but had weeks in the trenches and weeks out doing training and other support activities. They were sometimes under heavy fire but sometimes it was very quiet, and casualties were light.

On 27 August 1915 Christopher's unit was going into trenches to relieve another battalion but he was unwell and was sent to the casualty clearing station. He rejoined his unit on 13 September, when things were quiet. But from the end of September there were more deaths from shells, and reports of soldiers misbehaving.

Then in December Christopher was given 9 days' leave, returning for his unit's Christmas party. Their local Germans tried to be friendly but there was no Christmas truce that year and they were given short shrift.

The unit was not in specific action over the winter. But unluckily for Christopher he was in the quartermasters' store at Dramoutre (now Dranouter) when it was hit by a shell on 19 February 1916. He was one of three men and two horses killed. He was aged 27, and was buried nearby at Loker Cemetery. His family paid for the words 'Greater love hath no man than this' to be added to his headstone. He is also remembered at St Giles Church in Oxford and on their website, and on the Canadian Virtual War Memorial.

This is the story of one of the men who appear on the war memorial of Walton Street

Methodist Church, which can now be seen at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Oxford, UK. These stories were compiled in 2019 based on research by Stephanie Jenkins (http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/war/walton_street_chapel/index.html), supplemented by information from a variety of military sources.

Choldcroft's detailed Canadian military record is available at:

<http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?op=pdf&app=CEF&id=B1691-S005>.

His battalion's World War 1 experience, including links to war diaries, can be found here:

<https://qormuseum.org/history/timeline-1900-1924/the-first-world-war/perpetuated-battalions/3rd-toronto-battalion-canadian-expeditionary-force/>.