

IN MEMORIAM



Private Harry Atherton

10th Canadian Infantry Battalion, CEF

Corporal Percy Howarth

7th Canadian Infantry Battalion (British Columbia), CEF

Sergeant Richard Musgrave

7th Canadian Infantry Battalion (British Columbia), CEF

CWGC Loos British Cemetery

Loos-en-Gohelle, France

8 June 2023



CANADIAN ARMY
ARMÉE CANADIENNE

Private Harry Atherton

Harry Atherton was born on 15 November 1893 in Leigh, England. He was the son of James Henry Atherton and Sarah Atherton (née Bradbury). Atherton grew up in Tyldesley, England and moved to Canada in 1913 by himself. He settled in McBride, British Columbia, and worked as a carpenter before enlisting.



On 31 March 1916, Harry enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) with the 63rd Canadian Infantry Battalion (Edmonton), CEF in Edmonton, Alberta, at the age of 23. On 22 April 1916, Private Atherton left the port of Saint John, New Brunswick, bound for England and arrived in Liverpool thirteen days later. Upon arrival, he was transferred to the 9th Reserve Infantry Battalion, CEF which absorbed the 63rd Battalion. After spending several months in the Shorncliffe Military Camp, Private Atherton arrived in France on 18 July 1916 after having been transferred the day before to the 10th Canadian Infantry Battalion, CEF. Upon his arrival, Private Atherton fought in several battles before being wounded. Due to his injuries, Atherton was sent to England to recover for a few months before returning to the front in March 1917.

On 15 August 1917, Private Atherton fought with the 10th Battalion during the first day of the Battle of Hill 70. The assault had two main objectives, the positions known as the Blue Line and the Green Line. The 10th Battalion, being part of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, took part in the first assault for control of the Blue Line. This objective was achieved, and the 10th Battalion led the continued advance to the Green Line. This objective was seized early in the morning of 16 August. From 15 to 18 August 1917, the 10th Battalion suffered 429 casualties, 71 with no known graves in connection to the assault on Hill 70. Initially reported as wounded, later reports listed Private Atherton as having been killed in action on 15 August 1917 at the age of 24.

Complete biography: <https://tinyurl.com/PteAtherton>

Corporal Percy Howarth

Percy Howarth was born 16 August 1894 in Darwen, Lancashire, England. His parents were Richard and Margaret Howarth (née Dearden), and Percy had seven siblings. Percy immigrated to Canada in 1912, sailing from England on RMS *Victorian*. Before enlisting, Percy was working as a seaman in Vancouver, British Columbia.



On 19 July 1916, Percy enlisted with the 121st 'Overseas' Battalion, CEF in Vancouver, British Columbia, at the age of 21. On 14 August 1916, he sailed from Halifax aboard SS *Empress of Britain* arriving in Liverpool, England on 24 August 1916. On 28 August 1916, Private Howarth joined the 7th Canadian Infantry Battalion, CEF and trained in England before joining his unit in France on 29 November 1916. In April 1917 while in France, Private Howarth got sick with influenza and was treated in hospitals for a week before returning to duty. On 11 April 1917, he was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal and then Corporal on 14 May 1917.

Corporal Howarth and the 7th Battalion fought in the Battle of Hill 70, which began on 15 August 1917. The 7th Battalion was on the left flank of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade and took part in the second wave of the attack between the Blue and the Red Line objectives. The fight for the Red Line was difficult as the Germans held strong in their position. The 7th Battalion then pressed towards the Green Line objective. However, they had to withdraw to the area of the Red Line since their left flank was exposed. On 16 August, a second attack led by the 10th Battalion with support by the 7th Battalion captured the Green Line. From 15 to 18 August 1917, the 7th Battalion suffered 118 casualties with no known graves in connection with the assault on Hill 70. Corporal Howarth was reported missing, then presumed to have died on 15 August 1917 at the age of 23.

Complete biography: <https://tinyurl.com/CplHowarth>

Sergeant Richard Musgrave

Richard Musgrave was born 22 September 1884 in Blackrigg, Canomie, Scotland. His only listed parent was Rebecca Musgrave and he had one sister, Jeannie (Jane). Before enlisting, Richard was working as a Teamster in Calgary, Alberta.



On 30 April 1915, at age 30, Richard enlisted with the 56th Overseas Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) in Calgary, Alberta. On 5 July 1915, he sailed from Montreal aboard SS *Elele* headed to Shorncliffe Army Camp in England for training. On 17 February 1916, Private Musgrave travelled to France as a new member of the 7th Canadian Infantry Battalion (British Columbia), CEF. Throughout 1916, Musgrave was promoted up the ranks until achieving the rank of Sergeant on 19 March 1917. On 14 April 1917, Sergeant Musgrave was wounded, but it was minor enough to stay on duty. On 9 July 1917, he was awarded the Military Medal for bravery.

Sergeant Musgrave and the 7th Battalion participated in the assault on Hill 70 that began on 15 August 1917. The 7th Battalion was on the left flank of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade and took part in the second wave of the attack between the Blue and the Red Line objectives. The fight for the Red Line was difficult as the Germans held this position in force, resulting in heavy casualties. The 7th Battalion then pressed its attack to the Green Line objective but had to withdraw to the area of the Red Line since their left flank was exposed. The 7th Battalion suffered 118 casualties with no known graves between 15 and 18 August 1917 in connection with the assault on Hill 70. Sergeant Musgrave, age 32, was reported missing on 15 August 1917 and was presumed to have died as part of the battle.

Complete biography: <https://tinyurl.com/SgtMusgrave>

Identification

Following the war, Private Atherton's, Corporal Howarth's, and Sergeant Musgrave's names were engraved on the Canadian National Vimy Memorial commemorating Canadian soldiers who died during the First World War and have no known grave.

In June 2011, a construction project in Vendin-le-Vieil uncovered the human skeletal remains of one soldier with Canada shoulder titles. In July 2017, a construction project in Vendin-le-Vieil uncovered the human skeletal remains of five soldiers. Alongside the remains were a number of artefacts. An identification disc and a 10th Canadians cap badge were found with one set of remains. A 1 British Columbia cap badge, damaged 7th Battalion, CEF collar badges, and a Military Medal ribbon were found with another. One of the five sets of remains was successfully identified as Private George Alfred Newburn, 7th Battalion, in February 2019.

Through historical, genealogical, anthropological, archaeological, and DNA analysis, with the assistance of the Canadian Forces Forensic Odontology Response Team and the Canadian Museum of History, the October 2021 Casualty Identification Review Board was able to confirm the identity of the remains found in 2011 as Corporal Percy Howarth, and the identity of two of the sets of remains found in 2017 as those of Private Harry Atherton and Sergeant Richard Musgrave.

CWGC's Loos British Cemetery

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Loos British Cemetery was begun by the Canadian Corps in July 1917. The remainder of the cemetery was formed after the Armistice by the concentration of graves from smaller cemeteries and the battlefields over a wide area north and east of the village of Loos. It is in this area that Private Atherton, Corporal Howarth, and Sergeant Musgrave are being buried today. Most of the Canadians buried in this cemetery are from the Battle of Hill 70. Two-thirds of those commemorated in this cemetery remain unidentified.

The Battle of Hill 70

15-25 August 1917

In July 1917 the Canadian Corps received orders to capture the city of Lens. Lieutenant-General Sir A.W. Currie, the newly appointed Corps Commander, planned to first take the high feature of Hill 70 that dominated Lens from the north.

The attack, originally planned for the end of July, was postponed due to weather until mid-August. This allowed the Canadian Corps to increase its preparations for the coming operation.

As part of its preparations, the Canadian Corps conducted raids against German outposts and the Canadian gunners undertook a programme of wire-cutting, destroying German artillery positions and gas shelling. Engineers also prepared special drums of oil to be used on the morning of the attack to create a smoke screen.

The infantry rehearsed their attack over similar terrain, but unlike previous attacks, there was no large preparatory barrage, which would have given the enemy warning of an impending operation.

Surprise was achieved when the attack started at 4:25 in the morning of 15 August under cover of an immense artillery barrage. A simulated attack by the 4th Division, led by Major-General Sir D. Watson, in front of Lens served as a diversion for the 1st Division, led by Major-General Sir A.C. Macdonell, and the 2nd Division, led by Major-General Sir H.E. Burstall, who successfully captured Hill 70.

The 7th and 10th Battalions participated in the assault on Hill 70. The 10th Battalion, part of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, took part in the first assault for control of the Blue Line. The 7th Battalion was on the left flank of the 2nd Brigade and took part in the second wave of the attack between the Blue and the Red Line objectives. The fight for the Red Line was difficult as the Germans held this position in force. Heavy casualties were reported as a result of this attack.

The 7th Battalion then pressed its attack to the Green Line objective but had to withdraw to the area of the Red Line since their left flank was exposed. The 10th Battalion was moved forward on the afternoon of 15 August to help hold the line against German counterattacks. A second attack led by the 10th Battalion on the Green Line on 16 August was successful. The 7th Battalion suffered 118 casualties while the 10th Battalion suffered 429 casualties between 15 and 18 August.

Having planned for the inevitable German counter-attacks, the Canadian formations consolidated their gains rapidly and the artillery began its programme of shelling the known areas where the Germans would assemble for their counter-attacks. Over the next several days, the Germans mounted at least 21 counter-attacks against the Canadian defenders of Hill 70.

On 18 August, General Currie planned to improve the position in front of Lens on the southern edge of Hill 70. The 2nd and 4th Divisions, supported by the grouping of the artillery from three divisions plus the Corps' heavy artillery and guns of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, launched their attack on 21 August.

However, the Germans had anticipated the attack and, even under the heavy barrage, made the Canadian advance difficult. The attacks continued for the following days with little success and operations came to an end on 25 August. Even if the Canadians had not taken Lens, they had secured Hill 70, which dominated that city and it remained in Allied hands until the end of the war.

The capture of Hill 70 and the subsidiary attacks on Lens achieved the desired results, even though much of the town was still in German hands. The fighting between 15-25 August cost the Canadians almost 10,000 casualties (killed, wounded and missing). The Canadian Corps battered five German divisions and their effort had contributed to wearing down the enemy.

Over 1,300 soldiers of the Canadian Corps killed in action between 15 and 25 August 1917 have no known grave.

Order of Service

Welcome and Call to Worship

Welcome to this sacred place and this service of remembrance for the lives of Private Harry Atherton, Corporal Percy Howarth and Sergeant Richard Musgrave. We gather here to pay our respects and to remember the cost of war, the integrity of character and the connection of family. We are not present here alone—but are kept company by those who have come before and those who will come long after we're gone. God's grace and love holds us and grounds us here today.

In the words of Isaiah 'do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name and you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. (Isaiah 43: 1a-3a)

Opening Prayer

I invite you now into a time of prayer or a time of quiet contemplation—whichever is your practice and makes you comfortable.

Let's pray:

Holy One, Creator of all life, we gather in your presence to celebrate life and to honour service; especially today the lives and service of Pte Atherton, Cpl Howarth and Sgt Musgrave. We offer thanks for the way in which they used their lives in service to the peace and justice of others. We pray that they are at rest with you, that they know the good they did with their sacrifice, and that they rest in eternal comfort surrounded by your loving embrace.

We are here today to honour their memory and lay them to rest. We stand with family and friends and ask that you bless this holy ground—a place dedicated to the memories of Canadians who served and died. May we never forget what they gave; and may we remain passionate about peace for all. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Psalm 27: 1-4, 13-14

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh—my adversaries and foes—they shall stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident. One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

1 Corinthians 13: 1-8, 12-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Matthew 11: 28-30

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Reflection

Pastoral Prayers

Again, you are invited into this time of prayer if you are comfortable, or you may wish to be in quiet contemplation during this time.

All loving and caring God,
We thank you for all the blessings of life, for watching over us in life and in death, and for all the ways in which we come to know your love. We thank you for those who share our lives: our families, friends and loved ones. And we thank you for the care and respect we receive from those unknown to us yet in our military family.

Especially today we thank you for the lives of Private Atherton, Corporal Howarth and Sergeant Musgrave—they were sons, nephews, brothers, partners, and comrades to many. We offer great thanks for their commitment to serve, for their bravery in battle, for their ability to put the well-being of others above their own. We thank you for all in them that was good and kind, resilient and courageous, thoughtful and giving.

Comforting God, we pray for their families today—that they may come to know their own history through the characters of these men. And, that we all may learn through them how to live our lives to the fullest right here and now.

Thank you, too, for the members of The British Columbia Regiment, The Calgary Highlanders, and The Royal Winnipeg Rifles who are honouring their comrades in spirit, to respect and bring attention to their lives and their service. Bless them in their own call to service, God.

Remind them that they are held in your embrace as they embark in work that is sometimes dangerous and challenging. May we all be reminded that we are not alone.

God hear all our prayers ... of grief and gratitude ... as we place these men in their final resting place. May we all find safe harbour and understanding in your arms.

Amen.

Act of Remembrance

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.
We will remember them.

Last Post

Moment of Silence

Rouse

Lament

Undressing and lowering the casket

Laying of the Wreaths

Note: The salute is maintained from the first note of the Last Post to the last note of the Rouse, including the ten second Moment of Silence.

The Committal

With thanksgiving for the lives they lived and the love they shared through their sacrifice, we commend to you now, God, these men's souls to your gracious keeping. We ask that you help us be worthy of their sacrifice by the choices we make; and we ask that these three soldiers experience eternal peace in the loving mystery that is beyond our understanding.

Amen.

Blessing and Benediction

Friends, as we leave from here let's remember that there is nothing we can do to make God love us any more; and there is nothing we can do to make God love us any less. God's love is unconditional—we are known and loved forever. Go in peace and go in love.

Amen.

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The British Columbia Regiment (Duke of Connaught's Own) perpetuates the 7th Canadian Infantry Battalion (British Columbia), CEF.

The Royal Winnipeg Rifles and The Calgary Highlanders both perpetuate the 10th Canadian Infantry Battalion, CEF.