

IN MEMORIAM



**An Unknown Canadian Soldier from
the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted
Rifles**

**Two Unknown Soldiers of the Great
War**

Known Unto God

**CWGC Loos British Cemetery
Loos-en-Gohelle, France**

27 June 2022



**National
Defence** **Défense
nationale**

Canada



An Unknown Canadian Soldier from the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles

On September 14, 2011, a set of human remains were discovered during road work in Loos-en-Gohelle, France. The remains were found with two 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR), Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) collar badges.

Fighting in the area constituted part of the Canadian advance on Hill 70, north of Lens, in mid-August 1917. The 5th Battalion, CMR was one of many occupying the area where the remains were discovered during the Battle of Hill 70. Six soldiers from that battalion were killed in action during the month of August 1917 and have no known grave. All six soldiers were excluded via DNA analysis which greatly expands the list of candidates.

Due to the hundreds of possible candidates, an accurate identification was not possible at this time. The Directorate of History and Heritage, in order to acquire all possible data prior to burial, completed an anthropological analysis and collected both maternal and paternal DNA samples from the remains. This data will be kept on file in the hopes to continue comparisons with donated familial samples, allowing for a possible identification in the future.

Despite not knowing the identity of this soldier, we can now say that he is not missing; he is here. We do not know who this Canadian is, yet he has always been among those we have honoured. His name is listed on the Canadian National Vimy Memorial as a Canadian soldier who died in France. Each visit to the Memorial honours his memory. He is one of us, one who made an incredible sacrifice. We may not know what pain he bore, but we know he nobly fell serving his country.

Two Unknown Soldiers for the Great War

In August 2016, three sets of human remains were discovered during construction work in Lens, France. The remains were found with one "CANADA" shoulder title and one 26th Battalion, CEF collar badge. One set of remains was successfully identified as Private John Henry Thomas of the 26th Battalion, CEF. He was buried in August 2018.

Fighting in the area constituted part of the Canadian advance on Hill 70, north of Lens, in mid-August 1917. The 26th Battalion was one of many occupying the area where the remains were discovered during the Battle of Hill 70. Other units involved in the area included: the 1st, 4th, 22nd, 25th and 49th Battalions, the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI).

Due to the hundreds of possible candidates and not being able to confirm nationality of the two sets of remains, an accurate identification was not possible at this time. The Directorate of History and Heritage, in order to acquire all possible data prior to burial, completed an anthropological analysis and collected maternal DNA samples from the remains. This data will be kept on file in the hopes to continue comparisons with donated familial samples, allowing for a possible identification in the future.

Pte Thomas's biography: tinyurl.com/PteThomasEN

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 the three soldiers 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 2nd led by Major-General Sir H.E. Burstall who successfully captured Hill 70.

A number of battalions participated in the assault on Hill 70. The fight for the Red Line objective was difficult as the Germans held this position in force. Heavy casualties were reported as a result of this attack. The Green Line objective was successfully attained on 16 August, again with heavy casualties against the German counter-attacks.

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 and the Corps' Heavy artillery as well as 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 efforts contributed towards 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

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

We are gathered here today in this place of remembrance to honour our fallen in conflicts past.

Today we remember with thanksgiving these brave men whom, alongside so many others, answered the call of their country, served with honour and gave their lives in the service of their nation.

We will shortly commit their bodies to be buried. In so doing let us commit ourselves anew to remember their courage. For by so doing we honour their memory and we reflect upon that sacrifice.

Let us offer ourselves also to God's service, that His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven and that His kingdom of justice and peace be established everywhere.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us recall the presence of God, the Father of all, maker and sustainer of all that is, whose purposes are good, whose love is never withheld and whose mercy never passes away. We call to mind God's faithfulness in times of darkness and despair.

We remember before God our brothers and sisters whose names are known only to God, and all who have served in the Armed Forces of our nations; who counted service to others greater than service of self, and who gave their lives in battle.

Merciful God, hear our prayers and comfort us; renew our trust in your Son whom you raised from the dead; strengthen our faith that all who have died in the love of Christ will share in His resurrection; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen

READINGS

Ecclesiastes 3, 1 – 8

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted:

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up:

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance:

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing:

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away:

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak:

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

John 14, 1 – 6

Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

And whither I go you know, and the way you know.

Thomas replied, Lord, we do not know where you are going; so how can we know the way?

Jesus replied I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, except by me.

ADDRESS

In Flanders Fields

John McCrae (1872-1918)

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

COMMITTAL

Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Our days are like the grass; we flourish like a flower of the field when the wind goes over it; it is gone and its place will know it no more. But the merciful goodness of the Lord endures for ever and ever...

We have entrusted these men in to the hands of God. We therefore commit their bodies to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust having our whole trust and confidence in the mercy of our heavenly Father, and in the victory of His son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who died, was buried and rose again for us, and is alive and reigns for evermore.

Amen

LOWERING OF THE CASKET

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.

THE LAST POST

MOMENT OF SILENCE

THE ROUSE

THE LAYING OF THE WREATHS

PRAYERS

Almighty God, protect all who serve in the Forces of The Queen; strengthen us in danger and temptation, give us courage and loyalty, that we may remain true to the highest traditions of our profession; and keep us steadfast when faced with the perils of action in war; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Almighty God, who has revealed your only Son as the resurrection and the life; raise us, we pray, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness that, when we depart from this life, we may rest in Him, and at the last may receive the blessing; Well done good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord. Grant this, O merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, our mediator and redeemer.

Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

**Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our
trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against
us.**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

For ever and ever.

Amen

THE DISMISSAL

Support us, O Lord, all the day long of this troublous life, until
the shadows lengthen and the evening falls, the busy world is
hushed, the fever of life is over and our work is done.

Then, Lord, in Your mercy grant us a safe lodging, a holy rest,
and peace at last; through Christ our Lord.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the
Holy Spirit, rest upon you and remain with you and all those
you love and for whom you pray, this day and always.

Amen

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