

# IN MEMORIAM



**Private**

**George Alfred Newburn**

7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion  
(British Columbia), CEF

CWGC Loos British Cemetery

Loos-en-Gohelle, France

12 June 2019



National  
Defence

Défense  
nationale

Canada

## Private George Alfred Newburn

George Alfred Newburn was born on 7 April 1899 in London, England to parents Alfred and Mary Newburn. Following the death of his mother, George immigrated to Canada along with his father and three sisters. The family arrived at the port of Québec City in June of 1912 with a destination of Esquimalt, British Columbia. Prior to enlistment, George worked as a messenger with the Canadian Pacific Telegraph Company.

George enlisted with the 88<sup>th</sup> 'Overseas' Battalion (Victoria Fusiliers), Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) on 6 November 1915. He was 16 at the time of enlisting but lied about his age and claimed he was 18. He embarked for England on 1 June 1916, arriving in Liverpool on 8 June 1916. On 18 July 1916, Private Newburn was transferred to the 30<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalion in East Sandling, England. He was then assigned to the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion (British Columbia), CEF part of the Canadian Corps in France on 12 August 1916.

Private Newburn and the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion participated in the assault on Hill 70 that began on 15 August 1917. The 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion was on the left flank of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion suffered 118 casualties with no known graves between 15 and 18 August 1917 in connection with the assault on Hill 70. On 15 August while fighting in the second wave of the assault on Hill 70, Private Newburn was killed in action at the age of 18.

Complete biography: [tinyurl.com/NewburnEN](http://tinyurl.com/NewburnEN)

## **Identification**

Following the war, Private Newburn's name was engraved on the Canadian National Vimy Memorial commemorating Canadian soldiers who died during the First World War and have no known grave.

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, including boots, Lee Enfield rifles, and a damaged 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion (British Columbia), CEF collar badge.

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 Casualty Identification Review Board was able to confirm the identity of one set of remains as those of Private George Alfred Newburn in February 2019.

## **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 George Alfred Newburn is 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 4<sup>th</sup> Division led by Major-General Sir D. Watson in front of Lens served as a diversion for the 1<sup>st</sup> Division led by Major-General Sir A.C. Macdonell and 2<sup>nd</sup> led by Major-General Sir H.E. Burstall who successfully captured Hill 70.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion participated in the assault on Hill 70. The 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion was on the left flank of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. Heavy casualties were reported as a result of this attack.

The 7<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion was moved forward on the afternoon of 15 August to help hold the line against German counterattacks. A second attack led by the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion on the Green Line on 16 August was successful. The 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion suffered 118 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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 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 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

## *LITURGY*

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

**And also with you.**

## *OPENING PRAYER*

**Psalm 130:1-8** Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

## *THE COLLECT*

**Let us pray.**

O God, the maker and redeemer of all, grant us, with your servant George and all the faithfully departed, the sure benefits of your Son's saving passion and glorious resurrection; that in the last day, when you gather up all things in Christ, we may then enjoy the fullness of your promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

Creator God, we gather today to stand in honour of our fallen comrade. We stand with family and friends and we ask you to make this place Holy, a place set apart to honour and remember Canadians who have served their country in the ultimate sacrifice. Loving God, a Soldier knows that the

most important people in a battle are those on our left and on our right, and we give you thanks for those people on our left, and on our right. Private George Newburn has stood for us and now we stand for him. May you comfort, strengthen and guide us to be all that we are called to be.

**Amen.**

### *READINGS*

**Psalm 23:1-6** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

### *Old Testament Lesson*

**Isaiah 49:13-16** Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! for the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.

### *Epistle Lesson*

**Romans 8:31-39** If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died- more than that, who was raised- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who

shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

*Gospel*

The Holy Gospel according to St Luke the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

**Luke 23:33-43** And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."



This is the Gospel of our Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*SERMON*

Lord have mercy upon us

**Christ have mercy upon us**

Lord have Mercy upon us

Lord remember us in your Kingdom and teach us to pray,

**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, forever and ever.**

**Amen.**

*THE 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*

*ROUSE*

*UNDRESSING AND LOWERING OF CASKET*

*THE COMMITTAL*

## *CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION*

God our creator, we commend into your hands our brother, George. In this life, he answered the call to serve his country, and laid down his life in the cause of freedom. May all that was good in this man's life not be lost, but will be a benefit to the world; that all that was important to him will be respected by those who follow. We ask for your presence to be with all who are affected by the tragedy of war, to strengthen all who suffer, and that we find peace in our hearts and treasure the freedom secured by the sacrifice of others. We pray that we may uphold the torch entrusted to us so that their sacrifice may not have been in vain.

Give us the strength and courage in the days ahead, and to continue in our service to our Nation.

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord look upon you with favour and grant you His peace.

**Amen.**

Private George Newburn, at the going down of the sun and in the morning,

**We shall remember you.**

*LAYING OF FLOWERS AND WREATH AND FINAL RESPECTS*

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