



CWGC

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Canadian Agency

Information Sheet

Canadian War Dead from the Sporting World

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was established by Royal Charter on 21 May 1917. Its duties are to mark and maintain the graves of the members of the forces of the Commonwealth who died in the two world wars, to build and maintain memorials to the dead whose graves are unknown, and to keep records and registers. The cost is shared by the partner governments - those of Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom - in proportions based on the numbers of their graves.

Over 110,000 Canadians lost their lives during the First and Second World Wars and are buried or commemorated by name on a memorial in over seventy countries worldwide. It can be extremely difficult to comprehend such statistics, especially when we compare these to Canada's small population at the time of both armed conflicts. Many of the Canadian men and women who did serve and die were young, and had as many interests and dreams as those who are alive today throughout our vast country. For some, these included significant achievements or even careers in sports.

Among those Canadians who served were renowned athletes who had competed at various levels including interscholastic, Olympic and professional events or teams. This information leaflet highlights some of the Canadian servicemen who lost their lives during one of the two world wars after particular success in the sporting world.



Winnipeg Brookside Cemetery

First World War



William Clifford

William Clifford excelled in marksmanship. He was a member of the Canadian Bisley teams of 1910 and 1911 and a member of the MacKinnon Cup winning team of 1910. In 1911, he won the Bisley King and Prince of Wales prizes.

During the First World War he urged the withdrawal of the Ross rifle from the Canadian infantry battalions due to its ineffectiveness in the trenches of the Western Front; instead, he promoted the use of the Lee-Enfield rifle which was used by British soldiers. He later requested and received a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps due to his dispute with Sir Charles Ross, the rifle inventor, and Sir Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia and Defence. Second Lieutenant Clifford did not return from his mission on 25 April 1917. As was too often the case during the Great War his remains were never discovered. He is commemorated on the Flying Services Memorial in Arras, France along with others who suffered the same fate.



Flying Services Memorial



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Allan McLean "Scotty" Davidson

Inducted posthumously into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1950, Allan M. "Scotty" Davidson was one of Canada's early hockey heroes. As captain of the Kingston Frontenacs, he led the team to the Ontario Hockey Association's junior title in 1909 and 1911. During the 1912-1913 season he joined the National Hockey Association, playing for the Toronto Blueshirts, scoring nineteen goals in twenty games. The following year, as team captain, he led the Blueshirts to Toronto's first-ever Stanley Cup title.



Lance Corporal Davidson was the first professional hockey player to join the Canadian Expeditionary Force in September 1914 serving with the 2nd Canadian Infantry Battalion (Eastern Ontario Regiment). He was 24 years old when he died in France on 16 June 1915 and is one of over 11,000 Canadians whose remains were never found or positively identified. Lance Corporal Allan M. Davidson is commemorated on the Vimy Memorial.



Vimy Memorial



Alexander Decoteau

Originally from the Red Pheasant Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, Alexander Decoteau distinguished himself as the first Aboriginal policeman in Canada and as Canada's first motorcycle police constable. Prior to the First World War he also stood out as a distance runner winning many races in Western Canada. Decoteau was chosen to represent Canada at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics in the 5000 metre track event where he finished in eighth place.

Almost four years later Decoteau enrolled in April 1916 in the 202nd Canadian Infantry Battalion. He later joined the 49th Canadian Infantry Battalion (Alberta Regiment) and as one of its soldiers died on the first day of the Canadian assault during the Battle of Passchendaele on 30 October 1917. Private Alexander Decoteau is buried in plot XI, row A, grave 28 of Passchendaele New British Cemetery.



Passchendaele New British Cemetery

James Duffy

Born in 1890 in Ireland, James Duffy immigrated to Canada in 1911 as a tinsmith and a stone cutter. He represented Canada as a distance runner finishing fifth in the marathon at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. In April 1914 he won the Boston marathon.

Private James Duffy enrolled in the Canadian Expeditionary Force at Valcartier in September 1914. As a member of the 16th Canadian Infantry Battalion (Manitoba Regiment), Private Duffy was one of the 278 members who were killed on 23 April 1915 during the Second Battle of Ypres. He is buried in plot I, row F, grave 14 of Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery in Belgium.



Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery



Francis Clarence McGee

Born in 1882 in Ottawa, Francis Clarence McGee had an interesting family ancestry. His uncle was Thomas D'Arcy McGee, a Father of Confederation and the only Canadian federal politician to be assassinated. While working for the Department of Indian Affairs, he devoted some of his personal time to rugby and lacrosse; however, Francis McGee was better known for his abilities on the ice. He was a hockey scoring legend while playing with the Ottawa Hockey Club from 1902 until 1906 (nicknamed the Ottawa Silver Seven in 1903) even though he was blind in one eye due to an injury suffered in a 1900 amateur game. Perhaps his most famous achievement occurred when he scored fourteen goals in the 1905 Stanley Cup victory against the Dawson City Nuggets.



At the beginning of the First World War, Francis McGee was an active member of the 43rd Regiment (Duke of Cornwall's Own Rifles). He enrolled in the 21st Canadian Infantry Battalion (Eastern Ontario Regiment) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in November 1914. According to William Houston's biography of Francis Clarence McGee in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online, "It is a mystery how McGee got into the army with sight in only one eye. In his certificate of examination the medical officer wrote that McGee could "see the required distance with either eye." According to McGee's nephew, Frank Charles McGee, his uncle tricked the doctor. When he was asked to cover one eye and

read the chart he covered his blind eye, and when required to cover the other eye he switched hands instead of eyes."

In December 1915 he injured a knee in France and was sent to the United Kingdom to recuperate. The following year, he returned to his battalion during the Battle of the Somme in France where he was killed near Courcellette on 16 September 1916. Lieutenant Francis C. McGee's remains were never found and he is commemorated on the Vimy Memorial.



Vimy Memorial



Percival Molson

Born into a prominent Canadian family in 1880, Percival Molson was the son of John Thomas Molson from the famous brewing company. He was an exceptional all-round athlete and participated in a wide range of sports such as cricket, golf, swimming and tennis; however, he is best remembered for his feats in football, hockey, and track and field.



Villers Station Cemetery

In 1897, at the age of sixteen, Percival Molson played one game for the reigning Stanley Cup champions, the Montreal Victorias. As a McGill University student he was named all-round athlete for three consecutive years, a feat which has not been equalled in the university's history. In 1900 he set a world record in long jump at the American Athletics Meet in the United States and in 1904, he represented Canada at the St. Louis Olympic Games in the 400 metre race. Molson played for the Montreal Football Club from 1902 to 1906 and was known for his running and kicking abilities. Molson was team captain for two consecutive years in 1903 and 1904. In 1906, he was a member of the Quebec Rugby Football Union which had won the championship. In 1909, he was named one of the original trustees of the Grey Cup, Canada's new football championship trophy.

On 2 June 1916 he was wounded during the Battle of Mount Sorrel in Belgium. Awarded the Military Cross for valour he later returned to the Western Front as a Captain with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. On 5 July 1917 he was killed at the age of 36 during an artillery barrage. Captain Percival Molson is interred in plot VIII, row E, grave 1 in Villers Station Cemetery.

In Captain Molson's last will he bequeathed \$75,000 to help cover the costs of McGill's new athletic stadium. It was officially re-dedicated the Percival Molson Stadium on 25 October 1919 to commemorate his sporting achievements and the sacrifice of his life for King and Country. Since 1998, the Canadian Football League's Montreal Alouettes have made the Percival Molson Stadium their permanent home.



George Taylor Richardson

Another hockey hero and a gifted athlete of the early twentieth century was George Taylor Richardson. Born in Kingston, Ontario in 1886, he participated in the Intercollegiate Hockey Union championship games of 1904 and 1906 playing for Queen's University's hockey team. He scored five goals in Queen's victory of 13 to 3 in the 1906 final against McGill University.

After his university years, he played offense for Kingston's 14th Regiment senior team which participated in three consecutive Ontario Hockey Association final series. He was also a provisional lieutenant within the regiment. Richardson later joined the Kingston Frontenacs hockey club and eventually became its team president. In the 1908 final game of the Ontario Hockey Association championship series, he set a record by scoring seven goals in a 9-7 win for the Frontenacs.

When the First World War was declared Lieutenant Richardson volunteered for service and enrolled in the 2nd Canadian Infantry Battalion (Eastern Ontario Regiment). In February 1915, once his training was completed in Canada and in the United Kingdom, his battalion was sent to the Western Front. He experienced the horrors of trench warfare around Ieper (Ypres) in Belgium in April 1915.

Captain Richardson returned to the UK on two different occasions; once, he bought three hundred pairs of boots for his men due to the poor quality of those which had been originally assigned to them, and, second, he purchased respiratory masks which had been recently invented for protection against German mustard gas attacks chemicals.

While supervising the withdrawal of a trench raiding party on the night of 8–9 February 1916, Richardson's patrol was spotted by German soldiers who opened fire on them. Captain Richardson was shot through the hips and was severely wounded. He made it back to the trenches but succumbed to his wounds during the early morning hours of 9 February 1916. Captain George Taylor Richardson is buried in Bailleul Community Cemetery Extension (Nord) in plot II, row B, grave 74. He was posthumously awarded the Legion of Honour on 17 March 1916 and was elected to the International Hockey Hall of Fame in 1950. The George T. Richardson Memorial Stadium is home to Queen's University Golden Gaels. Last but not least, from 1932 to 1972, the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association presented the George T. Richardson Memorial Trophy annually to the eastern Canadian Junior "A" champions.



Bailleul Community Cemetery Extension (Nord)

Canadian Expeditionary Force's 180th & 228th Infantry Battalions

The Irish Regiment of Canada perpetuates the 180th and 208th Infantry Battalions; these battalions provided reinforcements for the Canadian Corps. The 180th Infantry Battalion was nicknamed the Sportsmen's battalion since it actively recruited men from Toronto's sporting communities. These men trained in Toronto and were later sent to Camp Borden. Its Battle Honours include Arras 1917, Hill 70, Ypres 1917, Amiens, Scarpe, Drocourt-Quéant, Hindenburg Line, Canal du Nord, Pursuit to Mons, France and Flanders 1917-1918.

The Algonquin Regiment perpetuates the 228th Infantry Battalion (Northern Fusiliers) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force which recruited men from North Bay and Sudbury, Ontario. During the first half of the 1916-1917 National Hockey Association season soldiers from the 228th Battalion wore khaki-colored uniforms and established themselves as a very popular drawing card around the league. The soldiers won six of their ten games and placed third in the mid-season standings before being sent overseas in February 1917. The 228th Canadian Infantry Battalion served in France as the 6th Battalion, Canadian Railway Troops.



Vimy Memorial

Second World War

Ernest Osborne Herlen

Boxing matches were very popular and some servicemen were already accomplished boxers before entering the forces like Ernest Osborne Herlen (or Ossie as he was known) who started boxing at the age of 15. During the 1930s Ossie excelled in his chosen sport, becoming Saskatchewan Lightweight Champion in 1937 and Welterweight Champion in 1938. Of his thirty-three fights, Ossie won twenty-seven, twelve by knockout. In his nine years of boxing, he was never knocked out.

After entering the Royal Canadian Air Force, Ossie carried on boxing and took the Toronto Garrison Championship in 1940. Pilot Officer Ernest Herlen died at the age of 25 on 9 June 1944 in an airplane accident. He is interred in block J, lot 43, grave 11885, in Saskatoon (Woodlawn) Cemetery, Saskatchewan. His sporting achievements are still remembered today.



Russell Henry McConnell

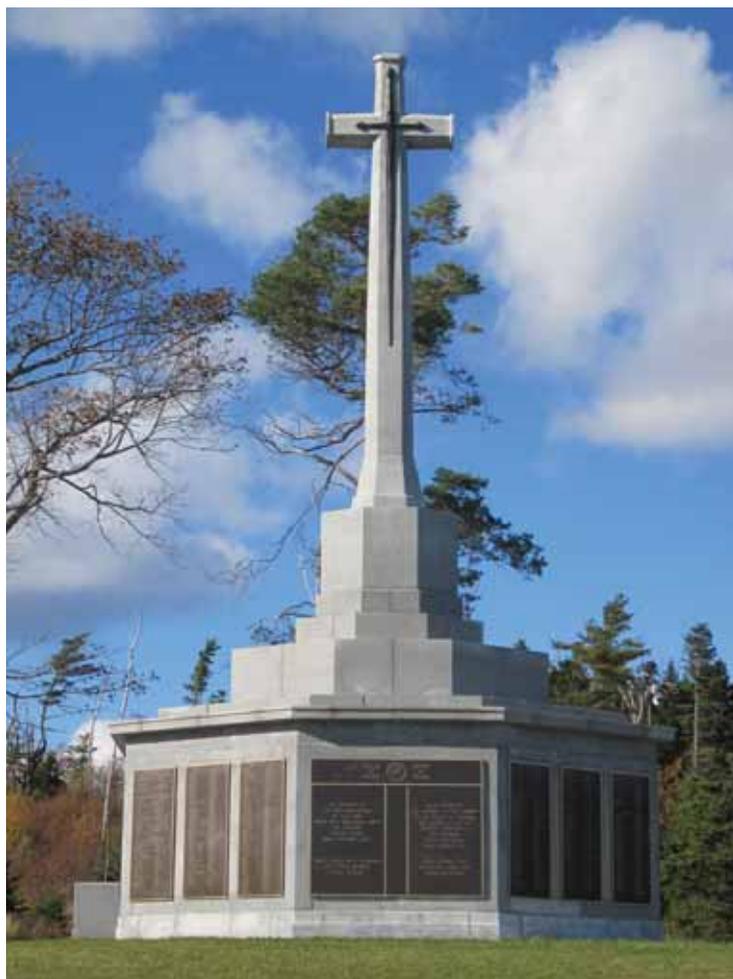
Russell H. McConnell was born on 7 January 1918 in Montreal. He was one of the most accomplished hockey players in McGill University history.

While studying commerce from 1935 to 1939, he was a member of four McGill hockey championship teams and played two seasons of senior football. He won two scoring titles in the International Intercollegiate Hockey League and was the most valuable player in the Quebec Senior Hockey League during the 1938-1939 season.

During his senior academic year he was appointed captain of the university's hockey team. During his years with the McGill Redmen he established career records for goals, assists, and points, which lasted fifty years - 116 goals with 95 assists for 211 points in 94 games. His most impressive achievement occurred in February 1939 when he set a record for most points in a game, accomplishing this feat twice during a five-day period against Harvard University and the University of Montreal.

According to the Who's Who in Canadian Sport, Russell McConnell rejected offers of a professional hockey career with the New York Rangers. Instead, he served King and Country by enrolling in the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve.

McConnell was a member of the crew of H.M.C.S. Raccoon when the armed yacht attempted to chase down the German submarine U-165 in the Gulf of St. Lawrence on 7 September 1942. Contact with Raccoon was lost and on 9 October 1942 McConnell's remains, identified by a school ring, washed up on Anticosti Island. These were then committed to the sea with full naval honours. Sub-Lieutenant Russell H. McConnell's name is located on panel 8 of the Halifax Memorial. This memorial commemorates those of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Navy Reserve, the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve, the Canadian Merchant Navy and the Merchant Seamen of Newfoundland who have no known grave but the sea. The memorial also bears the names of those of the Canadian Army, stationed in Canada who have no known grave or who were lost at sea. The Memorial consists of a large Cross of Sacrifice erected over an octagonal podium, the faces of which bear 23 bronze panels inscribed with over 3,000 names.



Halifax Memorial



Albert Tilson

Due to his fire red hair, Albert Tilson was nicknamed “Red” Tilson during his two seasons with the Ontario Hockey Association’s Oshawa Generals. He was the OHA’s scoring leader during his second season with the Generals.

At the age of 19 he enrolled in the Canadian Army to serve his country during the Second World War. Lance Corporal Albert Tilson was killed while serving as a member of the Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada on 27 October 1944 during the Battle of the Scheldt in Belgium. He is interred in plot II, row D, grave 12 of Adegem Canadian War Cemetery.

The Ontario Hockey League commemorated his life by creating the Red Tilson Trophy which annually honours the league’s most valuable player. He also became the first player of the Oshawa Generals to have his jersey number retired; the ceremony was held in November 2006.



Adegem Canadian War Cemetery

Sources

The Canadian Agency of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission extends its gratitude to the following sources which were used during the research of this information leaflet: Aboriginal Multi-Media Society; Alberta Online Encyclopedia and Edukits; American Hockey League Internet Site; Canadian Football League Internet Site; Canadian Olympic Committee Internet Site; Canadian Sports Hall of Fame Internet Site; Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online (Library and Archives Canada Internet Site); Dudley Morine Garrett Award Internet Site; Ferguson, Bob. Who’s Who in Canadian Sport, Volume 3, Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data, 1999; International Hockey Hall of Fame Internet Site; Joe Pelletier’s Greatest Hockey Legends Internet Site; Legends of Hockey - Hockey Hall of Fame Internet Site; McGill University Internet Site; Montreal Canadiens Internet Site; National Hockey League Internet Site; Oshawa Generals Internet Site; Queen’s University Internet Site and Veterans Affairs Canada Internet Site. The Canadian Agency is also grateful to Irma Coucill, Ron Good and Brian Harris for permission to publish their illustrations or photographs.

Commonwealth War Graves in the Americas

There are over 20,000 Commonwealth War Dead buried in some 3,400 cemeteries or commemorated by name on a Memorial to the Missing in the Americas. The majority of those died as a result of disease or accident, or of wounds received on active service elsewhere. Many others died in air or naval operations and were denied a known grave.

Services Available to the Public

Locations

Records can be searched on-line using the “Debt of Honour” register at www.cwgc.org or at the Commission’s Head Office in the United Kingdom. The Canadian Agency is also able to help enquirers locate a particular grave or a name on a memorial.

Directions to Visitors

The Commission can provide directions to all Commonwealth war cemeteries and memorials throughout the world, or enquirers can find out for themselves from the Commission’s website at www.cwgc.org

Publications

Publications relating to the Commission’s work can be supplied on request or may be downloaded from the Commission’s website at www.cwgc.org

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