



COLDWATER REMEMBERS

PRIVATE RONALD McDONALD

Ronald McDonald was born on May 19, 1889, son of Dan and Mary (McGillis) McDonald of Coldwater, Ontario. On March 15, 1915, Ronald enlisted in Lindsay, Ontario, with the 21st Canadian Infantry Battalion, part of the 4th Canadian Brigade, 2nd Canadian Division of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was 25 years old and single. On his Attestation Form he is described as 5 feet 9 inches tall, with blue eyes and brown hair. He identified his religious denomination as Presbyterian, and his trade as carpenter, with no previous military experience.



Private Ronald McDonald, regimental number 59708, sailed from Montreal to England on the S.S. Metagama, arriving on May 15, 1915. After training in England for several months, he landed in France on October 27. With his unit he fought through several months and suffered a gunshot wound to the hand in June 1916, returning to duties a month later.

In October 1917, Canadian troops, including Private McDonald's unit, were sent to Belgium to take part in the final push to capture the village of Passchendaele. Despite the horrible conditions, the Canadians reached the outskirts of the village by October 30 during a driving rainstorm. On November 6, the Canadians launched an assault and were successful in capturing the village of Passchendaele itself. But counter-attacks soon followed and Canadian casualties continued to climb even after they gained control of the village. More than 4,000 Canadian soldiers died in the fighting around Passchendaele, and almost 12,000 were wounded. Private McDonald was among the dead. On November 9, Private McDonald was wounded in the legs by shrapnel during his battalion's tour in the Passchendaele area. He was transported to Casualty Clearing Station No.44 where he later died.

Four years later, Ronald's mother Mary (by then Cook) would have received the awards her son was entitled to: the 1914-15 Star; the 1914-1918 British War Medal; the Inter Allied Victory Medal; a Memorial Plaque (a bronze medallion often referred to as "Dead Man's Penny"); and a scroll from King George V. She would also have received a "Mother's Cross".

Private Ronald McDonald is buried at Nine Elms British Cemetery, located 11.5 km west of Ieper, in Belgium. In Canada he is commemorated on page 281 of the *First World War Book of Remembrance*, located inside the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower in Ottawa. As of November 11, 2018, he is also commemorated on a plaque on the Cenotaph in front of the Coldwater Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

We will remember him.