



COLDWATER REMEMBERS

PRIVATE ANDREW DURNFORD

Andrew William Durnford was born on April 2, 1897, the son of Janet (Chalmer) and William Durnford of Tay Township, just outside the village of Coldwater, Ontario. He had four brothers and two sisters. Along with several friends, he enlisted in Coldwater with the 157th Overseas Battalion (The Simcoe Foresters), Canadian Expeditionary Force, on February 12, 1916. He was 18 years old and single. On his Attestation Form he is described as 5 feet 8 inches tall, with brown eyes and black hair. He identified his religion as Methodist, and his trade as labourer, with no previous military experience.



Private Andrew Durnford, regimental number 644007, sailed to England on the S.S. Cameronia, arriving on October 28, 1916. Within a month he joined his front line unit in France, the 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion (Western Ontario Regiment), on November 29. The unit was part of the 1st Canadian Division under the command of General Arthur Currie. In the months that followed, Private Durnford trained and prepared for a battle that would take center stage in Canadian culture.

Private Durnford was killed in action on the first day of the Canadian troops' assault on Vimy Ridge, April 9, 1917. That fateful morning his battalion advanced on the front line, on the right flank of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade, preceded by a creeping barrage of friendly artillery. At 12:35 p.m. on the 9th, a message from the unit's adjutant stated: "*We have captured all our objectives and are consolidating BLUE. Our casualties are not very heavy. We have taken at least 50 prisoners and captured 2 machine guns.*" Sadly, Private Durnford would not celebrate his unit's success that night.

An official telegram would have reached his parents to deliver the tragic news. Four years later, they would have received the awards their son was entitled to: 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 an official scroll from King George V. His mother, Janet, would also have received a "Mother's Cross".

Private Andrew Durnford has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France, about 8 km northeast of Arras. In Canada he is commemorated on page 232 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.