



COLDWATER REMEMBERS

PRIVATE GORDON BECKETT

Gordon Beckett was born in Coldwater, Ontario, on October 10, 1896, son of John and Frances Beckett. On June 11, 1915, Gordon enlisted in Red Deer, Alberta, with the 12th Regiment Mounted Rifles, Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was 19 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 Church of England, and his trade as farmer. He claimed prior military experience with the militia.



Private Gordon Beckett, regimental number 117133, sailed on the S.S. Missanabie, arriving in Devonport, England, on October 9, 1915. After training in England for several months, he landed in France and joined his front line unit, the 2nd Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, on January 29, 1916. The unit fought as part of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division.

In late August 1916, the Canadian divisions moved from Flanders to the Somme, where they took over a section of the front line west of the village of Courcellette. They ran into heavy fighting and suffered some 2,600 casualties before the full-scale offensive even got underway. In the major offensive, which began at dawn on September 15, Canadians assaulted on a 2,000 metre sector west of the village of Courcellette. Advancing behind a creeping artillery barrage and aided by the newly introduced armoured tanks, Canadian infantry captured the main objective, a defence bastion known as the Sugar Factory, and then pushed ahead to Courcellette. Numerous German counter-attacks were repulsed, but at a heavy cost in casualties. Private Beckett was killed in action on September 29, 1916, near the village of Courcellette. No details are available as to the circumstances of his death.

Six years later, Gordon's parents 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 a scroll from King George V. His mother would also have received a "Mother's Cross".

Private Gordon Beckett has no known grave, but he is commemorated on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France, about 8 km northeast of Arras. In Canada he is commemorated on page 52 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.