



COLDWATER REMEMBERS

PRIVATE GEORGE ARTHUR WOODS

George Arthur Woods was born on April 7, 1890, in Surrey, England, the son of Lucy (Mitchell) and John Woods. The family immigrated to Canada in 1894, and lived in Coldwater, Ontario, by the time the First World War began. Along with several friends, George enlisted in Coldwater with the 157th Overseas Battalion (The Simcoe Foresters), Canadian Expeditionary Force, on February 12, 1916. He was 25 years old and single at the time of enlisting. On his Attestation Form he is described as 5 feet 6 inches tall, with blue eyes and brown hair. He identified his religious denomination as Church of England, and his trade as trainman, with no previous military experience. He was employed by the Canadian Express Company of Coldwater prior to enlisting.



Private Woods, regimental number 644034, 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 a letter to his widowed mother, Private Woods gave his first impression of his experience on the front lines: *"The fireworks at the Exhibition may be considered fine, but they do not compare with the fireworks of our artillery and that of Fritz."*

On May 3, 1917, the 1st Battalion attacked and captured enemy trenches north of Fresnoy, near Vimy. The day's entry in the unit's War Diaries reports 52 soldiers killed, 224 wounded, and 70 missing. Private Woods was in the latter group. A line recorded in his personnel file describes him as "missing after action". Weeks later, an official telegram to his mother, Lucy, delivered the tragic news. A final report would later state that, for official purposes, he was *"presumed to have died on or since May 3rd 1917."*

Mrs. Woods passed away in 1920. Had she lived a few more years, she would have received the awards her 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. She would also have received a "Mother's Cross".

Private George Woods has no known grave. His name is engraved on the Vimy Memorial in France, alongside the names of 11,285 Canadian soldiers listed as "missing, presumed dead" in France during the Great War. In Canada he is commemorated on page 353 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.