

## Faithfull & MacDonald – Two Lieutenants of the 75th Battalion

By E. Clare Stewart & Iain S. Sneyd

In the Fall 2018 issue we published an article about Lt. Charles Douglas Hewson – “He had been in France only sixteen days”. In it we mentioned five other Lieutenants who also joined the 75th Battalion on March 26, 1917: Gordon Chamberlain Faithfull, Duncan John MacDonald, Gordon Bedford Ross, Dalton Strype, and Murray MacKay Winchester.

In this article we explore the lives of Faithfull and MacDonald. Subsequent articles will discuss Ross, Strype, and Winchester.

Gordon Chamberlain Faithfull (also spelled Faithful) was born December 13, 1887 in Taranaki, New Zealand to Richard Chamberlain Faithfull, a solicitor, and Eleanor Gwendoline Woolmer Barton. His family moved to England in time for Gordon’s baptism on January 29, 1888.

Faithfull served three years with the 3rd Middlesex Royal Field Artillery and three years with the 5th London Brigade Royal Field Artillery<sup>1</sup> before immigrating to Canada in August 1910. While living in Montreal he served one year with the Royal Highlanders and four years with the 64th Regiment (Militia) Chateaugay and Beauharnois. In 1912, while with the 64th he attended the Provisional School of Infantry, Trois Rivières, where he qualified as Lieutenant.

In June 1914 Faithfull married Ida Gill in Ottawa, where he was a theatre proprietor and manager. He was living in Ottawa on February 5, 1916 when he enlisted in the 109th Overseas Battalion, CEF. On July 23, 1916 the battalion sailed to England on the S.S. Olympic. In September 1916 Faithfull attended an Officer’s course at Pirbright Training Camp, and on December 20 he was attached to the 125th Battalion.

On February 2, 1917, Faithfull transferred to the 12th Reserve Battalion, from which he transferred to the 75th Battalion overseas on March 20. On March 24 he was taken on strength by the 75th Battalion and on March 26 he joined the unit in the field.

On April 9, at Vimy Ridge, he was initially reported “missing”, but was then reported to have been Killed in Action.

The Circumstances of Death card gives details of his death:

He took part in an attack on Vimy Ridge, and when about 50 yards in front of the “jumping off” trench, he was hit in the hand by a piece of enemy shrapnel. He wrapped a handkerchief around it and commenced creeping backwards to our own lines, and had only gone a short distance when he was hit in the head by an enemy bullet and instantly killed.



<sup>1</sup> In 1908 at the formation of the Territorial Force, the 3rd Middlesex R.F.A. became the 5th London Brigade R.F.A. (TF). It is logical to assume that Faithfull’s service was continuous from the old unit to the new.

Lt. Gordon Chamberlain Faithfull is buried in Canadian Cemetery No. 2, Neuville-St. Vaast, Plot 1, Row A, Grave 5, three graves away from Lt. Charles Douglas Hewson. His medals were sent to his father, who at that time was living in Shanghai.



Gordon Chamberlain Faithfull

Charles Douglas Hewson

King George V visits the graves of Lts. Charles Douglas Hewson and Gordon Chamberlain Faithfull, July 11, 1917. Photograph taken by Lt. John Warwick Brooke, © Imperial War Museum.



Duncan John MacDonald<sup>2</sup> was born in Glen Robertson, Glengarry County, Ontario on May 9, 1894 to James and Mary Anne MacDonald. He had two siblings, an older sister, Christina Ann MacDonald, and a younger brother, James Alexander MacDonald.

While still a student (one document – his original Medical History Sheet - says “medical student”) MacDonald served in the 59th Stormont and Glengarry Regiment (militia) as a private. He enrolled in the 154th Overseas Battalion CEF on January 15, 1916. In April and May of that year he attended the Provisional School of Infantry in Kingston. On September 11, he transferred to the Officers’ Overseas Draft and proceeded to England on September 26.

After being posted to the General List for several months, MacDonald was taken on strength to the 12th Reserve Battalion, and on March 20, 1917 transferred to the 75th

<sup>2</sup> MacDonald’s name appears differently in different sources. We find both MacDonald and McDonald, and Duncan John and John Duncan. In this article we are using the name given by MacDonald on his Officers’ Declaration.

Battalion. On March 26, along with Faithfull, Hewson, Ross, Strype, and Winchester, he joined the 75th in the field. Of the six lieutenants, MacDonald was the only one who emerged unscathed from the battle for Vimy Ridge.

From the end of April 1917 to after the Armistice, MacDonald's service file shows a continuous series of medical treatments, alternating with service in the field. Medical issues began with admission to 14 General Hospital Boulogne with influenza, followed by a series of treatments for VDG; during this time he was attached to the 1st Central Ontario Regiment Depot.

On December 8, 1917, MacDonald was taken on strength by the 12th Reserve Battalion. While still with the 12th, on January 26, 1918, he was admitted to 1 Military Hospital Canterbury after an accident. He suffered a concussion and wound to the forehead due to being run over by an automobile. By April 13 he had recovered and proceeded overseas to the 75th Battalion. In May he transferred to the Canadian Machine Gun Reinforcement Unit. He served with them until July 5 when he was admitted to 51 General Hospital Étaples for treatment of VD. He was discharged to duty on August 20, and then posted to the 4th Machine Gun Battalion on September 28.

On November 7, 1918 MacDonald was wounded by a "W" type gas shell. He was admitted to 20 General Hospital Camiers on November 13 and discharged November 16.

On May 5, 1919 MacDonald proceeded to England and was taken on strength "F" Wing Canadian Concentration Camp, Bramshott, pending return to Canada. While there, at the end of May, he was again hospitalized for treatment of VD.

On June 28, 1919 MacDonald sailed for Canada on the S.S. Mauretania. On July 7 he was demobilized.

After the war, MacDonald married Eva Landry on November 10, 1923 in Saskatoon, SK. Information from his granddaughter, Nicole McCullough, says that when he died on August 22, 1927 it was from lingering effects of mustard gas. This occurred when Nicole's mother was just a year old. Nicole has inherited his military commendations and a silver cane that MacDonald used as a result of his war injuries.

Our next article will discuss the lives and service of Lt. Gordon Bedford Ross and Capt. Duncan Strype, MC.

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