

Alexander McDougall - WW1



7th Battalion (British Columbia) C.E.F.

Soldier Profile

- Full Name: Alexander McDougall (MacDougall... p. 1)
- Regimental Number: 931427 (MacDougall... p. 1)
- Rank: Private (Pte.) (MacDougall... p. 3)
- Date of Birth: November 6, 1890 (MacDougall... p. 1)
- Place of Birth: Georgeville, Antigonish County, Nova Scotia (MacDougall... pp. 1, 17)
- Next of Kin: Catherine McDougall (Mother), Georgeville, Antigonish County (MacDougall... pp. 1, 17)
- Trade/Occupation: Miner (MacDougall... p. 1)
- Physical Description on Enlistment: 25 years old, 5'2½" tall, fair complexion, blue eyes, brown hair (MacDougall... pp. 2, 6).

Service Timeline

1. Enlistment and Domestic Training (1916)

- May 12, 1916: Enlisted and signed his Attestation Paper at Nelson, British Columbia, joining the 225th Overseas Battalion, CEF (MacDougall... p. 1).
- October 30, 1916: While training at Vernon Camp, B.C., he was transferred to the 158th Battalion (The Duke of Connaught's Own), CEF (MacDougall... pp. 13, 23).
- November 14, 1916: Embarked from Halifax, Nova Scotia, aboard the *SS Olympic*, arriving in Liverpool, England, on November 20, 1916 (MacDougall... pp. 6, 23, 27).

2. Deployment to England and France (1917)

- January 1917: Absorbed into the 1st Canadian Reserve Battalion at Shorncliffe to undergo advanced training (MacDougall... pp. 23, 27).
- May 18, 1917: Transferred to the 7th Battalion (British Columbia Regiment), CEF and deployed to the active theater of war in France (MacDougall... pp. 15, 23-24).

3. Frontline Action & Severe Battle Injury (November 1917)

- Private McDougall served on the Western Front through the summer and autumn of 1917 until he was severely wounded in action (MacDougall... pp. 7, 24).

The combat action in November 1917 where Private Alexander McDougall was wounded was the catastrophic final phase of the Battle of Passchendaele (also known as the Third Battle of Ypres)

By November 1917, the Canadian Corps had been pulled into the Ypres sector in Belgium to accomplish what British forces had failed to do all summer: capture the high, mud-slick ridge and the village of Passchendaele. While the village itself fell on November 6, the Canadians still had to secure the absolute top of the ridge just north of the village to prevent the Germans from launching a counter-offensive.

The 7th Battalion (1st British Columbia) was chosen to lead the final assault of the entire months-long campaign on November 10, 1917.

- November 10–11, 1917: Suffered a catastrophic Gunshot Wound (G.S.W.) / shrapnel injury to his left hand, back, and thighs (MacDougall... pp. 7, 10, 24).

At 6:00 AM on November 10, 1917, under a torrential, freezing rainstorm, the 7th Battalion leaped from their mud-filled trenches into No Man's Land.

Flanked by the 8th Battalion on their left and the 20th Battalion on their right, the 7th Battalion pushed forward behind a creeping artillery barrage.

Their main objectives were a strategic intersection known as Vindictive Crossroads and the highest point of the ridge, Hill 52.

While they captured Vindictive Crossroads with minimal initial resistance, the advance ground to a bloody halt when they reached a defensive line known as Venison Trench. Here, a massive German concrete pillbox opened fire, sweeping the open mud with heavy machine-gun barrages.

- The Injury: The shrapnel fractured the spinous processes in his spine, caused a severe abscess in his left thigh, and shattered his left hand (MacDougall... pp. 7, 10, 31).
- November 19, 1917: Admitted to No. 8 Stationary Hospital in Wimereux, France, where he was officially placed on the "Dangerously Ill" list (MacDougall... pp. 7, 9, 24). Emergency surgery was required to address his severe wounds and perform partial amputations on his left hand (MacDougall... pp. 31, 39).

4. Hospitalization and Convalescence (1917–1918)

- November 30, 1917: Invalided back to England and admitted to Fort Pitt Central Military Hospital in Chatham, where his wounds required daily surgical dressings (MacDougall... pp. 7, 10, 40).
- December 1917 – February 1918: Moved to Rust Hall Hospital in Tunbridge Wells for continued treatment of his spine and recovering hand (MacDougall... pp. 7, 40).
- February 27 – May 27, 1918: Transferred to the Military Convalescent Hospital at Woodcote Park, Epsom (MacDougall... pp. 7, 10, 31). Medical records here note that his wounds had finally healed, but his left hand was heavily compromised by the

amputation of his 4th (ring) and 5th (little) fingers, along with parts of his metacarpal bones (MacDougall... pp. 31, 39-40). His remaining index and middle fingers were left stiff and deformed, rendering his grip weak and limited (MacDougall... pp. 19, 31).

- June–July 1918: Placed on light gym and remedial therapy at Seaford Camp to restore basic wrist and hand mobility (MacDougall... pp. 19, 25).

5. Return to Canada and Final Discharge (Autumn 1918)

- September 22, 1918: Boarded a transport ship at Liverpool via the Canadian Discharge Depot in Buxton to return home (MacDougall... p. 25).
- November 7, 1918: Formally discharged from the CEF at Victoria, British Columbia, after a medical board ruled him permanently "Medically Unfit" for further military service due to his severe combat amputations (MacDougall... pp. 3, 26, 33). Following his discharge, his medical records indicate his intended civilian destination was Silverton, West Kootenay, B.C. (MacDougall... pp. 35, 38)

Medical Condition & Permanent Disabilities

Private McDougall's medical boards confirmed that his combat injuries caused severe permanent trauma (MacDougall... pp. 26, 39):

1. Left Hand Amputation & Deformity: Loss of his left little and ring fingers at the metacarpal bones (MacDougall... pp. 31, 40). His remaining middle finger was severely stiffened and deformed at the interphalangeal joint, dropping his total hand utility and grip power significantly (MacDougall... pp. 19, 31).
2. Spine and Thigh Weakness: Residual lower-body stiffness and localized pain resulting from the shrapnel fracture of his vertebrae and a deep left-thigh muscular abscess (MacDougall... pp. 7, 31).

Financial Settlement on Discharge

Upon his final demobilization on November 7, 1918, his account was finalized as follows (MacDougall... p. 33):

- He received 7 days of active pay (\$7.00) and Field Allowance (\$0.70) for November (MacDougall... p. 33).
- He was granted a standard \$35.00 clothing allowance to aid his transition back to civilian clothes (MacDougall... pp. 33, 35).
- His account details note a post-discharge pay award totaling \$350.00 processed across 1919 (MacDougall... p. 38).