

Daniel William McDonald - WW1 (KIA)



(photo enhanced with AI technology)

Soldier Profile

- Full Name: Daniel William McDonald (MacDonald,... p. 1)
- Regimental Number: 130146 (MacDonald,... p. 1)
- Rank: Private (Pte.) (MacDonald,... p. 3)
- Date of Birth: March 12, 1890 (MacDonald,... p. 1)
- Place of Birth: Cape George, Antigonish County, Nova Scotia (MacDonald,... p. 1)
- Next of Kin: D. J. McDonald (Father) & Mrs. Christina McDonald (Mother), Cape George, Nova Scotia (MacDonald,... pp. 9, 11)
- Trade/Occupation: Brakeman (Railway) (MacDonald,... p. 1)
- Physical Description: 25 years old, 5'11" tall, 175 lbs, medium complexion, grey eyes, brown hair, with a scar on the bridge of his nose (MacDonald,... pp. 2, 21).

Service Timeline

1. Enlistment & Trans-Canada Journey (1915)

- October 20, 1915: Though originally a Nova Scotian native, he was out west working when the war began (MacDonald,... pp. 1, 11). He signed his formal Attestation Paper in Vancouver, British Columbia (MacDonald,... p. 1).
- Assigned Unit: He joined the 72nd Overseas Battalion (Seaforth Highlanders of Canada) (MacDonald,... p. 1). He underwent basic training in Vancouver, during which he spent 23 days in the hospital for a recovery in January 1916 (MacDonald,... p. 22).

2. Deployment to England and France (1916)

- April 23, 1916: Embarked from Halifax aboard the *SS Empress of Britain*, arriving in Liverpool, England, on May 7, 1916 (MacDonald,... pp. 7, 19).
- Frontline Transfer: He was transferred on a reinforcement draft to the 16th Battalion (Canadian Scottish), CEF (MacDonald,... pp. 19, 27). He landed in France on June 19, 1916, entering the bloody theater of the Western Front (MacDonald,... pp. 13, 19).
- The Military Will: Just before stepping onto the battlefields of France, he filled out his military will on June 5, 1916, leaving all his pay and personal effects to his mother back home in Cape George (MacDonald,... p. 23).

3. Wounded in Action & Return to Battle (September 1916)

- September 8, 1916: During intense shelling, Private McDonald suffered a Gunshot Wound (G.S.W.) to his face (MacDonald,... p. 15). He was evacuated to No. 5 General Hospital in Rouen, France (MacDonald,... p. 15).
- Rapid Recovery: His wound was superficial enough that he was moved to a convalescent depot and discharged back to the Base Depot in Harfleur by September 13, 1916 (MacDonald,... p. 15). He was rushed straight back to the frontline trenches to rejoin his unit (MacDonald,... p. 27).

4. The Somme Offensive & Death (October 1916)

- October 8–9, 1916: Less than a month after being wounded, Private McDonald went into combat during the catastrophic Battle of the Somme (MacDonald,... pp. 15, 33). Following a brutal engagement, he was officially listed as "Wounded and Missing" (MacDonald,... p. 15).

The Battle of the Somme - The Battle of the Somme was one of the largest, bloodiest, and most defining conflicts of the First World War. It took place in northern France near the Somme River from July 1 to November 18, 1916.

The offensive was a massive joint operation by British and French armies designed to relieve pressure on the French fortress of Verdun, which was under immense German siege, and to break through the German lines on the Western Front.

The 16th Battalion, CEF, an elite infantry unit originally raised in western Canada, landed on the Somme in late August 1916. Their actions over the next two months represent some of the most ferocious hand-to-hand trench warfare experienced by Canadians.

The Assault on Regina Trench (October 8–9, 1916)

Following their victory at Courcelette, the 16th Battalion was thrown into the assault on Regina Trench, a deeply fortified, masterfully engineered German defensive network on the reverse slope of a ridge. The attack commenced on the morning of October 8, 1916, in cold rain and absolute mud:

- *The Fatal Wire: Unknown to the troops, the preceding Allied artillery bombardment had failed to cut the thick German barbed wire entanglements.*
- *The Slaughter: As the 16th jumped out of their trenches, they ran directly into uncut wire. Trapped in the open, they were systematically cut down by German machine gunners and targeted by pre-registered enemy artillery.*
- *Hand-to-Hand Combat: Small pockets of the 16th Battalion managed to breach the wire using wire-cutters and brute force. They made it into Regina Trench, engaging in brutal, desperate hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets and grenades.*
- *The Counter-Attacks: Isolated and without ammunition, the surviving Canadians could not hold the trench against waves of German counter-attacks. They were forced to retreat back across No Man's Land under heavy fire.*

The assault on Regina Trench on October 8–9 was a total catastrophe for the 16th Battalion. They suffered devastating casualties, losing hundreds of men in a matter of hours. Because the battlefield was an inaccessible wasteland of mud and constant shellfire, many bodies could not be recovered.

- The Fog of War: Because the battlefield was heavily churned by artillery, his body could not be immediately located. In September 1917, the British War Office issued a directive stating that for official purposes, he was presumed to have died on or since October 9, 1916 (MacDonald,... p. 25).
- Final Confirmation: In November 1917, official eyewitness reports and unit records updated his status to definitively Killed in Action on October 8/9, 1916 (MacDonald,... pp. 15, 17).



Post-War Remembrance & Gratuities

Private McDonald's supreme sacrifice was processed through the Canadian military estate system to support his grieving family in Antigonish County:

- The War Service Estate: His final active pay ledger was settled with a credit balance of \$122.76, which was transferred to the non-effective records branch to be sent to his family (MacDonald,... p. 29).
- Memorial Artifacts: His mother, Mrs. Christina McDonald, was sent his posthumous War Medals, his Memorial Scroll, and the Memorial Cross (Silver Cross) in recognition of her loss (MacDonald,... p. 9).

Excerpts from the book *First World War Honour Roll of Antigonish, Nova Scotia 1915-1927* by the Heritage Assoc. Of Antigonish.

A letter to his mother, written on May 21, 1916 reveals that Danny was safely stationed at Bramshott, England, and getting along fine after the trip across aboard the Empress of Britain, a voyage that had been a tad less than ideal. "It was not stormy but we had not much room" "There was [sic] over four thousand troops on board." Aside from the cramped quarters, "we had a very nice trip coming across."

Daniel spoke glowingly of his time in England: "They treat the Canadians fine. They do all they can for them. I have been to London on leave and the place I stayed, the people drove us all around the city everyday and had tea parties for us at night.... They also gave us free tickets for theaters.

The British and Canadians were clearly quite confident that they would win the war before long. "They say the Germans are an easy mark for the Canadians," wrote Daniel. "They will run away from them every time so that proves that they are all in. They are losing [sic] ground everyday." As time would reveal, the enemy wasn't so easily defeated.

Back in England, Daniel confidently proclaimed, "The Canadians are all good fighters." He was clearly proud to be serving his country. His signature on the letter to his mother read: "Pte. D. W. McDonald 130146 Coy A 2 Platoon 72nd Seaforth Highlanders CEF." Before signing off, he added, "Give my best regards to all and don't worry about me for it will be no good."

Daniel's body was eventually recovered from the battlefield, an account of his death appearing in *The Casket* on August 30, 1917. Initially buried a mile west of Le Sars, Daniel's remains were later exhumed and reinterred in Adanac Military Cemetery, Miraumont, Somme, France.