

## Tpr. Arthur Coles, Military Medal (1884-1916)

Arthur Coles was born 28 April 1884 in Taunton, Somerset County, England, on the Bristol Channel in the southwest. In his youth he served with the West Somerset Yeomanry, a county regiment. In 1908, at the age of 24, Arthur emigrated to Canada. Arthur also had a brother named Edward P. Coles whom emigrated to Canada and served in the First World War with the Canadians.

In 1911, the *Hedley Gazette* reported that Arthur Coles, then of Trail, B.C., visited the Similkameen Valley investigating ranch land in Ollahla. He apparently moved to Hedley that same year as he is listed in the 1911 census as being a resident of Hedley at that time.

In October 1914, Arthur contributed \$5 to the newly established Hedley Patriotic Fund - which is comparable to almost \$120 in the present day - a sizable amount to donate to the cause. His brother, Edward, visited him in Hedley during this time as well. A short two months later, 4 December 1914, Arthur enlisted into the Canadian armed forces in Vancouver with his friend from England, John Hepper, now also residing in Hedley. Arthur and John had both served in the West Somerset Yeomanry back in England. Arthur was now a railway surveyor and his friend, John, was a surveyor's helper.

Arthur and John trained at Willow Camp, Victoria, in early 1915, along with two other Hedleyites, Marcus Jacombs and Dan Dollemore. These four men were all assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles.

Marcus Jacombs of the 2<sup>nd</sup> C.M.R. wrote to a Hedley friend in January 1915 from Willow Camp, "We had orders the other day to prepare for an early departure and I think we are going to be used mostly at the front for advance work - patrolling, scouting and as cavalry screen, as we have been trained a great deal lately in that kind of work. We are all supposed to know semaphoring [a system of visual signaling]."

Nothing further is known of Arthur Cole's life until his very last days... It is known he served as a first aid man for his battalion and was recommended for the Military Medal "for bringing in a wounded man under heavy gun fire at Hoojen," Ypres, in the spring of 1916. He was awarded the medal posthumously, as reported in the *London Gazette* 10 August 1916.

There were sporadic battles at the Ypres Salient, Belgium, as the British sought local advantage and superiority over the Germans. One attempt to gain high ground was made in June 1916 when the British, with the Canadians playing a leading role, attempted to

take Mount Sorrel. The battle saw heavy casualties on both sides and at the end of the attack all were in the same positions. Arthur Coles had joined a cavalry regiment, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles, but by now some cavalry units were being dismounted and used as regular infantry. Although, the cavalry stayed as a major component of all armies throughout the war, as each army sought that elusive breakthrough which would see the horsemen unleashed. Unfortunately for Arthur Coles, he never lived to see that day and was fatally wounded on 2<sup>nd</sup> June providing first aid “while attending to fallen comrades under heavy fire.” He died the next day.

Tpr. Coles' Capt. Askill wrote to his mother, “He was a quiet, constant, faithful worker, one who knew his duty and never hesitated to perform it, many times in the face of deadly fire.”

Arthur was 32 years of age when he died. He is buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Belgium.