

William George Currell

Canadian Infantry (Central Ontario Regiment)
58th battalion

1881 – 1917



William Currell was born in Swanbourne on 16th November 1881, the eldest child of Charles and Mary Ann Currell (nee Digby). He was baptised at St Swithuns on 19th April 1882. At the time of his birth, the family were living in Station Road, in a house which was shared with William's Grandparents, John and Ann Currell. In succeeding years, five more children were born to the family – Ellen (1884), Mary (1886), John (1888), Sarah (1890) and Emily (1895). Then in 1898, William's mother Mary died after giving birth to a 7th child Charles, who also died after nine days. Charles remarried in 1900, to Eliza Edmonds from Ludgershall, who already had a young daughter called Mary (1897). By 1901, William's family had moved to their own home in Nearton End. Charles and Mary had at least five more children by this second marriage, but William himself, aged 19, had left home and was boarding with a family in Railway Terrace, Fenny Stratford. His occupation was given as Railway Engine Cleaner.

William married Louisa Hill from Simpson in 1907, and by the 1911 Census they had two children, Lucy born 1908 and William born 1910. William was a locomotive fireman for the London and North West Railway, and they were living in 61 Duncombe Street, Bletchley. There may have been other children after this, but at some point between 1911 and 1916, the family emigrated to Canada, where William attested (or enlisted) on 23rd March 1916, aged 34 years when his address was given as 178 Christie Street, Toronto, Ontario, and his occupation as Shedman (TSR). He gave his religious denomination as Methodist.

William joined the 58th Battalion, of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, which was an infantry battalion. The CEF was recruited in central Ontario and mobilized at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. It embarked for Great Britain on 22 November 1915, disembarked in France on 22 February 1916, where it fought as part of the 9th Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division in France and Flanders until the end of the war. It is not known exactly when William himself travelled across to France to join the Brigade.

William was killed on 26th October 1917, probably as part of the 3rd Battle of Ypres, which was an offensive mounted by Commonwealth forces to divert German attention from a weakened French front further south. Whilst the initial attempt to dislodge the Germans from the Messines Ridge was successful, the main assault which began at the end of July became of struggle in deteriorating weather.

At the time of his death on 26th October 1917, his family were living at 12 Westport Street, Toronto. The records state 'previously reported missing, now, for official purposes, presumed to have died. Location of Unit at time of casualty, Passchendale'. William Currell's memorial is at the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium, which suggests that his body was never found.

