



De Last Post in het landschap

The Last Post in the landscape

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TYNE COT CEMETERY - PASSENDALE



Guy Melfort Drummond



Guy Melfort Drummond was born on 15 August 1887 in Cacouna, Province of Quebec, Canada, the only son of The Honourable Sir George Drummond, KCMG, CVO and his second wife Grace Julia Parker, Lady Drummond.

His father had a long and successful business career, mainly in the sugar industry. Drummond was an active member of the Montreal business community, becoming a member of the Montreal Board of Trade and serving as chairman from 1886 to 1888. He was also on the board of directors of several large companies, including Canadian Pacific Railway, and from 1887 to 1896 he was vice-president of the Bank of Montreal, of which he was president from 1905 until his death in 1910.

He had a keen interest in politics and was very active in the Conservative party, and in 1888 Sir John A. Macdonald appointed him to the Senate of Canada, where his views on commercial, financial and tax matters were highly valued and where he chaired the Banking and Finance Committee, which he led until his death.

Grace Julia Parker, Lady Drummond, as she later became known, was widely respected for her pioneering work in charity and as a champion of women's involvement in public life. She was the first chairwoman of the Montreal branch of the National Council of Women in Canada and helped establish the Montreal branch of the Victorian Order of Nurses in 1899. She was the first chairwoman and, along with Elsie Meighen Reford, co-founder of the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal.

In 1910, Sir George and Lady Drummond founded the Charity Organisation of Montreal and Lady Drummond was chairwoman from 1911 to 1919.

The Honourable Sir George Drummond, KCMG, CVO and his second wife Grace Julia Parker, Lady Drummond.



At the beginning of the Great War in 1914, Lady Drummond travelled to London to work at the headquarters of the Canadian Red Cross, where she headed the Information Bureau. She personally funded most of her department's activities, including providing news to the families of missing and wounded soldiers and organising accommodation and other support for Canadian soldiers in hospital or on leave in London.

For her outstanding services to Canada and the British Empire during the Great War, Lady Drummond was awarded the title Lady of Grace of The Order of St. John of Jerusalem, she was also awarded the French Médaille de Reconnaissance, the Serbian Red Cross Medal and the British Red Cross Medal. She was widely regarded, as reported in newspapers of the time, as one of the "12 Greatest Canadian Women" for her work. In recognition of her community service and humanitarian work, Lady Drummond was the first woman ever to receive an honorary doctorate (LL. D.) from McGill University.

She gave birth to her first son, Julian St George in 1885 but in the summer of 1886, while they were at their cottage in Cacouna, Julian died of an unknown cause, what we would today call AIDS. Does the grief of a dying child surpass the grief of a lost loved one? Like other mothers of this age, she had her little son photographed one last time.

The following summer, again in Cacouna, Julia gave birth to Guy Melfort Drummond. He grew up with four half-brothers and sisters and was educated at St John's School in Montreal, for some time at Bradfield College in England and went to the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris in 1909.

Guy with his mother at a younger age



Guy was groomed by the Conservative Party of Canada as a future great leader, and people around him believed he would one day become Canada's prime minister. In that capacity, he joined the army after McGill University and reached the rank of captain in 1912. During that time, he courted the beautiful Mary Hendrie Braithwaite and they married, with all the pomp and circumstance of the time, in Montreal in April 1914. Three months later, declarations of war turned the world upside down.

Guy was twenty-seven when he died and his wife Mary was pregnant with their first child. She was considered a symbol in her own right, as her ongoing charitable work for Canada's war effort illustrated the stoicism of war widows.

The digitisation of Canada's pension files of World War I veterans reveals a new aspect of Mary Drummond's charitable work, as five months after Guy's death, Mary Drummond applied for a war widow's pension. These documents show that officials at the Pensions & Claims Board were somewhat surprised by her application because war widows could not get a pension if "she was or became rich". As one of the richest widows in Canada, Mary's application was initially rejected. Until she revealed that she planned to donate the pension money to the wives and children of other soldiers of the 5th Royal Highlanders.

At the outbreak of war, Guy volunteered for active service at Valcartier Camp and accepted an appointment as a lieutenant in the 13th Bn. Canadian Infantry - Black Watch (Royal Highlanders of Canada) on 22 September 1914.

For the 13th Battalion, the advance began on the evening of 25 September 1914 and reveille sounded at 3am the following morning. During the night it had frozen severely, but hard work quickly warmed the men up.

Despite the weather, the battalion reached the station on time and boarded the train at 8am and an hour later it had left Valcartier Camp behind and the train slowly came to a halt in Quebec harbour.

On arrival in Quebec, the battalion, with a total strength of 45 officers and 1,112 other ranks, boarded the Cunard Line's R.M.S. Alauna.

On the afternoon of 30 September 1914, a farewell message was read from H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught and shortly afterwards the ship slowly glided down the river.



On the evening of 13 October 1914, England came into sight and the next morning the *Alaunia* anchored. It had originally been planned that the entire convoy would dock at Southampton, but the presence, or suspected presence, of German submarines off Southampton had caused them to opt for Devonport/Plymouth. The arrival of the *Alaunia*, several hours before the other ships, was the first indication to the people of Plymouth and Devonport that they had the honour of welcoming the first contingent of troops from overseas.

West Down South, where the Royal Highlanders were located was a stark contrast to Valcartier.

The ground in Valcartier was light, sandy and excellently drained, while it must be feared that the Canadians' memories of Salisbury are mainly one of mud. "'Mud and rain', 'rain and mud', more rain and more mud". These phrases run like a verse through all the letters and diaries dealing with that time.

Quote: *"This is a godforsaken hole and we are getting pretty sick of it. It's raining again today. Nothing but rain, mud and then more rain. It has been raining for 19 days in a row now and the Winnipeg of earlier times would be ashamed if it could see the mud here. It makes everyone unhappy and hinders all the work."*

Guy and his brother-in-law Captain Trumbull Warren, 15th Bn. Canadian Infantry were both married to the Braithwaite sisters, Mary and Marjory. On 25 December 1914, both families were reunited in London where they celebrated their last Christmas together.

In early January 1915, the Battalion's work was largely confined to making roads and improving conditions around the camp.

With the prospect of active service not far away, the troops set to work with enthusiasm.

The Battalion left the camp for France on 11 February 1915 but without Guy. He was so disappointed that he volunteered to be reduced in rank, to lieutenant, so that he could quickly join his unit in France.

This was agreed and Guy joined the 13th Battalion on 1 April 1915 at Estaires, near Bailleul and Armentières.

On 15 April 1915, the Royal Highlanders began the march towards that 'lively' area the general had spoken of. From the direction taken, it soon became clear that the battalion was heading for a part of the Ypres Salient, an area with a sinister reputation.

On 20 April 1915, his brother-in-law Trumbull was badly wounded on the market square in Ypres. The impact of a shell caused a piece of metal to fly across the market place and hit 'Trum' in the right collarbone but also punctured his lung. He was taken to the hospital located a few hundred metres away, but the surgeon was not hopeful and Trum died a few minutes later.

The news reached Guy and he was given permission to attend the funeral. On the morning of 22 April 1915, in Guy's presence, he was carried to his grave in Ypres Reservoir Cemetery.

Captain Trumbull Warren



On the night of 21 April, the battalion entered the line near St John's and took over the trenches from the 14th Battalion Royal Montreal Regiment. Little did many know yet that they were about to write a glorious page in Canadian history.

Besides, the night was suspiciously quiet ... The Canadians occupied a line 4,250 metres long stretching north-west from the Ypres-Roulers railway line to a point some fifty metres beyond the Ypres-Poelkapelle road. On the far left was the area of the 13th Battalion with French colonial troops (Turcos) on their left and on their right the 15th Battalion Canadian Infantry better known as the 48th Highlanders from Toronto.

In the afternoon of 22 April 1915, Guy joined the battalion positioned in a supporting trench. The Germans unloaded their deadly gas attack and broke through on the left flank and overran the Turcos. These retreated through the lines of the Canadians.

Guy, who was perfectly bilingual, tried to reunite the French troops to hold out, and through his heroic act he encouraged many to form a new line of defence.

He ordered his platoon to form a line of defence along the road, near St Julien, as he began to rally the Turcos. During this action, he was shot through the throat and died almost instantly.

Guy's body was buried where he fell, but his body was recovered after the war, identified by his kilt and uniform and reburied at Tyne Cot Cemetery in Passchendaele.



Mary and Marjory, the two sisters were widowed in a span of two days.

Overcome with grief and convinced to assist her sisters during this difficult period, a third and final sister, Dorothy, left for England on the next ship ... She celebrated her 25th birthday, on 25 May 1915, aboard the Lusitania.

Two days later, the ship was torpedoed by a German submarine off the Irish coast, but Dorothy still reached a lifeboat. The sloop was lowered but capsized six times and those on board had to take refuge in other sloops. She was still able to grab someone's hand, but she was already weakened and died of hypothermia.

Julia, his mother, received the telegram in London, where she was working with the Red Cross ... Her beloved son was dead and she kept that telegram all her life. She stayed in England throughout the war. She continued her work for the Red Cross, perhaps driven by the thought that she would not be able to cope with Montreal without her Guy.

But Guy Melfort Drummond II, her grandson, was waiting for her in Montreal and although he would never know his father, she was the inspiration of the many stories Julia passed on to him about Guy.

A bronze statue of Captain Guy Melfort Drummond is on display in Gallery 2 of the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, Ontario.

The family commissioned veteran Robert Tait McKenzie, a celebrated sculptor and physician, to sculpt him to commemorate.



Piper Gil Vermeulen of the Last Post Association played the lament 'Oft in the Stilly Night' during the evocation, the lyrics of which can be found below:

*Oft, in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me;
The smiles, the tears,
Of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken;
The eyes that shone,
Now dimm'd and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken!
Thus, in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain hath bound me,
Sad memory brings the light
Of other days around me.*

*When I remember all
The friends, so link'd together,
I've seen around me fall,
Like leaves in wintry weather;
I feel like one
Who treads alone
Some banquet-hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed!
Thus, in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad memory brings the light
Of other days around me.*



Organisatie / Organisation: Last Post Association

Productie / Production: Events Outside The Box
Tekst en regie / Text and director: Bart Cafmeyer
Research: Johan Moors (LPA)

Artiesten - Deelnemers / Artists - Participants:

Ozark Henry
Chorus Youth Choir conducted by / Jeugdchoor Chorus o.l.v. Tine Devoghel
Koninklijke Harmonie Ypriana conducted by / o.l.v. Nico Logghe
Lies Verholle
Liesbet Desmet & Vera Turpijn
Piper Gil Vermeulen
Klaroeners / Buglers & piper Last Post Association

Met dank aan / Thanks to:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Gemeente Zonnebeke

Meer informatie / More information:

www.lastpost.be