

WW I Enlisted Men & Women of Whitewater Region Project

Private Arnold Leonard Davidson



Image 1: Pte. Arnold Davidson⁴

Pte. Arnold Leonard Davidson was buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, Boulogne-Sur-Mer, Pas de Calais, France.^{4,5} Pte. Arnold Davidson is honored on the Beachburg⁸ & Westmeath⁹ War Memorial. His name is also inscribed on the gravestone of his parents in Beachburg Union Cemetery.⁹

A letter of condolences was sent to Pte. Davidson's father, Wm Davidson, Esq., Beachburg from the Major General, Minister of Militia and Defence, for Canada.¹¹

Pte. Arnold Leonard Davidson, adopted son of **William Henry Davidson** and **Margaret Jane McLeese**, was born on 15 Feb 1897 in Beachburg. He was the 12th sibling of 16 children, 7 girls and 9 boys. Arnold had two brothers who also served in WWI.¹

Arnold enlisted on Jul 7, 1915 at Smiths Falls, Ontario into the 59th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force at age 18. He was transferred to the No. 4 Canadians on Jun 29, 1916 and joined the unit in the field in France on July 13, 1916. Less than 2 months after reaching the front, on Sept 1, 1916, he was struck by a shell sustaining chest, arm & head injuries. He died from his injuries in No. 13 Gen Hospital, Boulogne on Sep 11, 1916 at age 19 1/2 years.^{2,3}

A newspaper article in the Cobden Sun, dated Nov 7, 2001 provides a detailed summary of Pte. Arnold Davidson's service.⁶

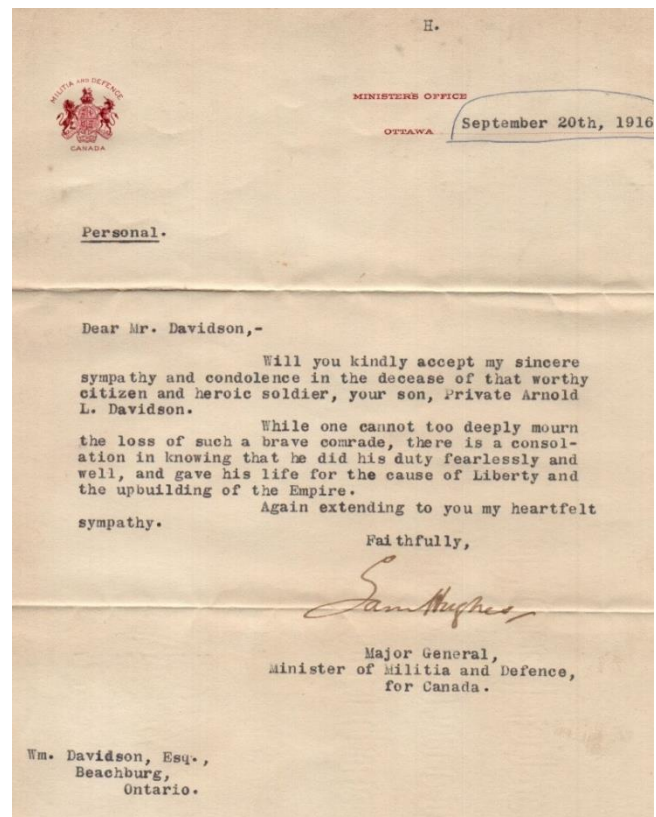


Image 2: Letter of Condolences¹¹

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Remembering one of our own

Editor:

In the Cobden Sun, July 30, 1997, a list of local war veterans included the name of Arnold Davidson. As I recall, there was no photograph available at the time.

Please find enclosed a picture of Arnold. It has been 85 years since his death, but he is still remembered and cherished by the Davidson family for sacrificing his life. I have written a brief account of his final year with the hope that you might have some space to publish a small portion of the narrative for Remembrance Day.

This year on September 11, the anniversary of his death, I gave a brief thought to his memory but the rest of the day was clouded in horror by the tragic events in the US. Once again, young men and women are going to a war front to fight for freedom and for peace. Almost a century ago, thousands of young men like Arnold gave of their lives in the fight for freedom. It is more important than ever to remember the sacrifices they made because defending freedom is a cause that will always be with us.

Lisa Emberson
Ottawa

Arnold Davidson was 18 years and five months of age when he joined the military and 19 years and seven months when he died. Here is a short account of his final year with information drawn from reports in the Renfrew Mercury and from his military service record.



Arnold Davidson

Arnold Leonard Davidson, born February 15, 1897 in Beachburg, Ontario was the adopted son of Margaret Jane McLeese and William Henry Davidson. He indicated on his enlistment papers that he had qualified as a blacksmith and was a Presbyterian. He was 5 ft. 9 in., 159 lb., with blue eyes and brown hair. A framed Certificate of Service, located in the Pembroke Museum, records that Private A. L. Davidson enlisted in Pembroke, Ontario, July 5, 1915, in the "B" Co. 59th Battalion C.E.F. His Declaration and Oath papers were signed in Smith Falls, Ontario on July 7, 1915.

The Beachburg correspondent reports in the Renfrew Mercury, August 20, 1915, "that Arnold Davidson responded to the call of King & country & has donned the khaki uniform... and if need be to make the supreme sacrifice for her. He has been allowed one month leave to help with the harvest after which he will return to training camp at Kingston to prepare for the call to the front". His unit record confirms that he was "on furlough" during the month

of August.

In the March 10, 1916 issue of the Renfrew Mercury, from the Beachburg correspondent, Privates Ed Anderson, Ernie Pappin and A. Davidson recently spent a few days with friends here (i.e. in Beachburg.)

His active service began when he arrived by train in Halifax on April 1st.

"It was twenty six minutes after two in the morning. We stayed in the train till about two o'clock in the afternoon and then we marched straight to the boat. About five we pulled out to the centre of the river and stayed there till April 5th. They had to coal up, that is to store up enough coal to carry us across. On April 5th about nine o'clock in the morning we left for England and at half past ten we saw the last sight of dear old Canada".

The boat arrived at Liverpool, England, April 11, 1916. This journey, from Montreal to Borden Camp, England, was published in the Renfrew Mercury on May 19 in a letter shared by his parents. On the train trip both through Canada and in England, he notices with a boyish enthusiasm and only as a farm lad would, all of the varieties of farming.

"In England, the farmers transport all their grain in boats. They have canals dug all through the country. They hitch a horse to a big scow and draw it up to the canal. It's worth a fortune to see how they work here, though I don't think they have as good a way as the Canucks. It takes two Englishmen to plough where in Canada it only takes one Canadian".

Ernie Pappin's letter to his parents was also published beside Arnold's and the account of his journey several days earlier was much the same. Ernie's letter was dated April 10, from Sandling Camp, Kent, England.

On June 28, 1916, Arnold was drafted to the No. 4 Canadians, 2nd batt., C.E.F. and sent to France. He left for his field unit on July 12, arrived July 16 and was reported wounded on July 23, 1916 with wounds to his chest, left arm and head. He died from these wounds on September 11, 1916 in No. 13, General Hospital, Boulogne.

During his active duty, his rate of pay was \$1.00 per day plus a small field allowance of \$.10 per day. He received \$130.73 between April 1 and September 11, 1916. On May 28, 1917, his brother Donald signed for the remaining balance of \$49.67 owed by the government.

His death was reported in the Renfrew Mercury on September 29, with a photo on page 1 and an obituary on page 6. The article reveals that his two older brothers are also overseas; Herbert of the 32nd Reserved Battalion in England and Clarence of the 26th Battalion in France. Both of these men returned safely to Canada.

"Arnold is the first of our local soldier boys who has made the supreme sacrifice, so far as we know. Just entering manhood, a splendid specimen of physical strength ..., he has gone down with the many others in defence of his country and of the right principles for which she stands in this tremendous struggle".

Private Arnold Leonard Davidson, No. 454695 of the Overseas military forces of Canada, 2 Bn. is buried in the Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, Boulogne-Sur-Mer, France, Plot VIII, Row C, 137, Grave 696. The inscription on his stone reads: "They loved not their lives unto death, Rev. 12:11".

Editor's note: Arnold Davidson was the great-great uncle of Lisa Emberson.



Image 4: Westmeath War Memorial⁸

Sources:

1. Bennett, Fay E., Faysgenealogy.com.
www.faysgenealogy.com : family history database & images; 2001-present. Cobden, ON. (Original sources noted in database)
2. "Personnel Records of the First World War." Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. Digital images. Library and Archives Canada. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx>.
<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=347388>
3. "Circumstances of Death Registers, First World War." Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. Digital images. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/mass-digitized-archives/circumstances-death-registers/Pages/item.aspx?PageID=46935> go to 609 of 1140.

Image 3: Newspaper Clipping⁶

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4. The Canadian Virtual War Memorial: Veterans Affairs Canada. "The Canadian Virtual War Memorial (CVWM)." Database. Veterans Affairs Canada. [www.veterans.gc.ca/eng.
https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/167900?Arnold%20Leonard%20Davidson](https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/167900?Arnold%20Leonard%20Davidson)
5. Commonwealth War Graves Commission. "Commonwealth War Graves Commission." Database. [https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-
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6. 'Remembering One of Our Own', Newspaper Clipping, The Cobden Sun, Nov 7, 2001
7. Book of Remembrance, Veterans Affairs Canada
[https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/books/page?page=75&book=1
&sort=pageAsc](https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/books/page?page=75&book=1&sort=pageAsc)
8. Photograph of the Beachburg War Memorial, photographed by Fay Bennett
9. Photograph of the Westmeath War Memorial, photographed by Fay Bennett
10. Find A Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/231161524/arnold-davidson?>
11. Letter of Condolences to Pte. Davidson's father, from the collection at Ross Museum, Foresters Falls