



Ben Wright Howarth

1896 - 1917

Ben was born in Dewsbury on 25th May 1896. His father was Henry Howarth, a coal miner born in Dewsbury around 1876 and died in Ontario, Canada in 1936. His mother was Lavinia (nee Stocks) born in Bradford in 1874. They were married on 14th March 1896 at St. John the Evangelist Church, Dewsbury Moor.

Their other children were; Emma, born in 1898, Arthur, born in 1902 and died in 1902, Wilfred, born in 1900, Gilbert, born in 1903, Gladys Mary, born in 1905, John, born in 1911, Henry, born in 1913 and Dorothea, born in 1915.

On the 1901 Census the family lived at 25, Peel Street, Batley, in 1911 at 12, Union Street, Hemsworth near Wakefield. Ben was working as a pony driver in a coal mine. The family emigrated to Canada, travelling on the SS "Parisian" from Glasgow to Halifax, Nova Scotia, leaving on 5th April 1913. They settled in the Province of Ontario.

He attested into the Canadian Expeditionary Force on 10th November 1914 serving as Private 57203 in the 20th Battalion Central Ontario Regiment. He was killed in action on the 9th April 1917 during the first day of the assault on Vimy Ridge. His remains were not found until 1919 and he is now buried in Nine Elms Military Cemetery, Thelus, Pas-de-Calais, France. Ben was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the Canadian Silver Cross (Mother's Cross).

Spring of 1917 found the Canadian Corps preparing to take Vimy Ridge as a part of the Battle of Arras. The attack went in on 9th April 1917. The 20th Battalion attacked in right depth of the 4th Brigade, mopping up the enemy still holed up in trenches and craters, taking prisoners and collecting maps and documents. The attack was a complete success. The Canadian Corps captured the entire ridge, a stunning achievement that many in the High Command had declared impossible, but which proved the worth of Canadian troops. Casualties of the 20th Battalion were relatively light, i.e. under one hundred, of whom only six were killed. Sadly, this was not true of the Canadian Corps as whole.

Thelus is a village about 6.5 kilometres north of Arras. "Nine Elms" was the name given by the Army to a group of trees 460 metres east of the Arras-Lens main road, between Thelus and Roclincourt. The cemetery was begun, after the capture of Vimy Ridge, by the burial of 80 men of the 14th Canadian Infantry Battalion, who fell on 9th April 1917. Most of the rest of the cemetery was made after the Armistice by the concentration of British and French graves from the battlefields of Vimy and Neuville-St. Vaast and from certain small cemeteries. There are now nearly 700, 1914-18 war casualties commemorated in this site. Of these, almost 150 are unidentified and there are also 55 special memorials to 45 Canadian and 10 British Soldiers.

Ben is commemorated on the Dewsbury Cenotaph in Crow Nest Park and in the Dewsbury Roll of Honour kept in Dewsbury Central Library and in the Canadian Book of Remembrance, Parliament Hill, Ottawa.

In Memory of

Private

Ben Wright Howarth

57203, 20th Bn., Canadian Infantry who died on 09 April 1917 Age 21

Son of Henry and Lavinia Howarth, of 1660, Fraser Avenue, Windsor, Ontario.

Remembered with Honour

Nine Elms Military Cemetery, Thelus



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

