

WW I Enlisted Men & Women of Whitewater Region Project

Private Wilbert Drynan

Pte. Wilbert Drynan, son of **Alexander Drynan** and **Hannah McLaren**, was born on 2 May 1893 in Bromley Twp. He was the second youngest of 7 children, a number of whom lived in Cobden. They were Wm who died in childhood, Mary Jane (Wm Angus), Alexander, Robert and Charles all of Bromley Twp., & Cobden. James lived in South Porcupine.¹



Image 1: Pte: Wilbert Drynan⁹
1917.² Two years and 9 months after enlisting, Pte. Drynan died on 2 Sep 1918 in Dury, Pas De Calais, France aged 25.^{2,3,4,5}

According to the circumstances of death, he was “Killed in Action Whilst dressing wounds of a comrade during an advance on Drocourt-Queant Line, on the morning of September 2nd, 1918, he was instantly killed by an enemy machine gun bullet.”⁶ The location was south of Dury. A newspaper article quoting a member of his platoon stated he was dressing the wounds of a German soldier at the time.⁴

Pte. Wilbert Drynan was buried in Dury Hill British Cemetery, Dury, Pas De Calais, France.^{3,5} In August, 1918, Dury was behind the German defence system known as the Drocourt-Queant line. The story is told on the granite monument that stands at Dury Hill Cemetery. “The Canadian Corps 100,000 strong attacked at Arras on August 26th 1918. Stormed successive German lines and here on September 2nd broke and turned the main German position on the Western Front and reached the Canal du Nord.”⁷ Dury village and the hill just south of it were captured. The monument commemorating the fallen is a block of white Quebec granite weighing about 15 tonnes.⁸ Pte. Drynan’s name was also commemorated on the plaque Cobden Memorial Hall plaque.¹

PRIVATE WILBERT DRYNAN Killed in Action.

To be in the thickest of the fray for the greater part of two years, and to escape unwounded, to receive the Military Medal for conspicuous bravery, in battle, and to fall while performing a decidedly humane act, are the distinctions and honors which will always follow the memory of Pte. Wilbert Drynan, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Drynan of Wolf-town, Ont., who was killed in action on September 2nd, 1918, according to an official report received by his parents a few weeks ago.

Pte. Drynan, whose readiness to obey his country's call can be partly accounted for by the fact that his father is a Fenian Raid veteran, volunteered his services in January of 1916, and in less than nine months was in the trenches. He came through practically all the heavy fighting of 1917 up to September of 1918. His letters to his parents were always bright and cheerful, and though he spoke of being exposed to constant danger and of coming through terrific battles, yet he never complained. Writing to Mrs. Drynan after the death of her son Sergt. Gorman said Wilbert was always dutiful and always cheerful. In hours of loneliness we often went to him for encouragement; he never failed to cheer us up. It was from Sergt. Gorman that we learned also that Pte. Drynan was shot through the breast while rising from dressing the wounds of a German soldier, and that he had previously received the Military Medal for similar work in the face of fierce machine-gun fire. The sympathy of the community goes out to Mr. and Mrs. Drynan in the loss of their dutiful son, who fell in his 24th year, and hope that they will find comfort in his gallant life and self-sacrificing death. Of few can it be said with more truthfulness than of Pte. Drynan that he died obeying the Divine Command: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.”

Image 2: Pte. Drynan obituary⁴

WW I Enlisted Men & Women of Whitewater Region Project



Image 3: Dury Monument⁸

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://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?op=pdf&app=CEF&id=B2681-S042>
3. 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/253786>
4. The Renfrew Mercury, "Private Wilbert Drynan Killed in Action" Oct 25, 1918
5. Commonwealth War Graves Commission. "Commonwealth War Graves Commission." Database. www.cwgc.org <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/253786/w-drynan/>
6. "Circumstances of Death Registers, First World War." Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. Digital images. https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?op=img&app=microform&id=31829_B016738-01060
7. Remembering the Fallen WWI, Dury Canadian Memorial, <https://www.ww1cemeteries.com/dury-mill-british-cemetery.html>
8. Webmatters Carte de Route, First World War <http://www.webmatters.net/index.php?id=650>
9. Cobden Royal Canadian Legion, Photograph of Pte. Wilbert Drynan, donated by Gladys Leech.