

WW I Enlisted Men & Women of Whitewater Region Project

Private Walter Johnson

Pte. Walter Johnson, son of **Walter Johnston** and **Annie Crothers**, was born on 25 Dec 1883 in Johnstone, Renfrewshire, Scotland. The spelling of his surname is noted as “Johnson” in his military records however his siblings and parents’ surname is spelled “Johnston” in records that I have located. A number of his siblings immigrated to Canada including his brothers Joseph of Pembroke and Matthew of North Bay, and his sister Alice (Mrs. Wm A. Dack) of Cobden.¹ Walter’s occupation was listed as plasterer² however for a period of time he worked in Dack’s General Store in Cobden as a clerk.⁸

Pte. Johnson enlisted into the 18th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry (Western Ontario Regiment) on Sep 2, 1915 in London, Ontario where he was living at the time.² He is described as being 5’ 7” and 130 lbs. He had grey eyes and auburn hair.² He was 31 years, 9 months old. His beneficiary was his brother Joseph.

Pte. Johnson sailed for Liverpool from Halifax aboard S.S. Lapland on April 26, 1916. On Sept 9, 1916, he joined the unit in the field. Less than a month later, he was killed ‘in action’ on 3 Oct 1916 near Courcellette, France aged 32 years, 10 months old.³ The circumstances of death register³ stated only:

“Killed Action” Vicinity of Courcellette.

Twenty-six members of the 18th Battalion were lost on Oct 3, 1916. His body was not recovered but his name is marked on the Vimy Memorial at Vimy, Pas de Calais, France.^{4,5,6,7}

Pte. Walter Johnson’s name is commemorated on the original Memorial Hall plaque dedicated to the Cobden & Area soldiers who died in WWI and the Cobden Legion’s WWI Cobden Honor Roll⁹.

Pte. Johnson’s brother received the medals he had earned – Victory Medal, British War Medal as well as the Memorial Cross.

Mrs. W. A. Dack received the sad news on Friday of last week that her brother, Walter Johnston, had been killed in action. Mr. Johnston for a time was clerk with W. A. Dack, but moved to London, Ont., where he enlisted on September 2nd, 1915. He was killed in action on October 2nd, 1916. He is survived by three sisters and two brothers. Our sympathy is extended to the bereaved family.

Image 1: Report of casualty⁸

In Memory Of
Private
WALTER JOHNSON
Service Number: 123061
18th Bn., Canadian Infantry who died on 03 October 1916 Age 39
Son of Walter and Annie Johnson, of Johnstone, Renfrewshire, Scotland.
Remembered with Honour
VIMY MEMORIAL



IIIIII
COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
IIIIII
COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Image 2: Vimy Memorial⁵

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Sources:

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3. "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_B016695-00342
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/1569795>
5. Commonwealth War Graves Commission. "Commonwealth War Graves Commission." Database. <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/1569795/walter-johnson/>
6. Find A Grave <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56679265/walter-johnson>
7. Canadian Great War Project, <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com/searches/soldierDetail.asp?ID=48917>
8. War Diary of the 18th Battalion CEF, <https://18thbattalioncef.blog/2016/09/30/october-1916-casualties/>
9. Bennett, Wayne. *Photograph of the WWI Cobden Honor Roll*, The Cobden Legion, Ontario. November 2022.