

“He had been in France only sixteen days”

by Iain S. Sneyd & E. Clare Stewart



Lieut. Charles Douglas Hewson was born June 07, 1896 to Frank Albert Hewson (1862-1942) and Harriet, also known as Hattie, Hewson (née Kent) (1864-1901). On his father's side he was of English descent, although his father himself was born in Michigan, U.S.A. On his mother's side he was of English and Irish descent. Charles was named after his mother's brother Charles who died of tuberculosis at age 18.

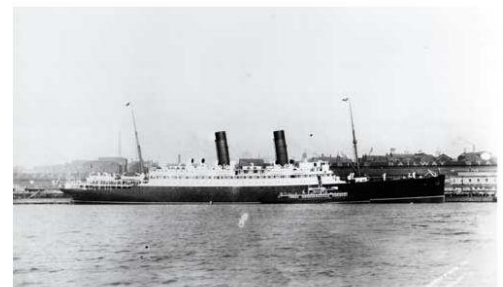
Charles had four sisters. Bertha Elizabeth (1886-1957) was married to John Garnett Pendrith. Hazel Belle (1889-Unknown) was married to Archibald Lachlan McKinnon. Anna Evelyn (1890-1979) was married to Harold Archdell Truax. Ethel Frances (1901-Unknown) was married to Harry Charles Sedew. Both Bertha and Hazel named sons after their brother: Charles Pendrith (b. 1917) and Douglas MacKinnon (b. 1918).

Charles and his family lived at 501 Euclid Avenue, Toronto, Ontario. He attended Harbord Collegiate and after graduation studied at the Y.M.C.A.'s Springfield College, Springfield, Massachusetts. He was actively involved in the Leaders Corps of the Toronto Central Y.M.C.A. and was a member of the Loyal Orange Lodge, Queen City. Charles and his family were Anglican and worshipped at the Church of St. Stephen in the Fields, 103 Bellevue Ave., Toronto.

Prior to enlistment Charles had been a Private for one year in the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada. At the time of his enlistment he was a member of the 109th Regiment, Toronto. Upon enlistment April 1, 1916, he transferred to the 201st Battalion, C.E.F. with the rank of Lieutenant. From May 1 to September 21, 1916 he was attached to Bombing school. On September 21 he was transferred to the Overseas Draft.



On September 26, 1916 Charles's service file shows that he was attached to the Officers Draft, Canadian Military Staff (C.M.S.). On that date he sailed from Halifax on S.S. Laconia, arriving in Liverpool October 6. Upon arrival in England he was taken on strength, posted to the General List, and detailed to C.M.S. at Shorncliffe. On December 23, 1916 Charles ceased to be attached to C.M.S. and was attached to the 166th Battalion at Seaford Road.



R.M.S. Laconia, 1912

On January 8, 1917 Charles's attachment was transferred to the 12th Reserve Battalion in Shorncliffe with effect and then on January 11 was attached to the 12th Reserve Battalion in East Sandling.

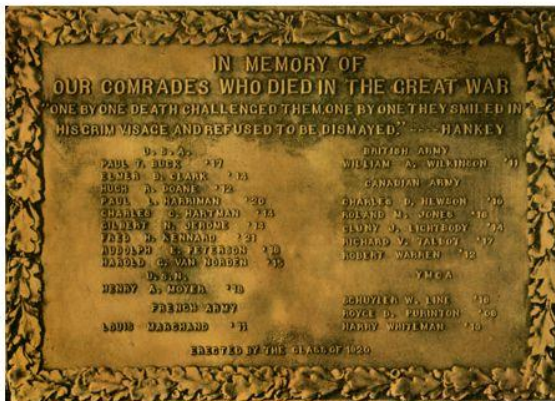


On March 20, 1917, Charles was struck off strength from the 12th on transfer to the 75th Battalion Overseas/France. On March 24 he was taken on strength with the 75th Battalion in the field. Hewson joined the unit on March 26 along with five other Lieutenants: Gordon Chamberlain Faithfull, John Duncan McDonald, Gordon Bedford Ross, Dalton Strype, and Murray McKay Winchester.

On April 9, 1917 Charles Hewson was killed in the battle for Vimy Ridge. He had been in France only 16 days. He is buried in the Canadian Cemetery No. 2, Neuville St. Vaast, Plot 1, Row A, Grave 2. Of the five other Lieutenants who joined the 75th on March 26, two, Faithfull and Winchester, also were killed in action on April 9. Faithfull is buried in Canadian Cemetery No. 2, Neuville St. Vaast, three graves away from Charles. Winchester, who was originally declared Missing, was not recovered and is commemorated on the Vimy Memorial. Two of the Lieutenants, Ross and Strype, were wounded during the course of the battle. McDonald, Ross, and Strype, who all survived the battle for Vimy Ridge, returned to Canada following the war.



S/Lt Elizabeth Sneyd (Ret'd) & Capt Steven Dieter CD at Charles Hewson's grave, April 2007. Photo © Armchair General Photos 2018



Springfield College Memorial Plaque

Charles's father was reading a letter from his son when he received the telegram telling him of Charles's death. Mr. Hewson was sent Charles's medals (the Victory Medal and the War Medal) and the Memorial Plaque and Scroll. As Charles's mother had died in 1901, no one was eligible to receive the Memorial Cross. Charles is commemorated on plaques at Harbord Collegiate, Springfield College, and St. Stephen in the Fields, as well as on the family grave in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Toronto.

Charles Douglas Hewson was a first cousin of Hattie Belle Hewson (1874-1953), Iain S. Sneyd's great-grandmother on his father's side. Information was gathered from family research by Capt Steven Dieter CD, S/Lt Elizabeth Sneyd (Ret'd), Iain S. Sneyd, and E. Clare Stewart; Charles's Service File; the 75th Battalion War Diary; and the Canadian Virtual War Memorial.