

VETERAN OF THE WEEK 17

(8 August – 14 August, 2022)

Major Alexander Farquhar MacDonald

209th Battalion & 10th Battalion

Canadian Expeditionary Force

First World War



Major Alexander Farquhar MacDonald of Swift Current, Saskatchewan was born on the 27th of January 1882 in Glengarry, Ontario. He was a “student at law” meaning he was in training or going to school to become a lawyer. Major MacDonald had several years of previous military service at the time of his enlistment in the 209th Battalion on the 15th of January 1916 at age 34 years. His previous service included being a member of the Active Militia with the 27th Light Horse, 6 years with the 13th Field Battery, and 3 years with the Cameron Highlanders.

Major MacDonald like the rest of his comrades in the 209th Battalion set sail for England on the night of the 31st of October/ the morning of the 1st of November 1916 aboard the S.S. Caronia. Which sailed from Halifax to Liverpool, he arrived in Liverpool along with the rest of his battalion on the 11th of November that same year. That December he and the rest of the 209th were transferred to the 9th Reserve Battalion for quarters, rations, and discipline. On the 21st of January 1917 he then proceeded overseas to France for duty with the 10th Battalion C.E.F.

He arrived in France on the 30th of January that same year and joined his unit, the 10th Battalion in the field on the 15th of February. Unfortunately, Major Alexander Farquhar MacDonald was Killed in Action in the early morning hours of the 8th of April 1917 during preparations for the Battle of Vimy Ridge. At the time of his death, he was leading one of four raiding parties of the 10th Battalion, that were to make raids on German held trenches called the “Labyrinth”, which were a series of trenches located on the southern end of the ridge and were north east of the French villages of Maroeuil and Anzin.

Major MacDonald was killed instantly by a burst of enemy machine gun fire while attempting to advance cross “No Mans Land”. Major MacDonald is buried in Plot V (5), Row D, Grave 13 at Ecoivers Military Cemetery, Mont-St. Eloi, Pas de Calais, France. Located roughly 3 ½ miles north west of Maroeuil and 5 ¼ miles northwest of Arras. He is commemorated on page 280 of the First World War Book of Remembrance located in the Peace Tower in Ottawa. A notification of his death was published in the local Swift Current paper called the “Sun”.

The article in the “Sun” was entitled “Major A.F. MacDonald is Killed in Action in the Battle of Vimy in France”. In the article it goes on to state that Major MacDonald was one of the best-known officers of the 209th and that the city and its residents will morn his loss. It also mentions he was one of ten children and was the first of the ten to pass away. In the article listed are two of his surviving brothers that lived in Swift Current a Mr. P.J. and a Mr. Angus MacDonald. This week we honour the service and sacrifice of Major Alexander Farquhar MacDonald, who gave his life for King and country during the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Thank you for your service Major Alexander Farquhar MacDonald.

Lest We Forget