

CULTURAL MOMENT FOR NOVEMBER 4, 2024

CELEBRATING CAPTAIN FREDERICK WILLIAM CAMPBELL, VC



Captain William Frederick Campbell of Mount Forest

Frederick William Campbell was born in Mount Forest on June 15, 1869. He was the son of Ephraim and Esther Hunt Campbell, and married a Mount Forest gal, Margaret Annie.

As a young man, he joined a unit of the Canadian Militia. He served in the South African War with The Royal Canadian Regiment. On September 23, 1914, he enlisted and was commissioned as an officer in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, in the 1st Battalion.

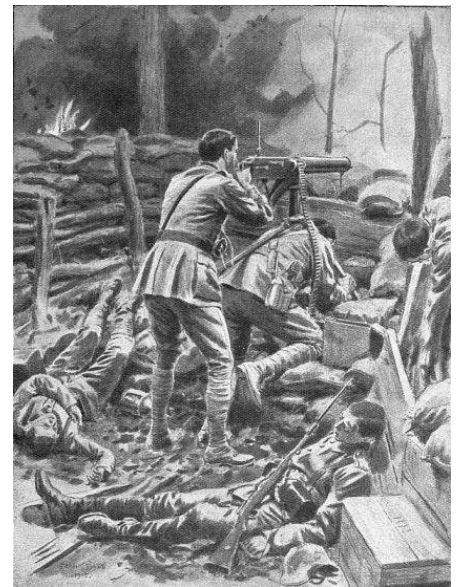
At a campaign near Givenchy, France, Captain Campbell took two machine-guns over the parapet, arrived at the German first line with one gun, and maintained his position there, under very heavy rifle, machine-gun and bomb fire. Almost the whole of his detachment had then been killed or wounded. When the supply of bombs had become exhausted, he advanced with Private Howard Vincent still further to an exposed position, and, by firing about 1,000 rounds, succeeded in holding back the enemy's counterattack

It was during this campaign that Campbell showed his creativity and his ability to meet extraordinary circumstances. A piece of artillery had been struck by an enemy shell, smashing one wheel. The gun could not be moved back by either horse or man. Campbell entered an abandoned house looking for something to help the situation. He discovered a heavy round-topped table. The top was removed and was fitted for use as the wheel on the cannon. This piece is still an exhibit in the Royal 22nd Regiment Museum in Quebec City, including the tabletop.

As he was retreating, his right thigh bone was shattered. Campbell was given first aid by Captain Gordon, the regimental Chaplain, also of Mount Forest. Gordon was assisted by Private [William George Seim](#), 2nd Battalion, also from Mount Forest, who later became a Sergeant.

It was Campbell's 48th birthday. The wound turned septic, and Campbell succumbed to his wounds four days later on June 19, 1915. For his actions, he earned posthumously the Victoria Cross, the British Empire's highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy. Campbell was 1 of 70 Canadians to receive it. His citation read: "For most conspicuous bravery on 15th June, 1915, during the action at Givenchy." He is buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery in France.

The gravestone inscription reads: "HOW SLEEP THE BRAVE WHO SINK TO REST BY ALL THEIR COUNTRY'S WISHES BLEST," which is from an "Ode Written in the Beginning of the Year 1746" by William Collins.



Frederick William Campbell and Howard Vincent