

TIME TRAVELLER'S DIARY: Edward Charles Woodroof

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Edward Charles 'Chas' Woodroof was born exactly 134 years ago, on January 21, 1885 to William and Elizabeth Woodroof of Chelmsford, England. He grew up in Chelmsford at 24 New Writtle Street with his five sisters, and one brother.

At age 24, he left his hometown to embark on a life journey to Halifax, Canada leaving on the S.S. Virginian, ported in Liverpool, England, March 1909.

He settled near the village of Schomberg, where he would begin a new life. He spent the first few years of life in Canada working on the dairy farm of Ed Lloyd.

On April 6, 1915, seven years after his arrival to Canada, Woodroof enlisted and joined the Canadian Armed Forces. This was typical of many British immigrants to Canada, who saw joining the military as a free trip home, as all of the Canadian forces were first stationed in England before heading to the front.

At War

He boarded the S.S. Hesperian, ported in Quebec, and arrived in Europe in October 1915. Trained as a scout and a sniper, his time spent in the war was heroic. Diagnosed with bronchitis at the beginning of his journey, he returned to his unit determined to fight. His heroism began on June 2, 1916 during the Battle of Mount Sorrel.

The Germans mounted an attack by artillery, flamethrowers, and infantry, only 56 men returning out of nearly 700. During this attack Woodroof was one of the 56 men whose duty was to provide intelligence on the battle situation and bring out the wounded. These he accomplished in the face of great adversity and he was promoted to Corporal in June and to Sergeant in August.

He was able to keep his humble attitude and continue effectively, fighting in the Battle of the Somme, where he was wounded by shrapnel on September 12 at Mourquet Farm, but remained at duty and was later found. He recovered in time to rejoin the battalion below Vimy Ridge in October, and was promoted to company Sergeant Major.

During the Battle of Vimy Ridge, he was wounded by a large piece of shell fragment that tore through his thigh, fracturing his femur. The wound proved fatal, although the exact date of his death is undetermined, as his body was not found until after the battle.

Edward Charles 'Chas' Woodroof will be remembered by these distinctive features, which consisted of a set of gold teeth (except the front two) his heroic heart that he carried throughout the First World War, and his name which will remain engraved for years to come on the Aurora Cenotaph.