

IN MEMORIAM



Lieutenant

Francis Henry Hemsley

16th Battalion

(The Canadian Scottish)

Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Loos British Cemetery

Loos-en-Gohelle, France



Défense nationale National
Défence

Canada 

Lieutenant Francis Henry Hemsley

Under a cover of thick oil smoke, Lt Hemsley attacked the enemy. It was 16 August 1917 and Lt Hemsley and his comrades in the 16th Battalion (The Canadian Scottish), Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) were fighting in the Battle of Hill 70.

Lt Hemsley's life journey began in Ealing, Middlesex, England where he was born on 5 August 1880. His first action in military uniform occurred in 1900 when he served overseas as a trooper during the South African War (1899-1902).



In 1906, Lt Hemsley married Adina Cresswell Hebden and they would eventually have three children Doreen, Hugh, and Colwyn. In 1911, he immigrated to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan to work on a farm, and a year later his family joined him.

On 20 February 1916, Lt Hemsley answered the call to serve King and Country in the CEF and enlisted with the 183rd Battalion (Manitoba Beavers) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He embarked for overseas service from Halifax, Nova Scotia, on 3 October 1916 and arrived in Liverpool, England ten days later. In England, Lt Hemsley received military training with the 108th Battalion (Selkirk) and the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion (Manitoba). On 25 April 1917 he was posted to the 16th Battalion (The Canadian Scottish) and joined them in the field in France on 30 April.

In mid August 1917, Lt Hemsley and the 16th Battalion were part of the Canadian Force ordered to capture the strategic objective referred to as Hill 70: a treeless expanse of high ground northwest of Lens that dominated the city and provided a commanding view of the Douai Plain.

In the evening of 13 August, the 16th Battalion moved out of their billets in Mazingarbe and relocated to the front line. At 0425 on 15 August, behind a smoke screen and a creeping barrage of supporting artillery, the 16th Battalion attacked the German positions entrenched at the Red Line. The Canadian Scottish soldiers quickly breached the enemy's defences and in less than half an hour had reached the next objective: the Blue Line. By 0600 the 16th Battalion had overwhelmed the enemy at their final objective: the Green Line. But the Germans fought back. During the next 24 hours the enemy counter-attacked and hurled continuous artillery fire and poison gas against the tenuous Canadian positions resulting in high casualties. During the Battle, the 16th Battalion suffered 257 casualties including 62 who were killed. Of those fatal casualties 41 had no known grave. Lt Hemsley was one of those casualties and his remains were lost. After the war, Lt Hemsley's name was engraved on the Canadian National Vimy Memorial along with more than eleven thousand Canadian soldiers who were listed as "missing, presumed dead" during the First World War.

In the midst of grief, Adina Hemsley raised her children and forged a new life in the post-war years on her own. She never remarried. In the decades that followed, Adina's children and grandchildren lived with lingering unresolved issues: how did Lt Hemsley die and where was his final resting place? In 2012 remains were discovered in a construction site near Lens, France. Historical and scientific analysis was conducted and in 2024, the remains of the fallen soldier were identified as those of Lt Hemsley. One hundred and seven years after he was killed in battle, Lieutenant Francis Henry Hemsley will finally receive a military funeral to honour his service and courage in making the ultimate sacrifice for Canada.

Order of Service

Funeral Procession

Call To Worship

Opening Prayer

In Flanders Fields

Scripture Readings:

Psalms 23

John 14: 1-6, 26

Romans 8: 35-39

Sermon: "So long Dearie, Yours ever, Frank"

Prayers of Thanksgiving and the Lord's Prayer

The Act of Remembrance

The Last Post

Moment of Silence

(10 seconds – military personnel will hold salute)

Rouse

Lament

The Benediction

Undressing of Casket

The Committal

Lowering of Casket

Presentation of the Flag and the Cross

Laying of Wreaths

Final Respects by Military Personnel

Participants

Maj Rev. Tom Hamilton, Ph.D.

Military Chaplain; Historian-Directorate of History and Heritage

Mr. Richard Hemsley: Reader, Psalm 23

Next of Kin: Grandson of Lt Hemsley

LCol Slade Lerch: Reader, Act of Remembrance

Commanding Officer, The Canadian Scottish Regiment

MCpl Allyssa Haigh: Bugler

The Canadian Scottish Regiment

Cpl Emma Yeo: Piper

The Canadian Scottish Regiment

MCpl Tyler Commandeur: Reader, In Flanders Fields

The Canadian Scottish Regiment

In Flanders Field

John McCrae (1872-1918)

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That marks our place; and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow;
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Field.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from falling hands we throw
the torch; Be yours to bear it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep though poppies blow
In Flanders Field.

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

