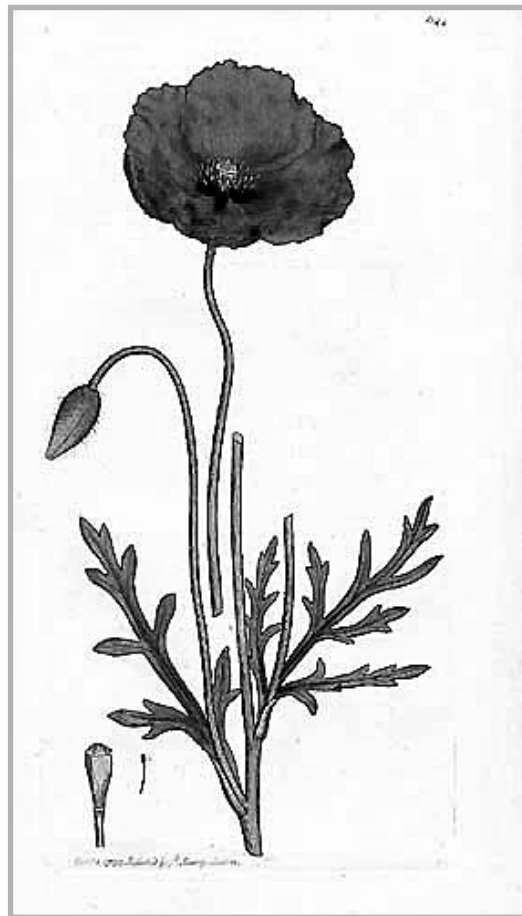


THE CASE OF PRIVATE CROMARTY A SOLDIER FROM WHONNOCK



Fred Braches

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Occasional papers of the Whonnock Community Association to promote the research and understanding of the past of our community. Series Editor: Fred Braches.

Whonnock Community Association

PO Box 134

Whonnock, BC

V2W 1V9



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Also available: *Records of the Whonnock Community Association's Historical Project, 1985.*



Maple Ridge Cenotaph, 13 January 2005.



R. Cromarty's name on the Maple Ridge cenotaph.

The Case of Private Roy Cromarty, a Soldier from Whonnock

In his book of stories from Maple Ridge, *All Our Yesterdays*, Ed Villiers writes about the experiences of Charlie Owen on the front in the First World War:

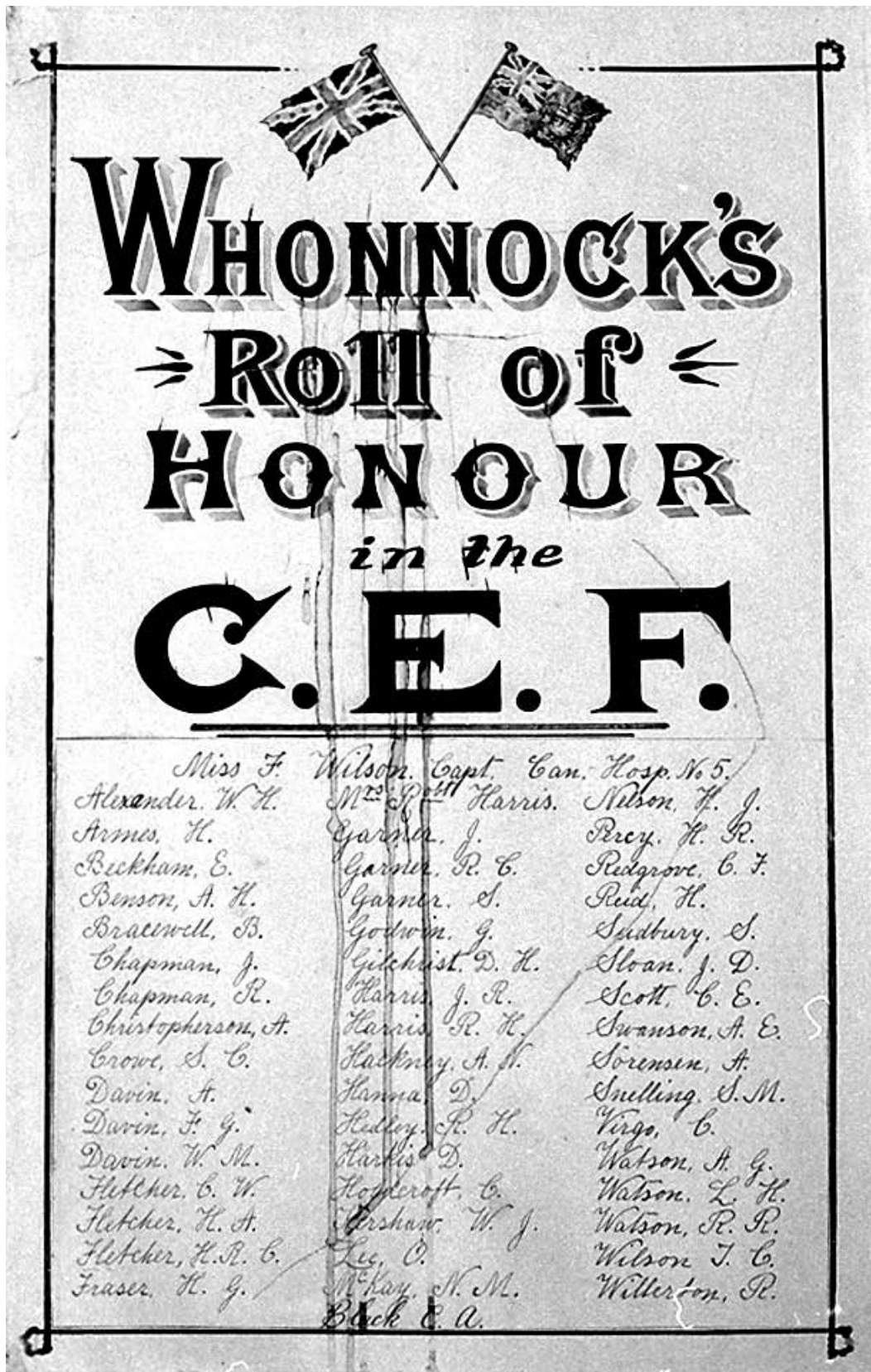
Shortly after Charlie arrived German artillery shells began to explode around the trenches. The ditches were dug in a zigzag pattern so that bursting shrapnel could travel only a short distance. When an artillery shell exploded near him Charlie's first instinct was to run down the trench in the other direction. He rounded a bend and came face to face with a soldier from Whonnock named Cromarty who was calmly sitting on a bench smoking a pipe. A piece of corrugated tin above his head protected him from being splattered by mud. Cromarty removed the pipe from his mouth and said quietly, "There's no point running from 'em, Charlie. You'll just as soon run into one as away from one."

"He was right," Charlie said. "I soon got used to it. But Cromarty was killed later on. His name is on the cenotaph down in Haney."

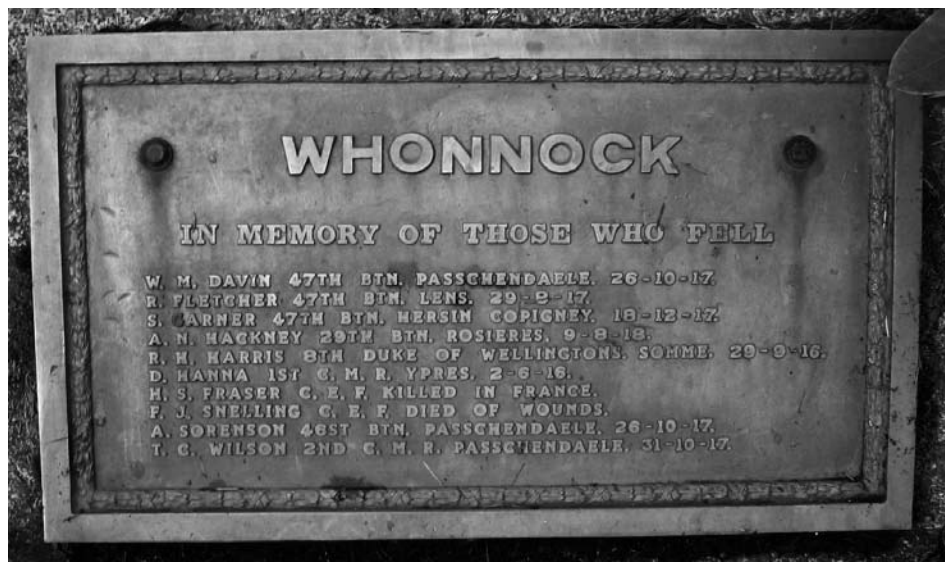
As Charlie Owen told it, the name "R. Cromarty," is marked on the Maple Ridge cenotaph. Every year on Remembrance Day his name is called, together with the names of all the others who did not return. I was curious to know who this Cromarty from Whonnock could be, since I had not seen his name in any Whonnock records before. Most of the Cromartys at that time were descendants of Fort Langley's cooper, William Magnus Cromarty, who farmed in Glenn Valley, across the river from Whonnock. None of them seemed to have settled in the Whonnock area from where this Cromarty was believed to have come.

Research on the Web site of the Library and Archives of Canada showed that this soldier was Private Roy Cromarty who died on 18 December 1917. That name was not in my records of the Cromarty family. Perhaps this Roy Cromarty was not related to the Glen Valley Cromartys at all? The attestation paper—a form completed for enlistment—seems to confirm that impression. It shows that this Roy Cromarty was born in Chilliwack and lived there before enlisting; it names as his next of kin his father, an R. C. Cromarty living in Chilliwack. Also the initials R. C. did not match any of William Magnus Cromarty's male offspring.

To order *All Our Yesterdays*
contact Edward Villiers,
25019 108th Ave.
Maple Ridge BC V2W 1G8
Phone 604 463 9174.



Whonnock's Roll of Honour was created in 1916 to attract new recruits. Three Garners are listed in the centre column. R. Cromarty's name is missing.



The old commemorative plaque with the names of the Heroes of 1914–1918 is now displayed near the entrance of the Whonnock Community Centre.

But if Roy Cromarty lived in Chilliwack and did not come from Whonnock, why would his name appear on the Maple Ridge cenotaph and why is it absent from the cenotaph in Chilliwack? Even the residents of Whonnock did not seem to consider him one of their own: In 1916 they prepared a Roll of Honour for display in their Ladies Hall, showing more than 40 names of Whonnock residents who served overseas, but Roy Cromarty is not one of them. The “Victory Edition” of the British Columbian of 1918 writes about this roll of honour, which, the newspaper says “would do credit to a larger settlement,” but it also comments on the absence from the Roll of Honour of the name of Roy Cromarty.

Cromarty was still ignored by the residents of Whonnock when after the war the Ladies Hall became the Whonnock Memorial Hall “in memory of the soldiers of Whonnock district who fell in the war” and a brass plaque was ordered with the names of all who did not return. The name Cromarty was again missing.

This old commemorative plaque with the names of the Heroes of 1914–1918 is now displayed near the entrance of the Whonnock Community Centre. One of the names on the plaque is that of S. Garner, serving, as Roy Cromarty did, in the 47th Battalion. It struck me that he died on the same day as Roy Cromarty, 18 December 1917. Were Sam Garner and Roy Cromarty fighting side by side?

The Garners were familiar to me. Three are mentioned on Whonnock’s Honour Roll: J. Garner, S. Garner, and R. C. Garner. Joseph Garner and Sam Garner were brothers. Robert Craig (Junior) was their nephew. Three of the daughters of Robert Robertson, the first white settler in Whonnock, had married Garners brothers. Joe, a widower now, was one of them. He and his nephew Robert Craig were the first to register for overseas service in November 1914. Both men came home alive after the war ended.

The attestation paper of Sam Garner shows that he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Forces two years later than Joe and Robert Craig, on 7 April 1916



Soldiers of the 47th Canadian Infantry Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Forces in France. Private Sam Roy Garner, alias Roy Cromarty, is standing to the right. Photo courtesy Lyn Ross.

in Vancouver. He registered with his full name: Sam Roy Garner, a 32-year old single man, a logger, born in Chilliwack and a resident of Whonnock. Mysteriously he is not recorded as a fatal casualty by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission or the Veterans Affairs Canada. How his name, unit and date and place of death could have been recorded on the Whonnock plaque was yet another mystery.

To help me resolve the many questions I ordered copies of the First World War service files of Roy Cromarty and Sam Garner from the Library and Archives of Canada, and made a startling discovery. Sam Garner's records show that his service came to an abrupt ending almost as soon as it began. Sam's file includes a form, dated 18 April 1916, showing that he was discharged as he was, for reasons we will never know, "not likely to become an efficient soldier." There is no evidence that he reenlisted. That explained why his name is missing from the casualty records of Veterans Affairs Canada.

However, Roy Cromarty's name is included in the records of Veterans Affairs Canada as a war casualty. Cromarty's service file confirmed that he died of multiple gunshot wounds on the same day that, according to the Whonnock plaque, Sam Garner passed away: 18 December 1916. It could, however, hardly be a coincidence that both men were also born on the same day: 6 August 1883 as shown in their attestation papers. By now I had a strong suspicion that Sam Roy Garner reenlisted in New Westminster under the name Roy Cromarty only a day after he was discharged in Vancouver. As Roy Cromarty he went to war and he died, under that assumed name, tragically the only one from the Lower Mainland Garner and Cromarty families to give his life in the Great War.

Now the other pieces of the puzzle fell into place as well. Sam Garner, obviously used the initials of his own real father, Robert Craig Garner (senior) to make up a name of a next of kin when completing the attestation paper for the fictitious Roy Cromarty. Since there was no R. C. Cromarty, the initials of the next of kin and “father” in the service file soon became S. E., for Samuel Ephraim Cromarty, of Chilliwack. Samuel Ephraim Cromarty was a son of cooper William Magnus Cromarty and Sam Garner’s brother in law. In reality he and his wife were not old enough to be the parents of a 32-year old man: Samuel Ephraim Cromarty was 14 years older than Sam Garner, and his wife, Carolina Augusta, was only 7 years her brother’s senior.

The two Cromartys, aware of the fictitious identity of Sam Garner, must have been saddened by the news of his death and also troubled to read on the front page of the Chilliwack Progress: “Another Chilliwack boy has been called to give up his life...Mr. & Mrs. S. E. Cromarty having been advised that their son, Pte. Roy Cromarty died from wounds received in action.”

Samuel Ephraim Cromarty and his wife had another reason to worry. Their own 18-year-old son had also enlisted in April 1916 and they knew that he had been fighting alongside Sam Garner (alias Private Roy Cromarty) when Garner was mortally wounded. Their son, called Samuel Ephraim Cromarty after his father, did come home to Chilliwack after the war and later named one of his own sons “Roy Cromarty” in honour of his deceased uncle. The fact that another Sam Cromarty had joined the C. E. F. explains why Sam Garner used his own second name Roy for his fabricated name: Roy Cromarty.

There is one more fact indicating that Roy Cromarty was in fact Sam Garner. When Sam Garner enlisted under his own name, he recorded his sister-in-law in Whonnock as his next of kin. Barbara Christine née Robertson, was the widow of William Henry Garner, Sam’s oldest brother. Sam Garner had lived in her house in Whonnock and he knew the hardship the widow went through to make a living for herself and her three children. When he reenlisted under the name Cromarty he did not register her as next of kin preferring someone with the name Cromarty. But even under his pseudonym he did not hesitate to support her. Effective 1 November 1916, the day he embarked in Halifax, he assigned a monthly payment of \$20 to Mrs. W. H. Garner, “a friend” in Whonnock. In a “military will” he left the little he had “the whole of my property and effects” to his sister-in-law.

So it came to be that Sam Garner (alias Roy Cromarty) sailed from Canada on the MS *Caronia*, one of the larger ships of the Cunard Line, requisitioned to serve as a troop transport. He disembarked in Liverpool on November 11, 1916, arrived in France on November 28, 1916, and moved onward to the front not long after that. That is where Charlie Owen met him in the trenches, smoking his pipe during a barrage of artillery, and saying quietly, “There’s no point running from ‘em, Charlie. You’ll just as soon run into one as away from one.” Charlie knew Sam was from Whonnock but referred to him as Cromarty, because everyone on the front knew him under that name.

Military will of “Private Roy Cromarty” leaving the little he had to his sister-in-law Barbara Christine Garner.

20

Perforated sheet for Will from Pay Book of Reg.

No. 790949 Dec 28 16

Name Roy Cromarty

Unit H 7 Bata

Military Will

*In the event of my death
I give the whole of my
property and effects to my
sister in law*

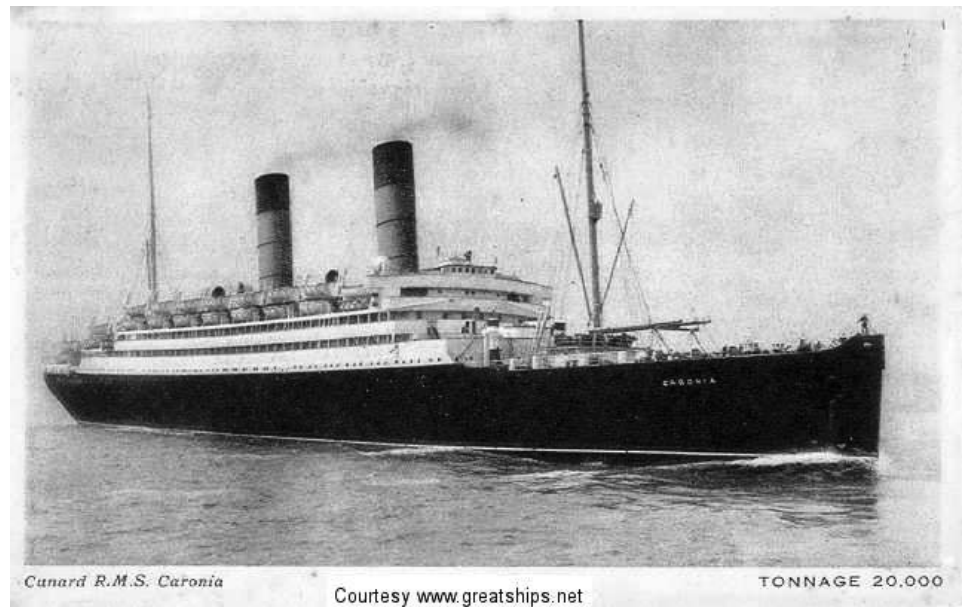
*Mrs W H Garner
Whonnock B C
Canada*

Signature Private Roy Cromarty

Rank and Regt. H 7 Bata C.E.F.

Date December 15th 1916

MS *Caronia*, one of the larger ships of the Cunard Line, requisitioned to serve as a troop transport between Canada and England from 1916 to 1919.



The people of Whonnock were aware that it was Sam Garner who served overseas and died there and that is why they did not hesitate to commemorate Sam Garner with his own name on the bronze plaque that is now outside the Whonnock Lake Centre. The family made certain that also in Chilliwack Sam Roy Garner was remembered with his proper name on their cenotaph.

However, in Maple Ridge the organizing committee used information from newspapers or official sources to compose the list of names on their cenotaph. Therefore the Maple Ridge cenotaph shows the family name Cromarty as Sam's surname. Every year the name "Cromarty" is called among all the others who did not return from Great War. Could he still do so, Sam would call "present," even if it was not his own name. Perhaps it is time to start calling him instead by his proper surname: "Garner."

Whonnock, November 2005



Chilliwack cenotaph, 5 November 2005.



Private Sam Roy Garner’s name on the cenotaph in Chilliwack. The name Cromarty is not included.

The Duke of Connaught's Own
158th (Overseas) Battalion

DUPLICATE

158 TH. BATT.
646125
No. _____
Folio. _____

Card
5-5-20
G.M.

ATTESTATION PAPER

CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.
(ANSWERS)

- 1. What is your surname?..... **GARNER**.....
- 1a. What are your Christian names?..... **SAM ROY**.....
- 1b. What is your present address?..... **Whonnock, B.C., Canada**.....
- 2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born?..... **Chilliwack, B.C., Canada**.....
- 3. What is the name of your next-of kin?..... **Mrs Barbara Garner**.....
- 4. What is the address of your next-of-kin?..... **Whonnock, B.C., Canada**.....
- 4a. What is the relationship of your next-of-kin?..... **Sister-in-law**.....
- 5. What is the date of your birth?..... **6 August 1888**.....
- 6. What is your Trade or Calling?..... **Logger**.....
- 7. Are you married?..... **No**.....
- 8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated and inoculated?..... **Yes**.....
- 9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia?..... **No**.....
- 10. Have you ever served in any Military Force?..... **No**.....
If so, state particulars of former Service.
- 11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement?..... **Yes**.....
- 12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the } **Yes**.....
CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? }

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, **Sam Roy Garner**, do solemnly declare that the above are answers made by me to the above questions and that they are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

Date..... **April 7th** 191**6**..... *Sam Roy Garner* (Signature of Recruit)
Chas J Fletcher (Signature of Witness)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, **Sam Roy Garner**, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

Date..... **April 7th** 191**6**..... *Sam Roy Garner* (Signature of Recruit)
Chas J Fletcher (Signature of Witness)

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence. I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at **Vancouver, B.C.** this **Seventh** day of **April** 191**6**.

Chas J Fletcher (Signature of Justice)
Commanding **158th**

M. F. W. 23.
200 M.-11-15.
H. Q. 1772-30-841.

The Duke of Connaught's Own
158th (Overseas) Battalion

Sam Roy Garner's attestation paper, 7 April 1916.

This space to be for numbers.

C



Proceedings on Discharge.

(When forwarded for confirmation these proceedings should be accompanied by the documents specified on fourth page.)

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No. .646125. | |
| Rank Private. | |
| Name SAM ROY GARNER. <small>Note—The name must agree strictly with that on enlistment unless changed subsequently by authority.</small> | |
| Corps (Squadron, Battery or Company) <i>The Duke of Connaught's Own</i> 158th (Overseas) Battalion C. E. F. | |
| Date of Discharge April 18th 1916. | |
| Place of Discharge Vancouver, B.C. | |
| 1. DESCRIPTION AT THE TIME OF DISCHARGE. | |
| Age... 33.....years.....months. Height... 5.....feet..... 5.....inches. Complexion Dark. Eyes Dark Brown. Hair Black. Trade Logger. Intended place of residence } Whornock, B.C. <small>(To be given as fully as practicable.)</small> | Descriptive Marks None. |
| 2. The above-named man is discharged in consequence of "Not likely to become an efficient soldier". <i>K. R. & O. 322.2.</i> | |
| <small>N.B.—The cause of discharge must be worded as prescribed in the King's Regulations and be identified with that on the character certificate. If discharged by superior authority, the number and date of the letter to be quoted.</small> | |
| <small>To be in the handwriting of the Commanding Officer, who will initialise and make identical entries on the character certificate and initial them.</small> | 3. Conduct and character while in the service have been, according to the records, etc. <i>"FAIR"</i> |
| | <small>N. B.—This will be assessed when practicable, by the Commanding Officer, in the presence of the soldier and the Officer Commanding his Squadron, Battery or Company:</small> |
| | 4. Special qualifications for employment in civil life. (Vide para. 332, K. R. & O., Canada.) "Logger". |

M. F. B. 218.
25m.—11-15.
H. Q. 1772-39-113.

(OVER)

Handwritten initials and number 2

Sam Roy Garner's discharge paper, 18 April 1916.

131st OVERSEAS BATTALION *A Duplicate*

can ATTESTATION PAPER.

No. *790949*

Folio.

10-5-16 CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

6. QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.

(ANSWERS)

- 1. What is your surname? *Cromarty*
- 1a. What are your Christian names? *Roy*
- 1b. What is your present address? *Chilliwack, B.C.*
- 2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born? *Chilliwack, B.C.*
- 3. What is the name of your next-of-kin? *R. C. Cromarty*
- 4. What is the address of your next-of-kin? *Chilliwack, B.C.*
- 4a. What is the relationship of your next-of-kin? *Father '17*
- 5. What is the date of your birth? *16th August 1883*
- 6. What is your Trade or Calling? *Logger*
- 7. Are you married? *No.*
- 8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated and inoculated? *Yes*
- 9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia? *Yes 10th Regt.*
- 10. Have you ever served in any Military Force? *No.*
If so, state particulars of former Service.
- 11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement? *Yes*
- 12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the } *Yes*
CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE? }

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *Roy Cromarty*, do solemnly declare that the above are answers made by me to the above questions and that they are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

Date *April 19th* 191*6*. *R. Cromarty* (Signature of Recruit)
M. Patterson (Signature of Witness)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, *Roy Cromarty*, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of all the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

Date *April 19th* 191*6*. *R. Cromarty* (Signature of Recruit)
M. Patterson (Signature of Witness)

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence. I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath

before me, at *NEW WESTMINSTER* this *B. C.* *19th* day of *April* 191*6*.

B. Walker (Signature of Justice)

M. F. W. 22.
400M-1-16.
H. Q. 1772-30-241.

Roy Cromarty's attestation paper, 19 April 1916.

R-128
8,401-50,000-21-10-16.

A.G.R. **Rank** **Name** **CROMARTY, ROY** **Reg'l No.** **790949A**

Unit **131st Bn.** **If in perm. Corps, What Unit?** **Married or Single** **Single**

Place and Date of Enlistment **New Westminster, B.C. 19th April, 1916.** **Place of Birth** **Chilliwack, B.C.**

Name and Address, Next-of-Kin **R.C. Cromarty, Chilliwack, B.C.** **Relationship** **Father.x**

Assigned Pay Monthly \$ **Payable to**

Separation Allowance \$ **Payable to**

Discharge, Date and Place

N.E. R.B. No. 8235.
 F. No. 2564-208.
 Category...
 Date 7/16

| Report. | | Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service. The authority to be quoted in each case. | Place. | Date. | REMARKS. Taken from Official Documents. |
|------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Date. | From whom received. | | | | |
| 13. II. 16 | 30th. | Arrived in England. | | 11-11-16 | per S.S. "Caroline" 15 DEC. 1916 |
| 27-11-16 | | Taken on Strength | Sh'elf, | 13. II. 16 | Pt. 2-O, 300 |
| 3-12-16 | 47th Bn | S.O.S. to 47th Bn. overseas | " | 27-11-16 | PT II 314 |
| 30-1-17 | 47th Bn | T.O.S. FROM 30th Bn. | In the Field | 28 II 16 | Pt. 2 D. O. 262 |
| 31. 1. 17 | 10th Coy | Attended 10th Bn. Field Coy. B.C. | " | 18. 1. 17 | PT II D.O. 19 |
| 29. 10. 17 | 10th Coy | Attended 10th Bn. Field Coy. B.C. | " | 18. 1. 17 | PT II D.O. 5. |
| 11. 5. 17 | 10th Coy | Attended 10th Bn. Field Coy. B.C. | " | 2. 6. 17 | " 57. |
| 7. 11. 17 | 10th Coy | Attended 10th Bn. Field Coy. B.C. | " | 21. 2. 17 | PT II 62 |
| 21. 12. 17 | 10th Coy | Attended 10th Bn. Field Coy. B.C. | " | 16. 12. 17 | " 1. |
| 21. 12. 17 | 10th Coy | Attended 10th Bn. Field Coy. B.C. | Field | 17. 12. 17 | PT. 2. O. 95. Name not on |
| 27. 12. 17 | 10th Coy | Attended 10th Bn. Field Coy. B.C. | Field | 18. 12. 17 | PT. 2. O. 95. Name not on |

Roy Cromarty's record sheet.

West Reg. 1914-15 Star,

790949 Pte Roy Cromarty, 649-C-18091 47th Bn. Can. Inf. *m*

Medals & Dec. (^{Sister-} S. in law) Mrs W.H. Garner, Whonnock, B.C.

Plaque & Scroll Brother, Mr. Chas. Garner, Chilliwack, B.C.

Serial No 773019

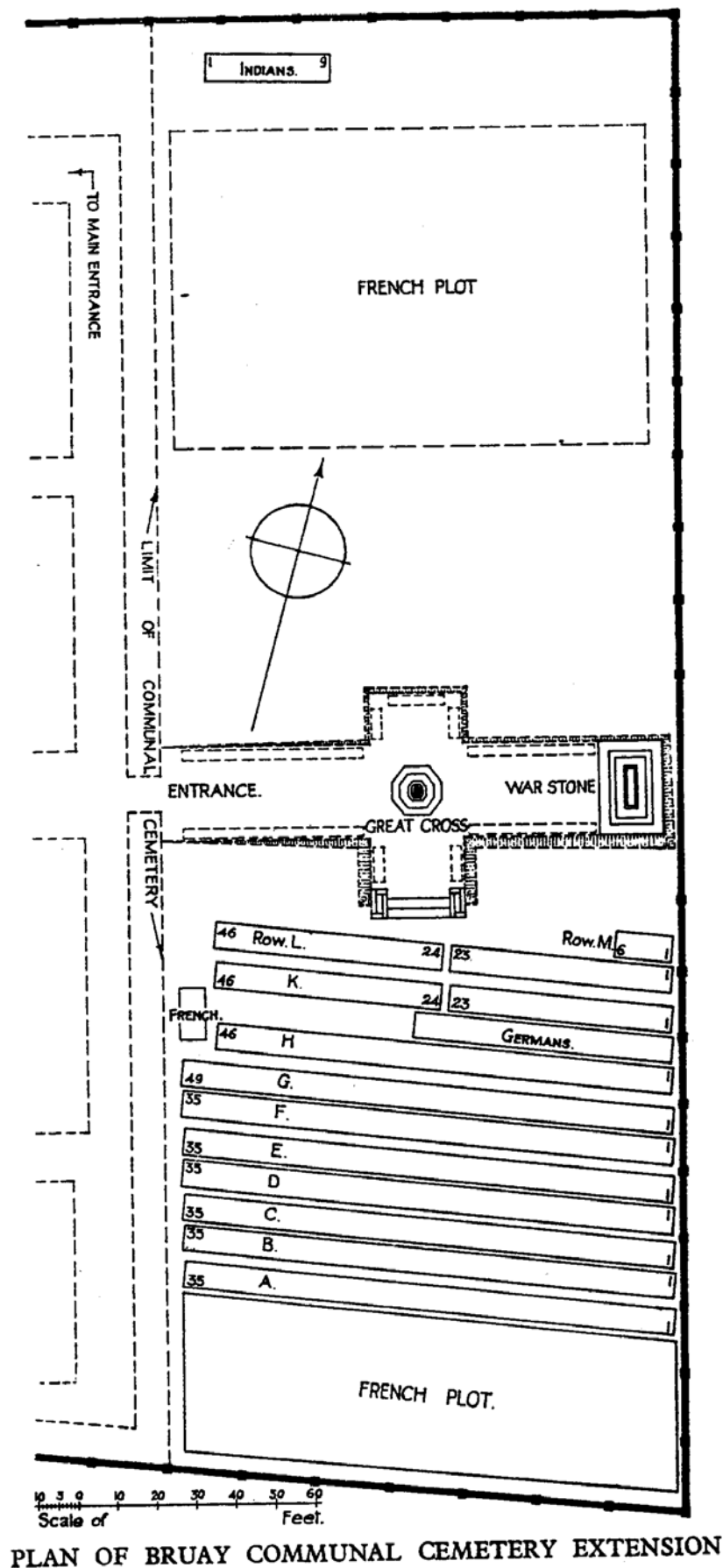
Memorial Cross Nil.

Scroll Desp. *27-1-21* Reqn. No *2-14169*

W.A. Plaque Desp. *FEB 24 1922* Reqn. No *P 30582*

W

Among the service records is this card, dated in 1922, mentioning Mrs. W. H. Garner, sister-in-law and Charles Garner, brother. There is no mention of the alleged "parents," the Cromartys in Chilliwack.



According to information from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Private Sam Roy Garner's grave is at the Bruay Communal Cemetery Extension: row "L" grave number is 26. If there is a grave marker it will of course show the name Roy Cormarty.

"Bruay is a large village in the Department of the Pas-de-Calais, 6 kilometres south-west of Bethune and 26 kilometres north-west of Arras." CWGC

MORE WHONNOCK NOTES

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News about Whonnock in the Mission newspaper
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The history of Whonnock's cemeteries
—includes cemetery records and transcriptions of the grave markers
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Our Norwegian settlers—minutes of the Lutheran Church in Whonnock
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