

## 256265 Private George Price

### The Last Canadian to Die in WWI

*Researched and Written by: Capt. (N) (Ret'd) Michael Braham*

**Introduction:** At 1058, 11 November 1918, Private George Price, of "A" Company, 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force became the last Canadian and last British Commonwealth soldier killed in the First World War.



Source: Wikipedia

**George Lawrence Price:** George Price was born in Falmouth, Nova Scotia, on 15 December 1892, and raised on Church Street in what is now Port Williams, Nova Scotia. As a young man he moved to Moose Jaw, Sask.

He enlisted in the 210<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion (Frontiersmen), Canadian Expeditionary Force (C.E.F.) in Moose Jaw on 15 October 1917 and was enrolled with the 1<sup>st</sup> Saskatchewan Depot Battalion on 4 December 1917.

Subsequently he was transferred to the 15<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reserve Battalion, 6 February 1918, and then transferred to the 28<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion, 1 May 1918.

Private Price completed basic training in Regina and was then posted overseas. He embarked from St. Johns, 21 January 1918, on the S.S. *Scotian* and arrived in Liverpool on 6 February 1918. He was taken on strength at the 15<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reserve Battalion, Bramshott, 6 February 1918 and subsequently transferred to the 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion. He arrived in Etaples, France, 2 May 1918 and eventually arrived at the unit on 1 June 1918.

On 8 September 1918 Private Price was gassed in the Canal-Du-Nord area and sent to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Collection Station for treatment and subsequently to the 26<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in Etaples, France. He was discharged and returned to his unit on 26 September 1918.

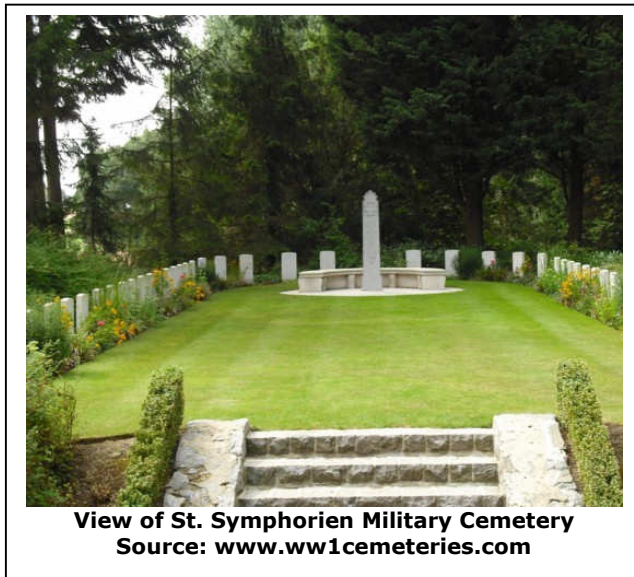
On 11 November 1918, Private Price was part of an advance to take the small village of Havré. After crossing the Canal du Centre into the town of Ville-sur-Haine under German machine gun fire, Price and his patrol moved toward a row of houses intent on pursuing the machine gunner who had harassed their crossing of the canal. The patrol had entered the house from which they had thought the shooting had come, but found the Germans had exited through the back door as they entered the front. They then pursued into the house next door and again found it empty. George Price was fatally shot in the chest by a German sniper as he stepped out of the house into the street, against contrary advice from a house occupant, and died at 10:58 am, just 2 minutes before the armistice ceasefire that ended the First World War went into effect at 11 a.m.

The Battalion War Diary notes, *The Battalion suffered on this operation one casualty only Pte Price of "A" Company being killed by an enemy machine gunner at 10.50 hours.*

He is widely regarded as the last Canadian and the last soldier of the British Commonwealth to be killed in World War I. This would make him the 60,661<sup>st</sup> Canadian killed in the conflict. He was posthumously awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.



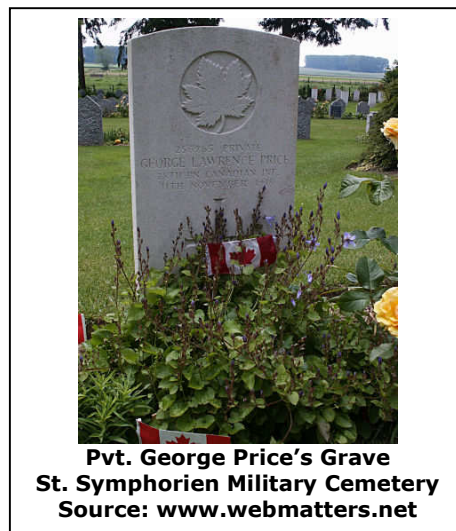
**Burial:** Originally he was buried in the communal cemetery at Havre<sup>1</sup>, however



<sup>1</sup> The backdrop to the Canadian War Museum display on Private Price includes his original headstone in Havre Communal Cemetery. Interestingly, the inscription is to Pte J.L. Price. It is not known whether the first initial was an error, or reflected an earlier way of spelling "George". The inscription on his headstone in St Symphorien spells out his complete name.

he now rests in the Military Cemetery at St. Symphorien (Grave V C 4) a few kilometres to the southeast of Mons, BE.

St. Symphorien Military Cemetery was created and maintained by the German army from August 1914 until November 1918, when it passed into Allied hands, and it contains the graves of 229 Commonwealth servicemen and 284 German soldiers. The cemetery is overlooked by a granite obelisk commemorating the dead from both sides in the Battle of Mons (August 1914) as well as a Commonwealth Cross of Sacrifice. There is an additional German monument to the dead of the 4th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment from the same battle.



In addition to George Price, this cemetery contains the grave of the first Commonwealth soldier killed in the war, Private John Parr, Middlesex Regiment and, that of the first Victoria Cross winner of the War, Lt. Maurice Dease, Royal Fusiliers. St. Symphorien also contains the grave of the first Iron Cross recipient of World War One.

**Memorials:** In 1968, on the 50th anniversary of his death and the armistice surviving members of his company traveled to Ville-sur-Haine and a memorial

plaque was placed onto a wall of a house near the location of his death. The inscription, in English and then in French, reads in English:

*To the memory of 256265 Private George Lawrence Price, 28th North West Battalion, 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 2nd Canadian Division, killed in action near this spot at 10.58 hours, November 11th, 1918, the last Canadian soldier to die on the Western Front in the First World War. Erected by his comrades, November 11th, 1968.*

The house has since been torn down, but the plaque has been placed on a brick and stone monument near the site where the house originally stood, and thus still near the place where he fell.

In 1991, the town of Ville-sur-Haine erected a new footbridge across the adjacent canal. A plebiscite was held and on 11 November the bridge was officially named the George Price Footbridge (Passerelle George Price).



**Monument to George Price and the new footbridge**  
Source: [www.webmatters.net](http://www.webmatters.net)

#### References:

1. Wikipedia, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Lawrence\\_Price](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Lawrence_Price)
2. Coombs, Rose E.B., *Before Endeavours Fade*, Battle of Britain Prints International Ltd, 1976
3. [www.nwbattalion.com/memorial/gl\\_price1.doc](http://www.nwbattalion.com/memorial/gl_price1.doc)
4. [ww1cemeteries.com/ww1cemeteries/symphorienmilitarycemetery.htm](http://ww1cemeteries.com/ww1cemeteries/symphorienmilitarycemetery.htm)
5. [www.webmatters.net/monuments/ww1\\_price.htm](http://www.webmatters.net/monuments/ww1_price.htm)



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