

PRIVATE CLAUDE JOSEPH PATRICK NUNNEY, VC, DCM, MM

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

Victoria Cross Background: The Victoria Cross (VC), instituted in 1856 by Queen Victoria, is the Commonwealth's premier



military decoration for gallantry. It is awarded in recognition of the most exceptional bravery displayed in the presence of the enemy, although in rare instances the decoration has been given to mark other courageous acts.

Since its inception during the Crimean War, the VC has been awarded 1,358 times. Depending on which of a variety of sources is cited and on the selection criteria applied, somewhere between 94 and 98 Victoria Crosses have been awarded to Canadians or to others serving with the Canadian Forces.

A distinctly Canadian version of the medal was introduced in 1993. To date no one has been awarded the Canadian medal.

Pte. Claude Joseph Patrick Nunney:

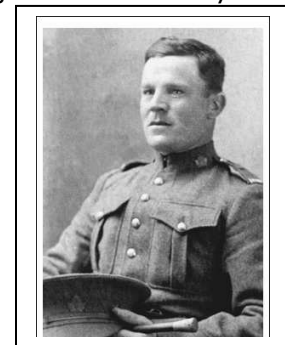
Claude Joseph Patrick Nunney was born in Dublin, Ireland, on December 24, 1892. As his family was poor, he and a few of his siblings were sent to Canada in 1905 as Home Children, a child emigration movement between 1869 and the late 1930s, in the hopes the children would have a better life here in Canada. Nunney was first a ward of St. George's Home in Ottawa, Ontario, then he was placed in a

home in North Lancaster, before his foster-mother's death in 1912. He was then placed in another home in the area, from where he enlisted in June 1913, as a private with the 59th Stormont & Glengarry Regiment.

In February 1915, Nunney enlisted for service in the Canadian Expeditionary Force with the 58th Battalion. In March 1915, he was transferred to the 38th Battalion, before sailing for England in May 1916.

Nunney was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions during the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917, and the Military Medal for his actions at Avion later the same year.

VC Action: Private Nunney was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously for the dash and steadfast example he showed on 1 and 2 September 1918 during the fighting at the Drocourt-Quéant Line in France. On 1 September, near Vis-en-Artois, positions recently captured by the Canadians were subjected to a heavy enemy artillery barrage and a counterattack. On his own initiative, Nunney left his company's main line and went forward through the barrage to its outpost line. Here he went from



position to position encouraging his comrades. The next day, Private Nunney's exemplary conduct helped to inspire his company to carry its objective. Severely wounded on that day, Nunney died on 18 September 1918.

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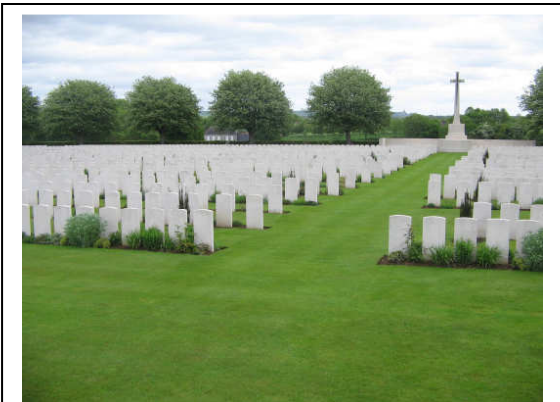
Citation: *"For most conspicuous bravery during the operations against the Drocourt-Quéant line on the 1st and 2nd September, 1918.*

On 1st September, when his battalion was in the vicinity of Vis-en-Artois, preparatory to the advance, the enemy laid down a heavy barrage and counter-attacked. Pte. Nunney, who was at this time at company headquarters, immediately on his own initiative proceeded through the barrage to the company outpost lines, going from post to post and encouraging the men by his own fearless example. The enemy were repulsed and a critical situation was saved. During the attack on 2nd September his dash continually placed him in advance of his companions, and his fearless example undoubtedly helped greatly to carry the company forward to its objectives.

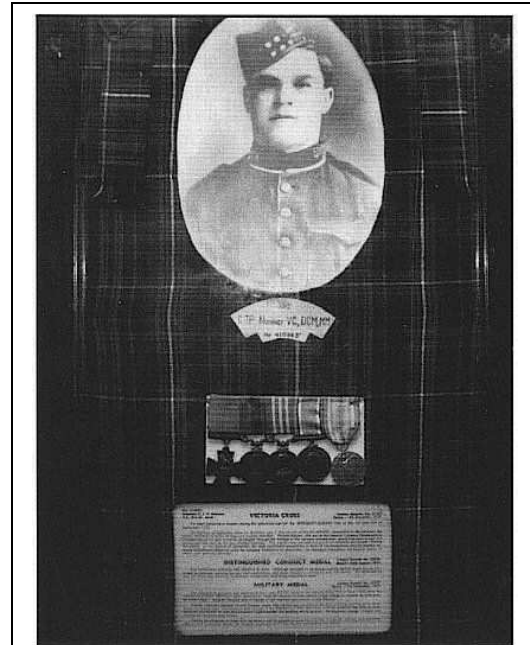
He displayed throughout the highest degree of valour until severely wounded."

The London Gazette, December 14, 1918

Gravesite: He is interred at the Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension in Aubigny-en-Artois, France, a village approximately fifteen kilometers northwest of Arras.



**Aubigny Communal Cemetery
Extension**



Nunney's Medal Display

Medal Location: Nunney's medals, including his VC are displayed above the fireplace at the Armoury in Cornwall, Ontario.

Post Script: As the Canadian Corps moved against the Drocourt-Quéant defensive line from 1 to 4 September 1918, seven VCs were awarded to Lieutenant-Colonel Cyrus Wesley Peck, Captain Bellenden Seymour Hutcheson, Sergeant Arthur George Knight, Lance-Corporal William Henry Metcalf and Privates Claude Joseph Patrick Nunney, Walter Leigh Rayfield and John Francis Young.

References:

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Mike Braham is a graduate of the Royal Military College (1965) and a former naval officer and senior official with DND. He has an abiding interest in military history.