

# MASON, Charles Harold (1889-1917)

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## 2nd Lieutenant Charles Harold Mason and the Mason Family

Parts 1 and 2 of this Naramata Family History were researched and written by Bill Price.

Some time ago, I wrote about the family of one of our WW1 dead whose name appears on our Cenotaph, Arthur Hayward. Since then, I've occasionally turned my thoughts to the other of our WW1 dead: Charles Harold Mason and his family.

The Masons were from Ilkeston, Derbyshire. It's an ancient village in the Erewash Valley, which separates Derbyshire from Nottinghamshire, about 9 miles from Derby. Today, its eastern boundary is only two miles from Nottingham's western edge. Its public market was granted in 1251 and its major church, St Mary's, dates from 1660. I've travelled through Derbyshire, sticking my nose into its antique shops and Great Houses. It's a pretty part of England, so fondness and curiosity sent me looking for what I might find of the Mason family.

Charles Harold Mason's history can be traced back, at least, to Jabez Mason, probably born in Ilkeston about 1737 and died 1827. Jabez married Mary Turton (1748-1827) and they had a son, Moses, born in Ilkeston in 1778 who married Sarah Lings. By 1841, Moses was a tallow chandler (candle maker) living on Bath Street in Ilkeston, with five children, including another Moses (by then 13).

The elder Moses died in 1848, the family continuing to live on Bath Street as candle makers. By 1861 the younger Moses had married Mary Ann, and by 1874 had expanded the family business to include 'cow keeping'. They had four children, including a son named, not surprisingly, Moses William.

Moses William married Emma Elizabeth, from Nottingham. By 1881 they were running a grocery business at 74A Bath Street, Ilkeston, with three children: Edith M (Feb 1876), Frank M (1877), and Sarah Lillian 'Lillian' (September 1879). By 1891 they had moved to 158 Bath Street with three more children: William Edward (May, 1881), our Charles Harold, (January 17, 1889) and Alice Emma (1891), Moses advertising himself as a 'grocer and tea dealer'. As the family business was in the heart of Ilkeston's business district, the family seems prosperous.

Harold's life became focused in Nottingham, which, at the turn of the century, was a major centre of England's lace in-

dustry. He became a lace draughtsman, considered to be a highly skilled trade. He attended Nottingham's High Pavement School, Britain's first organized science school on Stanley Road, Forest Fields, training to become a civil engineer. About 1908 he also joined the 1st Nottinghamshire Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, a militia unit. They were mounted, armed with 13 pounder Quick Firing horse-drawn guns, providing artillery support to the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Mounted Brigade. By the spring of 1911, Moses William had retired and with Emma, Sara Lillian, Harold and Alice Emma, moved to a fairly substantial home in Beech House, Bull Bridge, Ambergate, a delightful country village about twelve miles from Ilkeston.

The whereabouts of Frank Mason is unknown. Edith is thought to have found work in the Marylebone area of London, working as a household domestic. At some point she met Francis Joseph de Guerry Languedoc, a retired Master Mariner, somewhat older than herself. Languedoc was Canadian, born in February 1864 in York, Quebec, of an old Gaspé family. They married in New Basford, Derbyshire, about 8 miles from Ilkeston, in June, 1901. Edith, presumably with Francis, emigrated to Canada in 1904.

The Languedocs were among the first group of settlers to arrive in Naramata, coming here in April 1909 at about the same time as the Aikins, Salting, and Rounds families. The Okanagan Historical Society Report #19 (1955) indicates that they arrived in Naramata from Quebec, consistent with the fact that they arrived five years after Edith's emigration date. The 29th Report suggests they had been enticed to Naramata from somewhere in the prairies or Eastern Canada by J M Robinson's advertising. Later, the 1965 Report states that the Hancocks and Languedoc came to Naramata 'by chance' and remained, but how in the world some would arrive in Naramata by chance is an intriguing question.

William Edward emigrated in 1909, Harold (then 22) and Lillian Sarah had arrived by June 1911, by which time Francis had established his orchard. They all lived in the Languedoc family home, located at what is now 907 Languedoc Street (it's still there, very much amended, now owned by Peter and Mary Simonsen). Their neighbours were on one side, Avard and Annie McCulloch, their son, stepson and two daughters, and on the other, Ernest and Marion Hancock, Ernest's mother Sarah and their two daughters. Sarah and Harold were unemployed, no doubt working the orchard. Only Edward had regular work as a 'sawmill hand' at \$40 a month. Harold was later to be employed by the Water Power Branch, Department of the Interior, Dominion Government, most likely as a Division Assistant Civil Engineer in the Vancouver Head Office. It was a work location that was instrumental in leading him to the killing-grounds of Ypres.

Moses, Emma and young Alice Emma came last, sailing from Liverpool to Quebec on the Canadian Pacific's *Lake Manitoba* on 27 April, 1913. They had a total of £330 between them and sailed with a great number of passengers who had declared to Canada Customs their intent to become 'fruit growers'. Their departure ended 175 years of continuous Mason family residence in the Erewash valley. One wonders about the personal odyssey that had brought a retired sea captain and his wife to finally come to rest in Naramata. Why would the Mason children leave a city of high employment and opportunity? And what would draw an aging Moses William from a comfortable retirement away from his life-long home? Whatever the reasons, with the exception of Frank, the Masons had gathered together again in the Languedoc's Naramata household. But some would stay, and some would go and next month, I'll explore the Naramata history of this family and how it came to be that we honour Charles Harold Mason each Remembrance Day.

## 2nd Lieutenant Harold Mason and the Mason Family - Part 2

Last month I looked at how Moses and Emma Mason and most of their children followed their daughter Edith Languedoc to Naramata. I previously said that the whereabouts of Frank Mason was unknown. Since then I've found that Frank, a lace draughtsman, joined the Cluny Lace Company in Ilkeston, eventually becoming the owner. His family retained the Cluny factory to this day. It now appears that the Masons are still a significant presence in Derbyshire.

By 1913, the Naramata Masons had gathered together in the Languedoc family home. However, the tides of change that had carried the family to Naramata were not to leave them at rest. Moses' time here was very short. He died at the age of 60 on September 17th, 1914, only 17 months after leaving Derbyshire and is buried in Naramata. Emma was to become a long-time resident, living and dying here at the age of 87 in 1939 outliving her husband by 25 years. A grave in Naramata cemetery titled "Mother Mason" is undoubtedly hers. William Edward's history is unknown to us. Lilly Mason married Ronald Smith in Naramata on September 6, 1913. Smith, an American, was born in Nova Scotia in 1876 of

Scots Presbyterian family. In Yale in 1911, Smith was a bookkeeper, working for Gilbert Brandt & Co., a railway contractor supplying labour to the CPR. By 1912, Brandt's company was working on the Little Tunnel north of Naramata then temporary homes to about 1500 railway construction workers. While the construction crews were housed in the hills, contractor's staff lived in the village. Smith was 36 when he married Lilly.

Alice Emma's husband-to-be, Leonard Edward Smith, was born in Tunbridge Wells, England, in 1891 emigrating to Canada in 1905. By 1911, he was boarding in the Strand Hotel, along with 56 other single men and employed full time as a foreman in Kelowna's shipbuilding industry. In 1919 Leonard planted an orchard on the north bench above Gulch Road. Alice married him on September 21, 1921 in Naramata. Berte Berry recalls that Leonard had been previously married, his first wife dying giving birth to their only child Gwen. Leonard and Alice had three more children together: Harold, Barbara and Malcolm, all of whom attended the Naramata School. Leonard died October 1978, at 87 and rests in Naramata Cemetery. Alice, the very last of the Ilkeston Mason family, followed him there the next September, age 89. The Smith orchard is now owned by Joe and Terry Hart.

Francis Languedoc died in Naramata May 7, 1931 at 72 years. His passing was sadly noted by an obituary comment in the New York Times. Edith Languedoc lived another 40 years, dying in Kelowna in 1971, 4 years short of a century. Her obituary in the Okanagan Historical Society report of 1972 referred to her as 'one of the most respected pioneers of the . . . district'. Both are buried in the Naramata cemetery, Francis, of course, left us a lasting legacy in Languedoc Street.

### From Naramata to Ypres

The 80th Division Pioneer Battalion was organized in July 1915 but its designation was changed in August to the 1st Pioneers. The battalion mobilized at Winnipeg and recruited in Victoria, Calgary, Winnipeg and Vancouver where Harold was employed with the dominion Government. He enlisted on November 5, 1915.

Harold embarked at Montreal on 20 November 1915 aboard the CPR troopship *Metagama*, disembarking on 30 November. After training at St. Martins Plain, the 1st Pioneers landed at Boulogne March 9, 1916 and by the 12th Harold would have heard the guns for the first time. By the 13th they were working on front-line trenches, suffering their first 'killed in action' on the 16th. By April 2nd, they were around Ypres.

While with the 1st Pioneers, Harold was appointed Corporal. In early 1917, he was back in England for four months officer training with the No. 14 Officer Cadet Battalion, Berkhamsted. He applied unsuccessfully for appointment to a Canadian Engineering Division and subsequently received a temporary commission May 24th in the Imperial Army as Second Lieutenant, The Queens - Royal West Surrey Regiment, nicknamed 'The Mutton Lancers' after the lamb and flag on their cap badges.

In January 1917, The Queens had moved to the Somme, in time to fight in the Battle of Arras on April 2nd. On the 23rd they participated in a major unsuccessful attack on the Hindenburg Line. After some offensive action over the next month, they were in reserve by July 1st. On July 2nd and 3rd the Battalion marched through Famechon and Doullens and entrained for Hopoutre, close to Poperinghe, the main allied railhead for access to the front. It reached Poperinghe on the 4th. Nearby Kickkebus, out of the range of the guns was surrounded by reserve camps and the next day the Battalion moved into one of these known as Canal Reserve Camp where Mason joined it. The Battalion was scheduled to replace a brigade of The Kings (Liverpool Regiment) in trenches just east of Zillebeke. Zillebeke, about four kilometres southeast of Ypres, was under constant heavy enemy shellfire and the intersection of its main street - Halleblast - and the path to the front became known as 'Hell Blast Corner' - the enemy concentrating fire on main intersections. The guns were always busy, especially in the early morning when troop movements were heaviest and enemy attacks expected.

On the morning of the 6th, Harold, with the Battalion, pulled out at 9 a.m. He had a two-hour march to Zillebeke and Hell Blast Corner and then three kilometres through communication trenches, past Observatory Ridge and Armagh Wood out to the front. Before he could reach the relative safety of the communication trenches, the guns found him on the road. He was the sole casualty in the battalion's move to the front. The War Graves Commission reports him killed on the 7th, the difference possibly being attributable to a day to be processed through a casualty clearing station. He was 28.

### **Dickebusch New Military Cemetery Extension**

The small Flanders village of Dickebusch (now Dickkebus) is a short distance from Ypres and about 9 kilometres from Zillebeke. From the village church, it's a short distance to the Dickebusch New Military Cemetery. Lest we forget, Second Lieutenant Charles Harold Mason rests in grave II.B.26