

VETERAN OF THE WEEK 27

(24-30 October, 2022)

252074 Corporal Charles David Griffin

209th & 102nd Overseas Battalions

Canadian Expeditionary Force

First World War



Figure 1 Cpl. Charles Griffin (R) & Pte. Donald Grant (L), France 1917.

252074 Corporal Charles David Griffin of Burnham, Saskatchewan was born on the 20th of July 1894 in Roath, Cardiff, Glamorgan, Wales to George Glendower Griffin and Catharine Richards Mogford. He would be orphaned at the young age of three. His father George passed away in about 1895, when he was one and his mother died in 1897 when he was three. He was raised by his father's brother Samuel Griffin and his wife Sarah Jane. He attended the Metal Street school in Cardiff and received his grade eight. By 1911 Charles was living with his cousin Thomas Mansel John and his family in Merthyr Tydfil. While living there he worked in a coal mine alongside his cousin Thomas.

Later that same year (1911) he immigrated to Canada to live with other relatives, his uncle Alfred and aunt Jane Baskerville. Who had homesteaded just outside Swift Current at Burnham, Saskatchewan in 1906. His first Job in Canada was working for another local area rancher named William "Bill" Buzzard. He worked for Mr. Buzzard for five years. It was in 1916 he took leave from his job as a ranch hand to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force alongside his best friend Donald Grant. At the age of 21, he originally enlisted with the 128th Overseas Battalion on the 18th of January 1916 in Swift Current but soon transferred to the 209th Overseas Battalion (15 February 1916).

Cpl. Griffin then proceeded to sail overseas to England on the 1st of November 1916 aboard the S.S. Caronia. He arrived in England on the 11th of November that same year. After the 209th was disbanded in England he was transferred to the 102nd Overseas Battalion, with whom he would serve the rest of the war with. Charles arrived in France on the 6th of December 1916 and met up with the 102nd in the field on the 22nd of January 1917. In June of the following year, he suffered a bout of scabies and was admitted to No. 13 Canadian Field Ambulance but returned to duty relatively quickly. He would be appointed Lance Corporal on the 11th of January 1918, and seven days later on the 18th he would be awarded a Good Conduct Badge. Griffin was eventually promoted to the rank of Corporal on the 4th of September 1918.

On the 1st of October 1918, Cpl. Griffin was Wounded in Action near Cambrai, France during the Battle of Canal du Nord, having suffered a gunshot wound to his left ankle causing a severe fracture. A wound that would cause him to limp for the rest of his life. That same day he was taken Prisoner of War by the Germans and was initially treated at a German field ambulance, where he would have the first of two operations performed on his ankle. He would then be transferred to a German Hospital near Mons (12 October 1918) where he underwent a second operation. Eventually he would be sent to a German POW camp north of Cologne, Germany, where he described the conditions as being very poor.

A Swift Current Sun article published in 1979 about his experiences during the war recounted, Charles and the other POW's having survived off of potato peelings and sawdust. Two months later he would be released and repatriated. He would then be admitted to No. 3 General Hospital Boulogne (12 December 1918). A couple days later he would be invalided to England for further treatment as he came out of the POW camp in poor condition. He would be admitted to Lewisham Military Hospital in England on the 16th of December that same year. It was while being treated in hospital in England, he met his future wife Margaret "Madge" Humphreys who was one of his nurses.

Griffin then would be invalided back to Canada for further treatment of his wounds (10 June 1919). Corporal Charles Griffin would be officially discharged from the C.E.F. on the 15th of July 1919 via reason of medically unfit for service. For his service during the Great War Cpl. Griffin was awarded the following: the British War Medal, the Victory Medal, and both War Service Badges Class A and B. He also was entitled to one good Conduct Badge and the right to wear one Gold Casualty Stripe. Despite having a limp and limited use of his ankle Cpl. Griffin would go on to serve again during the Second World War, this time serving at home as an Airforce Firefighter. This week we honour the service of 252074 Corporal Charles David Griffin of Burnham, Saskatchewan. Thank you, Cpl. Griffin, for your service.

Lest We Forget.

