



Thame Remembers



Private William Chowns

William Chowns was born on 24th January 1889 in Moreton, near Thame. The son of William Chowns and Emma (née Austin). He was the fourth child of a family of six boys and one girl. The family all emigrated to Canada between 1906 and 1911, except for Frank, the eldest, who married and stayed in Thame. Frank was also killed in World War One. (See section on France).

William was working as a labourer in Humber Bay, Ontario, Canada when he was drafted on 20th February 1918, with no previous military experience, into the 19th Battalion Canadian Infantry (Central Ontario Regiment).

William was posted to the Western Front to join the Battalion with the 4th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Canadian Division. As the war neared its end, the Canadian Corps pressed on towards Germany. This final phase of the war for the Canadians being known as the *Pursuit to Mons*. It was during these final thirty-two days of the war that the Canadians engaged the retreating Germans over about seventy kilometres in a series of running battles at Denain and Valenciennes in France and finally Mons in Belgium. It was just outside Mons on 10th November that William was killed instantly by a machine gun bullet through the head. He was 29 years old and this was one day before the Armistice. Some criticism was levelled at the Canadian Corps Commander for needlessly wasting lives to capture Mons once it was known that the cessation of hostilities was imminent. It was claimed that the soldiers who were killed and wounded in taking Mons were sacrificed for a symbolic rather than a strategic objective. Mons being the location where the war started for the British Expeditionary Force in 1914.

3107824 Private William Chowns, Canadian Infantry, was initially buried in Hyon Communal Cemetery, three quarters of a mile south of Mons, before being re-interred, in December 1920, in Mons (Bergen) Communal Cemetery, Mons.



**The
Thame Remembers Cross
was delivered
to his grave on
21st April 2018
by
Brian West**

