

Hello! In this short video essay I will be going over and detailing the information available about the lives of two British home children who served in the first world war. It is important first to establish some key details about the association between home children and the war; an estimated 10,000 home children in Canada volunteered to serve in the conflict, some sources estimate that this was nearly all of the eligible home children who could've possibly volunteered. The reason why nearly every eligible home child enlisted was for two primary factors, the first being that it gave them an opportunity to leave the often abusive home life that they had to live in Canada, some underaged boys even ran away from home and lied about their age in order to enlist. For these home children, going to an active warzone and fighting for their country was seen as a better alternative than staying home. The second primary reason was many who enlisted hoped that by being close to Britain, they may have the opportunity to reconnect with their families and the people that knew them before they were sent away through the home children program. One fascinating fact is that during the time period of the war (1914-1918) Britain sent no new home children to Canada as there was too high of a risk of the ships being sunk by German U-Boats. Ultimately more than 1,100 of the 10,000 home children died during the conflict, of that total 689 of them are estimated to have died in the battle of Vimy Ridge alone. Many home children returned from the war with lasting injuries that made it so they were unable to work on the farm or do physical labour, and the general home children program began to slow down and have new restrictions put onto it which ultimately resulted in the end of the home child program.

The first of two individuals' whose stories i'd like to share is that of Cecil Bennett. Born in 1895, Cecil was brought to Canada through the home children program when he was just 10 in 1905. In 1907 he was placed in a home in Caven Township, located in Durham Ontario. Unlike many other home children, who had to work as children at the homes they were

placed at, Bennett wasn't expected to work until he had finished his education. In addition to that there is a lot of information on Bennett thanks to the family he stayed with keeping ahold of his documentation. In 1915, 10 years after he came to Canada at the age of 20, he enlisted to fight in World War 1, he served with the 3rd Dragoon's, the 93rd Battalion Military Police, and finally was transferred to the infantry in the Central Ontario Regiment, 20th Battalion. However on April 9th, 1917, Six days after his 22nd birthday, Cecil Bennett was killed in action on the first day of the battle of Vimy Ridge, his body was buried in a mass grave in Lichfield Crater Thelus and was survived by two sisters whose identities are currently known. Cecil Bennett is a special case of home children, as the preservation of his records allows for a better perspective of what lives were like for individual home children.

The second story i'd like to share is that of Claude Nunney. Nunney was born in London in 1892 and similar to Cecil Bennett, was brought to Canada in 1905, where he resided in the St. George's Home in Ottawa. He also had a brother Alfred who was placed in a home in Pembroke. following his arrival. In 1915, at the age of 23 Nunney would enlist to serve in the first world war. He would be a part of the 38th Battalion on the Western front, becoming a well distinguished soldier, earning the Conduct Medal and the Military Medal by 1918. Claude would end up earning the Victoria Cross, Canada's highest military honour for his conduct during the 2nd Battle of Arras. However unfortunately he died of his wounds during the battle and wouldn't live to see himself be awarded the Victoria Cross, and it was award posthumously. The following is an excerpt of his medal citation: "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 the highest degree of valour until severely wounded.”

Considering 10,000 home children fought in the first world war, there are thousands of more stories similar to Cecil Bennett and Claude Nunney's. However a lot of their stories has gone undocumented and untold, and it's likely those stories will never get the opportunity to be told. By remembering the contributions made by home children during the conflict, we can keep as much of that memory alive as we can, even if individual stories have been lost to time.