

HUGH CAIRNS VC & DCM

AN OUTSTANDING LEADER OF MEN

RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY PUPILS OF BOTHAL MIDDLE SCHOOL



Corporal Hugh Cairns shortly before he was promoted to Sergeant on 15 August 1918.

Photo CWM 19940079-023 courtesy of George Metcalf Archival Collection, Canadian War Museum.

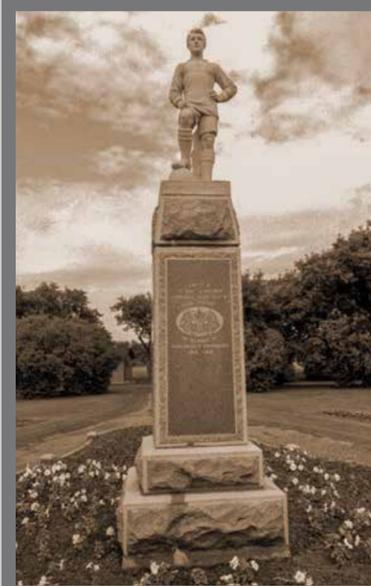
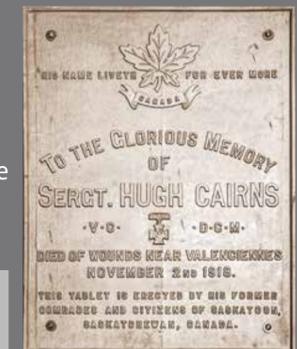
Hugh Cairns was born in Ashington on 4 December 1896. He went to Bothal School before his family emigrated to Saskatoon, Canada in 1911. Hugh and two of his brothers (Albert & Henry) enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1915. Only Henry survived the war.

Hugh was sent to France and was awarded both the Victoria Cross and Distinguished Conduct Medal, Britain's two highest awards for bravery. He died on 2 November 1918 from the wounds received winning his Victoria Cross.

Inseparable brothers

Hugh and Albert Cairns were described as inseparable brothers. Albert was killed on 10 September 1918 during the battle of Cambrai. Hugh was determined to avenge his brother's death and this may help explain his heroics in November 1918.

Hugh Cairns Memorial, Christ Church Anglican, Saskatoon. Photo QC-1677-3 courtesy of Saskatoon Public Library - Local History.



Hugh's love of football

Hugh was a keen footballer and his team won the Saskatoon League Championship shortly before he enlisted in 1915.

The Saskatoon Football Memorial is topped by a statue of Hugh Cairns and lists the 75 Saskatoon footballers who were killed in the First World War.

Hugh Cairns Memorial, Saskatoon, Canada

Photo PH-HBS-27-2 courtesy of Saskatoon Public Library - Local History.



Lasting legacy

Bothal Middle School memorial plaque, unveiled in 1921. Dedicated to 128 former Bothal School pupils, including Hugh and Albert Cairns, killed in the First World War.

"A VC has been awarded to Hugh Cairns, an old boy"

(extract from the Head Teacher's logbook, Bothal School, Ashington - 3 February 1919)



"We must never forget these heroic men and women. Let us all remember"