**Eric Rodnight**

Eric Rodnight, born in Bedford in 1894, was the youngest of seven children of William and Elizabeth Rodnight. His father, a coal merchant, moved his family to Watford in the early 1900s, where he became a commercial traveller dealing in coal. Two of his sons took apprenticeships, one became an elementary school teacher and another worked for the railway. In 1911, when the family was living at 13 Canterbury Road, Watford, Eric was 17 and a student.

Eric joined the Canadian Machine Gun Corps, 15th Company, gained a commission and served as a Lieutenant. In 1917 was engaged in an unsuccessful attempt to capture Passchendaele village.

‘The reasons for the our failure lay rather in the inevitable weakness of our artillery barrage, the nature of the ground, the strength of the machine gun resistance from the pillboxes, and above all in the unbroken wire entanglements. You cannot afford to take liberties with the Germans. Exhausted men struggling through mud cannot compete against dry men with machine guns in ferroconcrete boxes waiting for them’.

Extract from a private diary of a senior and experienced officer.

‘On 28 October the Enemy shelled our barrage positions and killed one officer, Lieutenant Rodnight’.

Extract from Canadian Corps War Diary

Eric died on 29 October 1917, aged 24. He is remembered with honour at The Menin Gate memorial at Ypres, panel 32.

In about 1916, Eric’s mother moved to ‘Bealings’, Belmont Road, Bushey. Eric is commemorated on the Bushey Memorial and at St Paul’s Church near her home.

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