

Prisoners of War

457758 Vernon Joseph Gorst

Gorst joined the 60th Battalion on July 2, 1915. On the night of November 15, 1916 a patrol made up of Major Walter Miller, 457689 Company Sergeant Major Ivan Lawrence McAdam, 458190 Sergeant Frederick William Couchman and two Battalion scouts was sent out from the Paris Redoubt. Lt Montague Henry Goslett led a covering party made up of 457687 Corporal Charles H. Norton, 457444 Lance Corporal Robert Gordon Wilson and 457758 Private Vernon Joseph Gorst, to protect the patrol. They left the trenches at a point between No. 1 and No. 2 posts a little after 7:30 pm. They returned at 9:15 pm 409776 Lance Corporal Harry Watts was in charge of No 1 Post and watched Major Millar and CSM McAdam return to the trench. Sgt. Couchman and the two scouts followed closely behind. A few minutes later the covering party, led by Lt. Goslett followed by Gorst, Norton and Wilson approached No 1 Post. 1/Cpl Watts challenged them and Gorst replied back "60th" Watts recognized Gorst's voice and allowed them into the trench. CSM McAdam checked over the men to make sure everyone was accounted for and then marched the men up the trench to their dugouts. Couchman was the platoon Sgt. in charge of No. 16 platoon in D Company, Gorst's platoon, when he came back on duty at 2:00 am he was informed that Gorst was missing. He searched the dugouts and trenches but found no sign of Gorst. He then reported the disappearance to Lt Goslett. Gorst was never seen again and on January 9, 1917 a court of inquiry made up of Major G.E. Geary and Lt J.A. Wallace and presided over by Major R.A. Macfarlane all of the 58th Battalion was convened at the town Majors office in Ecoivers to determine what happened to Private Gorst. After hearing evidence from Corporal Norton, Lance Corporal Watts, Sgt. Couchman and Lt Goslett the court determined; " The court declares that 457758 Pte. V. J. Gorst, 60th Canadian Infantry Battalion, illegally absented himself without leave at sub-sector 1 of frontage held by 9th. Canadian Infantry brigade, France, on the 15th. Day of November, 1916 and that he is still absent." On January 22, 1917, would be declared a deserter. On July 22, 1917, the authorities found out he was a prisoner of war and held at Dulmen, Germany. He would remain a prisoner until released from captivity December 2, 1918. 1915. He was Struck off Strength of the battalion April 12, 1919. Gorst was eighty years old when he died on November 27, 1960 at Shaughnessy Hospital, Vancouver and is buried in Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Burnaby, British Columbia.