



THE LOCHNAGAR CRATER MEMORIAL

Roy Bealing and his best friend Pte. Alfred Moxham

For many years, a lone veteran made his way to the old Somme battlefield where he would stand quietly on the lip of the Lochnagar Crater. That man was Roy Bealing M.M., of the 6th Wiltshires, and had fought here on 2nd July 1916. The events of that day remained with him for the rest of his life. His pilgrimages were a testament to the memory of his lost comrades.

His best friend, Pte. Alfred Moxham, lost his life at Lochnagar. Roy, along with Alfred's brother, William, witnessed the tragic end.

Roy and William had advanced together and fallen headlong into the Crater. Scrambling up the other side, they could see a German machine-gun had found the range of the lip. Backwards and forwards the gun swept, and up came young Alfred, who upon seeing the chasm before him, froze. His brother and Roy frantically shouted but before he could move out of danger, he was cut down.

Roy and William had the painful duty of burying him in the bottom of the Crater, where for all we know, he may still lie. Later that year a Canadian war correspondent noted in his diary that he had seen there a simple wooden cross with the inscription 'Moxham'. Shown here is a photograph of the cross which was later used in the Michelin Battlefield Guides.

The story would surely have been lost had it not been for a chance meeting in the late 1970s when Richard Dunning began talking with this solitary figure looking out across the Crater. He subsequently accompanied Roy on several pilgrimages back.



Top: Battlefield grave of Pte. Alfred Moxham, Lochnagar Crater 1917 © IWM.
Below: Roy Bealing remembers, Lochnagar 1st July 1980.

Roy Bealing et son meilleur ami Le Soldat Alfred Moxham

Pendant des années, un vétéran solitaire est venu à l'ancien champ de bataille de la Somme se tenir discrètement au bord du Lochnagar Crater. Cet homme est Roy Bealing, Médaille Militaire, des 6^{èmes} Wiltshires. Il a combattu ici le 2 juillet 1916. Toute sa vie, il a gardé un souvenir indélébile de ce qu'il s'est passé ce jour-là. Ses pèlerinages sont un hommage à la mémoire de ses camarades perdus.

Son meilleur ami, le Soldat Alfred Moxham, a perdu la vie à Lochnagar. Roy, ainsi que William, le frère d'Alfred, ont été témoins de sa fin tragique.

Roy et William avançaient ensemble quand ils tombent tête la première dans le Cratère. En escaladant le versant opposé, ils se rendent compte qu'une mitrailleuse allemande s'est frayé un chemin par-dessus le bord. Elle balaye le terrain dans tous les sens. Le jeune Alfred s'approche, mais en voyant le gouffre à ses pieds, il se fige. Son frère et Roy hurlent de toutes leurs forces, mais avant qu'il n'ait pu se mettre à l'abri, il est abattu.

Roy et William ont accompli leur douloureux devoir en l'enterrant au fond du Cratère où, pour autant que l'on sache, il repose encore aujourd'hui. Plus tard cette année-là, un correspondant de guerre canadien a noté dans son journal qu'il y avait vu une photographie d'une croix en bois toute simple portant l'inscription « Moxham ». L'image ici est une photographie de cette croix qui, plus tard, a illustré les premiers Guides Michelin des Champs de Bataille.

Cette histoire se serait sans doute perdue s'il n'y avait pas eu une rencontre fortuite, à la fin des années 1970, entre Richard Dunning et cette figure solitaire, au regard perdu au fin fond du Cratère. Ils ont commencé à discuter et il a ensuite accompagné Roy durant plusieurs pèlerinages sur le site.



The Lochnagar Crater is privately owned by Richard Dunning MBE and is dedicated to Remembrance, Respect and Reconciliation.
www.lochnagarcrater.org



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thanks the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) for their support with this visitor information project.

Alfred Moxham is commemorated on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. The CWGC commemorates the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died in the two world wars.

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