



THE LOCHNAGAR CRATER MEMORIAL

The valiant attempt by Bombing Sgt. Patrick Butler to rescue his C/O, Lieut-Col. Louis Meredith Howard

When the attack commenced on 1st July the 24th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers had to advance from the reserve trenches behind Tara and Usna Hill and walk well over two thousand yards (1800 metres) across totally exposed ground towards their objectives for the day – the trenches in front of the villages of Contalmaison and Pozières. German machine-guns and artillery decimated them, inflicting over 630 casualties by nightfall.

They were led by Lieut-Col. Louis Meredith Howard who was seriously wounded and lay caught up on the German wire. Despite the danger, Bombing Sgt. Patrick Butler crawled out and extricated him before carrying him to the relative safety of the Lochnagar Crater. Shortly afterwards, whilst tending to his C/O, Sgt. Butler was sadly killed by a German sniper.

Equally sadly, Lieut-Col. Louis Meredith Howard succumbed to his wounds the following day and for several years now, on behalf of his relatives, a wreath has been placed in his memory during the Lochnagar Remembrance Ceremony.

They are both buried nearby in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Ovillers Military Cemetery.

This was no doubt one of countless acts of selfless gallantry on that fateful day but there was an interesting postscript. In May 2016 there was a poignant meeting where, for the first time, the grandson of Lieut-Col. Louis Meredith Howard met the grandson of Bombing Sgt. Patrick Butler, the man who had sacrificed his own life in trying to save him.

And in July wreaths to them both are laid side by side during the Lochnagar Ceremony.



Bombing Sgt. 348 Patrick Butler, 24th Northumberland Fusiliers, killed 1st July 1916. © Patrick Butler.

La vaillante tentative du Bombing-Sergeant Patrick Butler de secourir son Commandant, le Lieutenant-colonel Louis Meredith Howard

À l'annonce de l'assaut le 1^{er} juillet, le 24^{ème} Bataillon des Northumberland Fusiliers doit quitter les tranchées de réserve derrière Tara et Usna Hill et marcher plus de 1800m, à travers un terrain totalement exposé, vers l'objectif du jour – les tranchées devant les villages de Contalmaison et de Pozières. Les mitrailleuses et l'artillerie allemande les déciment, on compte plus de 630 victimes à la tombée de la nuit.

Ils sont menés par le Lieutenant-colonel Louis Meredith Howard qui est gravement blessé et s'est enchevêtré dans les barbelés allemands. Malgré le danger, le Sergent Patrick Butler part le chercher à quatre pattes et le porte jusqu'à l'abri relatif du Lochnagar Crater. Peu après, alors qu'il s'occupe de son commandant, le Sergent Butler est malheureusement abattu par un sniper allemand.

Tout aussi tristement, le Lieutenant-colonel Louis Meredith Howard succombe à ses blessures le lendemain. Depuis plusieurs années, une gerbe est déposée en son souvenir par ses descendants, lors de la Cérémonie du Souvenir à Lochnagar.

Tous deux sont enterrés au cimetière militaire Commonwealth War Graves Commission d'Ovillers tout proche.

Il ne s'agit là sans doute que de l'un des innombrables actes de bravoure altruiste en ce jour fatidique, mais il a une postface intéressante. En mai 2016 a eu lieu une rencontre touchante où le petit-fils du Lieutenant-colonel Louis Meredith Howard a fait la connaissance du petit-fils du Bombing-Sergeant Butler, l'homme qui a sacrifié sa vie pour tenter de sauver son grand-père.

Et en juillet, des gerbes à la mémoire des deux hommes sont déposées côte à côte lors de la Cérémonie de Lochnagar.



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 its support with this visitor information project.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission commemorates over 3,400 Commonwealth and 120 French casualties at Ovillers Military Cemetery. The CWGC commemorates the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died in the two world wars. For more information visit www.cwgc.org or download the free CWGC War Graves App.



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