



THE LOCHNAGAR CRATER MEMORIAL

Attack: An account by Pte. Tom Easton, 2nd Battalion Tyneside Scottish

On July 1st, I was not yet twenty. When the whistles blew for the assault, the bagpipes started and we advanced towards the crater side by side, we didn't want to look like cowards.

There were enormous losses. Out of a thousand men there remained only one officer and two hundred men.

Later there was one event that remains etched in my memory.

During the attack we moved along the German front line where I saw one of my best friends sitting at a German artillery position.

He called me over and when I got to him he asked me to sit down.

I protested, telling him we had other things to do.

He said it wouldn't take long and asked me if I could hear music. I could hear absolutely nothing.

He described to me what he could see: *"The whole sky was opening up. Orchestras were playing, choirs were singing, and all the ancestors were there telling him to come and join them"*. He held his arms out. *"There's my old father"* he says, *"they're waiting for me"*. He fell forward and I saw he had no back. A piece of shrapnel had gone through his chest.

These things shake you. But it was a momentous experience for me, and in spite of the shock, it gave me the courage to do my duty as a soldier.'



Top: © Clément Masson (Illustration), Cédric Masson (Text). Below: Tom Easton standing in the Crater – 1960s.

L'assaut : d'après le récit du Soldat Tom Easton 2^{ème} Bataillon Tyneside Scottish

« Le 1^{er} juillet, je n'avais pas encore vingt ans. Au coup de sifflet donnant le signal de l'assaut, les cornemuses commencèrent à jouer et nous avançons vers le cratère côte à côte, nous ne voulions pas avoir l'air lâche.

Il y avait des pertes énormes. Sur mille hommes, il ne restait plus qu'un officier et deux cents hommes.

Plus tard, un événement qui reste gravé dans ma mémoire arriva.

Pendant l'assaut, nous longions la ligne de front allemande où j'ai vu l'un de mes meilleurs amis assis sur une position d'artillerie allemande.

Il m'appela et lorsque j'arrivai devant lui, il me demanda de m'asseoir. Je protestai, lui disant que nous avions autre chose à faire.

Il me dit que ça ne prendrait pas longtemps et me demanda si j'entendais de la musique. Je n'entendis absolument rien.

Alors il me décrivit ce qu'il voyait : *« Tout le ciel s'ouvrait, des orchestres jouaient, des chorales chantaient et les ancêtres l'appelaient à venir les rejoindre. »* Il ouvrit ses bras. *« C'est mon vieux père »,* dit-il, *« ils m'attendent »*. Il tomba en avant et je vis qu'il n'avait plus de dos. Un éclat d'obus lui avait traversé la poitrine.

Ce genre de chose, ça secoue. Mais ce fut pour moi une expérience mémorable, et malgré le choc, cela m'a donné le courage de faire mon devoir de soldat. »



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



THE LOCHNAGAR CRATER MEMORIAL



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

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission 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.

@CWGC #CWGC

www.cwgc.org

