

# Local historian calls for Hastings to be recognised as birthplace of war hero



Claude Nunney

A LOCAL historian is calling for Hastings, instead of Dublin, to be recognised as the birthplace of a Canadian recipient of a Victoria Cross (VC) and receive, as part of the UK government's First World War centenary plans, a paving stone commemorating the hero.

Peter Silk, an amateur historian, has launched a website in a bid to set the record straight and ensure that Hastings is rightfully acknowledged as the birthplace of Claude Nunney, a member of the 38th Battalion CEF, a unit of the First World War Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Last year (August 2013) the *Observer* reported that Hastings was to receive commemorative paving stone placed in the town honouring Claude Nunney.

Emigrating to Canada in 1905 under the British Home Children scheme, according to his birth certificate, Nunney was born Stephen Sargent Claude Nunney to William and Mary, of 42 Bexhill Road, Hastings, on July 19, 1892.

Mr Silk said: "No one has yet shown to me any records proving that he was born in Dublin. I would not take the attestation papers as being a key document upon which to base my arguments on.

"It would be a very great pity for Hastings to be overlooked when the British Government is recognising the birth place of the First World War VC winners, for a misplaced claim made by some unsupported claims that he was born in Dublin. Robert Noonan/Tressell was born in Dublin, that has been proved.

"The attestation papers were by no means accurately completed, the recruiting officers wanted men to sign up, and were not wanting to establish whether or not the facts were true."

Yet it was Nunney himself who perpetuated the myth that he was an Irishman born in Dublin.

"Claude was sent to Canada by the Harrow Road School, Crusade of Rescue a Catholic Charity, once he arrived at St George's House, Ottawa he was placed with a family in North Lancaster, Glengarry County. This is south of Ottawa near to the St Lawrence Seaway.

"This area had several different waves of emigrants from Scotland and Ireland. They were settled into the area by being given farming plots.

"The settlers to the area started with migrants from the soldiers and their families who fought for the British (Loyalists) during the American War of Independence, and families who left Scotland following the Jacobite Rebellion 1745 (Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Battle of Culloden) and later the clearances, plus the Irish famines etc.

"In the main the immediate area that Claude settled was predominately Celtic, mainly Scottish, and primarily Catholic.

"There were very few English families in the area. He had red hair, which he used to enforce his claim to be Irish."

"He actually enlisted as just Claude only adding Joseph Patrick around the time he was waiting to go with his battalion to France and Flanders to fight.

"In the 1911 Canadian Census, he is listed as Stephen Nunney, Born England came to Canada in 1906. He was living with a 'Scotch' family."

Claude Nunney was awarded the VC for his actions during the operations against the Drocourt-Quéant Line near Vis-en-Artois in France at the start of September 1918, where he led his men to victory despite coming under heavy German fire.

For more information about Claude Nunney log onto [www.claudenunney.co.uk](http://www.claudenunney.co.uk).

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