

DAVID FERGUSON HUNTER V.C.

THE MAN AND THE MEDAL

Ian Hunter



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PREFACE

This paper is very much work in progress. With only limited family documentation available, I have tried to piece together the story of David Ferguson Hunter, who was awarded the Victoria Cross in September 1918, just before the end of World War I.

There will undoubtedly be other information that is known to family members or to people with an interest in either The Great War or the Victoria Cross. Hopefully, any such further information can be added to this paper to build a more complete picture of the man and the story of "The Seven Heroes of Moeuvres".

I make no apology for the fact that there is a degree of repetition within the various accounts quoted here. I wanted to give a full picture of the official and the public reactions to the events at Moeuvres and each piece quoted here gives its own description and emphasis.

I have been helped enormously by two people in particular. Fabrice Hazebroucq was until recently the Deputy Mayor of Moeuvres. Fabrice has carried out a great deal of his own local research and he has provided me with a number of photographs and articles that I had not come across in my own research.

I first had dealings with Fabrice when the Dunfermline Athletic Heritage Trust was organising a trip to France to mark the centenary of the start of the Battle of the Somme. It was decided to include Moeuvres in our itinerary and the people of Moeuvres gave our group a very warm welcome. The village did not know the story of the Seven Heroes of Moeuvres but, since our visit, they have really taken the story to their hearts.

During our visit to Moeuvres in July 2016, we saw not only the grave of Private Mulhill, who died trying to reach the British lines, but also the location of the actual shell hole in which Hunter and his men were trapped.

At the time of writing, the people of Moeuvres are planning to erect a memorial to the Seven Heroes and Fabrice intends to apply to have them officially recognised as war heroes by the French government.

Donald Adamson, too, has been of great help. Donald is a trustee of the Dunfermline Athletic Heritage Trust and very interested in military history. His knowledge of the organisation of the army at that time and his ability to research background information on individuals and battles have provided me with information that I could not possibly have found for myself.

As more and more historical documentation is digitised and made available on the Internet, I would hope that further photographs and stories could be added to the material here. I would really welcome receiving any additional material or photographs held by anyone interested in Hunter's story. I can be contacted at: ihunter25@aol.com.

Ian Hunter – 15 May 2020

INTRODUCTION

David Ferguson Hunter V.C. was born on 28 November 1891 at Kingseat, Dunfermline, Scotland. His family had long been, like so many families in central Scotland, miners.

After a brief period working as a coach painter Hunter, too, worked as a miner until five weeks after the First World War began, when he volunteered for the Highland Cyclist Battalion. His service number at that time was 1420. Later, he transferred to the Royal Engineers before serving in France in 1916. While in France, as a Private in 32nd Division of the 17th (Service) Battalion (3rd Glasgow) he suffered a shrapnel wound to his back and spent four weeks in hospital from 10 February until 14 March 1917.

In early September 1918, he joined the 1/5th Bn., (City of Glasgow) Highland Light Infantry, with whom he was serving when his “great gallantry” at Moeuvres led to his being awarded the Victoria Cross.

His was the 500th award of the Victoria Cross since the war broke out and King George V presented him with his medal at Buckingham Palace on 16 November 1918, just five days after the war ended.

After the war, he returned to his mining job at Kingseat and was later employed at Steelend. Between 1921 and 1951 he was a country postman in the West Fife area.

In 1951, aged sixty, he was employed as a storekeeper at Comrie Colliery for five years. His address during this period was 40 Haig Crescent, Dunfermline.

He died of a heart attack in 1965 and is buried in Dunfermline Cemetery.

In the First World War, it was very unusual for someone other than a commissioned officer to be awarded the V.C. otherwise than posthumously. It was also virtually unique for a single exploit such as that at Moeuvres to be referred to in one of General Haig’s communiques. This paper tries to describe Hunter’s background and to tell the story of the Seven Heroes of Moeuvres so as to put Hunter’s action into context.

THE EARLY YEARS

David Ferguson Hunter was born on 28 November 1891 at Quarry Row, Kingseat, Dunfermline, Scotland. He was the fourth of twelve children, six of whom died in infancy. He had three brothers, two of whom also fought in the war, and two sisters.

His father, Peter, was a miner who originally came from Clackmannan. Peter married Maria Ferguson, of 29 Queen Anne Street, Dunfermline, on 31 December 1883 in James Street, Dunfermline.

Hunter was a pupil at Halbeath School but at the age of 14, after a brief period working as a coach painter, he became a miner working, first, at the Aitken Pit in Kelty before moving to the Dean Colliery, Kingseat, to work alongside his father.

He joined the Territorial Army in 1910, serving with the 7th Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. In October 1914, he volunteered for overseas service in the Highland Cyclist Battalion (service number 1420), but did not get to France until 1916, when he transferred to the Royal Engineers. Soon after, he was wounded and spent four weeks in hospital. In early September 1918, he joined the 1/5th Bn., (City of Glasgow) Highland Light Infantry, with whom he was serving when he was awarded his V.C.. His service number was 43247.

On 26 June 1913, Hunter married Isabel Wilson. They went on to have six children:

Nancy (Nan)	11 August 1914
Maria (Rea)	5 August 1916
James (Jim)	29 October 1919
David	19 November 1923
Elwin Walter Catt	19 November 1923
Thomas (Tom)	12 February 1930

David was the elder twin by five minutes.

At the time of his service in the war, the family was living at 35 Forth Street, Dunfermline.

Isobel died on 23 June 1936 and on 9 June 1939 Hunter married Elizabeth (Betsy) Young, who had two children by her previous marriage.

THE WINNING OF THE MEDAL

The Citation

Number 30970.

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WEDNESDAY, 23 OCTOBER, 1918.

War Office,
23rd October, 1918.

His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Victoria Cross to the undermentioned Non-commissioned Officer:—

No. 43247 Cpl. David Ferguson Hunter, High. L.I. (Dunfermline).

For most conspicuous bravery, determination and devotion to duty.

When the battalion to which he belonged relieved another unit in the front line, Cpl. Hunter was detailed to take on an advanced post which was established in shell holes close to the enemy.

Relief was carried out in darkness, and there was no opportunity of reconnoitring the adjacent ground.

On the following afternoon the enemy drove back the posts on Cpl. Hunter's flanks and established posts in close proximity to

and around him, thus completely isolating his command.

Despite the fact that he was exceedingly short of rations and of water this gallant N.C.O. determined to hold on to his post to the last.

On the evening of the second day he endeavoured to communicate with his company without result. Nevertheless he maintained his position, and repelled frequent attacks until the evening of the third day, when a counter-attack relieved him.

Without food and water he had held on to his post for over forty-eight hours. Not only did he withstand constant attacks, but he had also to undergo the barrage fire of the enemy and of our own attacks, which came right across his post.

The outstanding bravery, coupled with the determination, fortitude and endurance, displayed by Cpl. Hunter is beyond all praise, and is a magnificent example to all.

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The formal citation for the award of the V.C. to Hunter was published in **The London Gazette** on **22 October 1918**.

That very brief summary tells only part of the tale, however. A review of other, contemporary material brings out the full story of the action at Moeuvres that led to the award of the medal.

Background

1/5 Battalion of the HLI would have had four rifle companies (A, B, C and D) and an HQ company. Each company might have numbered 150 men and, in turn, those companies would have been split into four platoons of 30-35 men, each led by a junior officer. Those platoons would, themselves, have been split into three sections of around ten men and these would have been led by a sergeant or a corporal. It is one of these sections (presumably reduced by casualties to seven men) that Cpl. Hunter was commanding at Moeuvres. The six men who were with Hunter were:

Pte. William Jones, Peebles;

Pte. John Phillips, Glasgow;

Pte. John Fleming, Glasgow;

Pte. C McFarlane, Glasgow;

Pte. W. Gray, Saltcoats; and

Pte. Terence Mulhill, Edinburgh.

War diaries were kept by all units of the British army and were usually written up at the end of each day by the adjutant. The following war diary extract relates to the period when 1/5 Battalion was at Moeuvres. It shows that, having captured the village (or the ruins of the village) from the Germans, the British had been pushed back out. They had established outposts to the north of Moeuvres, in shell holes, and Hunter and his six men became isolated when they, alone, did not receive the order to fall back. The diary of 1/5 Battalion records the several attempts to re-take Moeuvres and the eventual success. Hunter and his six men are the “right post” of C Company. Hunter is mentioned by name – which is extremely rare for a non-officer at this time. The reference to an officer’s being hospitalised due to “shell shock” is equally unusual.

Those who were killed in this action are buried in Moeuvres cemetery. They include Pte. Mulhill. Both Captain Ross and 2nd Lieutenant Bryson subsequently died of their wounds and are buried in Queant Communal cemetery.

1/5 Battalion HLI War Diary

16/9/18: Took over line in HINDENBURG SUPPORT LINE between INCHY and MOEUVRES at midnight from 1st Battalion MUNSTER FUSILIERS. "B" and "C" Companies in front line with outposts in shell holes. "A" and "D" Companies in support.

17/9/18: Heavy shelling on HINDENBURG SUPPORT LINE all day.

Heavy enemy bombardment put down on MOEUVRES extending to front of "C" Company coming down behind the support line. Troops on own RIGHT were drawn in necessitating a defensive flank being formed by "D" Company from LEFT post of "C" Company which had been driven back but had reoccupied its position at (Ref Map 67c NE) E14 @ 10.85 down HOBART STREET to E13 Central. Previous to this it had been found that touch with right post of "C" Company had been lost. Frequent patrols and parties attempting to reach the post were driven off by the enemy. Continuous bombing attacks by enemy on right were all driven off. A Block being placed in front of HOBART STREET TRENCH post in which post "C" Company was replaced by "D" Company, withdrawing to dugout at E13 @ 20.05. Heavy shelling at night.

About 7 pm, Lieutenant and Adjutant T. B. Clark was wounded and Captain K. Ross RAMC mortally wounded in WARBURGH STREET.

The following officers re-join Transport Line: -

Lieutenant W. H. Milne from GH2 Lewis Gun Course at Le Touquet.

2nd Lieutenant J.G. McKenzie from UK leave.

18/9/18: Captain T. S. Wilson joins the battalion as captain K. Ross wounded.

HINDENBURG LINE heavily shelled all day. Attempts to find missing men were all driven off by enemy.

19/9/18: Heavy enemy shelling all day. An attack was ordered to re-take MOEUVRES; this was carried out by 155 Infantry Brigade on our right with two companies of 7 Highland Light Infantry to attack E14 Central, one company of 1/5 Highland Light Infantry to re-establish the post occupied by RIGHT post of "C" Company. Bombardment to commence 19.00 hrs for 5 minutes barrage to move forward afterwards 100 yards each 4 minutes. "A" Company was asked to carry this out jumping off from HOBART STREET. They were held up just short of objective by machine gun fire from LEFT which being the flank on our own LEFT at flank of barrage. The barrage had not been sufficiently effective. "D" Company was ordered to support "A" Company and having done so, the missing post of "C" Company under Corporal DAVID HUNTER was enabled to be relieved. The post could not be maintained due to strong hostile attacks. The Battalion was in the process of being relieved by 25th Battalion, Canadians, which was completed about 12 midnight, the Battalion proceeding to bivouac area near NOREVIL.

The following casualties were sustained by the Battalion for phase from 16 to 19 September.

*Killed: Captain W. F. Donald 9th attached 5 Highland Light Infantry on 19th
9 Other ranks*

*Wounded: 2nd Lieutenant A. Bryson 5 Highland Light Infantry on 19th
Lieutenant and Adjutant T. B. Clark on 18th
Captain K. Mck. Ross Royal Army Medical Corps on 18th
24 Other ranks*

Gassed: 7 Other ranks

Missing: 4 Other ranks

Sick (to hospital): Lieutenant Swann (shell-shocked).

Captain James Price Lloyd's Account

After the war, and in common with a great deal of material used by the government to report on the war, the Ministry of Information (MI7) destroyed all the archives relating to the action at Moeuvres. MI7 was keen that all of its press material and propaganda should be destroyed. However, an officer of the Welsh Regiment who served with Military Intelligence, Captain James Price Lloyd, wrote the following account of the action at Moeuvres. Captain Lloyd made manuscript notes of the actions behind the awards of 94 V.C.s. Remarkably, these documents have survived in his personal records. Many of these papers are officially stamped, and one can trace the development of many individual articles from the notes based on an idea, to the pencil draft that is then followed by the hand-written submission and the typescript.

Tales of the V.C. - 43247 Corporal David Ferguson Hunter – HLI

"The Seven Heroes of Moeuvres"

"On the occasion of the hostile attack at Moeuvres on the 17th inst., a corporal and six men of the Highland Light Infantry, 52nd Division, forming the garrison of one of our posts just north of the village, were surrounded and believed to have been captured. During the two days in which the Germans were in occupation of Moeuvres this party, in fact, maintained their position and inflicted many casualties on the enemy. On the night of the 19th and 20th inst., when Moeuvres was retaken by our troops, the whole party regained their unit without loss."

Thus, the British Official Communiqué, issued from General Headquarters in France on the morning of the 21st of September 1918.

The ruins of the village of Moeuvres are set on the brow of a low slope which looks down on the dry bed of the Canal du Nord. Death has stalked Moeuvres many times during

these four years of war. It is in the heart of a country which the battle of Cambrai in the autumn of 1917 has made "historic". Pronville, Inchy-en-Artois, Graincourt, Flesquiers, Moeuvres itself, all these places have risen out of obscurity into a terrible fame. Between Moeuvres and Queant four miles to the west, and then southwards along the canal, the Hindenburg Line, that "invulnerable fortress" which our soldiers have taken spreads its red tentacles across the map. Two and a half miles away, the maimed spires of Bourlon Wood stand out boldly against the Eastern sky.

On Monday night, the 16th of September, a brigade of the 52nd division went into the line between Inchy-en-Artois and Moeuvres, the relief taking place after dark.

The right company of the Brigade (a company of the 1/5th HLI) took over from a company of the Munsters three posts on the road that runs Northwards out of Moeuvres towards Inchy, one of them at its junction with Hobart Trench which joins the Hindenburg Support Line and the canal du Nord, and the other two at intervals 200 yards Southwards along the road.

The left post of the next Brigade was on the southern edge of the village of Moeuvres.

This tale concerns the garrison of the most southerly of the three posts on the Inchy road.

This post, after the manner of modern fighting, consisted simply of a group of shell holes encircled by a zagged fringe of wire. Behind it the ground rose gently towards the main defences of the Hindenburg Line. The Canal was half a mile away, across the flat ground in front.

At some time during the night of the 16th, an NCO and six men of the Munsters filed out of the post and a corporal and six men of the HLI filed in. The corporal's name was David Ferguson Hunter and the names of his six men were Privates:

200062 J L Phillips

203406 D McFarlane

55770 W Jones

41617 W Gray

40668 J Fleming

and one man who is now dead.

The newcomers brought with them a Lewis gun and ammunition, a few bombs and their rations and water for the next day.

That night passed quietly, as nights go on the western front. As one of the party has put it, "There was just the usual shelling, nothing to worry about."

The 17th, too, was a quiet day but it was only the hush before the storm. In the dusk of the September evening, there fell about them suddenly a rain of gas and high explosives.

And, when the guns had prepared the way, the Germans attacked. They came in full flood across the level plain against the Inchy road. The post on the Northern edge of Moeuvres and the post on the Cpl. Hunter's left were both driven in, but the Cpl. and his men stood up like sullen rocks above the sea of their enemies. They heard the noise of battle drift slowly westwards, but Cpl. Hunter saw no reason to withdraw. "We had got no further orders," said one of his comrades afterwards, "so we decided to hold on, trusting our own boys would make a counter-attack and relieve us."

When the main attack was over, the Germans tried several times to destroy this handful of insolent Scotchmen who presumed to oppose the might of the German Army. Again and again, their bombers stole up in the darkness, but always keen eyes were watching for them and rifle and machine gun drove them back whence they came.

So that night passed and another day. The seven men had now no rations, except "the iron ration" that the British soldier carries in his pack, and no water, except such food and nauseous liquid as they could scrape from the bottom of shell holes.

During the night of the 18th, Cpl. Hunter sent out two men bidding them try to get into touch with the Company. They never came back. One of them was killed. The other, after wandering for eight hours in the wilderness of No Man's Land, was badly wounded, and only reached the British lines as dawn was breaking.

At midnight, one of the sentries on duty reported that a patrol of the enemy was approaching the post. Cpl. Hunter gave his men the order to fire, and the Germans, disappointed once more of their prey, went back to their lines. Just before daylight, Pte. Jones made an effort to crawl back, but in a little while he returned. It was impossible to break through, "so there was nothing else but to still hold on." One more day these brave men spent in the pangs of hunger and thirst, but not a man of them thought of surrender.

On the morning of Thursday the 19th came the most welcome sound they had heard during their three days' ordeal, the full-throated voice of the British guns. It is odd that, after all they had suffered and endured because of their enemies, these five men in their shell holes should come to be in the greatest peril of all from their friends. Yet it was so.

Pressed close to the ground, they heard all about them the whistle and soar of the descending shells, and saw the Inchy road and the light railway which ran beside it wrapped in an orange sheet of flame. Then fell a sudden silence, and afterwards out of the night behind them came the thin shouts of men and the noise of bursting bombs.

Help was close at hand but, before it came, the thunder of the German barrage pealed out upon the Inchy road. At about 10 p.m. that night, a corporal of the 1/7th HLI, going forward to join his Company, was challenged as he passed a group of shell holes on the edge of the road. He turned sharply to find himself covered by the uncompromising muzzle of a machine gun with the haggard, unshaven but equally uncompromising face of a British soldier behind it. The corporal explained that the line had moved on and that such strict precautions were hardly necessary under the circumstances. The man in the

shell hole replied that he was glad to hear it. He had been there three days and that was the first he had heard of it anyway.

Then Cpl. Hunter and his weary men lifted their Lewis Gun from the frame, climbed out of their shell hole and, guided by their new friend, returned to their Company Headquarters in Hobart Street.

All five of them were utterly exhausted. The strain of their three days' watching had left its mark upon them. Yet their comrades, who had never hoped to see them again, "were impressed by their air of cheerfulness and good spirits."

That night the battalion was relieved. Cpl. Hunter was asked if he would prefer to ride in an ambulance. He refused to do that, but insisted on taking his usual place in the ranks and marching back out of Moeuvres with the men of his company.

Private Mulhill is buried in the cemetery in Moeuvres.



Hunter's Own Account

The following, from **The Dunfermline Press** of **28 September 1918**, is the closest I have come to a detailed account of the incident from Hunter, himself.

HEROIC DUNFERMLINE CORPORAL

Brave Stand Made by H.L.I. Heroes

Remarkable Exploit at Moeuvres

The following appeared in Sir Douglas Haig's despatch on Saturday: "On the occasion of the hostile attack at Moeuvres on the 17th inst. A corporal and six men of the 1/5th Battalion Highland Light Infantry, 52nd Division, forming the garrison of one of our posts just north of the village, were surrounded and believed to have been captured. During the two days in which the Germans were in occupation of Moeuvres, this party, in fact, maintained their position with great gallantry and inflicted many casualties on the enemy. On the night of the 19th – 20th inst., when Moeuvres was retaken by our troops, the whole party regained their unit without loss."

With reference to the foregoing, the Press Association's special correspondent with the British Army in France writes: "I have just heard of a feat of valour and endurance which deserves to be recorded in letters of virgin gold. When the heavy German attack of Tuesday afternoon forced back the scattered garrison of Moeuvres to a line well west of the village, one of our posts established near the cemetery was reported to be holding out by troops which were obliged to retire from the vicinity of it. As this post was only held by a corporal and six men of the Highland Light Infantry, it was naturally concluded it would speedily be mopped up by the enemy. But when our counterattack at seven o'clock on Thursday evening drove the Germans back to and even beyond the line whence they had delivered their assault, the gallant Scots were still found to be holding out. They were rather weak and their eyes were red-ringed but they were able to echo the tumultuous cheering of their comrades with triumphant lustiness. A regular cordon of corpses around the post told how fiercely they had been assaulted. They had practically no effective shelter against the slashing rainstorms, and were sodden through. Ceaseless vigilance was necessary to prevent the enemy getting within bombing distance. Although they knew that they were right in the midst of the foe, they never doubted that their comrades would be coming back and their concern was whether their ammunition would hold out meanwhile. Their rations were all gone and they were ravenous. In any event, they were not going to surrender, but when it became impossible to hold the little fort for any longer they meant to make a sortie and try to get through to the British outpost line. Here was the spirit of Rorke's Drift over again. But whereas Chard and Broomhead, with their 80 heroes of the old 24th Foot, were only called up to hold up the army of 4,000 strong throughout the night of January 24, 1879, these seven indomitable Scots stuck to their post for 48 hours.

It was disclosed on Thursday that the hero of the Moeuvres exploit is Corporal David Hunter whose home address is 35 Forth Street, Dunfermline. In letters to his wife the gallant corporal recounts his experiences.

In the first letter, dated September 18, Corporal. Hunter says:

"I take the greatest pleasure in writing you a few lines to let you know that I am still in the very best of health. If you get any word from the War Office about my being missing, never worry yourself, because I am as right as rain. I was cut off for four days but I managed to get back safe and sound. My, but it was a rough time! Fancy being four days without meat and water. But we held on like grim death, and there was a party sent out and got us relieved. There were six men along with me, but one was wounded and the other killed, so that just left the four men along with myself.

"When we came in, the Colonel wanted to see me and he congratulated me on our good work in hanging onto our post so long. He is recommending me for a decoration. He said it was as fine a piece of work as he had heard of.

"I never thought anything about its being a good piece of work, and as for the decoration, I am quite thankful that I am alive today. I got an awful fright when the Colonel told me to write home as soon as possible, as I was reported missing, but you will know now not to worry yourself.

"We are out now for a rest, so you will know I am quite as happy as ever again. I just joined this Battalion at a good time (I don't think), but it's still all in the day's work. I am sure of getting a medal of some sort, but what it will be I don't know and I don't care; I am quite satisfied I am safe and sound. I am first to go now on leave. I hope this letter reaches you before you get word from the war Office. I would have written sooner if I could. Cheerio! I am hoping to be with you any day."

In a subsequent letter to his wife, Corporal Hunter refers humorously to the dangers of his becoming "swell-headed". "All the officers," he writes "are asking about my welfare, and my own Major has been at me a dozen times asking me if I was sure I was all right, because, if not, I could get to hospital for a rest for a day or two. I always tell them I am all right, that it is my leave I want first. I had the Brigadier-General speaking to me yesterday afternoon. He congratulated me on my good piece of work and asked me all that happened when I was cut off. Of course, I told him, and he took me by the hand. I am being made sergeant very soon. I was told on the quiet last night that I had been recommended for the ---, but I am afraid that is a bit too much, but one never knows."

"I tell you I am going about here thinking I am a soldier now.....I have just returned from an interview with two correspondents of the Allied Press, two Frenchmen. I got a message from Brigade Headquarters saying that I was to report there and that was what was waiting on me. They told me that my name had been wired through the whole of France after this last affair. I had to give them my experience, and they were quite pleased with it. I told them it was my leave that was worrying me. At least I gave them a good hint, and one of them told me that I would be all right. He heard there was to be a special leave for me in a day or two. He took down that I was married and had two children, and that I was a miner, and then they took a snapshot of me. I am thinking this will mean a French decoration too, so you see I am among it just now."

Corporal Hunter has a family of two young girls, one aged four and the other two years. His letters are couched in affectionate terms, and he frequently expresses his love for "our darling wee Nan and Baby Rea," and, referring to the prospect of leave, he asks his wife to "tell the wee darlings" to be sure to meet him at the station on his arrival home.

Corporal Hunter is a native of Kingseat, which forms part of the municipal burgh of Dunfermline. His parents are still resident at the mining village. His father, Mr Peter Hunter, formerly a miner, is at present employed at the Fife Electric Power Company's generating station at Townhill.

In civil life, the gallant corporal was a miner to trade, working for a short time at the Aitken Pit, Kelty and subsequently at Dean Colliery, Kingseat. He enlisted voluntarily in a Cyclist Battalion in October 1914. He was transferred to the Royal Engineers, and went to France two years ago, after repeatedly expressing a desire to get into the firing line. He had not been long there when he was wounded, and he spent six weeks in a hospital overseas. Corporal Hunter joined the Highland Light Infantry only on the 13th or 14th of this month – hence the sentence in one of his letters, "I just joined the Battalion at a good time." In July last year he was home on furlough. Then he saw, for the first time, his little baby girl, who had been born in his absence.

Corporal Hunter is 26 years of age. Two of his brothers are in France – Private Thomas Hunter, Motor Transport, who enlisted in March 1915 and has been three years on the Continent; and Private Robert Hunter, Machine Gun Corps, Black Watch, who has served in France for twelve months. A brother in law of Corporal Hunter gained the Military Cross some time ago.

Corporal Hunter's wife (a daughter of Mr Wilson, district agent for the "Dundee Courier") is naturally proud of her husband's exploit. In an interview with a Press representative, she mentioned that when she saw the report of the stand at Moeuvres on Sunday last, the thought occurred to her that her husband had figured in it. "I'm sure that's Dave," she remarked, and she was so affected by the thought that she could not read the account of the thrilling deed.

M. Jean Vignaud, of the "Petit Parisien", gives an account of an interview with Corporal Hunter.

"Me, I am not worrying," the corporal said to M. Jean Vignaud. "I should like to go on leave after months in the trenches. I had written home that I was coming, but I did not know that first of all I was going to endure hell."

And hell it was for, as the corporal stated, "We had to endure two barrages – the German and the British. That was the most trying thing."

Says the correspondent, "In regard to the terrible moments at Moeuvres, I questioned the corporal, thinking it would please him to recount the story of the worst moments of his life.

"I guessed that this little miner from Fife, his gas mask slung across his shoulder, his khaki Balmoral across one side of his face – round and ruddy with piercing, clear eyes – heartily wished us to question others as he had already replied to so many interrogations for, smiling, standing at the correct attitude for a soldier, he was not able to hide his surprise. And then, after modestly telling his interrogators what he did, the corporal strolled away – a little thoughtful.

"Just at this moment, Scottish bagpipes were heard playing some native dances, which for an instance deadened the noise of the cannon, and it seemed that this music celebrated the courage of the little unknown soldier – of this humble miner of Fife.

The Regiment's Historical Account

The following extract comes from **"The Fifth Battalion HLI in The War 1914-1918"**, a work written by officers of the battalion and published in **1921**. The accompanying plan shows "Hunter's Post".

The line here was held in a way we had not encountered yet, although the general principles of the defence were the same as ever. The main line of resistance was in the second line of the old Hindenburg Support Line, and our portion lay between the shattered villages of Inchy and Moeuvres. In front of this line there was a series of posts in No-Man's land, each held by ten or twelve men. The support line was the main Hindenburg Support Line.

The Munsters had three companies in the line, and one in support. In the case of the left and centre companies it was fairly simple to get an idea of the dispositions and make the necessary arrangements for the relief, although it was impossible to visit the posts outside the line. The right company, however, was not so simple. There was considerable doubt as to what ground was held in the neighbourhood of Moeuvres. There had been continual scrapping. One night we pushed out a new post near the cemetery, and the next night the enemy drove it in again. It was a very nasty spot, and it so happened that we had called on the day that it was our turn to do the pushing, and the Munsters were very busy making arrangements for the discomfiture of the enemy.

For these reasons, it was impossible to find out the dispositions of that company, and we had to return home with the promise that the situation would be cleared up before we arrived, and all would be well.

Before we actually went up to the line, we were informed that there was to be a slight alteration of battalion and brigade boundaries. The dispositions of our battalion were "D" Company on the right, "C" in the centre, "B" on the left, and "A" in support. When we did reach the line to take over on the night of 16th, the redistribution of boundaries cut out "D" Company's bit of the line altogether, so that they came in as a second support company, and incidentally they were in the other brigade's area, as they could not find accommodation in our own sector.

"B" Company were all outside the main trench, and were disposed with two posts in front and a support with their headquarters in No-Man's Land. There was no wire on the enemy's side of our position, though there was a perfect labyrinth of very heavy wire behind us.

"C" Company, which was only thirty-five strong at this time, had their headquarters in a deep dug-out in the line of resistance, along with a very small support. The remainder of the company was occupying two posts, one about 500 yards up a trench which ran straight towards the enemy, and in which the enemy had a post just over the road beyond ours: the other was about 250 yards to the right of this, on the far side of the road and absolutely in the open. This was the post which was held by Corporal Hunter and six men, and it was merely a small pit dug in the ground.

"D" Company for that night were housed in a deep dug-out in the main support line, with their headquarters in a concrete faced shelter in the back wall of the trench, excellently sited if we had been fighting the other way, but well-known to the enemy, and getting hit by about three out of every five shells aimed at it, as did all the other dug-outs and shelters in the line.

"A" Company were in support on the left flank.

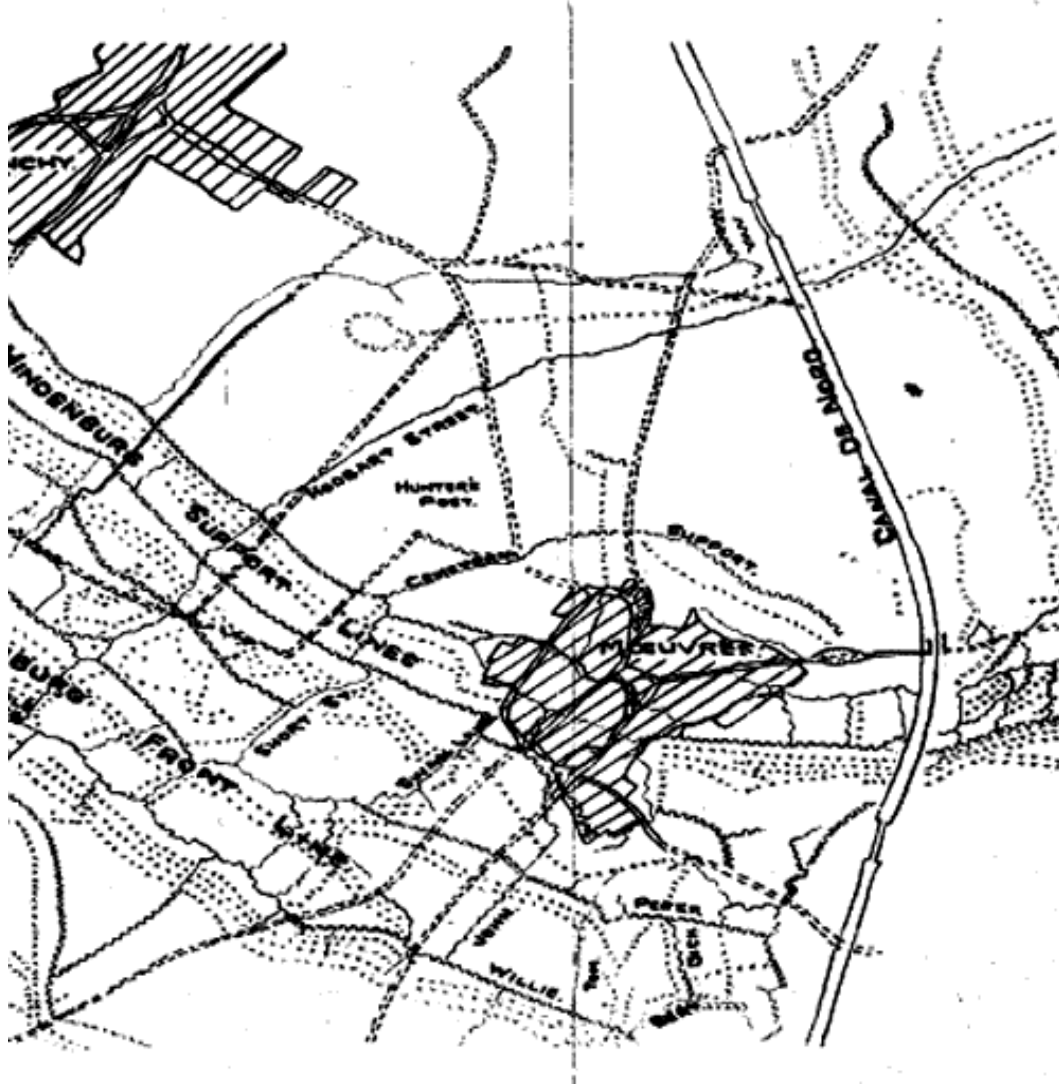
The night of the relief was quiet, and except for continual desultory gas shelling nothing of note occurred. Early on the 18th it was decided that "D" Company should relieve "C" Company that night, partly because the company was outside our Brigade area, but principally because "C" Company was far too weak numerically for the extent of front it had to hold, and even the posts were not sufficiently strongly garrisoned. During the day "D" Company lent "C" Corpl. I. Ross and three men to form a connecting link between the forward posts and their headquarters, and these were posted about midway up the communication trench. The relief was to be carried out as soon as it was dark enough to cover the movement.

The enemy decreed otherwise. Just as we were about to "Stand To" in the evening, a barrage of gas shell and high explosive came down on the whole line. For three quarters of an hour it was impossible to enter the main Hindenburg support trench. We could only sit in our dug-outs and wonder what was happening. The stories we heard of the Bosches being in the third and fourth lines of our systems in the March advance, before it was known that an attack was taking place, came vividly into our minds, and our great anxiety was that we should not be caught like rats in a trap.

Every telephone line went "dis" in the first three minutes and it was quite impossible to find out what was happening until the shelling should have moderated a little. We had just to rest our souls in patience, and re-light the candles as they were put out by the concussion every time a shell struck the dug-out. This was the constant occupation, both in the deep dug-outs and in the concrete faced shelters in the main support line, and not for the first time, we blessed the Germans for the good, solid workmanship of these dug-outs.

MOEUVRES, SEPT. 1918.

SCALE, 1 : 20,000.



MOEUVRES, SEPT. 1918.

SCALE, 1 : 20,000.

Shortly after the barrage came down details of the battalion on our right began to pass the dug-out where "D" Company was located, and Sergt. Meiklejohn, who was in charge there, at once got two platoons out of their shelter, and formed a flank facing Moeuvres, reporting his action. Beyond this movement, there was no information of any kind, but from it we were able to judge that an attack had been made at least on the right.

As soon as the shelling moderated, it was determined to carry through the relief of "C" Company. Two platoons of "D" Company were ordered to move to the relief at once; the remaining two were instructed to hold the flank position they had taken up, until the situation became a little clearer, and meantime they were to try to get someone, whose job it was to hold that part of the line, to take over from them; if they succeeded in this they were to rejoin their company in "C" Company's area.

The first thing to be done was to ascertain what had really taken place. There was a strong suspicion that an attack had been made on the right. Had it developed on our own front? Were our posts in front still intact? "C" Company, like everyone else, had had a most uncomfortable time, and they had not sufficient men to send out patrols to visit their posts. It was, therefore, determined that as soon as "D" Company arrived, strong patrols should be sent along the trench to gain touch with the battalion on our right, if there was one; and forward to find out how the posts had fared. As soon as this information was obtained, the relief was to take place, with any new dispositions the information obtained rendered desirable.

Our first bit of news arrived from a curious quarter. In the general excitement, Stretcher-Bearer Chester of "C" Company had not been noticed for some time, although he had not been missed, and now while the arrangements were being made he arrived at the Company Headquarters. On being asked where he had been, he told us that he had been out at the post at the end of the communication trench to see if there was anything doing in his line. He had found the post and everything was all right. This information was most reassuring, but it was decided that the patrol must be sent in spite of it, and with instructions that it was to find out about the other post as well.

The connecting post half-way up the communication trench had been a particularly warm corner, and Corpl. I. Ross had been wounded in several places early in the barrage. In spite of this he had refused to go back, and had carried on for over an hour, visiting the various posts and doing invaluable work. It was only now that under a direct order he consented to leave the line, taking with him to Battalion Headquarters the first report of the situation. For his plucky conduct, he was awarded the Military Medal.

The patrol sent to "C" Company's posts in front, found that in the trench intact. After a consultation with the N.C.O. in charge, he and Sergt. Glover got out of the trench, and went to visit Corpl. Hunter's post. The two N.C.O.'s had not gone more than 30 yards when they were met with a shower of stick-grenades thrown from a position between the posts. They had to beat a hasty retreat, and were lucky to get back to the trench with no more damage than a wound to "C" Company's corporal.

As soon as this was known, Corpl. M'Ewing and Pte. J. Adams made the second attempt to reach the post. This time it was an effort to reach the post across country and unseen, but when M'Ewing and Adams were just short of the Moeuvres-Inchy Road, a couple of Verey lights were fired from the far side of the road and a considerable number of Bosches were seen. A blatter of musketry was opened on them, and they too had to give up the attempt and return.

A third attempt was made later, but it fared no better than the previous ones, and we were reluctantly compelled to assume that the post had been scuppered. The patrol along the trench to the right went as far as the junction of the shallow trench leading round the cemetery, and did not get touch with anyone.

It was now determined to carry out the relief at once, and as no information could be obtained as to what had happened on the right, it was decided to relieve "C.'s" remaining advanced post, and to form a defensive flank along the communication trench. The remainder of "D" Company arrived at this time after handing over to another battalion, and the new dispositions were made, "C" Company, now reduced to seventeen men, taking up "D's" old headquarters about 10 p.m.

The remainder of the night was normal, but the situation was most uncomfortable. Our own patrols had located a considerable number of the enemy round the posts. We guessed the situation fairly correctly, but it was not till the 19th that we learned definitely what had happened. The enemy had made a determined effort to retake Moeuvres, and our right flank was just on the edge of his attack. Owing to the determined defence of two companies of the right Brigade, the enemy had not got much for his pains, but he had succeeded in driving in nearly all the advanced posts to the right of our sector.

Nothing further occurred till 4 p.m. on the 18th, when a bombing attack was made on our post at the end of the communication trench. The post was driven back a short distance, but managed to regain its position without loss. Meanwhile the S.O.S. had been sent, and for half an hour we had an excellent daylight firework display, right along the road in front, and incidentally on Corpl. Hunter's post. The enemy started retaliation at once, and cut our telephone wires as usual, so that once we had got the barrage on we could not turn it off without considerable delay.

At dark on the night of 18th "A" Company relieved "D," who now retired for a space. Just before dawn on the 19th one man of "C" Company came in through "B" Company's right post. He was one of Corpl. Hunter's devoted band, and along with another had been sent to see about rations, and give information about the post. Unfortunately, his pal was killed by an enemy grenade, and he was the first person to let us know that the post was still gamely holding out. It was too late, however, to do anything that night.

In the early afternoon of the 19th we were informed that we were to be relieved by the Canadians that night, and about 4 p.m. we were told that the Brigade on our right was going to re-establish all the lost ground under a barrage at 5 p.m. The barrage was to extend along the whole front, and our "A" Company was to push forward the post in the communication trench and to re-occupy Hunter's post, on the assumption that it was lost, but we hoped otherwise. The 7th H.L.I., acting on our right flank, were to re-establish the posts round the cemetery, and form a link between us and the battalion on our right.

Lieut. W.H. Milne, with one half of "A" Company, endeavoured to push forward in the communication trench, but failed to get beyond the road. Meanwhile Captain Donald, with the other half of the company, jumping off from the centre of the communication

trench, followed hard on the barrage. But Captain Donald was killed, and his party had heavy casualties and rather lost direction.

Between 7 and 8 o'clock "D" Company was sent up to support "A." The situation was extremely obscure. We knew what had happened in the trench, but no reports had been received yet from either Captain Donald's party or the 7th H.L.I., who had jumped off from the same place. Some of the men who had gone over, came in about 8 o'clock, and from various reports we were able to piece together the fact that 7th H.L.I. had got their objectives. A little later two men of "C" Company came in to Advanced Company Headquarters, and told us that they belonged to Hunter's post, and that he was still holding the post with two men, and had sent them in to try to find out what was happening. A platoon was at once told off to relieve them, and a few minutes later we were able to welcome them back.

These men had gamely stuck to their post for 96 hours. They had no food or water other than what they had taken with them, namely, what is technically known as "the unexpired portion of the day's ration," and an iron ration each and a water bottle full of water. They had been continually surrounded by enemies and had beaten off every attack. They had yielded not a foot of ground, in spite of the fact that our own barrage had twice passed over them. They had no information, and no orders beyond those given when they were mounted, and yet they remained at their post until they were covered by our own troops in front of them. For this deed Corpl. Hunter got the V.C. and was promoted Sergeant: the other six men of his post each got the D.C.M.

Between ten and eleven a full-strength battalion of the Canadians relieved us, and they found that their first job was to dig shelters for their men, as the three or four dug-outs which had served to protect our small battalion were quite insufficient for them. By midnight we were on our way to Queant.

Our four days at Moeuvres were among the most trying we spent in the war, and we have the presumption to think we did well. The three companies received a special message from the Brigadier.

Another Military Account

The following is from "**A Short History of the Great World War**" by A F Pollard and published in **1920**.

The Heroes of Moeuvres.

West of Cambrai we had taken Moeuvres. The same evening a tremendous counter-attack was launched against this sector: at most points, it was repulsed by the Guards and two other divisions, but we had to abandon Moeuvres, which was immediately occupied by the enemy. The battle raged round Moeuvres for two days and nights, and when we eventually stormed and carried the village, it was hardly to be expected that any one of the little detachments which had been cut off and surrounded would still be holding out. But so it was. Corporal David Hunter and six privates of the Highland Light Infantry had held their assailants at bay for forty-eight hours, and were still holding out

when relieved. The piles of corpses heaped round the position they occupied testified to the efforts of the enemy to get at them. When first cut off they decided to "wait and see." Later, suffering from lack of food, and ammunition running short, they resolved to fight their way out rather than surrender. Corporal Hunter's chief concern was that it delayed his leave which was due, and he wanted to see his wife and children. He was awarded the Victoria Cross.

PRESS COVERAGE OF THE ACTION AT MOEUVRES

The action at Moeuvres and the award of the V.C. to Hunter was covered extensively, and sometimes in quite flowery language, by the press here in the UK, in France and further afield, including Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Until such time as all newspapers have converted their archives into digital format and made that material available on the Internet, tracking down every such report will be a practical impossibility. I have, however, pulled the following accounts together.

The earliest press report that I have come across is in **The Globe** of **Saturday 21 September 1918**. The sidebar contains the headlines which include ‘An Epic of Moeuvres’ and the front page carries the following brief report.

New Rorke’s Drift

Glorious Stand of the 7 Men of Moeuvres

Ready to Cut Their Way Out

British Army, Saturday. - The weather grew steadily worse, which is not good for field operations. The wind howls louder and the rain squalls are more spiteful and frequent; which makes it little short of miraculous that our incomparable troops are doing what they are.

When the heavy German attack of Tuesday afternoon forced back the scattered garrison of Moeuvres to a line well west of the village one of our posts established near the cemetery was reported holding out by troops which were obliged to retire.

As this post was only held by a corporal and six men of the Highland Light Infantry, it was concluded it would be speedily mopped up by the enemy. But when our counter-attack at seven o’clock on Thursday evening drove the Germans back to, and even beyond, the line whence they had delivered their assault, the giant Scotsmen were found to be holding out.

Still Able to Cheer

They were rather weak, and their eyes were red-ringed, but they were able to echo the tumultuous cheering of their comrades with triumphant lustiness.

A cordon of corpses around the post told how fiercely they had been assailed. They had practically no effective shelter against the slashing rain storms, and were sodden through much of the time.

Ceaseless vigilance was necessary to prevent the enemy getting within bombing distance, and although they knew they were right in the midst of the foe, they never doubted that their comrades would be coming back, and their concern was whether their ammunition would hold out meanwhile.

No Surrender

Their rations were all gone and they were ravenous. In any event, they were not going to surrender, but when it became impossible to hold the little fort any longer meant to make a sortie and try and get to the British outpost line.

Here was the spirit of Rorke's Drift over again, but whereas with their eighty heroes of the 24th Foot, Chard and Broomhead were only called upon to hold up an army 4,000 strong throughout the night of January 24 1879, these seven indomitable Scotsmen stuck to their post for 48 hours.

The same story, which came from a Reuter's correspondent, appeared in **The Sunday Pictorial** of **22 September** under the headline "Stand of The Seven Men of Moeuvres – Cordon of Enemy Dead".

On Monday **24 September**, **The Western Daily Press** carried this piece on page 3.

The Seven Men of Moeuvres

A feat of arms and endurance deemed worthy to be specially mentioned by Sir Douglas Haig in his brief official communiqué must be indeed wonderful even in a war in which heroic deeds have been countless in number. As every soldier knows, many distinctions are just luck. The particular man who accomplished a striking deed that is brought to the knowledge of his superiors just happened to be there, and equal courage would have been shown by other men if they had had the chance. But the corporal and six men of the Highland Light Infantry who happened to be cut off in one of the posts north of Moeuvres when the Germans captured that place last Wednesday could hardly have been blamed if they had surrendered when they were surrounded. Our leaders assumed that they were prisoners, but they refused to surrender. Isolated, like Horatius when the bridge fell, they scorned to yield. "A ring of corpses around the post told how fiercely they had been assailed," says our report and we learn from a French paper that even the Germans, struck by their gallantry, offered to spare their lives if they would surrender. But the Highlanders trusted to the return of their comrades. They had no orders to retire, the Corporal has since explained, and so they decided to "wait and see" – a phrase that is appropriate., as the Corporal comes from Mr. Asquith's constituency. Famished with their food all consumed, sodden with rain, without any sleep, for they had to keep the enemy at bay all the time, these men held on grimly for forty-eight hours, and "when Moeuvres was retaken by our men the whole party regained their unit without loss." It is a wonderful story. It is difficult to fancy that even a Pacifist can read of this stolid and heroic resistance without feeling something like faint admiration for the seven men of Moeuvres, whilst the rest of us who rejoice in every brave deed by our soldiers in this great war are indebted to this unnamed corporal and six men for an emotion that "cleanses the mind" not by "pity and terror", as in the classic illustration of the uses of tragedy, but by joy and pride. That contrary to all precedent, Sir Douglas Haig describes this little band as being "of the 1/5th Battalion Highland Light Infantry, 52nd Division," shows what the Commander-in-Chief thinks of the feat, and there is not an Englishman, Welshman, Irishman, or Colonial in the Army who will begrudge the seven Scotsmen the awards they will surely receive.

Initially, only a very limited amount of information was made available by official sources who did not want to reveal the identities of the men involved fearing that it might provide useful intelligence to the enemy (see the report from **The Army and Navy Gazette** of **28 September**, below). Apparently, however, the public and the press were keen to know who these men were. **The Daily Mirror** of **23 September 1918** carried the following, accompanied by a photograph of some HLI soldiers.

Who Were the Anonymous Heroes of Moeuvres?

If the exploit of the corporal and six men of the Highland Light Infantry who are now famous as the heroes of Moeuvres was so pre-eminently brilliant as to call for special mention in Sir Douglas Haig's communiqué, it is surely due to them and the public that their names should not be withheld.

The Huddersfield Daily Examiner of Thursday **24 September** repeated this plea.

Names Please

The story of "the seven Heroes of Moeuvres" told in Sir Douglas Haig's despatch of Saturday last, is one of the most splendid epics of the war. During the two days in which the Germans were in occupation of the town, this handful of heroes, surrounded by the enemy and pelted by pitiless storms, maintained its position and inflicted considerable casualties on the enemy. When the British army recaptured Moeuvres the whole party regained their unit without loss. This is surely one of the most remarkable records of valour and endurance in the whole story of past and present wars. It will find a secure place in history and coming generations will treasure it among their romances. "We decided to wait and see," declared the corporal in command of the little party, and never was a phrase more magnificently vindicated. And yet – so strange a thing in the British War Office – we are not allowed to know the names of these heroes. The Commander-in-Chief gives them pride of place in his despatch. Every newspaper in Britain has told their story: a representative of a French newspaper has actually interviewed them. But they are still anonymous. O, wonderful and unique stupidity of our military machine! Of course, their names WILL be given at last – but why were they ever withheld? The enemy would gain nothing by the knowledge, whilst more than one good end would be served by publishing them in the Army and the home people.

On Saturday **28 September**, **The Army and Navy Gazette** carried the following on its front page within its "Service Notes" column.

A Welcome Novelty

In the official communiqué dated the 21st inst., we are told of the truly heroic deeds of a corporal and six men of an infantry battalion at Moeuvres on the 17th. These men formed the garrison of a small post to the north of the village, and when the Germans attacked they were surrounded and it was believed that they had been captured. For two days, however, this gallant little band held on, maintained their position and inflicted great loss upon the enemy, and when on the night of the 19th-20th Moeuvres was retaken, the gallant Scotsmen were relieved and were able to rejoin their unit without loss. The British

Commander-in-Chief was hastened to tell this splendid little story, and in connection with it he has made a new and a very welcome departure. He has not only permitted the name of the regiment to which these heroes belonged to be made known, but we are actually informed officially, that they belonged to the 1st/5th Battalion of the Highland Light Infantry. Now that such information can so early be divulged without fear of conveying useful intelligence to the enemy, may we not hope that in future we may hear more intimate details of very many of the great deeds of the war, and the names and numbers of the units upon which those composing them have thus brought great honour?

The front page of *The Illustrated Police News* of 26 September 1918 was made up of a dramatic representation of the scene at Moeuvres.



Inside, the publication carried the following report.

Heroes of Moeuvres

Corporal and Six H.L.I. Hold Out for Two Days

The Kents in Trones Wood and that group of the 21st swallowed recently in a counter-attack by Boom Ravine did not win their division higher fame than a certain corporal and six men of the Highland Light Infantry who have just been freed from a forty-eight hours' siege in a post north of Moeuvres.

The German counter-attack completely enveloped them and they were given up for lost, but from the direction of their disappearance rang out continually the noise of a machine gun and rifles. They were surrounded but not smothered and, not less cunning than determined, bided their time, waiting for good targets.

"One of the terrors of such a position is that you have as often as not to face risk from your own artillery as well as from the enemy. Probably a particularly heavy shelling will be the prelude of any attempt to relieve you, supposing relief is in any way likely. The Moeuvres district has been more smothered in shell fire during the last week than any other part of the front, but the Highland Light Infantrymen thought chiefly of their targets and let other things take their course.

When, after two of the longest days men could spend, relief at last came the stalwart group were surrounded like a man in a butt with the victims who had fallen to their bullets.

Previously, a single machine-gunner in Havrincourt fared very much in the same way. He was left completely alone, and in spite of the occasional activity of his gun the enemy could so little believe in the presence of an Englishman in such a German place that an officer walked up to within five yards of him before he saw his fatal mistake.

A representative of the "Petit Parisien" has interviewed the Scots corporal, a Fifeshire man, referred to above, and says:

The corporal and his comrades held out without food, and the only water they had was what was in their flasks. "I knew," the corporal said, "that the British had had to retire, but I had no orders, so we decided to wait and see. The men with me were splendid. The Germans attacked us three times in the moonlight, but we repulsed them by rifle fire alone. They then hoped to reduce us by starvation, but our artillery forced them to fall back."

The corporal's only regret was that his leave had been delayed, for he was looking forward to seeing his wife and two boys [sic].

The Pall Mall Gazette of 26 September 1918 also revealed Hunter's name.

Hero of Moeuvres

Identity of the Gallant Corporal

Corporal David Hunter, the hero of Moeuvres, has written to his wife, who lives at Kingseat, a mining village near Dunfermline, describing the exploit of his six comrades and himself.

He modestly suggests that too much has been made of his service, but says that since publication of the news he has been told that he may expect both British and French decorations.

It is anticipated, also, that he will soon be promoted to the rank of sergeant.

Corporal Hunter, however, seems to be chiefly concerned as to when he will be able to get home to see his wife and two children.

The Evening Telegraph and Post of Friday, 27 September carried the following photograph and report.

Fife Hero at Moeuvres – An Unassuming Miner

Corporal Hunter Tells His Wife of Experiences of beleaguered Party's Rough Time



"I was sure that is Dave; I can't read any more," said Mrs. Hunter, of 35 Forth Street, Dunfermline, when she read Haig's message in his Saturday's communiqué stating that a corporal and six men of the 1/5th H.L.I. had held the German hordes back at Moeuvres for forty-eight hours, although believed by their regimental companions to have been killed or captured. Not only did the immortal seven scorn death and defy capture, but they inflicted terrible losses in the lines of the attacking greys.

The demand for the names of the seven was quickly predominant, but the military authorities refused to disclose the names and homes of the heroic seven.

Beyond the fact that the corporal was a Fifer and a miner nothing was known of him, so that when Dunfermline was informed that the wife of Corporal David Hunter had received letters from the front, written in a plain, modest style intimating that he and six of his regimental companions were the heroes of Moeuvres a flutter of excitement prevailed, and the blood went tingling through the veins of all who knew Davie Hunter.

In the first letter, dated September 18, Corporal Hunter says:

“If you get any word from the War Office about my being missing, never worry yourself, because I am as right as rain. I was cut off for four days, but I managed to get back safe and sound. My, but it was a rough time! Fancy being four days without meat and water. But we held on like grim death, and there was a party sent out and got us relieved. There were six men along with me, but one was wounded and the other killed, so that just left four men along with myself.

“When we came in, the Colonel wanted to see me, and congratulated me on our good work in hanging on to our post so long. He is recommending me for a decoration. He said it was as fine a piece of work as he had heard of. I never thought anything about it being a good piece of work, and as for the decoration, I am thankful that I am alive today I got an awful fright when the Colonel told me to write home as soon as possible as I was reported missing; but you will know now not to worry yourself.

“We are out now for a rest, so you will know I am quite happy as ever again. I am first to go now on leave. Cheerio! I am hoping to be with you any day.

This next report comes from **The Dunfermline Press** of **28 September 1918**, shortly after the identity of the corporal in charge of the Moeuvres garrison had been revealed.

A Dunfermline Hero

Today we are proud of the fact that the mining village of Kingseat forms part of the city and royal burgh of Dunfermline, for none of the many brave deeds performed in this war is more heroic than that associated with the name of a Kingseat man.

In his despatch on Saturday last, Sir Douglas Haig announced the wonderful exploit of a Corporal and six men of the Highland Light Infantry who were surrounded at Moeuvres. Nothing was said by the Commander-in-Chief to indicate the identity of the gallant Corporal. Subsequently it transpired that the man hailed from this county, for in the course of an interview with representatives of the French newspapers he stated that his only dream of reward was to see again his wife and two children in his “little home in Fife”. A few days later, after the Press of the country had insisted upon the disclosure of the man’s name, the pleasant news came that he was born in this city. Dunfermline cannot fail to appreciate the honour that Corporal Hunter has conferred upon it.

The record of his deed will be enshrined in the annals of the 52nd (Scottish) Division. It will take a memorable place in the long line of glorious achievements of a heroic race on land

and sea. For four days Corporal Hunter was without food and water. Surrounded by the foe, he and his companions maintained their position against fearful odds, inflicting many casualties on the enemy and emerging triumphantly from a terrible ordeal. The Corporal is a modest man. He does not see why so much ado should be made of what he would have us believe was a very ordinary occurrence. During these last few days his thoughts have been turning in the direction of furlough, rather than that of the military decorations which await him. Let us hope that Dunfermline will suitably mark his magnificent courage, and help to convince him that he and his brave comrades have written one of the finest pages in the history of British valour and endurance.

This next piece is from **The Dunfermline Journal** of **28 September 1918**.

A Famous Dunfermline Soldier

Corporal David Hunter's Gallantry

The promptitude and fullness of the response made by the Fife miners to the call for military service as the opponents of a devastating militarism afforded a cheering testimony to their loyalty and self-sacrifice. During the prolonged warfare tributes to their gallantry and resourcefulness as soldiers have come from every one of the fighting areas. A conspicuous illustration of their resolute courage has been afforded by the account of Corporal David Hunter's defence of an isolated outpost along with six men of the Highland Light Infantry, to which French journalists in the beginning of the week gave publicity. The "Journal" of Paris, in describing the splendid adventure of the handful of Highlanders who had been left in a post of danger in the midst of the enemy, says: -

"On finding themselves surrounded in the village, in spite of all the adjurations of the Germans, who offered to spare their lives, they clung to the concrete ruins of the dugout and refused absolutely to surrender. Their three machine guns ground out death for 48 hours without a stop. These lions troubled themselves neither about sleep nor food. The whole store of grenades was exhausted upon them in vain. Patrols mown down by their fire formed a belt of corpses around their little fortress. At last, when the victorious British counter-attack came, they were rescued, black with dirt and smoke."

A respondent of the "Petit Parisien" has interviewed the Scottish corporal, the hero of Moeuvres, and says: -

"The corporal related in simple words how he and his comrades held out in their den without provisions and with no water but what they had in their flasks. "I knew," he said, "that the British had been obliged to retire, but I had not received any orders, so we decided to wait and see. The men with me were splendid fellows. The Germans attacked us three times by the light of the moon, but they were repulsed by our rifle fire without necessitating the use of our own machine gun. They hoped to reduce us by starvation but, fortunately, the British artillery forced them to fall back."

The only reference which the Corporal made to his personal sufferings was to regret his delayed leave. His only dream of reward, says the journal, was to see his wife and two sons in his little home in Fife.

The hero thus brought into fame is Corporal David Hunter, 1/5th HLI, miner, Kingseat, a son-in-law of Mr. David Wilson, Milton Green. His wife received a letter from him on Wednesday, in which he relates his interview with the Allied Press after accomplishing what his Brigadier-General described as a "good piece of work". The modest hero, after commenting on the congratulations he has received from his officers, says: -

"I am being made sergeant very soon, and I was told on the quiet last night that I have been recommended for the Victoria Cross, but I am afraid that is a bit too much – but one never knows."

Special interest appears to be taken by the French Press in the stirring adventures of this daring corporal, who, while honour and congratulations are being heaped upon his head, wishes for nothing more than leave that he might see his wife, "his darling wee Nan and Baby Rea." He adds: -

"I have just returned from an interview with two French correspondents of the Allied Press. They told me that my name has been wired through the whole of France after this last affair. I had to give them my experience, and they were quite pleased with it. I told them that it was my leave that was worrying me – at least I gave them a great hint – and one of them told me it would be alright; he heard there was to be a special leave for me in a day or two. He took down that I was married and had two children, and that I was a miner, and then they took a snapshot of me. I think this will mean a French decoration, so you see I am amongst it just now."

In an earlier letter, written before his interview with the French journalist, the Corporal says: -

"I was cut off for four days, but I managed to get back safe and sound. It was a rough time. Fancy being without meat and water, but we held on like grim death, and there was a party sent out to relieve us. There were six men along with me, but one got wounded and another killed. The Colonel said it was as fine a piece of work as he had heard of."

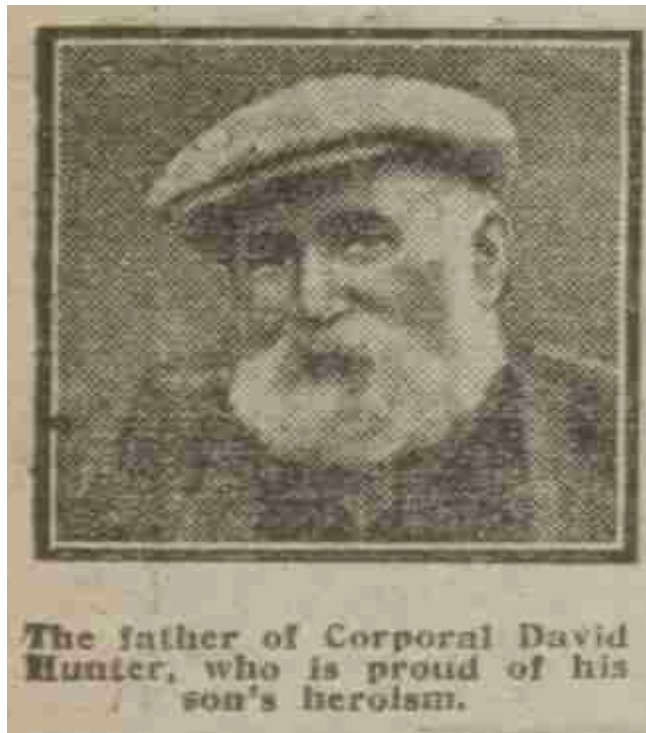
Corporal Hunter has already been wounded.

Corporal Hunter worked as a miner at the Dean Colliery, Kingseat, from the age of fourteen till the day he enlisted, and his father, Mr. Peter Hunter, is also a worker in the same colliery.

The Daily Record and Mail of 28 September 1918 carried the following three photographs under the headline "Wife and Family of the Corporal Hero of Moeuvres".



Following up the portrait in yesterday's "Daily Record and Mail" of Corporal David Hunter, 1/5th Highland Light. Inf. Bn., one of the heroes of Mœuvres, we give photographs—taken by our own photographer—of his wife and family and their home in Forth Street, Dunfermline. (1) Mrs. Hunter and her two children, Nan and Rea; (2) the home of Corpl. and Mrs. Hunter (with attic window).



The father of Corporal David Hunter, who is proud of his son's heroism.

The Sunday Pictorial of 29 September 1918 gave over much of its front page to the following.

THE HERO OF MŒUVRES AND HIS FIFE HOME



Mrs. Hunter being congratulated in Dunfermline.



Corpl. D. Hunter, who led the seven.



His mother, father and sister.



Mrs. Hunter and her two daughters, Nan and Maria.

There has been nothing finer in the war than the action of Corporal David Hunter, of Dunfermline, and his six comrades of the Highland Light Infantry, who held their post at Mœuvres, though surrounded by the enemy, for two days.—(Sunday Pictorial exclusive.)

The West Fife Echo of 2 October 1918, being very much a local paper, carried a piece which contained the following background information on Hunter and his family.

Parentage and Relatives

In the "Quarry Row", as it is locally known, was born, nigh 26 years ago, the hero of Moeuvres. His father, Mr Peter Hunter, was then a miner and he followed that occupation up till a short time ago, when he obtained employment with Messrs. Balfour and Beattie, electrical engineers and contractors, Townhill Works. Mr Hunter and his wife are typical Scots and have spent all their lives between Kingseat and Dunfermline. They own their house, and Mrs Hunter conducts a small fruit and confectionery business. The father is not old as years are reckoned, being still in the early fifties. The corporal's mother, a kindly Scotswoman, carries on one of those unpretentious shops so dear to the heart of the school-enclaved youngster, where many sweets and dainty delicacies are displayed in youthful and longing eyes. The Reporter of the "Sunday Post" describes the dwelling-place as a good Scottish home, even to the pictures on the walls and the framed Scripture texts. On the dresser and enshrined in conspicuous niches were photographs of the Hunter soldier sons. Mrs Hunter is the mother of four sons and three (sic) daughters. Three of the sons are in khaki. The youngest recently presented himself at the Medical Board, but was rejected, and he is at present employed as a hairdresser in Lochgelly. David was the first of the Hunter boys to answer the country's call, and he did so five weeks after the war broke out. The corporal is the fourth of a family of twelve, six of whom survive – four sons and two daughters. Of the sons, Robert is with the M.G.U., attached Black Watch; Thomas is a driver with the A.S.C.; and James, through no fault of his own, remains in civil life. The sisters are Nettie and Peggy, and naturally all of them are proud of their heroic brother.

"Blood will tell," Dr Bell told Mrs Hunter, and in the case of David the theory is amply justified. His maternal grandfather and grand-uncle both wore the cockade; and the former, who died not so many years ago, was only relieved of his soldiering responsibilities when King Edward VII ascended the throne.

THE CORPORAL'S TRAINING

The corporal was educated at the village school at Halbeath, about a mile down the road from Kingseat. He was not what would be called a "steers" lad, but rather inclined to be self-contained and bookish, but that very aloofness sprang from the quiet determination which flashed out when he was first sent to learn his trade as a coach painter. David would have none of it. From the pits he was bred, and to the pits he would go, and so often did he get a relative to look after his "piece", while he pretended to be following his detested occupation, that his parents had to let him have his way and meter the pits. Here, when the World-War broke out, there was no imperative need for him to hear the call of battle. He was a time-expired Volunteer, but the autumn of 1914 roused anew the soldier instincts and, leaving his "graith" and his home, he enlisted in the Highland Cyclists' Battalion.

Mr John Robertson, former headmaster of Halbeath Public School, and now living in retirement at Halbeath, confirmed this report of David's good behaviour. "All of the time

he was with me I never came into violent contact with him.” Was how Mr Robertson remarked with a kindly humour characteristic of the highly-respected village dominie who, during a long period of service, has done much to develop the spirit of manliness and patriotic devotion among the population of Kingseat and Halbeath.

THE CALL TO NATIONAL SERVICE

The mother’s testimony to the spirit which mastered the home-loving miner to enlist at the beginning of the war, may be quoted as an illustration of his sense of duties, a lover of his country and of his country’s honour.

“David was very strong upon the war, and I had the notion he would enlist, but I made no remark. One night he came into the house on his way home from work. He worked at Dean Colliery, just across the way there, and cycled morning and night between his house in Dunfermline and the colliery. This night he left me his pair of pit boots, asking me to send them to the cobbler for repairs. “I’ll get them tomorrow,” he said as he was leaving. But he did not come back on the morrow. He enlisted that night. That was just like David. He made up his mind to do a thing, and did it. When I asked him why he had enlisted he replied simply, “I felt I ought to be there. Somebody has to go. If they don’t, where would the country be?” The last time David was at home was a year ago. As he was leaving to return to France, I said to him, “Good luck to you, David. If you are spared to come back —”. At this point, David said, “I’m tired of listening to folks hoping I will be spared to come back. I have to take my chance just the same as the rest.”

THE HAPPY FIRESIDE

A year before the outbreak of the war he married Isa Wilson, a daughter of Mr D. Wilson of Dunfermline, and in Dunfermline spent his short, married life, previous to joining the colours. His home at 35 Forth Street is a pretty little row of buildings of two stories and attics, the house being the end attic of the row. Like most miners’ houses, it is scrupulously clean. Perhaps on the whole no country on earth can show a more independent working class than Scotland, and, however so lowly they may be, there always remains that pride of birth and race which makes even the humblest cot a palace. Eloquent of the young man’s tastes in civil life, there stands against a wall an organ, with which Corporal Hunter was won’t to pass his spare time. His was an essentially domestic nature, and nothing pleased him better than to be seen out and about with his wife and their two bonnie bairns, Nan and Rea. Nan is a dark, curly-headed girly of four, whilst Rea, aged two, has the complexion which Titian loved, and in that at least, takes after her gallant daddy. Mrs. Hunter herself is about the same age as her husband, whose meteoric rise to fame has not affected her naturally calm exterior. “When I got the Sunday paper and saw the story in it,” she told our representative, “I kent it was him all along. I said, “I know that’s Dave, but I’ll wait till Wednesday till I get the letter.

This report of the public’s reaction is from **The Dunfermline Press** of **5 October 1918**.

Corporal David Hunter

Corporal David Hunter, 35 Forth Street, Dunfermline, has been promoted to the rank of Sergeant in recognition of his bravery in the field. Up till yesterday, Mrs Hunter had no definite information from her gallant husband as to when he might be home in Dunfermline. The latest letter which she received from France was dated 25th September, and stated that he might obtain leave any day now and informing her that he would telegraph her on his arrival at the English side of the Channel. During the week, Mrs Hunter has been literally bombarded by letters of congratulation from all parts of the United Kingdom. Many of the letters are addressed to Kingseat, that being the address given in the earlier newspaper accounts disclosing the identity of the H.L.I. hero of Moeuvres. In the early part of the week a letter was received from the management of the Scottish Miners' Convalescent Home at Saltcoats extending an invitation to Sergeant Hunter, his wife, and two girls to spend a week or a fortnight at the institution. A London gentleman congratulates Mrs Hunter on "the magnificent service her husband has rendered to the Empire and the world", and forwards a poetic composition of his own, inspired, he says, by reading Sir Douglas Haig's now famous despatch.

An interesting contribution comes from Mr Harry Lauder, whose letter, addressed to Sergeant Hunter, is quite characteristic of the great Scottish comedian. Harry says:- "I just wish to be one of the thousands of your countrymen who would like to congratulate you on your courage. You certainly have covered your regiment with undying glory. The days of Wallace and Bruce are not dead, and shall never die while men like you and your comrades stand and defend the best cause the world has ever known. – Yours in admiration, Harry Lauder, to one of the lamps of civilisation."

Nor are the two little girls of the hero of Moeuvres forgotten. Packages of sweets and confections, accompanied by tenderly expressed epistles, have arrived to them by every mail. A letter, written by a schoolgirl in the Metropolis, is typical of the sense of admiration which has been awakened in the nation in connection with the heroic achievement of the seven H.L.I. boys. This writer encloses six penny stamps, which she describes as "a wee mite for the lassies." A beautiful doll, also forwarded from London, sent the elder of the two wee girls into a transport of joy on Wednesday, and at the same time aroused, and not unnaturally, the envious passions of the younger girl. Signing himself or herself "Your sincere well-wisher," and addressing the letter to "Dear Miss Hunter," the giver of the doll says – "I have read what your father has done in France and, as you are a wee girl, am sending you a wee doll to tell you how much I like the wonderful story I read about your father. I shall be glad to hear if you get the doll safe, and if you like it.

The Dunfermline Journal of the same date carried the following brief items.

Thebes and Moeuvres

Greek Fame Surpassed

Referring to the achievement of Corporal Hunter and his 5 associates, "The Spectator" remarks: -

THE SEVEN MEN OF MOEUVRES DESERVE AS MUCH AS THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES TO HAVE THEIR NAMES RECORDED.

Sergeant Hunter

Contrary to general expectation, the gallant hero of Moeuvres has not yet been granted the special leave which he hoped to receive. In recent letters to his wife since being promoted to Sergeant, he declares himself to be in good health, and none the worse of his extraordinary experiences. He also states that he does not expect leave until general leave is granted.

Mr. R. Chisholm Robertson, ex-President of the Scottish Miners' Federation, writes: -
"There surely cannot be a miner in Britain or elsewhere whose soul has not been stirred with admiration for "the hero of Moeuvres", David Hunter, miner, Fife.

The Heroes of Moeuvres

They were seven! A glorious story –
A story six of them still live to tell,
How at Moeuvres, not seeking vain glory,
They stuck to a post that was worse than hell.

Who would the valour of Scots be slighting
When nations are thrilled with that noble stand?
Against heavy odds, and for days and nights fighting
Without food and water, they held on, brave band!

Terrible moments, but duty ne'er shrinking,
Like many lads of the famed H.L.I.,
Only of victory, and home, were they thinking:
Bravely they fought, and as bravely would die!

Remember it, wives, remember it, mothers;
Grimly they fought, though surrounded by Huns;
Humanity's saviours, just like the others
Fighting for Freedom, without fear of guns.

Heroic seven! When world wars are ended
Cherish forever the part they have played;
Men who our country so nobly defended,
Though hemmed in on all sides, and ne'er were afraid.

*Honour the brave! Hand down through the ages,
The names of our heroes in peace and strife:
And never erase from history's pages
That gallant corporal, the miner from Fife.*

J. Wilson McLaren

The Nottingham Evening Post of 24 October 1918 carried this item.

Hero of Moeuvres

Victoria Cross for Corporal Hunter

500th Recipient of the Honour

The London Gazette announces the award of the Victoria Cross to Corporal David Hunter, the leader of the heroic seven Highland Light Infantrymen who made such a magnificent stand at Moeuvres last month. Corporal Hunter was a miner before enlisting, with a fondness for music and an omnivorous taste for reading. In the early days of his training he occasionally played the organ for Church services. The honour is awarded in recognition of conspicuous bravery, determination and devotion to duty, officially described in the following terms: -

No. 43247 Corporal David Ferguson Hunter, Highland Light Infantry (Dunfermline).

When the battalion to which he belonged relieved another unit in the front line, Corpl. Hunter was detailed to take on an advanced post which was established in shell-holes close to the enemy. Relief was carried out in darkness, and there was no opportunity of reconnoitring the adjacent ground. On the following afternoon, the enemy drove back the posts on Corpl. Hunter's flanks and established posts in close proximity to and around him, thus completely isolating his command. Despite the fact that he was exceedingly short of rations and of water, the gallant N.C.O. determined to hold on to his post to the last. On the evening of the second day, he endeavoured to communicate with his company without result. Nevertheless, he maintained his position and repelled frequent attacks until the evening of the third day, when a counter-attack relieved him. Without food and water he had held on to his post for over 48 hours. Not only did he withstand constant attacks, but he had also to undergo the barrage fire of the enemy and of our own attacks, which came right across his post. The outstanding bravery, coupled with the determination, fortitude, and endurance displayed by Corpl. Hunter is beyond all praise and is a magnificent example to all.

Corporal Hunter is the 500th fighting man to receive the highest Service honour since the war broke out. When so many of our great heroes give their lives in deeds that result in the bestowal of medals, it is a satisfaction that the 500th V.C. of the war, like the 1,000th

recipient of the honour since its creation, should live to receive the little piece of bronze from his Sovereign.

PRESS COVERAGE AFTER THE EVENT

The leader column of **The Dunfermline Journal** of **26 October 1918** reads as follows.

Our Second V.C.

“Many brave men,” wrote Homer, “lived before Agamemnon; but all unwept and unknown are lost in the distant night since they are without a divine poet.” And there are thousands of men in the British army who have proved themselves heroes of the highest type, but whose names have found no place in the public records, because they had not the good fortune to meet after their achievements generous French chroniclers, and had not as their commanding officers men prompt to proclaim the fearless valour of those under their leadership. The recognition of this multitudinous service in no way modifies Corporal Hunter’s title to the high honour he has received as a mark of “outstanding bravery, coupled with the determination, fortitude and endurance displayed” by him which is described in the official record as a feat “beyond all praise and a magnificent example to all”. The Corporal does not belong to the daredevil stamp of men. As a man who in his youth received a religious home training and a sound secular education in the elementary school at Halbeath, and as a workman who from the age of 14 had been made familiar with the perils of pit service, he had developed a character for fidelity to duty which banished all fears from his mind when dangers had to be faced and overcome. Thus inspired, he has been able to do a deed which has ranked him among the heroes of the war, and has brought distinction not only to himself but to the city of his residence. In due time the royal recognition which has been bestowed upon him will be seconded by the enthusiastic applause of his fellow townsmen. When the local ceremonial tribute is paid, the claims of Kingseat and of its landlord, Mr. R. Wallace, who has proved a generous benefactor of the village, will not be overlooked. Fortunate in his family life and training, the Corporal has also benefitted by the educational supervision of Mr. Robertson, for many years headmaster of Halbeath School and also by the inspiring locus genii of which Mr. Adamson MP, the Chairman of the labour Party, is a prominent example. The mining villages of Kingseat and Halbeath have reason to be proud of their hero, and in any public celebration that may be organised, place will doubtless be found for them and for the generous-minded and enterprising landlord. The impending change in the Provostship may cause some delay in the presentation to organise a demonstration worthy of the occasion and of the civic tribute to the second Dunfermline soldier who has won the highest military distinction for personal bravery.

That paper also carried the following report. At this time, there was much excitement about the fact that Hunter was expected home soon on leave.

Sergeant David Hunter V.C.

Civic Reception Awaits Him

Sergeant David Ferguson Hunter, H.L.I., has been awarded the Victoria Cross for the gallant stand he made along with the brave men under him. The honour was not unexpected among his ain folks in Dunfermline. Probably no act in the whole of the war has stirred the popular imagination so deeply as the heroism of the seven men who refused to surrender, and fought like lions for 48 hours without food. The following is the official description of the deed.

“For most conspicuous bravery, determination and devotion to duty. When the battalion to which he belonged relieved another unit in the front line Corporal Hunter was detailed to take on an advanced post which was established in shell holes close to the enemy. Relief was carried out in darkness, and there was no opportunity of reconnoitring the adjacent ground. On the following afternoon, the enemy drove back the posts on Corporal Hunter’s flanks and established posts in close proximity to and around him, thus completely isolating his command. Despite the fact that he was exceedingly short of rations and of water this gallant N.C.O. determined to hold on to his post to the last.

On the evening of the second day, he endeavoured to communicate with his company without result. Nevertheless, he maintained his position and repelled frequent attacks until the evening of the third day, when a counter-attack relieved him. Without food and water, he had held on to his post for over forty-eight hours. Not only did he withstand constant attacks, but he had also to undergo the barrage fire of the enemy and of our own attacks, which came right across his post. The outstanding bravery, coupled with the determination, fortitude and endurance, displayed by Corporal Hunter is beyond all praise, and is a magnificent example to all.”

The Hero of Moeuvres has been expected home for the last three weeks. He informed his wife that he would send a telegram to her as soon as he reached London. Although no wire has come, his relations have been watching the arrival of trains which usually bring home soldiers returning from the front. They knew his retiring disposition, and his distaste for ostentation, and they felt that he might come home without giving previous warning. Up till yesterday there was no sign of his arrival, and no word of his leave.

Sergeant Hunter is the second Dunfermline soldier who has gained the V.C.. The other was Sergeant John Erskine, Scottish Rifles, eldest son of Mrs. Erskine, Park Avenue, Dunfermline. Sergeant Erskine was killed shortly after gaining the coveted decoration, and he did not live to return to his native city to receive the civic honours which awaited him. In the case of Corporal Hunter, it is hoped that fate will be more kindly. Already there are signs among the Town Councillors that the honour which the hero has brought to his native city shall not be allowed to pass unnoticed. A meeting of the Magistrates will be summoned after the election in November, and no time will be wasted in making the necessary preparations for a civic reception and fitting recognition.

Sergeant Hunter is 26 years of age. He was engaged as a miner, as was his father, Mr. Peter Hunter, Kingseat, until recently, when he took employment at the generating

station at Townhill of the Fife Electric Power Company. The hero's father and mother have spent all their lives in the district, and they own a house, in which Mrs. Hunter conducts a small confectionery business, in Kingseat. Corporal Hunter was born in Quarry Row. He was educated at Halbeath School under the late headmaster, Mr. Robertson. Although of a shy disposition, and inclined to seek his own company, the spirit of determination, of which his features indicate possession, was never absent. He was not a boy to be treated with contempt, although reserved and quiet. The coach-painting trade, which he was sent to learn, did not appeal to his nature. He came off a mining stock, and the traditions of his family he would maintain. His father gave way to his son's purpose to win coal. At Kingseat Colliery he spent most of his working life. Before war broke out he was a Volunteer whose time had expired. Although there was no call upon him to fight, except that of his own desire and conscience, he enlisted in 1914, and gleefully departed to uphold the honour of his country. A year before the outbreak of war he married Isa Wilson, a daughter of Mr. David Wilson, Milton Green, Dunfermline. He has two daughters, whose tender caresses it has been his chief desire to obtain since his terrible experiences at Moeuvres. The deed which has won for the brave soldier the highest military award has stirred the Dunfermline imagination, as well as that of the country; and there is no doubt that his fellow townsmen will respond nobly when the time comes for his recognition.

Eventually, on Saturday 2 November 1918, Hunter made it home for the leave he had long been anticipating. This poem appeared in **The Dunfermline Press** of the same date.

The Splendid Seven

(To Sergeant David Hunter V.C. and His Glorious Six Highlanders)

*One word, my hero, David, just a word in your ear,
From a pal who has the luck to be a "dud",
But that's no fault of mine, my lad, the trouble's in the year,
For I was born way back too near the Flood;
Though time has crissed and crossed about my name
He's left me notes enough to sing your fame.*

*So I'll sing it with the gusto of a worshipper of pluck,
And I'll shout it till the rafters rift and ring,
You endured the fires of Hades and you nailed your charm to luck,
While you made your mark for country and for King:
Now I'll stake my reputation on a toss
That promotion is the stepstone to a Cross.*

*Horatius, the Roman, kept an army from the gate
In that yarn, that doesn't absolutely wash:
While he had Rome behind him as a refuge from men's hate,
You were hemmed on every outlook by the Boche:
You saw the turgid waters of the Styx,
You kept your end up, you and your brave six.*

On my honour, David Hunter, you have weaved a weft of gold

*That will live when we are mingled with the clay.
By our children's children's children will the wondrous tale be told
That story which has thrilled our hearts today:
Your noble act will make men smile and weep,
Until the last man reads and falls asleep*

*That's the record, wee man, David, plain, unvarnished, no veneer,
And I couldn't sing it better if I tried.
"Tis a tale of "no surrender" with hell's gate closed on your rear,
And the storming demons lying stark outside:
The tale will live when battles are won,
How the seven men at Moeuvres held the Hun.*

*A.J. Freeland
Kibworth, Leicestershire*

The Dunfermline Press of 9 November 1918 carried the following report of their interview with Hunter on Sunday 3 November 1918, the day after his return home on leave.

Sergeant Hunter V.C.

Home on Furlough

How the H.L.I. Heroes Kept the Foe at Bay

Sergeant David Hunter, V.C. arrived home in Dunfermline on Saturday morning on a fortnight's furlough. No demonstration was associated with his homecoming. It is not at all improbable that the hero of the world famous Moeuvres exploit deliberately planned an unostentatious entry to his native town. At all events, it has been frequently asserted during the last few weeks by people who claim to know the temperament of the gallant Sergeant that any attempt to make a fuss over his arrival would be extremely distasteful to him. He sent a telegram to his wife informing her of his landing on this side of the Channel, but the telegraphic message did not reach Mrs Hunter until an hour after the V.C. had arrived in the city. Several people recognised the hero as he stepped on the platform at the Lower Station. On his way along to Forth Street he was welcomed by two or three acquaintances, who extended to him their heartiest congratulations.

It was difficult to extract a statement from Sergeant Hunter with regard to his experience and that of the six gallant H.L.I. men who accompanied him in the shellhole on the outskirts of Moeuvres. Responding to the requests of several newspaper representatives who called at his house on Sunday forenoon, he said he would prefer to put any statement he had to make in writing. This he did. His modestly expressed narrative is as follows: -

"On the 16th September, my battalion, the 1/5th H.L.I. – it was only my third day in it – went into the line to relieve another and, as Corporal, I with six Privates – Gray, Saltcoats; Phillip, Glasgow; Macfarlane, Glasgow; Jones, Peebles; Mulhill, Edinburgh; and Pte Fleming – I think he belonged to Falkirk – occupied a Lewis gun outpost, which had been established in a shellhole, just on the outskirts of Moeuvres. Nothing out of the usual occurred the first night, except some shelling in the vicinity of the village. About dusk next

day, Fritz started to make things move a bit. After about an hour's bombardment, the enemy came once en masse and re-captured the village. We did not know at the time that we were alone with the enemy, and if it had not been for the non-arrival of our rations, I do not think we would have known for some time longer. The first night he attacked and captured the village he left us pretty much to ourselves, except for an occasional patrol he sent out, but we got rid of them all right. Things were pretty quiet the following day. When night came, however, we were made aware that there was a war on, if we did not know before. The Germans began with their artillery, and had another go at us. But we managed to hold them back all right.

"After the bombardment had quietened down somewhat, the idea occurred to me that I might make an attempt to get in touch with our own lines. With that end in view I sent out two men, with instructions to be very careful, and to crawl through if possible. I told them that if they did not come back I would know that they had got through. I made it plain to them that if one of them got hit the other was to come right back to the post. As it happened one of the men was killed. His mate, instead of coming back to the shellhole, gamely carried on and got through to our own lines. For that, I am more than grateful because that was what saved our lives. Unfortunately, this man was wounded a couple of hours before he managed to reach our lines. However, he was able to report that our post was still holding out. I believe it must have been too late at this time in the morning for our lads to do anything to help us, as daylight was just breaking. The time the two men were away in search of succour for us Fritz had another go at us, but it was also a "wash-out".

"All through that day matters were normal, with the exception perhaps that there was a little more shelling than usual. Luck was with us, however, and no shells came in beside us. We knew we could not keep the shells away, for when one tries to stop a 5.9 the game is finished. I don't think Fritz enjoyed the task of trying to shift us out of our post. It looked as if he were fed up with the whole business. Just at dusk on our last night in the post, our guns opened out and – well, if he stood that it was no use for us trying to frighten him. As usual, he "got the wind up" with our barrage and he scampered through the village and fields as hard as he could go.

Another account of an interview with Sergeant Hunter says that he made the following statement: - The machine gun which was persistently spraying our parapet with leaden warnings of death was annoying, and I determined to get rid of it. Under the cover of night and the rifles of my section, I crawled down the side of the ridge and succeeded in getting within 20 yards of the emplacement. Lying on the ground I managed to throw a grenade into the pit of the gun crew. With an earsplitting crash it went off, and when I advanced with fixed bayonet there was little left to show of the six men who had formed the crew of the gun. Startled by the noise, the enemy outposts started blazing into the darkness, and it took me nearly three hours to get back to my men, loaded as I was with a machine gun and a valuable supply of ammunition.

Another day dawned with seemingly no hope of rescue, and we spent the time making plans to raise a combined breakthrough should the necessity arise. As the daylight

improved, however, from high up in the air came the buzz of an aeroplane engine. Coming as it did from the direction of the British lines, we watched it with interest. Nearer and nearer it came until it was right over our heads, then to our joy it swung round and dropped a considerable distance, circling round our post several times, then rather disappointingly, climbed up again. We thought he was going to drop us food, but that hope was in vain, but he brought to us instead what was even better – the knowledge that our difficulties were known.

When the H.L.I. fought through the smoking village in pursuit of the fleeing enemy we shouted ourselves hoarse with cheers.”

Provost Norval, at the statutory meeting of the Dunfermline Town Council yesterday, said that Dunfermline had been highly honoured by the performance of a brave and noble deed in the war – in fact, a deed that had been brought prominently before the notice of the whole world. The very least they could do as a Corporation was to suitably recognise that they had in their midst a hero of the type of Sergeant David Ferguson Hunter. He moved that the question of making suitable arrangements be remitted to the Magistrates.

The motion was agreed to. At a meeting of the Magistrates held subsequently, it was decided to call a public meeting of the inhabitants of the city for Monday evening.

On Monday 4 November, The Daily Record and Mail also reported Hunter’s return.

Moeuvres V.C. Home

Sergt. Hunter’s Own Story of the Exploit

Without ceremony of any kind, Sergt. David Hunter, H.L.I., the V.C. hero of Moeuvres, arrived at his home, Forth Street, Dunfermline, on Saturday. None of his friends had any word of his home-coming and no one was present to greet him at the station.

The gallant Sergeant explained to a “Record and Mail” representative yesterday the situation in which he had been placed at Moeuvres when surrounded by the Germans. After the party of seven had been besieged he sent out two men with instructions to try if possible to get through to the British lines. He informed them that if they did not come back he would understand they had succeeded in their mission. One of the two was killed and the other wounded, but the wounded man bravely carried on until he reached the British lines.

For that he (Hunter) was more than grateful, as his actions saved the lives of the remainder, who were penned in a shell-hole which measured not more than nine feet by four feet, and gave nothing more than standing room.

Yesterday afternoon, the sergeant, accompanied by his wife and two daughters, visited his parents in the village of Kingseat.

Arrangements are being made by the Town Council to give Sergeant Hunter a civic reception.

Hunter's modesty was more tellingly reported in **The Courier** of the same date.

Sergt. Hunter, V.C., Tells His Story

Of Terrible Ordeal at Moeuvres

The circumstances of the arrival in Dunfermline on Saturday morning of Sergeant David Hunter, V.C., were doubtless in complete accord with what he desiderated.

His more intimate acquaintances have all along asserted that, fearing some display at the railway station he purposely withheld, even from his wife and the two children, the date when he was likely to obtain his furlough.

There were no relatives at the station to bid him welcome.

Several persons on the platform recognised the hero as he stepped from the train and hurriedly made his way for the exit. Similarly, he was spotted by a number of people as he walked along to his home in Forth Street. But for a few hearty handshakes to which he was subjected, he reached his residence with a minimum of inconvenience.

The hero looked fatigued and during practically the whole of Saturday he remained in bed. His furlough extends to six weeks.

In all probability, he will be presented with the coveted decoration before he returns to the front. As already announced, the Magistrates of Dunfermline are arranging for Sergeant Hunter's great heroism being fittingly recognised by the citizens of his native town.

How Heroes Were Surrounded

Sergeant Hunter was visited yesterday afternoon by a "Courier" representative, who found the hero preparing to leave with his wife and family for Kingseat, the mining village where his parents reside. Asked if he would care to relate his experiences, the gallant H.L.I. sergeant laughingly demurred. At last he stated that he preferred to commit his story to writing. This he did.

In the course of a modestly-expressed narrative he stated that he went into the line on 16th September, and took over an outpost on the outskirts of Moeuvres. That evening nothing but the customary shelling occurred in the neighbourhood. Next evening, about dusk, Fritz began to make things move a bit. Following an hour's bombardment, the Germans came over en masse, and recaptured the village. We did not know at the time, he continued, that we were alone with the enemy, and if it had not been for the non-arrival of our rations, I do not think we would have known.

In the Shell-hole

The enemy left us pretty much to ourselves in our shell-hole, which measured 9 feet by 4 feet, and was 5 feet in depth. Occasionally, however, he sent out a patrol, which we got rid of all right.

Things were pretty quiet the following day, but when night came we knew there was a war on if we did not know before. He started his artillery again and had another "go" at us, but we managed to hold him back all right. After the artillery quietened down somewhat I thought the best plan to adopt was to get in touch if possible with our own lines. For that purpose I sent out two men with instructions to make an attempt to crawl through, and to exercise the utmost possible care. I told them if they did not come back I would know that they had got through. I made it plain to them that if one got hit the other was to come right back to the shell-hole.

An Adventurous Journey

As it happened, one of them was killed. His mate, instead of coming back to our post, gamely carried on and got through to our lines. I am more than grateful, because that was what saved our lives. Unfortunately, the man who made the adventurous journey was wounded. He was able, however, to report our position, and that we were holding out. Luck was with us, and although many shells came in beside us we were not touched. We knew we could keep the Germans away, but when one tries to stop 5.9 shells the game is finished.

I don't think Fritz enjoyed the task of shifting us out of our post. It looks as if he were fed up with the whole business. Just at dusk in our last night at the post our guns opened out, and – well, if he stood that it was no use our trying to frighten him. As usual, our barrage got "the wind up with him," and he scampered through the village and fields as hard as he could go.

MOEUVRES V.C. AT HOME.



The hero safe at home again with his wife and two little daughters.

The photograph above and the one following are from **The Daily Mirror** of 5 November 1918.



With his family on the way to visit his father and mother.
Sergeant David Hunter, V.C., leader of the seven heroes
who held out for two days when surrounded by Huns, arrives
home in Dunfermline.—(*Daily Mirror* exclusive)

Having reported on the events at Moeuvres and on Hunter's return on leave to his home town, the local press then carried reports and notices relating to formal civic events that were planned to honour him and to mark the honour which he brought to Dunfermline and Kingseat.

The Dunfermline Journal of 9 November 1918 carried the following item.

Dunfermline V.C. at Home

Civic Recognition

A fitting civic recognition of Sergeant Hunter V.C. was under consideration by Dunfermline Town Council yesterday. Provost Norval said that Sergeant Hunter's act had been brought prominently before the notice not only of the country but of the whole world. The least the Council could do was to suitably recognise that they had in their midst a hero of the type of Sergeant Hunter. It had been suggested to him (the Provost) that in accordance with the democratic spirit of the times, Sergeant Hunter's bravery should be specially marked. The need was emphasised that arrangements should be made speedily, as when the former V.C. was brought to the city, Sergeant John Erskine was killed before any civic recognition was arranged. It was agreed that the Magistrates, along with ex-Provosts Harley and Husband should bring forward a recommendation for the Ordinary meeting of the Council on Monday.

The following appeared in **The Dunfermline Press of 9 November 1918**.

Testimonial

CITY AND ROYAL BURGH OF DUNFERMLINE

TESTIMONIAL

TO

Sergt. DAVID FERGUSON HUNTER, V.C.

In response to a widely expressed desire for public recognition in Dunfermline of the heroic conduct of SERGEANT DAVID FERGUSON HUNTER, in respect of which H.M. the King has approved of the award of the VICTORIA CROSS to him, the Provost, Magistrates and Councillors have resolved to invite Subscriptions from the Public for this purpose. It is requested that these should be intimated as early as possible to Mr. D. D. Blair, Burgh Chamberlain, East Port, or to the Town Clerk.

Further, the Provost, Magistrates and Councillors hereby call a MEETING, to be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, Dunfermline, on MONDAY Evening, 11th November, at Eight o'clock, to which they invite all persons interested, for consideration of the subject, and for the appointment of Representatives to act as a Committee in charge of the matter, along with several members of the Town Council.

It is hoped that facilities will be given at the Public Works throughout the Burgh, and otherwise, for the collection of Subscriptions in connection with this movement.

The Dunfermline Press of 16 November carried a report of that meeting.

Sergeant Hunter V.C.

Arrangements for Public Testimonial

A meeting, convened by Provost Norval and the Magistrates of the city of Dunfermline, was held in the Burgh Corporation Building on Monday evening, for the purpose of taking steps to publicly recognise the heroism of Sergeant David Ferguson Hunter, the Dunfermline V.C. Provost Norval presided, and he was accompanied by Sir William Robertson, Lord Lieutenant of the County; Bailies Kenny, Wilson and Irvine; and Mr A. Shearer, Town Clerk. There was a fairly good attendance of representative citizens.

The Provost hoped that the citizens would rise to the occasion, and mark in a very significant way their appreciation of Sergt. Hunter's bravery. Sergt. Hunter's act of heroism had reflected upon themselves in the way of honour and glory. The Provost concluded by suggesting the formation of a small committee to carry out the arrangements.

The Lord Lieutenant observed that it was a most fitting thing that Dunfermline should show its appreciation of Sergt. Hunter and the splendid stand he made. He (Sir William) had had an opportunity of speaking at a public meeting in Manchester a few weeks ago. On that occasion, he chaffed the English people on the subject of how much they were indebted to Scotland, pointing out that Scotsmen ran the English Church; and that the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in France, and the First Sea Lord were Fife men. And, as a climax, he told his English audience that Sergt. Hunter, whose name and the record of his heroic conduct at Moeuvres had appeared in the newspapers that morning, was a fellow-townsmen of his. (Applause.) He said he thought that some of the reflected glory to which the Provost had referred had come upon him that particular day, because of his townsmanship with Sergeant Hunter. (Applause.) In his opinion, there would be no difficulty in getting together a substantial sum of money; and he could not think of anything more substantial to present Sergt. Hunter with than a well-filled wallet of War Bonds, or something of that kind, which would last and would be a suitable stay and comfort to him, his wife and family. (Applause.)

Ex-Provost Husband said that a committee of seven Town Councillors had been formed to further the object in view. In discussing the matter, the committee were exactly of the same opinion as Sir William Robertson – namely, that a presentation should take the form of a wallet as full as they could of War Bonds. (Applause.) It had also been suggested that the hero should be presented with a gold watch, bearing a suitable inscription. He suggested that four or five gentlemen from the meeting should be appointed to act along with the committee appointed by the Town Council.

Bailie Irvine suggested that subscription sheets should be placed in all the public works in Dunfermline, so that everyone might have an opportunity of contributing towards the testimonial. The working people of Dunfermline, he said, were impressed with what the

V.C. had done, that he was confident they would contribute their mite willingly. (Applause.)

The Rev. W Andrew Hutchison pointed out that a minimum subscription had been fixed in connection with the testimonial to the late Sergt. Erskine, Dunfermline's other V.C. He thought there should be no minimum on this occasion, so that everyone might have an opportunity of giving even the smallest subscription. (Hear, hear.)

Major John L Jack, who attended as representing the local Volunteer Battalion, promised on behalf of officers, n.c.o.'s, and men that they would be most happy to assist the testimonial committee in every possible way. They would, he said, co-operate wholeheartedly in an endeavour to make this a thorough appreciation of what a Dunfermline man had done.

Ex-Provost Macbeth suggested that the working-classes should be associated with the executive committee, to whom the details should be left.

Lieut. R H Robertson expressed the view that a time limit should be fixed for the receipt of subscriptions.

The Provost pointed out that Sergeant Hunter's furlough expired on the 15th of this month, but he (the Provost) had written to his commanding officer, suggesting an extension of the leave. (Hear, hear.)

The following were appointed to act along with the committee of the Town Council: - Major Jack, Lieut. Robertson, Mr C D Allister, Mr Thomson Smith (Sergt. Hunter's former employer), Mr Thomson Henderson, the Right Hon. Wm. Adamson, M.P., Mr James Robertson (miners' secretary), the Rev. W Andrew Hutchison, and Mr A. M'Leod, chairman of the Dunfermline Co-operative society.

On the motion of ex-Provost Macbeth and Major Jack, the Provost was thanked for presiding. The latter complimented Mr Norval on his appointment as Provost, remarking that he was in a position to know that the honour was fully deserved. (Applause.)

The following edition of **The Dunfermline Press**, a week later, carried this following announcement.

Testimonial

CITY AND ROYAL BURGH OF DUNFERMLINE

TESTIMONIAL

TO

Sergt. DAVID FERGUSON HUNTER, V.C.

The Committee have resolved that SUBSCRIPTIONS, which may be of any sum, will be received up to 11th December.

SUBSCRIPTION SHEETS have been distributed to various Works, Banks, Shops and other Business Premises, and to Schools. The Public are invited to subscribe upon these sheets, or to lodge Subscriptions with Mr. D. D. Blair, Burgh Chamberlain, East Port, or with the undersigned.

ANDREW SHEARER, Town Clerk

City Chambers

Dunfermline, 15th November 1918

On 16 November 1918, Hunter received his medal from King George V at Buckingham Palace. The following is from **The Dunfermline Press** of **23 November 1918**.

Dunfermline Sergeant Honoured

Investiture at Buckingham Palace

Hero Praised by the King

Sergeant David Hunter, of Dunfermline, the Moeuvres hero, attended the Investiture at Buckingham Palace on Saturday, and received the Victoria Cross from the hands of the King. He conversed for a considerable time with His Majesty, who manifested the greatest interest in the circumstances of the exploit which won the Sergeant the coveted decoration.

Asked how he and his gallant colleagues managed to carry on for two days without food, the Sergeant amused His Majesty with the answer, "Oh, we just had to."

Sergeant Hunter is a very modest hero, and a man of action rather than of words. I understand (says a London correspondent) that the King described the exploit of the Scottish hero as one of the finest of the whole war, and declared that the stand which he and his comrades made at Moeuvres will be forever remembered in the annals of the British Army.

Sergeant Hunter, who was accompanied by his wife, left King's Cross for home on Saturday evening.

In a list of awards of the D.C.M. published in the "London Gazette" are the names of Private D M'Farlane, H.L.I. (Glasgow), and Private J. L. Phillips H.L.I. (Glasgow), who were with Sergeant Hunter V.C. at Moeuvres.

On the second night, Private M'Farlane and another went out to try to get into our lines and bring back rations and water. The other man was killed, and he himself was badly wounded. After wandering about "No Man's Land" for five hours, Private M'Farlane succeeded in reaching another of our posts, and gave information as to the position of his party. He showed magnificent courage and determination.

Private Phillips succeeded in reaching advanced headquarters, and volunteered to return with the relieving platoon to show them the exact position. He showed magnificent courage and endurance, particularly in volunteering to return with the relieving party in his exhausted condition.

A number of papers, including **The Leeds Mercury** of **18 November 1918** carried the following photograph of Hunter leaving Buckingham Palace.



The public testimonial meeting did take place and a detailed account of it appeared in **The Dunfermline Press** of **21 December 1918**.

Dunfermline V.C.

Public Testimonial to Sergeant Hunter

Interesting Presentation Ceremony

The citizens of Dunfermline honoured Sergeant David Hunter, V.C., at a meeting in the Co-operative Hall on Monday evening. The entire seating accommodation of the building was occupied, and some late comers had to be content with standing-room. Provost Norval presided, and the platform party included – Sergt. Hunter, Mrs Hunter, the two little girls; Sir Wm. Robertson, Lord-Lieutenant of the County, Bailies Kenny, Irvine and Taylor, Ex-Provost Husband, Councillor Houston, Major John L. Jack; Captain A. K. Smith, a former officer in Sergt. Hunter's battalion, the 5th H.L.I.; the Rev. W Andrew Hutchison, the Right Hon. Wm. Adamson, General Secretary of the Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan Miners' Association; Mr. James Robertson, assistant secretary: Mr. Thomson Smith, colliery proprietor, Sergt. Hunter's employer; Mr. Andrew Shearer, Town Clerk; Mr D. D. Blair, Burgh Chamberlain; Mr. T Henderson, representing the Parish Council; and Mr. A. M'Leod, chairman of the Dunfermline Co-operative Society Ltd. Occupying the platform were the members of the Dunfermline Select Choir, which under the conductorship of Mr. George Melville, opened the proceedings by singing "Scots Wha Hae" and "Hail to the Chief."

The Provost's Speech

The Provost, having intimated apologies from the military authorities, Mr. H. D. VanSant, American Consul, and Ex-Provost Jas. Currie Macbeth, said that the Committee entrusted with the organisation of a public testimonial to Sergt. Hunter, V.C., having requested him, as Provost of the city, to voice the feelings of the community and to present the gallant Sergeant with a tangible token of their admiration, he naturally very gladly acceded to the request. (Hear, hear.) He felt it a great honour and privilege, on their behalf, to voice the feelings of the community, and thus to testify to their appreciation of the honour which Sergeant Hunter had done to himself, and incidentally, done to the city. (Applause.) The bravery of Sergeant Hunter had been recognised by his Majesty the King, who had personally pinned the coveted Victoria Cross on his breast – the highest and most precious decoration which it was in the power of His Majesty to bestow for valour. (Applause.) They reflected with pride upon the fact that that was the second Victoria Cross which had come to their city. (Applause.) The first was gained by Sergeant John Erskine, Scottish Rifles, for conspicuous bravery two and a half years ago. (Applause.) Alas, he did not live to receive the public recognition which had been prepared for him. He made the supreme sacrifice. But his memory would live long in their hearts, and his name would be enshrined in the roll of heroes who had gone down in the great struggle for the world's freedom. (Applause.) Happily, the fight was over and victory won. (Applause.) The hero with them that evening would look forward to the prospect of a long and honourable career, which would be sustained by the consciousness of duty well and nobly done. (Applause.) Deeds

of heroism, sacrifice and unflinching devotion to duty had been many during the progress of this, the greatest and most sanguinary war the world had ever known, and it was inevitable that when so many millions of men had been engaged there must have been countless episodes, of which they knew nothing, in which the bravery and heroism of men had been displayed, whose heroism being unknown, must remain, not unhonoured, but unsung. They therefore did honour to those unknown heroes through the medium of those whose heroism had come into the fierce light of publicity. (Applause.) And no act of devotion to duty, courage, or self-forgetfulness stood out so vividly as, or appealed more powerfully to the imagination than that of Sergeant Hunter and his half-dozen brave comrades. (Applause.)

Sir Douglas Haig's Commendation

It so appealed to Sir Douglas Haig. (Applause.) Very special notice was taken of this act of bravery by the Commander-in-Chief, and it so appealed to our gallant, if emotional, Allies, the French, and to the great mass of the people at home, who were thrilled to the core when the first accounts of this great exploit were published. (Applause.) Sergeant Hunter was a miner, and miners as a class were proverbial for the heroism they often displayed in the carrying out of their dangerous avocation. (Hear, hear.) Those of them who had the administration of the Carnegie Hero Fund were well aware of that and they were not therefore, surprised that the spirit of heroism should be transferred to the field of battle. (Applause.) Having read the official account of the heroic Moeuvres episode, the Provost remarked that that was the bald, official narrative. It was a little more highly coloured certainly than most official narratives were, but they could fill in the blanks. What, he asked, must have been the agony and suspense of these men during that fatal forty-eight hours, without food or water, cut off completely from their comrades, and expecting death every moment? The wonder was that their nerves were not irretrievably shattered. (Applause.) Sergeant Hunter's bravery would live in history. (Applause.) In spite of all these circumstances, he held on, dogged and determined, the personification of the best in Scottish character and with that resoluteness and unswerving courage which had made the nation respected throughout the world. (Applause.) The point to emphasise was that he "held on". (Applause.) The war was won by holding on. (Hear, hear.) The Navy held on with the bulldog grip of the blockade, till they drew the German fleet sullenly out of their lairs to deliver themselves into the hands of their hated enemy. (Applause.) The Army held on. From that fateful day, when Haig in his orders told them that their back were to the wall, the tide began to turn in their favour, and now, when victory had come, we must still follow Sergeant Hunter's example and hold on. (Applause.) We must hold on for peace – a real and lasting peace. Our statesmen around the peace conference table must hold on for a full realisation of the ideals we had fought, struggled and died for – a peace to ensure that there should be no more war, and that we should have liberty and freedom to develop our industries and expand our commerce so as to bring about an era of prosperity, contentment and social betterment to those who had borne the brunt of the battle, to the workers at home, and to the rising generation, that they might grow up and bless us. If we held on now we should bring about that "consummation so devoutly to be wished." (Applause.)

The Presentations

Addressing Sergeant Hunter, the Provost said – No recognition which your fellow-citizens could give you can outshine the lustre of that token of the nation’s approbation given for valour alone, and which our King in person has pinned on your breast. We are proud that Dunfermline, through you, has added to its fame and distinction, and it is fitting that within a short distance of the tower of the ancient Abbey, where rest the bones of the greatest champion of liberty that Scotland has ever known, centuries after, the spirit of Robert the Bruce still lives and inspires such men as you to deeds of heroism in the sacred cause of freedom. (Applause.) I have great pleasure and pride in presenting you, in the name of your fellow-citizens, with this gold watch and albert, as a small token of their admiration of your heroic conduct. May you long be spared to wear it, and as often as you have cause to look at it, may it remind you of the kindly feelings that we have toward you. (Applause.) I also present you, Sergeant Hunter, with this wallet and war Bonds. No doubt you will find them very useful when you resume your ordinary civilian duties, which I hope you will do very shortly. (Applause.) I congratulate your poor wife and family. Your wife may not say it to you – that would be foolish on her part – but I have not the slightest doubt that she is a proud woman this evening. (Applause.) It has been said that no man is a hero to his wife, or his valet. That saying must have been falsified this evening. (Applause.) I am also to remind her of this event – although it will not be necessary, I am certain – and I ask you to give her this gold wristlet watch – (Applause) along with a gold locket to each of your two little children. (Applause.) They may not perhaps appreciate the gift at the moment, but after years, when they have grown up, they will wear these tokens of their father’s prowess with great affection – (applause) – and I have no doubt they will be handed down to posterity as heirlooms in your family. (Applause.) We trust that you, your wife and family will have a long, happy and peaceful life together, and when the terrible ordeal that you have passed through shall have become but a memory the softening influence of time will leave with you but the remembrance of a duty nobly done. (Applause.)

The Provost cordially shook hands with the hero, who was greeted with an outburst of cheering and the singing of “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.”

The Hero’s Reply

Sergeant Hunter’s reply was modest and brief, and contained no reference whatever to the circumstances under which he and his gallant comrades made their memorable stand. Talking to an audience, he said, was not quite his line. Indeed, he would rather have been following his ordinary occupation in the pit than standing on that platform. (Laughter and applause.) But he had to confess that his heart swelled with pride as he looked upon those handsome gifts which his fellow-citizens and friends had presented to his wife, girls and himself. The fact that his wife and children were being honoured with him gratified him more than words could tell. Words failed him to express his feelings adequately, and he hoped they would accept his heartfelt thanks for their goodness and kindly feelings toward him. (Applause.) Need he say that those handsome and beautiful articles would go down as heir looms of priceless value, and their handsome gift of War Bonds would

stand him in good stead as he travelled along life's journey. (Applause.) From the greatest depths of his heart, his wife, family, and he thanked the citizens of Dunfermline. (Applause.)

Mr. Adamson's Appreciation

The Rt. Hon. Wm. Adamson, in response to a request for a speech, said it was unnecessary for him to say how pleased he was, as a citizen of Dunfermline, and as one who had known Sergeant Hunter from his childhood to be associated with these proceedings at which his fellow-citizens were doing honour to one of the mining community who was worthy of all the honour they could bestow upon him. (Applause.) Sergeant Hunter's name would go down, in conjunction with the names of many others, in history, as having played a brave and important part in the course of the great conflict. (Applause.) They were all very proud of him. He was worthy of all the honour they could confer upon him. (Applause.)

Speech by Sir William Robertson

Sir William Robertson said they were proud that they could count Sergeant Hunter as one of themselves. He happened to be in Manchester taking part in a political demonstration on the day that Sergeant Hunter's name (he was then a corporal) appeared in the newspapers as being the hero of the great action at Moeuvres. In the course of his address he chafed those English people on the fact that they did not understand or appreciate Scotch folks as he thought they ought to. He said – "Just look at the matter yourselves. We sent you two Archbishops to run your English Church; we sent you Sir Douglas Haig as Commander-in-Chief of the British Armies in France; we sent you Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, the First Sea Lord – both of these men come from my own county; and last of all (and perhaps I ought to have said greatest off all) I claim Corporal Hunter as a fellow-townsmen." (Applause.) There was not another speaker at that meeting who had as many trump cards in his hand as he had. (Applause.) The Provost, Sir William proceeded, had made a remark that was very apropos to the occasion, when he spoke of the heroism of Corporal Hunter and his fellows in that shell-hole as being that dogged holding on. That was an essentially Scottish trait. Scotland had never been conquered and brought under subjection. (Applause.) England tried it many a time, and although she found helpers who, for the gift of land, were willing to sell their country, there was always a faithful remnant that kept the torch of freedom burning. They were driven from one fastness to another, but Scotland was never actually and absolutely overcome. She held on. (Applause.) But Scotland also put up a great fight for freedom of conscience, for religious freedom. That poor handful of covenanters who stood up against the might of Charles' forces were driven hither and thither, sleeping out in moors, poorly armed – but they held on. (Applause.) And it was because they held on that they knew what religious freedom had been and was now. "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." It was stout hearts that were in that shell-hole that day. (Applause.) He had been very much struck by what he read in the newspapers about Corporal Hunter. There was something in the air about receiving great credit – and very deserved credit – for what he had done, and being complimented on all hands and honoured by everybody before he got home. What did they think he wanted? He did not want to go to Buckingham Palace;

he wanted to go to a little palace down about Lady's-Mill. (Applause.) The one reward he asked for was leave to get home. (Applause.) On general grounds, they could understand that; but when they saw Mrs Hunter and these two charming children they could thoroughly sympathise with him. (Applause.) Was there not a very striking lesson in what they knew of this great action of Corporal Hunter and his fellows in that dreadful place of danger? The O.C. in that shell-hole was a Corporal. (Applause.) That was a fine thing about discipline. It had such a unifying, uniting and inspiring effect. They were all brave fellows in that shell-hole. (Applause.) But it took a guiding head and strong heart to keep them together, to let them see where duty lay, and what it was up to them to do; and the officer commanding – Corporal Hunter – was the guiding, inspiring, unifying, leading force. (Applause.) There was something fine about that and he wanted his hearers to think about it. Half-a-dozen men in a hole, and all very much like each other; one man as good as the other man. Singly, they could not have accomplished much; but they were a little band of brave fellows, who just needed some one to give the lead; and, the lead being given, the individual ability and courage of these men were gathered together and met those appalling forces of the enemy. (Applause.) That helped one to understand the somewhat obscure text that told them that no man liveth unto himself, and no one dieth unto himself. We were so much bound up, and if we could only get to understand that, we could accomplish much more than we usually did accomplish. (Applause.) It was not open to many of them to win a Victoria Cross; but it was open to every one of them to emulate the example of these men, who had the stout heart and who showed that they had the determination, the pluck, and the ability to hold on. If they did, they would accomplish much. Through holding on those men got out of a very tight hole. They would all get out of many a tight hole if they faced their difficulties with the same spirit and pluck and determination as Sergeant Hunter and his comrades faced theirs. (Applause.) Referring to the fact that Sergeant Hunter was a miner, Sir William concluded by stating that in one of his letters his son (who is an officer with the Fife R.G.A. in France) paid a warm tribute to the excellent work of the miners who were members of the Battery. (Applause.) Sir William proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the Committee in charge of the testimonial arrangements. (Applause.)

Ex-Provost Husband called for thanks to the choir, who rendered further patriotic pieces during the evening. The Co-operative Society Ltd were thanked for granting, rent free, the use of the Co-operative Hall; and Bailie Kenny proposed a vote of thanks to Provost Norval for presiding.

The watch presented to Sergeant Hunter bore on the front the Dunfermline Coat of Arms; on the back the hero's initials in monogram, and the inscription – "Presented to Sergt. David Ferguson Hunter, V.C., by the citizens of Dunfermline in recognition of his heroism at Moeuvres on 17th September 1918."

The value of the war Bonds presented to Sergeant Hunter was £235.

To put that into context, £235 in 1918 equates to £15,500 in 2018.

The Daily Mirror of Thursday, 19 December 1918 carried the following photograph of the presentation.

PRESENTATION TO A MOEUVRES HERO.



Provost Norval making a presentation to Sergeant Hunter, V.C., at Dunfermline. On the left of the photograph are seen Mrs. Hunter and her two children.

It was not only the local press that was fascinated by Hunter's story. On **11 January 1919**, **The Sphere: An Illustrated Newspaper for the Home** carried the following striking drawing accompanied by this brief narrative.

The Scots who Held the Post at Moeuvres

When Moeuvres was captured by the Germans on September 17, a corporal and six men of the Highland Light Infantry were cut off in one of our posts to the north of the village. Surrounded by the enemy on all sides, with no reserves of food and no shelter against the bad weather then raging, this indomitable little band held out against overwhelming forces for forty-eight hours, when Moeuvres was retaken by the British. The tale of their heroism is best told by the leader of the little band, Corporal David Hunter, V.C.: "I and the others went into the line on September 16, and took over an outpost just beyond Moeuvres. The first night nothing extraordinary occurred, just the usual shelling in the vicinity of the village. Everything was the same on the following day till dark; then the enemy began a bombardment, after an hour of which he came over en masse and captured the village. We did not know at that time that we were alone with the enemy; we only realised we were cut off when our rations did not arrive. The first night the enemy left us pretty much alone, but on the following night he started his artillery fire again and

made a determined attack, but we managed to hold him all right. After this, I thought it would be best to try and get into touch with our own lines, and I sent out two men to try to get through. Just at dusk on our last night in the post our guns opened fire, and the enemy turned tail and ran.



On 4 February 1919, The Boys' Own Paper published this piece accompanied by another drawing of the scene.

Place of honour this month must be given to the record in splendid heroism associated with the attack on Moeuvres in September last. The incident is depicted for us in vivid manner by Mr George Soper in the drawing published on p.183 of this number.

Briefly, the story is as follows: in the heavy fighting that month a strong German attack compelled the scattered garrison of Moeuvres to fall back to the west of that village. During the retirement some of the troops reported that one of our posts near the cemetery was holding out and it was generally concluded that the small remnant would be wiped out by Hun fire. Two days later, however, when the British troops

counterattacked, driving back the Germans beyond their former line, the brave little post of seven men – Scotsmen all, of the Highland Light Infantry – were found to be still holding their own and keeping the enemy at bay. A circle of corpses around the post showed how desperately the Germans had endeavoured to capture the position, and how dearly they had paid for the attempt. When the relieving force came up with them, the gallant band of Scotsmen were right out of food and wet through with the exposure to the rain.



THE SEVEN HEROES OF MOEUVRES.

(See "The Editor's Page," page 198.)

(Drawn for the "Boy's Own Paper" by GEORGE SHERMAN.)

It was but fitting that the leader of the valiant seven, Corporal David Ferguson Hunter, should be awarded the distinction of the Victoria Cross. All seven heroes deserved the decoration without doubt, but in such cases the leader is selected as the recipient. The honour belongs, nevertheless, to the Highland Light Infantry, which corps is justly proud of its comrades of Moeuvres. In the official story of the deed, as related in the Gazette, we learn that after the post was isolated and almost surrounded by the enemy, Corporal Hunter endeavoured in vain to get into communication with his company, which had fallen back. He then decided to maintain his position and, by skilful arrangement, managed to repel frequent attacks until the evening of the third day, when relief came. The seven heroes, crouching in their shell hole, had held on grimly for forty eight hours, without food or water. It was a fine deed and it stands out prominently among the many splendid heroic exploits to the credit of the Scottish regiments during the Great War.

We shall not willingly let die the memory of those gallant seven heroes of Moeuvres.

Almost forty years after the events in Moeuvres, the following article appeared in **The Evening Telegraph of 7 September 1956:**

Dunfermline Corporal Led Gallant Stand of Seven Men

It was a balmy evening in 1918 in France.

Corporal David Hunter and six privates of the HLI moved over the broken terrain in the darkness, stumbling and tripping.

At 11pm the seven men took over their position in a shell hole at Moeuvres.

Misty dawn crept over the land and the seven men saw the hordes of grey-clad enemy scurrying and falling, but pressing on towards them. Other section, platoon and company positions fell – wiped out. Lewis guns chattered. All through the day Corporal Hunter and his men kept up their fire. Rain soaked them. The earth became mud.

The next day the seven continued to hold their position at the edge of a cemetery. Wave upon wave of Germans were flung back by withering fire from those seven men.

One man volunteered to try to break through the Germany lines for help. He died in the attempt.

To keep up their strength, the six remaining munched biscuits and bully beef. To wash the food down they had rainwater caught in their capes.

To give a greater field of fire, Corporal Hunter split his small force into two – one occupying a shell hole not far from the other. Corporal Hunter dodged between them to maintain his command. Again, the Germans attacked and again they fell back with heavy losses.

On the fourth morning, the heavy-eyed HLI men had a new threat – from their own guns beginning a counter bombardment. No one knew that they were still holding out.

The barrage passed, the Highlanders breathed a sigh of relief. Then came wild excitement and thankfulness as a Canadian corporal led a section over their position. They were saved.

HUNTER'S LATER YEARS

According to **The Dundee Courier** of **10 January 1919**,

Moeuvres V.C. Hero returns to Pit

Under the scheme for the demobilisation of miners, Mr Thomson Smith, managing director of the Kingseat Company Ltd has secured the discharge from the army of Sergeant David Ferguson Hunter, V.C., 5th H.L.I., who has now returned to his former employment as a miner at Dean Colliery, Kingseat.

He subsequently left that colliery and was later employed at Steelend.

He also, on being discharged after the war, rejoined the Territorials. He was a sergeant in the 229th Anti-Aircraft Battery, Dunfermline and was based at their barracks in Elgin Street, Dunfermline. It was reported in **The Courier and Advertiser** of **30 December 1938**:

V.C.'s Sons Soldiers, Too

Among members of Dunfermline's anti-aircraft units now on duty are V.C. David Hunter, 40 Haig Crescent, Dunfermline, and his three sons.

V.C. Hunter, who is a postman, won his distinction during a big attack by the Germans at Moeuvres, a few miles to the west of Cambrai.

Serving with him now in Dunfermline Territorial ranks are his sons – James, aged 18, and 14-year old twins, Elwin and David.

Like his younger brothers, James joined the ranks at an early age, and has been in service for five years.

Elwin is serving as trumpeter, while David is a bugler.

David is employed at Carnegie Baths, and is keenly interested in swimming.

Elwin is an employee of Smith and Guthrie, Dunfermline. His hobby is music, and for a time he played the accordion in a local band.



In 1919, the Imperial War Museum commissioned A Neville Lewis to paint a three-quarter length portrait (oil on canvas) of Hunter, wearing his full uniform and kit and bearing his maroon medal ribbon. The portrait is still in the ownership of the Imperial War Museum.

In 1920, he attended the Buckingham Palace Garden Party for V.C. holders having, in 1919, sat as a model for a bust being made by Jacob Epstein, commissioned by Sir Muirhead Bone. It was designed to represent all Scots who won the V.C. in the First World War, and was first displayed at the Royal Academy, then later in the Imperial War Museum, where it is today.



The following was recorded in **The Courier** of Monday **14 April 1919**.

Moeuvres Hero Poses for the Sculptor

Sergeant Hunter, the Dunfermline V.C., leader of the seven Highland Light Infantrymen who held the Moeuvres shell-hole for two days and two nights when surrounded by Germans, is looking for a job at £1000.

Hunter is in London on the invitation of the war Museum authorities to sit as a model for Mr. Jacob Epstein for the shell-hole scene that he is reproducing.

"My hotel and travelling expenses are being paid," he said to a "Weekly Dispatch" representative, "but this London of yours is not cheap, and I'm ten pounds out of pocket already!"

"Once I was a miner, and played the organ in church in Dunfermline. But since I was "demobbed" I have been given an engineering job and I have no complaints to make."

Then the sergeant smiled. "But 'tis a £1000 a year job that I'd like. If you could send me along one I would be grateful."

"How do you like being a model?"

The heroic Scot pointed to a dais on which was a well-cushioned armchair.

"That's a very comfortable seat," he said. "It's pleasanter there than it was in the mines, and more enjoyable than in the trenches. And I want no more trenches: no thanks! But I get very drowsy there, and Mr. Epstein has to watch me or I should go to sleep."

Our picture shows Sergeant Hunter at the studios of Mr. Epstein.

On Friday, July 13 1923, the King and Queen and the Duke and Duchess of York visited Dunfermline. In a lengthy report of that visit in Dundee's **Evening Telegraph and Post** of that same date we are told:

Ex-service men, who had been lined up, were then inspected by His Majesty, who spoke several words to each. Addressing Captain W. B. Robertson, the son of the late Sir William Robertson, he asked where he (Mr. Robertson) had won the Military Cross. On being told, "At Messines," His Majesty said, "Did I present it personally to you in London?" "No, Your Majesty," replied Mr. Robertson, "it had unfortunately to be sent by post to me."

Sergeant Hunter, one of Dunfermline's V.C.s, who secured the coveted award at Moeuvres, when he successfully held an isolated position for some time although surrounded by the enemy, was next presented to His Majesty, who shook him warmly by the hand.

Between 1924 and 1951 he was a country postman, with rounds which included the villages of Saline, Steelend, Carnock etc..



The photograph above comes from **The Courier and Advertiser** of **11 November 1933**.

In November 1929, he attended the House of Lords' Dinner for holders of the V.C. and he also attended almost all the main V.C. (and, latterly, V.C./G.C.) functions.

He continued to be a member of the Territorial Army until 1939 and then became a member of the Home Guard.

His marriage to Betsy was reported in **The Dundee Courier** on **10 June 1939**: -

Dunfermline V.C. Weds

Dunfermline's V.C., Mr David Ferguson Hunter, 40 Haig Crescent, was married last night to Mrs Elizabeth Young, Loch House, Loch Road, Saline.

The ceremony took place at Saline Church, and was performed by Rev. Haddow Gilmour.

The bride was becomingly attired in a two-piece navy blue edge-to-edge coat, with blue hat to match. Matron of honour was Mrs Robert Farrel, Dunfermline, and Mr Robert Farrel was best man.

At a reception at the bridegroom's home about 30 guests were present.

Mr Hunter, a postal van driver, won the V.C. at Moeuvres in 1918 when, as corporal in charge of six men, he succeeded in holding an outpost for four days. The post was surrounded and believed to have been captured. When their battalion, the 1/5th H.L.I., 52nd Division, advanced they were surprised to find the post still held by the gallant little group.

In 1951, aged sixty, he retired from the Postal Service and was employed as a storekeeper at Comrie Colliery for five years. His address during this period was 40 Haig Crescent, Dunfermline. His retirement from the Postal Service was reported in **The Dunfermline Press** of **17 November 1951**.

Dunfermline V.C. of First World War

"Hero of Moeuvres" Retires After 27 Years' Postal Service

A Dunfermline V.C. of the First World War, Mr David Ferguson Hunter, 40 Haig Crescent, retires this month from the service of the Post Office where he has been employed for the last 27 years.

Sixty years of age, Mr Hunter has spent the whole of his postal service on rural routes. And when he finishes his delivery to-day he will have completed 20 years' service on the Carnock-Oakley route. He will go on six days' leave on Tuesday, at the end of which he will enter upon his retirement.

Mr Hunter has seen many changes in the life of the rural "postie". "First of all," he remarked to the Dunfermline Press representative on Thursday, "it was a case of walking, then we had push cycles. These were replaced by motor cycles and later motor vans." He has been driving for 22 years without an accident, and holds the Safety First League's gold medal and five bars: silver medal and five bars, and the 20 years' service medal and two bars.

"I seem to have been running around in uniform since I was in my teens," he says. "I joined the Territorials – the 7th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, whose G Company headquarters were at Kelty – in 1910, and I carried on until 1934."

Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, Mr Hunter volunteered for a Cyclist Battalion in October 1914, and after being transferred to the Royal Engineers, he went to France in 1916, after repeatedly expressing a desire to be sent to the fighting line. He had not been long overseas when he was wounded and he spent six weeks in hospital.

About the middle of September 1918, he joined the Highland Light Infantry, and, three days later, it was as 26-years old Corporal David Hunter, whose home at that time was

35 Forth Street, that he took part in the heroic exploit at Moeuvres which earned him the Victoria Cross.

Corporal Hunter was promoted to the rank of sergeant in recognition of his bravery in the field and in October it was announced that His Majesty the King had been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Victoria Cross to No. 43247 Corporal David Ferguson Hunter H.L.I. for most conspicuous bravery, determination and devotion to duty.

On 16th December 1918, at a largely attended public gathering held in the Co-operative hall, Sergeant Hunter was honoured by the citizens of Dunfermline in whose name Provost Norval presented Sergeant Hunter with a gold watch and albert, and a wallet and war Bonds to the value of £250; together with a gold wrist watch for Mrs. Hunter and a gold locket for each of their two daughters.

Mr. Hunter went to Buckingham Palace to receive the V.C. from King George V. He was also honoured by being selected to sit for the famous sculptor Jacob Epstein, who did a bust of the Dunfermline V.C. which was placed in the British war Museum, London as representing the Scots V.C.s of the 1914-18 war. A portrait of Mr. Hunter was painted and hung in the V.C.s gallery of the museum.

On return to civilian life, Mr. Hunter resumed his occupation as a miner at Dean Colliery, Kingseat. Later he was employed at Steelend, but after an accident he left the mines and began his association with the postal service in Dunfermline. Mr. Hunter is a native of Kingseat.

Hunter was one of several winners of the V.C. who attended a ceremony held at Hyde Park, London on 26 June 1956 to mark the centenary of the medal. His signature is in the bottom left-hand corner of this programme.

Woolley VC
1917

S. J. Day VC

St. Edmunds
Late Father
6th J.F. Thompson VC
24/2/1900

VICTORIA CROSS CENTENARY

Boer War
S.A.

REVIEW OF
HODDERS OF THE DECORATION

W. G. J. Miller VC

BY HER MAJESTY

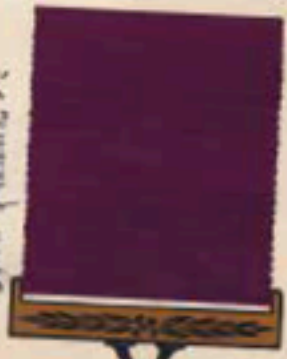
Queen Mary 3C

THE QUEEN

J. Borrell VC
1871/76

J. G. ...

Reverend Procter
John VC



How ...
Wood VC

F. A. ... VC
Capt. ... VC
1921. ... VC

Chas. ...

P. H. ... VC
... VC

HYDE PARK 16 JUNE 1916

Souvenir Programme
Peter Nispana

J. B. ... VC
... VC
H. L. ...

... VC
... VC
... VC
... VC

On 29 September 1957, Hunter took part in a march from Blythswood Square, Glasgow to protest about the proposed amalgamation of the HLI with the Royal Scots Fusiliers. He is pictured below with William Angus V.C., receiving their instructions about their roles in leading the march.



In 1962, two years before his death, Hunter was prepared to sell his V.C. as he was finding it increasingly difficult getting about and his twenty-seven-year-old Morris car had recently failed its road test. His family urged him to sell the medal, but in the end this was not necessary, as a London car dealer provided a car on condition that the medal was kept by Hunter and not sold. His old regiment, The Highland Light Infantry, had been quite prepared to purchase Hunter's V.C. from him but he promised that he would leave it to them on his death anyway.



He died of a heart attack in 1965 in Dunfermline Northern Hospital and is buried in Dunfermline Cemetery. The now-named Royal Highland Fusiliers provided a piper and a detachment to honour him at the funeral. Despite that formal recognition of him, his grave was unmarked by a headstone. He was survived by his wife, four sons, two daughters and two stepdaughters. John Carmichael V.C. and John Hamilton V.C. both attended his funeral.

His death was reported in **The Times** on **15 February 1965**.

Mr D. F. Hunter, V.C.

A Gallant Resistance

Mr David Ferguson Hunter V.C., has died suddenly in the Dunfermline Northern Hospital at the age of 73.

Hunter was a miner before he joined up in the Highland Light Infantry – now the Royal Highland Fusiliers – at the outbreak of The First World war. In September 1918, he was corporal in charge of a machine-gun outpost at Moeuvres, west of Cambrai, in France, when the whole Allied line fell back during a heavy German attack. All outposts were thought to have been wiped out – and they all were except Hunter's. But when British

troops retook their line they found Hunter and his six men still holding their outpost, with virtually no ammunition left and without food for 48 hours.

In 1962 Hunter caused surprise by offering to sell his V.C. His 27-year old car was nearly worn out and he and his wife could not get about without one. His regiment offered to buy the medal, but instead a London car dealer gave Hunter a present of a new car. The regiment's offer still stood but Hunter refused the money and told them he would leave the decoration to them when he died.

His decorations consisted of his V.C., Imperial Service Medal, 1914-20 British War Medal, Victory Medal, King George VI Coronation Medal 1937, Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Medal 1953 and Efficiency Medal "Territorial".



The following is from **The Dunfermline Press** of **12 August 2004**.

A Headstone for a Hero...

RECOGNISED: Cemetery tribute for WW1 Victoria Cross Winner

A Kingseat hero who won a Victoria Cross in the First World War has lain in an unmarked grave since 1965.

Corporal David Hunter, of the Highland Light Infantry, picked up the highest award for gallantry in the field after his heroics in 1916 but a family rift meant a headstone was never erected.

But now, almost 40 years after he died, friends and relatives will gather at his grave in Dunfermline Cemetery today (Thursday) for a ceremony at which his achievements will finally be marked in the city.

A coal miner before the war, Hunter was awarded the medal after he and four colleagues were surrounded by German troops and had to hold their position for two days without food or water.

Grandson, David Hunter, of Scotland Drive, Dunfermline, said, "He received the Victoria Cross in 1918 for holding a post for 48 hours until he was relieved by our troops. It was at the Battle of Moynes [sic] in France. It was a hill the Germans obviously wanted to take but he and four others held it despite being constantly attacked."

Hunter was promoted to sergeant before he left the army and he went on to work as a postman until his death at the age of 73. Although he didn't see active service in the Second World War, he was involved in recruitment.

Mr Hunter recalled, "He didn't speak much about the war but I knew the story from an early age. He was known throughout the town as V.C. Hunter although, to be honest, I had more to do with the grandparents on the other side. I was born in 1941, my father was a POW of the Japanese and my mother worked for the war effort so I was brought up by my gran until I was five."

Hunter's V.C. was awarded for "the most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty" and the citation continued "he was detailed to take on an advanced post close to the enemy and that while completely isolated, he maintained his position and repelled frequent attacks, showing outstanding bravery."

Mr Hunter said, "I've seen the V.C. although it was given to the regiment when he died and it's now on display in the regimental museum in Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow. There's also a bust of him in the Imperial War Museum in London. Not everyone has a bust but the story goes that people believed that it was just high-ranking officers got the V.C. so they wanted to show that this miner from Scotland had also got one."

Mr Hunter (62) a former football player with Morton, who was also involved with Dunfermline Athletic's youth development, said he was happy his own grandchildren would finally view the headstone of their illustrious relative. He added, "There was a bit of family history behind it and something personal that happened. It was odd. I was at the funeral, the regiment were there and they played the Last Post and everything but he didn't have a headstone. I'm very pleased something is being done after all these years and I'll be there on Thursday."

The stone to be placed at Hunter's grave has been donated by Abercorn Memorials from Edinburgh and will have details of his V.C. and his army crest.

In a special ceremony, General Officer Commanding major general WEB Loudon will give an address while ex-Army padre the Rev John Jenkinson will conduct the service. There will also be a laying of a wreath, standard bearers from the Royal British Legion Scotland and two pipers and a bugler from the Royal Highland Fusiliers, which was amalgamated with the HLI.

Thursday will be the culmination of a year's hard work by people like Bill Reid, the lodge secretary of Lodge Union (Dunfermline) 250, and Regiment Secretary Major William Shaw. Mr Reid, of Woodmill Road, Dunfermline, explained, "David Hunter was a member of our lodge. He joined up in 1919 and that's how I got involved in it. I got a call from a bloke in London who was taking note of holders of the V.C.s in Scotland who were lying in unmarked graves. David Hunter was one of them." He added, "This was something that should have been done a long time ago and it's just a pity that no-one picked up on it. We certainly didn't."

Mr Reid continued, "I actually knew the old boy, not very well, but I knew him to speak to. I never realised he was lying in an unmarked grave. For all the years I've been a friend of Davie Hunter – the football player – I didn't know that was his grandfather and that he held the V.C.. It was only when I started to dig into it, I interviewed the family in Grangemouth and they asked if I knew Davie was a grandson. I said, "You're joking. He's been a good friend of mine for years." We were both on the committee of Canmore Golf Club many years ago but when I told him all this he just laughed."

Major Shaw, who is based at the regimental Museum in Glasgow, said, "Hunter was one of our V.C.s lying in an unmarked grave but we're getting round to all of them slowly but surely. After Thursday there is just one other from this regiment. We're getting it sorted at long last and I'm very happy about it. The trouble is, gravestones cost about £1,000 so it's a lot of money to raise. That's why we must thank the generosity of Abercorn Memorials."





APPENDIX

Other press coverage of the action at Moeuvres

The story of the Seven Heroes of Moeuvres and of Hunter's V.C. received widespread coverage in national and local newspapers, only some of which has been quoted in this paper. Other press reports include the following. Several overseas newspapers also reported on the action at Moeuvres.

<u>Publication</u>	<u>Date</u>
Aberdeen Evening Express	23 September 1918
	27 September 1918
	1 October 1918
	3 October 1918
	4 November 1918
	23 November 1918
Aberdeen Press and Journal	23 September 1918
	24 October 1918
	14 July 1923
Arbroath Herald and Advertiser	11 October 1918
Army and Navy Gazette	28 September 1918
Belfast News-Letter	23 September 1918
Birmingham Daily Post	23 September 1918
	3 October 1918
	24 October 1918
Birmingham Mail	23 September 1918
	24 October 1918
Birmingham daily gazette	24 October 1918
Chichester Observer	2 October 1918
Cornishman	25 September 1918
Coventry Evening Telegraph	21 September 1918
Daily Mirror	23 September 1918
	4 October 1918
	9 October 1918
	5 November 1918
	18 November 1918

	19 December 1918
Daily Record	23 September 1918
	24 September 1918
	28 September 1918
	30 September 1918
	1 October 1918
	3 October 1918
	4 October 1918
	11 October 1918
	14 October 1918
	24 October 1918
	4 November 1918
	9 November 1918
	16 November 1918
	17 December 1918
Derby Daily telegraph	4 November 1918
Derry Journal	23 September 1918
Diss Express	11 October 1918
Dundee Courier	23 September 1918
	27 September 1918
	24 October 1918
	4 November 1918
	16 December 1918
	10 January 1919
	14 April 1919
	14 July 1923
	11 November 1933
	30 September 1938
	10 June 1939
Dundee Evening Telegraph	26 September 1918
	27 September 1918
	21 October 1918
	17 November 1918
	10 January 1919

	11 July 1923
	13 July 1923
	21 January 1936
Dunfermline Journal	21 December 1918
Edinburgh Evening News	23 September 1918
	26 September 1918
	27 September 1918
	2 October 1918
	24 October 1918
	2 November 1918
	17 December 1918
Evening Despatch	1 October 1918
Exeter and Plymouth Gazette	23 September 1918
Falkirk Herald	9 October 1918
Fife Free Press & Kirkcaldy Guardian	28 September 1918
Fifeshire Advertiser	26 October 1918
Gloucestershire Echo	23 September 1918
	27 September 1918
	16 November 1918
Grantham Journal	26 October 1918
Hamilton Advertiser	2 November 1918
Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail	23 September 1918
Huddersfield daily Examiner	24 September 1918
Hull Daily Mail	24 October 1918
Illustrated Police News	26 September 1918
Kirkintilloch Herald	25 September 1918
Leeds Mercury	23 September 1918
	24 October 1918
	18 November 1918
Liverpool Daily Post	23 September 1918
	27 September 1918
	19 October 1918
	24 October 1918
Liverpool Echo	27 September 1918

	24 October 1918
Manchester Evening News	26 September 1918
Newcastle Journal	21 October 1918
	24 November 1918
Nottingham Evening Post	26 September 1918
	1 October 1918
Nottingham Journal	4 November 1918
Pall Mall Gazette	24 September 1918
	26 September 1918
St. Andrews Citizen	26 October 1918
Southern reporter	12 October 1922
Staffordshire Advertiser	26 October 1918
Stirling Observer	28 September 1918
	5 October 1918
Sunday Mirror	22 September 1918
	17 November 1918
Sunday Post	29 September 1918
	2 October 1921
	23 November 1941
Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette	27 September 1918
Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser	25 September 1918
	2 October 1918
The Globe	23 September 1918
	27 September 1918
The People	22 September 1918
	6 October 1918
The Scotsman	23 September 1918
	17 December 1918
	24 December 1918
	10 January 1919
The Sphere	11 January 1918
Wells Journal	27 September 1918
Western Daily Press	23 September 1918
	27 September 1918

	24 October 1918
Western Mail	23 September 1918
Western Times	23 September 1918
	24 September 1918
Whitby Gazette	11 October 1918
Yarmouth Independent	5 October 1918
Yorkshire Evening Post	24 October 1918
	16 November 1918
Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligence	23 September 1918
	24 October 1918