

Cst. Graburn M.



GRABURN, MARMADUKE - CST. Regimental No. 335
November 17, 1879 - Cypress Hills, North-West Territories Age: 19

Cst. Graburn enlisted in the Northwest Mounted Police at Ottawa, Ontario, and was sworn in at Fort Walsh, Northwest Territories on

June 9, 1879. He is recorded as having been formerly a sailor. He was assigned to the horse camp in the Cypress Hills where the horses of the Force were kept for rehabilitation and rest. The camp was located in the valley of Battle Creek.

On November 17th, during the afternoon, Graburn had a verbal confrontation with a Blood Indian named Starchild, who persistently asked for food. It ended with Graburn ordering Starchild out of the camp. Later that day, Graburn's horse returned to the detachment still saddled and bridled, but Graburn failed to return. A search party was organized by Supt. Crozier and led by NWMP guide and interpreter, Jerry Potts. The tracks of two "barefoot" ponies were followed for a distance, then lost in the snow. Subsequently Graburn's forage cap was found and further along the trail, Graburn's body was discovered in a bush covered coulee. He had been shot at close range through the back of the head.

Subsequent investigations indicated that Starchild had left the Indian camp for Montana. There was also evidence from other Blood Indians that Starchild was Graburn's killer. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to return Starchild from the States until May of 1881. Some eighteen months later, Starchild was located in a camp near Fort Walsh and after a violent struggle, was taken into custody. On October 18, 1881, Starchild was brought to trial before a jury of six local ranchers. Due to a lack of firm evidence, he was found not guilty.

Cst. Graburn was the first member of the Force to die a violent death and he is buried at Fort Walsh, which is now a national historic site. His place of death is marked by a cairn in the Cypress Hills Park a few miles east of Elkwater, Alberta. The coulee where he died is now known as Graburn's Gap. His troopmates also erected a memorial stone at the Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa.

In part the inscription reads: "Marmaduke Graburn - Primus Moriri (First to die)"

Starchild was convicted of horse stealing some time later and sentenced to fourteen years in Stony Mountain Penitentiary. In later years he became a scout for the Northwest Mounted Police.