

FACT SHEET

Dr. Harry Colebourn - V.S., B.V.Sc., M.R.C.V.S., F.Z.S., C.A.V.C.

Three periods of Military Service as follows:-

1. Served with Canadian Army (Militia) 34th Fort Garry Horse Winnipeg, Manitoba - May 22, 1913 to September 24, 1914.  
Rank held - Lieutenant - Veterinary Officer.
2. Served with Canadian Expeditionary Force and the Royal Air Force, Army Troops, and Canadian Forestry Companies, Independent Force. Theatres of Service, Canada, Britain & France - September 25, 1914 to July 12, 1919.  
Rank held - Captain - Veterinary Officer.
3. Canadian Army (Militia) Fort Garry Horse Regiment - Winnipeg from January 15, 1921 to April 15, 1929.  
Rank on retirement - Major - Veterinary Officer.

Medals and Decorations - 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal and Mentioned Twice in Despatches, Colonial Auxiliary Forces Officer's Decoration.  
Recommended for O.B.E. award.

Further to his military career as related above, he was a long time active member of the Army & Navy Veterans in Canada. He served on the executive committee throughout World War Two years. Respecting this, you will note the enclosed photo copies of the executive members at that period of time.

Biographic Sketch -Dr. Harry Colebourn V.S., B.V.Sc.,M.R.C.V.S., F.Z.S.,  
C.A.V.C.

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Date of Birth - April 12, 1887

Place of Birth - Birmingham, Warwickshire, England

Date of Death and Place - September 24, 1947 - Winnipeg.

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Doctor Harry Colebourn came to Canada in 1905 when he was 18 years of age. He settled in Toronto initially and, in order to finance his university education, he worked in menial jobs such as selling fruit from door to door on the streets in Toronto and as a deckhand on commercial vessels plying the Great Lakes. In 1908, he enrolled at the Ontario Veterinary College located in Guelph. On the 25 of April, 1911, he received his degree as a Veterinary Surgeon and following his graduation, he returned to Dewsbury, England to re-~~unite~~ with his family. Following a short stay, he returned to Canada.

On July 3, 1911, he accepted a veterinary appointment with the Department of Agriculture, Health of Animals Branch in Winnipeg. In the same year he joined the 18th Mounted Rifles as a militia officer and then was seconded to the 34 Regiment of Cavalry, Fort Garry Horse, on May 15, 1912. He was one of the original officers of the Fort Garry Horse. When World War One broke out in August, 1914, he was already a trained officer and immediately offered his services to his country. Subsequently, he was given leave of absence from the Department of Agriculture and left Winnipeg on August 23, 1914, bound for Valcartier, Quebec. While enroute to Valcartier, he was attached to both the Fort Garry Horse and the Canadian Army Veterinary Corps. (C.A.V.C.)

On the 24th of August, the train stopped at White River where father purchased a small black female cub bear for the sum of \$20.00 from a hunter who had killed her mother. Shortly after this, father named his little cub, "Winnie" after the City of Winnipeg, his home town. On September 12, 1914, he was Taken On Strength of the Second Canadian Infantry Brigade Headquarters under the command of Lt. Colonel Arthur W. Currie who was later on to become Canada's leading general of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Father's six diaries he kept of the War show that on October 3, 1914, he and "Winnie" embarked from Gase Bay enroute for England aboard the S.S. Manitou along with four other liners heading for England. On October 17, they disembarked and left Devenport, England, for Salisbury Plains at 7:00 p.m. that morning. Winnie was to remain with him and a pet to the Second Canadian Infantry Brigade Headquarters while he remained in England. Both the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the Fort Garry Horse regiments were part of the Second Canadian Infantry Brigade serving under the command of Lt. Colonel Currie. Winnie quickly became a pet to many of the soldiers and would follow them around like a tame dog in their off-duty hours at Salisbury Plains. There were numerous photos taken of her with the men and these photos often became a keep-sake for them to treasure.

However, this situation was to change when father was given the order to remove Winnie from their Headquarters as she would not be able to accompany them to the battlefields in France where the Brigade was shortly to go. Consequently, on the 9th of December, 1914, father proceeded to the London Zoo with his 'pet' where he left her in safe keeping until the end of the war. According to his diary writings, it was his full intention to bring Winnie back to Canada with him after the war was over. His diaries indicated that he was very fond of her and would often visit her when on leave from war zones in France.

However, when the war ended in 1918, father remained there temporarily and in 1919, he reversed his original intentions to bring Winnie home to Winnipeg and instead, donated her to the London Zoo as a gesture of his appreciation for the London Zoo's efforts in caring for her during those four war years. It was to be noted that Winnie had also become a feature attraction for the many thousands of visitors and especially young children. She was considered to be completely trustworthy by her bear keepers who said that <sup>could</sup> of all the bears they had in the Zoo, Winnie was the only one they say this about. She was also the tamest and best behaved bear that the Zoo ever had.

The London Zoo in 1919 held a dedication ceremony by erecting a plaque reading to the effect that Captain Harry Colebourn of the Canadian Army Veterinary Corps had donated her to the Zoo. Numerous newspaper stories were written telling about this extraordinary bear and her friendly nature and antics. Two of her admirers of that early period after the war were A.A. Milne, a writer and his young son Christopher Robin. They frequently visited the Zoo where the young Milne boy would always want to go and see "Winnie". In 1926 as a result of his son's keen enjoyment in visiting with Winnie, Mr. Milne published the first and probably the best known of the series of Pooh's Classics called "Winnie-The-Pooh." The other books were called, The House at Pooh Corner, When We Were Very Young and Now We Are Six. Winnie past away on May 12, 1934 at the ripe old age of 20 years, a good life span for a bear.

Father, later on in the War was to be honored for his services by being recommended for the O.B.E. (Order of the British Empire) by the Directory of Canadian Veterinary Services, C.E. Edgett, D.S.O. "For his untiring devotion to his duties as Veterinary Officer first with the Units in the Field, with whom he served for over three years, then as Senior Veterinary Officer of Bramshott Area. This officer has always been most attentive to his professional charge and unsparing in his endeavors to produce efficiency, both when employed as an executive officer and as an administrative officer. He has been twice mentioned in the Despatches of the Field Marshall Commanding in Chief, British Forces in France, and was previously recommended by this department for an Honour."

Captain Colebourn, following the end of the war, remained in England for a short while to further his veterinary education and training by taking a post graduate course at the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in London, England. He was subsequently accorded the title of Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (M.R.C.V.S.) following his successful graduation from that institution.

On returning to Canada in early 1920, he went directly to Winnipeg his former place of residence. He then opened his own veterinary practice located at 471 McMillan Avenue and practiced there until 1926 at which time because of declining health, gave up his practice to accept a position with his former employer the Department of Agriculture, Health of Animals Branch of the Dominion Government as a veterinarian specializing in post-mortem work.

Although his health was not good, he did manage to maintain his military relationship with the Fort Garry Horse as their Veterinary Officer from January 15, 1921, with the rank of Major until his retirement from the military on April 15, 1929.

Throughout his 21½ years of service with the Department of Agriculture, Dominion Government of Canada until his retirement on May 19, 1945, he continued to maintain his small animal private practice on a reduced scale. He built a small animal hospital at the rear of the family home located at 600 Corydon Avenue where he dedicated many hours of paid and unpaid service to the numerous animals and their owners of that time. His dedicated love of animals prevailed throughout his life span until his untimely death on September 24, 1947, due to a fall down the basement stairs of his home.

Father also served on the Executive of the Army and Navy Veterans in Canada, Fort Garry Unit #60 then located at 291 Garry Street during World War Two.

This Biographic Sketch was prepared by his son- Fred Colebourn in May of 1988.