

Memorial to Constable Graburn

by CORPORAL J. K. BARNES

A SIMPLE BUT impressive ceremony was conducted under the auspices of the Graburn Gap Old-Timer's Association on July 2nd, 1934, dedicating to the memory of Regt. No. 335 Constable Marmaduke Graburn, a cairn, erected by residents of that district named after him in the Cypress Hills of Southern Alberta.

Constable Graburn was killed in the execution of his duty, at the spot on which this cairn was erected, on November 17th, 1879. He is buried in the N. W. M. P. cemetery at Fort Walsh, some ten miles distant.

At the ceremony were present a number of old-timers, members of the Association which bears Graburn's name, one of whom gave an address outlining the history of Graburn's death. In this address he told of how in 1875 a detachment of the N. W. M. P. then stationed at Fort McLeod were ordered to proceed into the Cypress Hills and there establish a new fort. The fort was built and was named Fort Walsh, in honour of the then Officer Commanding at Fort McLeod. Shortly after this fort was erected the scarcity of pasturage necessitated the location of a horse camp nearby. Consequently, five men and a camp cook proceeded to a spot on Battle Creek about ten miles from the fort and there established a horse camp. A band of Indians harrassed this small camp until finally driven away. Shortly after they had decamped it was noticed that one, named Star-Child, was still haunting the vicinity. No particular attention was paid to him until one day, Graburn, who had been detailed as horse picket, failed to return to camp at the appointed time. The matter was immediately reported to Fort Walsh, whereupon a searching party set out to find him. Not far from the camp on the banks of Battle Creek, they found his body. He had been shot through the back. His horse was also found, shot, some distance up the creek. Though there was no evidence to support it, it was generally believed that Star-Child, nursing a resentment at the occupancy of this horse camp, had ambushed Graburn and had shot him down without warning.

One of the interesting features of this ceremony was the fact that the man who found Graburn's body that morning in November, 1879, unveiled the cairn, at this ceremony. He is Regt. No. 98 Ex-Sergeant Robert (Bob) McCutcheon, now living quietly in Medicine Hat.

A large number of interested spectators from all parts of Southern Alberta and Southern Saskatchewan were present at this ceremony, to do homage to the memory of one of that small band of men who brought law and order into a new country over fifty years ago.