**Capt. Charles Rutherford
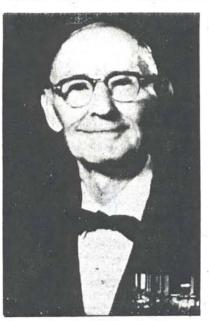VC, MC, MM**

Colborne's celebrated soldier dead at 97

By Adam Brown

One of the most decorated war heros of the commonwealth died yesterday, aged 97.

Charles Smith Rutherford, a long-time resident of both Colborne and Cobourg, was the last surviving Victoria Cross recipient from the First World War.

He also held the Military Medal and the Military Cross.

He won the Victoria Cross for an act of bravery on Aug. 26, 1918, when he single-handedly captured 45 German soldiers.

The 26-year-old Lt. Rutherford had become separated from his company by heavy German bombardment. Advancing alone in search of his troops, he spotted a group ahead of him and starting walking towards them.

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In a 1984 interview, he recalled that as he came close to the group, which included two officers and three machine-gun crews, "I realised they were all Germans.

"I knew if I hesitated, they'd start shooting at me, so I walked up brazenly and said 'You men are my prisoners.' "

Rutherford shouted and gesticulated wildly with his revolver, at which the German soldiers threw down their weapons and surrendered, convinced they were surrounded.

Later that day, Rutherford and his men captured 35 more enemy soldiers. At the end of the day, 80 had been captured without one Canadian injury. Most of the German resistance in the French town of Monchy-le-Preux had been wiped out.

After the war, Rutherford returned to Colborne where he ran a farm and served as clerk-treasurer of Haldimand Township at the same time.

In 1939, he took up the position of postmaster in Colborne. At the outbreak of the Second World War, he enlisted in the Veteran Guard of Canada and was sent to the Bahamas. He later received his captain's commission.

In 1946, Rutherford resumed his postmaster position, a position he held until 1955.

He then ran a dry goods store until his retirement in 1960.

In 1973, he moved to Cobourg, his home for the next six years.

He recieved a hero's welcome when he returned to Colborne in 1979. Former Northumberland MP George Hees and former Northumberland MPP Russel Rowe were among the crowd that lined the streets to welcome him home.

Rutherford died in Ottawa where he had been living recently.

He is survived by his four children: Andrew, of Portage La Prarie; Isabel Reid, of Scarborough; Dora Grant, of Colborne; and Rosemary Gormley, of Ottawa. His wife, Helen, died in 1980.