Frank Claude Taylor (1888–1975)

Service Record in the *Great War*

Princess Patricia's Canadian Infantry Regimental Number:1847

Enlistment: 2 March 1916 Shorncliffe, Folkestone, Kent, England Age: 28yrs 1 month Religion: Church of England
Height 5ft 6 ½ ins Hair: Dark Brown Eyes: Grey Complexion: Medium, Fair
Chest Girth: 32 ½in Expansion: 2 inches Occupation: Bricklayer
Registered Voter: Woodbridge Division Place of Birth: Charsfield Poll District: ???
Next of Kin: George Taylor, Poplar Farm, Clopton, Suffolk, England.

Theatre of Service: Britain and France

Enlisting Unit: 11th Battalion of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry

Discharge: 22 May 1919 at Witley, England Reason for Discharge: K.R. & O. Para 392 Sec XXV

Rank on Discharge: Corporal

Residence after Discharge: Poplar Farm, Clopton, Woodbridge, Suffolk

Medical Condition upon Leaving: Corporal Frank Taylor

Physique: Good Weight: 130 lbs (est) Height: 5ft 7 ins Eyes: Blue Pulse: 76

Healed wounds on leaving: Shrapnel would left shoulder and abdominal graze.

3 various wounds to upper arm

Original overseas unit reinforcements for the P.P.C.L.I. Joined the Regiment in the field 9th June 1916.

Wounded October 1917. Struck off strength 17th November 1917.

Note:

During the First World War a number of Canadian military establishments were centred on Shorncliffe. There were camps and a Machine Gun School which were served by the Shorncliffe Military Hospital (later No. 9 Canadian General), the Moore Barracks Military Hospital (later No. II Canadian General), and other Canadian hospitals. The Canadian Army Medical Corps Training Depot was at or near Shorncliffe during almost the whole of the war. On three occasions Canadian soldiers were killed during air raids on Shorncliffe. Shorncliffe Military Cemetery contains 471 First World War burials, more than 300 of them Canadian.

On Canada Day every year a remembrance service is held at the cemetery. What makes the service particularly poignant and unique is the participation of school children from local schools. This started in 1919 as the "Canadian Flower Service" when a Mr Palmer had the happy idea of suggesting to the local schools that it would be nice if the children could place flowers on the Canadian graves. The schools greeted this proposal with warmth and enthusiasm and the tradition continues to this day. Each child is positioned by a Canadian grave and while the adults are laying their wreaths on the memorial, the children lay their flowers on the graves.

Note:

1) **Witley Military Camp**, often simplified to **Camp Witley**, was a temporary army camp set up on Witley Common, Surrey, England during both the First and Second World Wars. Camp Witley was one of three three facilities in the Aldershot Command area established by the Canadian Army; the others being Bordon and Bramshott (nr. Liphook}.
2) **Ville de Liege,** The Belgium Government had 4 hospital ships - *Stad Antwerpen*, *Jan Breydel*, *Pieter de Coninck* and *Ville de Liège* – converted from channel ferries into hospital transport, which I think were owned by the Belgium Steamship Company. (further information perhaps Plumbridge's published in 1975 book – a survey of British Hospitals/Hospital Ships and Ambulance Trains - or perhaps the Royal Military Museum Brussels)
3) **Monks Horton, Kent:** Canadian Convalescent Hospital (650 bed tented hospital 1 May 1915; became Canadian Command Depot 24 May 1915; reopened as Convalescent Hospital on 21 June 1917, closed 1 August 1918) (also listed as a 350 bed Canadian Convalescent Hospital in January 1917)
4) **St Anselm's, Woolmer, Kent:** St Anselm's VAD Hospital (100 beds) (Kent/22 and Kent/142)(October 1914 – 31 March 1919) This hospital used two houses belonging to Mr Justice & Lady Sargant – St Anselm's and General's Meadow.

Active Service: Transcribed from Original Schedule 1

Date	From whom	Rec'd Detail	Place	Date	Remarks
06.06.1916	Draft posting	PPCLI	France	6.6.16	R.C.R. & PPCLI Depot
07.06.1916	Can Base Depot	Arrived in France & taken on Strength of Battn at Can Base Depot		7.6.16	Nom Roll Pt 11 Orders
07.06.1916	Can Base Depot	Left Can Base Depot for Unit		8.6.16	Nom Roll
17.06.1916	O.C. Battn	Joined unit from base	field	9.6.16	B.233
05.05.1917	O.C. Battn	Appointed Lance Corporal (unpaid)		9.4.17	B.213 Part 11 Ords CANCELLED
02.06.1917	O.C. Battn	Appointed Lance Corporal (paid)		26.5.17	B213 Part 11 Ords
15.09.1917	O.C. Battn	Promoted Corporal	field	10.9.17	B213 Part11 Ords
29.09.1917	O.C. Battn	Granted 10 days leave to England		21.9.17	B213 Part11 Ords
20.10.1917	O.C. Battn	Posted to EOR Depot. Wounded.	field		
03.11.1917	O.C. Battn	Admitted St Anselm's Hospital	Walmer		
31.10.1917	O.C. Battn				
02.11.1917	O.C. Battn				
03.11.1917	O.C. Battn	Wounded in Action	field		
17.11.1917	$^{H}/_{S}$ Ville de Liege	Shrapnel Wound shoulder. Invalided and posted to E.O.R.D. Seaford H.S. Ville de Liege			Part 11 Ords
11.12.1917	E.O.R.D.	Posted from PPCLI overseas	Kent	17.11.17	Part 11 Ords
18.07.1918		Discharged from 3rd C.C.D. Seaford to 6th Reserve			
18.07.1918		6th 20S 6th Reserve Battn on posting from EORD Seaford			

EOR might stand for Explosive Ordnance Reconnaissance (with a "D" added Depot) **BUT** see Canadian listing on Page 5

Active Service: Transcribed from Original Schedule 2

Date	From whom	Rec'd Detail	Place Date	Remarks
04.03.1916		Taken on strength	Shorncliffe	
27.04.1916		Struck off strength to R.O.R. PPCLI Depot	Shorncliffe	
29.04.1916		Taken on strength	East Sandling	
31.05.1916		Obtaining leave under false pretences. F.P.2 days. Forfeits 7 days pay	East Sandling	
06.06.1916		Struck off strength to PPCLI overseas	East Sandling	
14.07.1916		T.O.S. (taken on strength)	Field	
11.06.1917		Appointed Lance Corporal (paid)	Field	
26.09.1917		Promoted Corporal.	Field	
06.11.1917	E.O.R.	No. 11 ??? Can Fd Aublice ??	Field	
10.11.1917	E.O.R.	No 26 Gen Hospital		
26.11.1917				
06.12.1917				
31.12.1917				
30.12.1917				
18.07.1918		Posted from EORD on reporting from 3RD CCD	Seaford	
21.05.1819		On convalescence at 2 C.D.D. London pending discharge in B Isles	Seaford	
06.06.1919				
02.06.1919				
23.06.1919		Discharged in BI		
22.07.1919				

Casualty Clearing Station, (CCS)

A medical unit commanded by a major or lieutenant colonel. Wounded men were evacuated from the battlefield to a dressing station. From there the most gravely wounded were shipped to a CCS, located farther away from the front. At the CCS, casualties were given more extensive treatment before being transported to a variety of types of hospitals

Listed overleaf are some of the abbreviations used by the Canadian Army.

Adj	Adjutant
adm	admitted
ARD	Alberta Regimental Depot
att'd	attached
auth	authorized, authority
AWL	Absent without leave
Batt'n, Bn	Battalion
BCRD	British Columbia Regimental Depot
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
Bty	Battery
CADC	Canadian Army Dental Corps
CAMC	Canadian Army Medical Corps
CASC	Canadian Army Service Corps
Cav	Cavalry
CBD	Canadian Base Details
CCAC	Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre
CCCC	Canadian Corps Composite Company
CCD	Canadian Convalescent Depot
CCRC	Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp
CCS	Casualty Clearing Station
CDD	Canadian Discharge Depot
CDAC	Canadian Divisional Ammunition Column
CE	Canadian Engineers
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CERD	Canadian Engineer Reinforcement Depot
CFA	Canadian Field Ambulance
CFA	Canadian Field Artillery
CFC	Canadian Forestry Corps
CGA	Canadian Garrison Artillery

CGH	Canadian General Hospital
CGR	Canadian Garrison Regiment
CL	Casualty List
CLH	Canadian Light Horse
CMGC	Canadian Machine Gun Corps
CMR	Canadian Mounted Rifles
C of I	Court of Inquiry
Com	Command
Conv	Convalescent
CORD	Central Ontario Regimental Depot
Coy	Company
CRCR	Canadian Reserve Calvary Regiment
CRT	Canadian Railway Troops
CSM	Company Sergeant-Major
DAC	Divisional Ammunition Company
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal
dis	discharged
Div	Division
DO	Daily Order (of a unit)
D of W	Died of wounds
Dvr	Driver
emb	embarked
EORD	Eastern Ontario Regimental Depot
Frac	Fractured
GC Badge	Good Conduct Badge
Gen	General
GHQ	General Headquarters
Gnr	Gunner
GSW	Gunshot Wound

GOC	General Officer Commanding
HMS	His Majesty's Service
HMT	His Majesty's Troopship
Hosp	Hospital
HOW	Howitzer
HQ	Headquarters
inv "wd"	invalided wounded
KIA	Killed in action
LG (Lon. Gaz.)	London Gazette
LMB	Light Mortar Battery
LSH	Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians)
M&D	Medals & Decorations
MC	Military Cross
MD	Military District (or Depot)
MIA	Missing in action
MID	Mentioned-in-Dispatches
Mil	Military
Miss	missing
MM	Military Medal
MRD	Manitoba Regimental Depot
NSRD	Nova Scotia Regimental Depot
NYD	not yet determined
OC	Officer Commanding
OMFC	Overseas Military Forces of Canada
O.S.	Overseas
P&S	Plaque & Scroll (Memorial)
Pnr	Pioneer
PPCLI	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
pres	presumed

Proc	proceeded
Pte	Private
Pt. II O	Part II Orders
PUO	Pyrexia of unknown origin
QRD	Quebec Regimental Depot
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCD	Royal Canadian Dragoons
RCHA	Royal Canadian Horse Artillery
RCR	Royal Canadian Regiment
rem	remained
rept	reported
Res	Reserve
RFB	Reported from Base
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RSM	Regimental Sergeant-Major
RTC	Returned to Corps
RTU	Returned to Unit
SEF	Siberian Expeditionary Force
SOS	Struck off strength (of a unit)
Spr	Sapper
SS	Steamship
Staty	Stationary (Hospital)
SW	Shrapnel (Shell) wound
TMB	Trench Mortar Battery
TOS	Taken on strength (of a unit)
Tpr	Trooper
trans	transferred
unk	unknown
w, (w)	wounded

WORD	Western Ontario Regimental Depot

East Sandling was a base was used as a training depot for Canadian soldiers. Originally, the first Canadians to England (1914) went to Camp Bustard on the Salisbury Plain. Later, two new camps were built at Bramshott and Witely. East Sandling was only 50 km south-east of London. The Canadian soldiers had quite a reputation in England. They were the best paid of all the British Empire soldiers. They were known as a fairly undisciplined group yet managed to avoid most serious trouble. Their unruly behaviour was somewhat forgiven because of the reputation they were beginning to earn as an outstanding group of fighting men on the field of battle.

Admissions to Hospital or to the Sick List

Name of Hospital	Admitted	Discharged	Wound	No of Days	Remarks
VAD Hospital St. Anselm's Walmer	17.11.1917	04.12.1917	Shrapnel left shoulder Fractured edge of scapula Abdominal graze	17	Healed, good movements, convalescent.
Military Hospital	04.12.1917	06.12.1917	do.		Transferred to Monks Horton Kent
Canadian Convalescent Hospital Monks Horton Kent	06.12.1917	26.12.1917	do.		Discharged by hospital rep to 3rd C.C. depot Seaford

Medical Case Sheet

Wounded at Paschendale on 30th October 1917

Went to 26 General Etaples there to Walmer

P.C. wounds healed.

3 weeks convalescence

No. 26 General Hospital at Etaples consisted of 35 wards, accommodation for doctors, nurses and other staff, two operating theatres and an x-ray department. When the hospital opened it was staffed by 39 officers (mainly Territorials), 204 NCOs and men and 73 sisters and staff nurses. It was one of many hospitals to receive the wounded of the Somme.

During the First World War, the area around Etaples was the scene of immense concentrations of Commonwealth reinforcement camps and hospitals. It was remote from attack, except from aircraft, and accessible by railway from both the northern and the southern battlefields. In 1917, 100,000 troops were camped among the sand dunes and the hospitals, which included eleven general, one stationary, four Red Cross hospitals and a convalescent depot, could deal with 22,000 wounded or sick. In September 1919, ten months after the Armistice, three hospitals and the Q.M.A.A.C. convalescent depot remained.

Unless needing further medical treatment, men were normally evacuated back to the UK within a few days. At Southampton they were met by cheering crowds, ignorant of the full scale of the disaster on the field of battle.

an advert for VAD nurses

In 1909 it was decided to form Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) to provide medical assistance in time of war. By the summer of 1914 there were over 2,500 Voluntary Aid Detachments in Britain. Of the 74,000 VADs in 1914, two-thirds were women and girls.

Katharine Furse took two VADs to France soon after the outbreak of the First World War. After establishing a hospital at Boulogne, Furse returned to London where she became Commander-in-Chief of the organisation. During the next four years 38,000 VADs worked as assistant nurses, ambulance drivers and cooks. VAD hospitals were also opened in most large towns in Britain.

At first the military authorities were unwilling to accept VADs on the front-line. However, this restriction was removed in 1915 and women volunteers over the age of twenty-three and with more than three months experience, were allowed to go to the Western Front, Mesopotamia and Gallipoli. Later VADs were sent to the Eastern Front.

Some women went to the Western Front as letter writers for soldiers who were either too ill or too illiterate to write their own letters. May Bradford, the wife of John Rose Bradford, Physician to the British Expeditionary Force, later recalled how she educated men on the treatment of women: "To one man I said, 'Shall I begin the letter with my dear wife?' He quietly answered: 'That sounds fine, but she'll be wondering I never said that before.'

The Pole sisters (Gladys, Hilda, Lily and Muriel)
all joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment in Chislehurst.

Nurses like this will have nursed Frank – there's always an advantage to every adverse situation!!

Brief History of Patricia's

The Regiment left Ottawa on the 28th of August, 1914 and embarked at Montreal on the MEGANTIC.

The sailing was cancelled due to enemy action in the Atlantic and the Regiment disembarked at Levis, PQ, where the Patricia's set up camp and conducted needed training and organization. On the 27th of September, 1914 the Regiment sailed from Quebec on the ROYAL GEORGE, and on the18th of October was in camp on Salisbury Plain, England.

The British authorities found the Patricia's to be well trained and capable of taking the field. In early November the Regiment moved to Winchester to join the 27th British Division as a unit of the 80th Brigade . Other units of the Brigade were all regular battalions of the British Army: 4th Battalion The Rifle Brigade, 3rd and 4th Battalions Kings Royal Rifle Corps, and 2nd Battalion King's Shrophire Light Infantry.

The 27th Division landed in France on the 21st of December, 1914. The Patricia's were therefore the first and only Canadian Infantry Regiment in a theatre of war in 1914.

The Patricia's served one year with 80th Brigade (named the "Stonewall Brigade" after its defence of the Ypres Salient in May, 1915). The historic battle of FREZENBERG was fought on the 8th of May, 1915. The enemy attacked behind clouds of poison gas, however the Regiment held the front even thought they were fighting from ditches and shell holes and were under fire from three sides.

The Regiment came out of action commanded by Lt H.W. Niven with 154 effectives. The anniversary of this famous battle is commemorated annually by the Regiment.

On the 22nd of December, 1915 the Regiment became part of the newly formed 3rd Canadian Division as a unit of the 7th Brigade. Other units of the Brigade were: the 42nd Battalion (Black Watch); the 49th Battalion (The Edmonton Regiment); and the Royal Canadian Regiment. The Regiment fought in many actions throughout the rest of the World War I and was part of the Canadian Corp, which captured Vimy Ridge on the 9th of April, 1917.

During the battles around Passchendaele on the 30th of October, 1917 two members of the Regiment won the Victoria Cross for gallantry. Another Victoria Cross was won at Parvillers in August, 1918.

In November 1918, the Patricia's were involved in pursuing the Germans and on the 11th of November, 1918 No.4 Company entered Mons and shortly thereafter the Armistice was declared.

The Regiment returned to Canada in early 1919 and was demobilised at Ottawa following the homecoming parade.

Evolution of the Canadian Corps 1914-1918

One Division

On August 6, 1914, a grateful Empire sent word requesting that Canada's offer of soldiers be "dispatched as soon as possible." The next day, the Canadian Army Council advised that a "suitable composition" for Canada's overseas expeditionary force would be "one division."

First Contingent, August-September 1914

Canada's first contingent comprised four infantry brigades mobilized from militia districts across the country.

Brigades of the 1st Division

• **1st (Provisional) Infantry Brigade**, containing the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions, was mustered in Ontario.

• **2nd Infantry Brigade**, containing the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th Battalions, hailed from western Canada.

• **3rd Infantry Brigade** brought together volunteers from Montreal and the Maritimes in its 14th Battalion. The remaining three battalions of the 3rd Brigade were formed from Canadian Highland units.

• **4th Infantry Brigade**, originally planned as a future 2nd Division, but quickly absorbed by the 1st Division, gathered recruits from the Prairies to fill the 9th, 10th and 11th Battalions. The 12th Battalion came from the Maritimes.

First Contingent Arrives in Britain, October 1914

On October 14, 1914, a total of 31,200 men of the Canadian Expeditionary Force arrived in Britain. Under the command of Lieutenant-General E.A.H. Alderson, Canada's first overseas division brought together infantry, supporting arms and specialist organizations, including artillery batteries of 18-pounder guns, militia engineering field companies, signal, medical and veterinary units, as well as the Army Service Corps tasked with delivering vital food, ammunition and fuel supplies.

First Units to See Service in France, November 1914

On November 8, No. 2 Stationary Hospital became the first Canadian unit to see service in France. A fortnight later, a privately raised Montreal infantry battalion, the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry (PPCLI), arrived on the western front, but as part of the British 80th Brigade. The PPCLI would not return to the Canadian fold for nearly a year. It was to lose 75 percent of its effective fighting strength during a gallant defensive stand during the battles at Ypres, April–May 1915.

The Western Front

The western front, which the Canadians joined as part of the British 1st and later 2nd Armies, consisted of a complex, hand-gouged system of trenches, wooden planking, barbed wire and mud, which snaked from the English Channel to the Swiss border. Between 1915 and 1917, this line changed little more than 16 kilometres in either direction. Offensive victories were calculated in metres.

1st and 2nd Divisions Arrive in France

In February 1915, the 1st Division arrived in France with 610 officers and 17,263 other ranks. The 2nd Division followed in September of the same year under the command of Major-General R.E.W. Turner.

Brigades of the 2nd Division

• **4th Brigade**, which was newly formed, had its 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st Battalions mobilized from Ontario.

• **5th Brigade** saw its Battalions (22nd, 24th, 25th and 26th) recruited from Quebec and the Maritimes. The 22nd Battalion was comprised entirely of French-Canadian soldiers.

• **6th Brigade**, made up of the 27th, 28th, 29th and 31st Battalions consisted of western recruits. The 2nd Divisional Cavalry Squadron was formed at the end of March 1915. A lack of guns delayed the completion of the 2nd Divisional Artillery.

Creation of the Canadian Corps, September 1915

On September 13, 1915, Lieutenant-General Alderson opened the Canadian Corps Headquarters. The new formation comprised the 1st Division (Major-General A.W. Currie), 2nd Division (Major-General R.E.W. Turner) and Corp Troops under the command of Major-General M.S. Mercer. Mercer's Corp Troops included the Canadian Cavalry and the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery Brigades, as well as a group of infantry and dismounted cavalry units, which would later form the 7th and 8th Brigades of the future 3rd Division. By the beginning of November 1915, the Canadian Corps comprised 1,354 officers and 36,522 other ranks.

3rd Division

By the end of December 1915, Major-General Mercer, a Canadian by birth, commanded the Corps' 3rd Division. He held this command until his death during the Battle of Mount Sorrel, June 1916. By the end of 1916, all staff appointments in this Division, but for three, were held by Canadians.

Brigades of the 3rd Division

• **7th Brigade** consisted of the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry (the only unit with active field experience), the Royal Canadian Regiment (Canada's only permanent force battalion newly arrived in France after garrison duty in Bermuda), the 42nd Battalion (Montreal) and the 49th Battalion (Edmonton).

• **8th Brigade** was made up of the Canadian Mounted Rifle Battalion's 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Battalions.

• **9th Brigade**, which joined the Division in February 1916, comprised the 43rd (Winnipeg), 52nd (Port Arthur), 58th (Niagara area) and the 60th (Montreal) Battalions. By the end of January 1916, there were 50,000 Canadian troops in the field, serving in the Canadian Corps, as part of the British 2nd Army.

4th Division

In April 1916, the 4th Division, under the command of Major-General David Watson, was created from units already overseas or soon to arrive. Like the 2nd and 3rd Divisions (the 3rd now commanded by Major-General L.J. Lipsett), the 4th Division did not at first have its own artillery. The 4th Divisional Artillery was not formed until June 1917.

Brigades of the 4th Division

• **10th Brigade** consisted of the 44th (Winnipeg), 46th (South Saskatchewan), 47th (New Westminster, Vancouver and Victoria) and 50th (Calgary) Battalions.

• **11th Brigade** made up of the 54th (Kootenay, British Columbia), 75th (Toronto, Hamilton and London), 87th (Montreal) and 102nd (North British Columbia) Battalions.

• **12th Brigade** comprised the 38th (Ottawa district), 72nd (British Columbia), 73rd (Montreal) and 78th (Winnipeg) Battalions. At the end of June 1916, the number of Corps casualties had mounted to 32,000—nearly equalling the total number of recruits who sailed to England with the first contingent in October 1914.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9–12, 1917

A year later, during the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9–12, 1917, Canadian soldiers in the Corps totalled 97,184 men. For the first time, the Corps' 1st Division (Major-General Arthur Currie), 2nd Division (Major-General Harry E. Burstall), 3rd Division (Major-General Louis. J. Lipsett) and 4th Division (Major-General David Watson), under Commander Lieutenant-General the Honourable Sir Julian H.G. Byng, attacked as a single formation.

Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie Commands the Canadian Corps, June 1917

On June 9, 1917, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, a Canadian by birth, and at 41, the "youngest officer to achieve Lieutenant-General's rank in the British armies," assumed command of the Canadian Corps. Lieutenant-General Sir Julian Byng took over the British 3rd Army.

Canada's Finest Formation, November 11, 1918

In the following year, at 6:30 a.m. on November 11, 1918, a message reached the Canadian Corps Headquarters announcing that hostilities would cease five hours later at 11:00 a.m. At the moment of the armistice, Lieutenant-General Currie commanded 110,000 Canadian troops. Historian Jack Granatstein writes: "Arthur Currie was the best soldier Canada ever produced. The Canadian Corps under his command became the finest formation this nation has ever put in the field."

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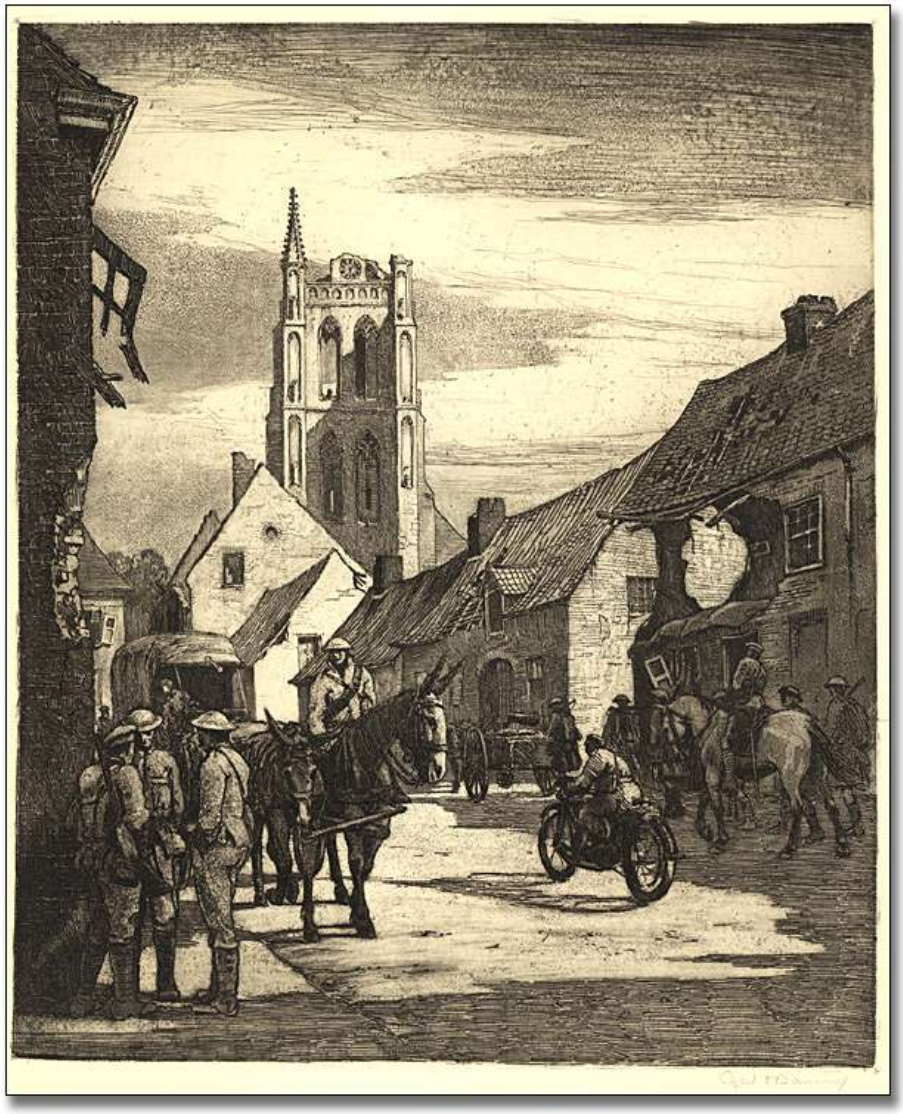


The Road to Ypres Through Vlamertinghe, [ca. 1915]

Lieut. C. H. Barraud

Reference Code: C 334-1-2-0-20

Archives of Ontario, I0013633

The Road to Ypres Through Vlamertinghe

By Lieut. C. H. Barraud

This village lies on the main Ypres-Poperinghe road about midway between the desert of Ypres and the half inhabited town of Poperinghe. Night and day traffic of war rumbled through it. This is a fine strong composition etched on a zinc plate, and somewhat suggestive in quality of the rich wood cuts of past ages.

The Barrier, Mont St. Eloy, near Vimy Ridge - April 9, 1917

The Barrier, Mont St. Eloy

By Lieut. C. H. Barraud

Up to the date of the capture of Vimy Ridge, April 9th, 1917, the "Barrier" was the furthest point to which troops were allowed to go in daylight.

Ypres - From Railway Dugout, April 4, 1916

Ypres - From Railway Dugouts

By Lieut. C. H. Barraud

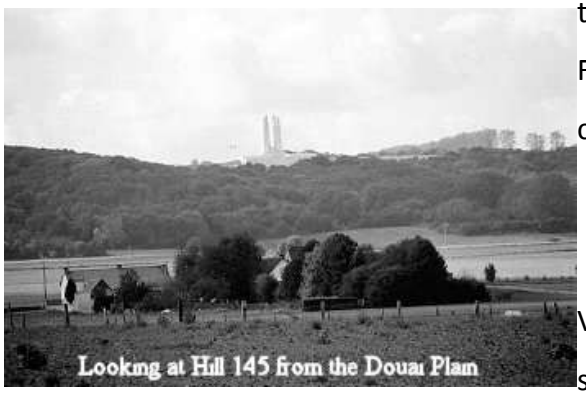
A familiar view of Ypres. **At one time or another practically all the Canadian Battalions have been quartered in the Railway Dugouts**. The "Shrapnel Corner" road is seen in the middle distance (the sketch was made on April 4, 1916). The trees in this plate exhibit perhaps more than any other Mr. Barraud's fine draughtsmanship.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge 9th April 1917

On the morning of April 9, 1917 the Canadian Corps attacked the German stronghold position at Vimy Ridge. The ridge, located about 10 kilometres to the north of Arras in Northern France and just south of the mines and factories of Lens and Lille, was a high ground that commanded the entire sector. The Canadian Corps, with the Canadian 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Divisions united for the first time – over 100,000 men - was attempting to do what Britain and France had tried from 1014 to 1916. Their attacks had gained little other than 130,000 casualties. Failure in this action could result in the destruction of Canada's army.

The Objective:

To fully appreciate the importance of Vimy Ridge, it is important to first realize a number of facts. The taking of Vimy Ridge was very important offensively as it was a key position of the German line in Northern France but it was even more important for the Germans to NOT lose Vimy Ridge. Their position in the entire region would be destabilized should the ridge fall into allied hands. The Ridge held a commanding view of the entire Douai Plain. Loss of the ridge would expose vast territory of German held positions to allied sight and allied guns. Vimy Ridge was the "hinge" of the German line as it protected the newly constructed Hindenburg line and also the length of the western front as it traveled north-west into Flanders and on to the channel. It is also important to note that upwards of 150,000 British and French casualties had been inflicted between 1914 and 1916 with no positive results.


Looking at Hill 145 from the Douai Plain

Vimy Ridge itself stands about 110 metres at the high point and runs for 8 – 10 kilometres in length. The allied side of the ridge was a long gradual slope which made its way to the crest where a sharp drop fell into the expansive Douai Plain. The reality of the geography gave the Germans a clear and uninterrupted sight line of all enemy advances while the Allies could only

use aircraft to see beyond the crest and into enemy held territory. The Germans had developed a series of three highly fortified defensive lines utilizing machine gun, artillery and barbed-wire to produce ground that, in their view, could not be over-taken. To add to the defences above ground, the Germans had constructed a vast network of underground tunnels and living quarters safely placed below a danger zone from artillery shells – equipped with electricity, medical facilities and many of the "comforts of home".

The attack on Vimy was a part of a larger British attack in the Arras region. The plan called for a massive movement across no-man's land by British forces on either side of the ridge while the pressure of capturing the ridge fell to the Canadians. Should this high ground stay in enemy hands, it would insure failure on the battle front generally and cost countless lives in another failed push to break the German line.

Leadership:

Byng

Commanded by Lt.-General Sir Julian Byng and Major-General Arthur Currie, the Canadians were united into a single Corp and given what was considered by many, this impossible task. I personally think that one could never lavish too much praise on the vision and planning of these two gentlemen. The war to that point had been one bloody massacre after another. Very little territory taken and no clear vision or plan developed to bring about a successful end to the conflict. The Canadian Corp would institute a change in strategy and approach that would truly bring about the beginning of the end. The "let's throw bodies in the path of machine gun bullets" approach to war was not going to cause the slaughter of the Canadian volunteers. Byng and Currie would re-vamp the old habits and inflict the first allied victory of the war against the German lines. An offensive strategy had been developed – a Canadian offensive strategy!

Currie

Currie and Byng had been a team since the horrific battles around Ypres at Hill 62, Sanctuary Wood and Mount

Sorrel of 1916. Currie had been a leader in the Canadian forces at St. Julien during the gas attacks in April 1915. As a Canadian observer, Currie had witnessed, first hand, the problems faced by the French at Verdun. Unlike many of their counter-parts in the High-Command, these men learned from past mistakes. They were not going to lead the Canadian Corps into battle, armed with the failing plans of the Somme or Verdun.

Innovations

The Platoon System:

Up to Vimy, attacking forces threw wave after wave of infantry into the battle. These close-packed soldiers had little chance to succeed against the artillery, machine gun fire and barbed wire. The results were usually large casualties and little success. The Canadians developed a system of placing specialists in machine-guns, bombs (grenades) and rifle specialists within a single platoon. These platoons would strike at the enemy, not in a straight line, but in a much looser action where German defenders had less chance of merely mowing down the attackers. This attack would find the attackers able to cover their own advances.

Communications:

Officers would stay more closely with their platoons, able to adapt and direct actions much more effectively and quickly. The men would also be fully briefed as to their objectives. Maps and rehearsals would be provided to each man. This would end confusion in the attack and bring the men more fully into the over-all objective of the attack. Should officers be killed, the attack could continue as planned. By the time the attack had begun, 21 miles of signal cable and 66 miles of telephone wire had been buried on the battlefront. The corps had dug 11 underground tunnel-ways to aid in the movement and protection of the troops. These underground roads were equipped with electricity, medical stations, supplies and rest stations. Portable bridges were built to assist in the movement of artillery pieces over the more difficult terrain and trenches.

***Indirect Machine-Gun Fire*:**

Up to Vimy, machine-guns were primarily a defensive weapon. Their obvious advantage again the infantry kept them in place at the trenches and successfully wiped out many a brave man. With over 400 bullets firing per minute, per gun, bravery meant little. The Canadian Corps decided to put these defensive traits into action while on the offensive. Thanks to Lt.-Col R. Brtinel's plan of "indirect firing" onto exact enemy positions both day and night, movement ceased at the German lines. Raids proved too dangerous and repair of barbed-wire almost impossible. The machine-gun fire became a supplement to the artillery barrage. During the attack, the lighter weight Vickers guns would be set up along with the Canadian advances providing both cover and a true offensive power designed to keep the German troops from attempting their usual defence.

***Artillery Preparations*:**

The Canadians set up a massive strike capability with their field artillery. Almost 250 heavy guns and about 600 lighter gauged field guns were aimed at enemy positions. For three weeks, Canadian guns, hammered at German positions. Previously mapped German machine-gun and artillery positions were targeted as the attack began – silencing the guns and not allowing the Germans to move their emplacements. An average of 2,500 tons of shells rained down on the German positions daily. Far back in the German lines, transportation and communications positions were destroyed, stopping food, ammunition and fresh troops from reaching the front lines. Feeding the Canadian guns was a network of rail lines built to bring the huge numbers of shells into position. Special fuses were developed for shells that would cause an almost instantaneous explosion, designed to take out enemy barbed wire. One of the more tragic features of the British barrage at the Somme had been their inability to take out the barbed wire. During the week preceding the attack (the "week of suffering" as the Germans called it) over one million shells were fired at Vimy Ridge.

The Rolling Barrage:

A plan had been developed to attack the German lines using both the infantry and artillery in concert with each other. After almost 3 years of war, the German defenders had been accustomed to waiting for the end of the artillery to move from their protected positions and man their machine-guns with ample time to kill the attackers. The Canadian plan called for artillery to keep an exact pace in front of the Canadian troops moving across "no-man's-land". A well-rehearsed movement of man and shell, moving at a pace of about 100 yards every 3 minutes would attack the enemy trenches. This would provide

a dangerous but effective cover for the Canadians. German machine-guns were kept silent as gunners stayed protected within the tunnels and trenches. It also, afforded an element of surprise as many Germans left their positions to face their attackers only to find the Canadians already at their trench.

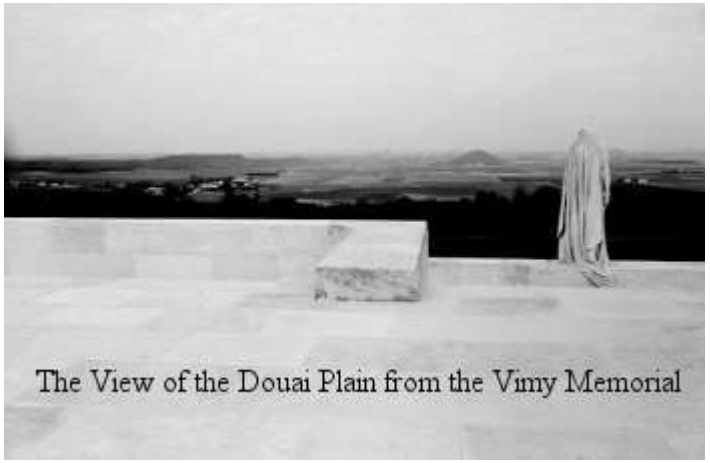
***Good Intelligence*:**

Nothing was left to chance. As mentioned above, enemy positions were mapped in preparation for the final artillery assault. Microphones placed throughout "no-man's-land" were triangulated enemy fire. Aircraft and balloons spotted where possible and maps and information gathered from trench raids all put together a picture of the German defences. German artillery battery positions were calculated and machine-gun nests plotted – most to be devastated on the morning of April 9. In charge of this task was Lt.-Col. Andrew McNaughton, hailed by many as the most talented artillery man on the front. By the attack, McNaughton and those manning the Canadian guns had destroyed about 85% of the German batteries. Preceding the attack, trench raids were carried out to glean as much information of the enemy terrain as possible.

April 9, 1917:

On April 9, 1917 – Easter Monday – at 5:28 am the battle was engaged. The weather was a combination of snow and sleet. Underground mines were exploded, gas shells fell onto German positions and transportation routes, artillery began to hit

German positions and machine-gun fire swept the enemy's positions. Over 11,000 guns (including British pieces) opened up on the ridge. The Canadians kept to their timetable and followed their detailed plans. By early afternoon, 3/5 of their objectives were taken. Thousands of Germans were taken prisoner and many thousands more had been killed. Still to be taken were the high ground positions called "the Pimple" (largely the responsibility of the British forces attached to the Canadians and Hill 145 (the highest ground – site of the memorial today). By the morning of April 10, Hill 145 had been taken – largely due to the incredible efforts of the work battalion from Nova Scotia. By April 12, the Canadians had reinforced those attacking "the Pimple" and after great effort had taken this from German hands as well.


The View of the Douai Plain from the Vimy Memorial

By the end of the battle, all objectives had been met. Canadians had established themselves as an elite fighting force. The German line had been soundly breached and the Canadians had fended off any thoughts of a German counter-attack.

Unfortunately, this victory was not to be the sweep through the German lines that it could have been. Allied high command had not prepared for such a breakthrough. There were no British battalions ready to carry on through the breach in the German lines. Both the French and British offensives of that month failed.

It has often been said that Canada's sons left their home as young colonials but returned as Canadians. Vimy is indeed the birthplace of "Canadian Nationhood". The price was heavy: 10,500 casualties, including 3,598 dead.

PASSCHENDAELE

(October and November, 1917)

"...I died in Hell
(they called it Passchendaele) my wound was slight
and I was hobbling back; and then a shell
burst slick upon the duckboards; so I fell
into the bottomless mud, and lost the light"

. . . Siegfried Sassoon

When one ponders the waste, stupidity, mud and gross loss of human life during the Great War, it is usually the battle of Passchendaele that comes to mind. This brainchild of Field Marshal Douglas Haig – also called The Third Battle of Ypres - officially began on July 31, 1917. Examining the general objectives, I guess it is possible to view the initial assault as worth attempting. It was hoped that smashing the German lines at Flanders would allow the allies to break through to the coastal ports of Belgium, causing considerable damage to the U-Boat offensive of Germany, as well as, causing serious damage to the German defensive strategy on their Belgian flank. The blundering and inexcusable waste of lives comes into play as it become obvious that Haig is willing to continue on with a poor plan regardless of weather conditions and German opposition. The full level of his poor leadership is seen when viewing the results: a gain of little importance with tremendous loss of life. Four million shells were used to "soften-up" the German defences as the attack began with a resulting destruction of the water table and drainage system of this lowland region. Streams and creeks were obliterated. The attack commenced at the same time the seasonal rains hit the region. Men and tanks had huge difficulty moving on the field of battle. Artillery could not hold positions properly as the footings were placed on the soggy ground. German defences had taken on a strategy of housing the men in concrete "pill boxes" on the slightly higher ground of the ridge giving their machine guns cover and an open field of fire to destroy the attacking forces. As the men strayed onto the battlefield, it was soon obvious that success would be almost impossible and slaughter guaranteed.

Men who had the misfortune of falling from the duckboard walkways faced a death of drowning in the mud of the shell holes. As the summer worked itself into early fall, it was obvious that no great breakthrough was to happen and that the British forces would face a gradual reduction in their numbers, morale and chances for victory.

By October of 1917, the Canadian troops were called upon to enter the situation and bring about a successful conclusion to this disaster. It was hoped that not only would the battle be turned in favour of the allies but also, unofficially of course, save the career of Field Marshal Haig. By the time the Canadians arrived at Passchendaele practically no objectives had been met. General Currie, Commander of the Canadian Corps, wanted no part of this enterprise but was soundly over-ruled by the British High Command. In fact, they were prepared to send their most innovative and gifted officer packing if he showed any more resistance to the order. Currie did, however, manage to win the point that extensive preparations and planning would be needed and that time must be granted for the Canadians to prepare and hopefully avoid making the same errors that had caused so much suffering for the British and Australian forces.

The field as faced by the Canadians was full of mud, water, corpses, dead horses, barbed wire and miscellaneous wreckage of almost four months of battle. The trench lines were almost unrecognizable due to the water and mud. The Canadian plan began with the rebuilding of the transport systems and an attempt to drain the field as best as possible. German shelling, aircraft attacks and nature caused over 1500 Canadian casualties before the attack even started.

The Canadians attacked on October 26, 1917 behind a covering artillery assault. Movement would be in small steps rather than great frontal assaults on German lines. Gradual steps into German positions would be accomplished to cover each successive move of the troops. Fresh reserve troops would come into position within two days to spell those on the front lines. The first day saw almost 2500 casualties. The next bite into the German lines would be on October 30 following an even larger artillery assault. German concrete bunkers would be destroyed by the artillery – not through direct hits- which did little, but often by destroying the ground surrounding them and causing the footings to shift. Should this fail, the bravery of the men would prove to be a success. This strategy of taking steps to reach the objective was working but costly. By November 10 the ridge had fallen to the Canadians. The Germans were ordered to retake the position at all costs but could not.

By November 14, 1917 the Canadians, having done what was asked of them, retired back to the Vimy region. Their positions were taken up by British troops. Almost 15,654 Canadian casualties had been counted (Currie had warned the British High Command that victory would cause 16,000 casualties a month earlier). Nine Canadians had earned the Victoria Cross. Roughly two square miles had been taken at a cost of 500,000 casualties to the Allied forces. Field Marshall Haig was spared his career.

With little fanfare and a grudging recognition of their deeds, the Canadian Corps had proven to all that their bravery, planning, training and skill had made them the elite Corps of the allied forces. With this killing ground behind them, the Canadians would take up their positions by Arras / Vimy / Lens and prepare to take on the final German defences of the Siegfried Line and in fact, lead the final assault that would bring the war to a close.

GENERAL

The 1917 **Battle of Passchendaele**, also known as the **Third Battle of Ypres** or simply **Third Ypres**, was one of the major battles of World War I, in which British, ANZAC, Canadian and South African units engaged the Imperial German Army. The battle was fought for control of the village of **Passchendaele** (*Passendale* in modern Dutch, now part of the community of Zonnebeke) near the town of Ypres (Ieper in Dutch) in West Flanders, Belgium. The plan was to drive a hole in the German lines, advance to the Belgian coast and capture the German submarine bases there. It was intended to create a decisive corridor in a crucial area of the front, and to take pressure off the French forces. After the Nivelle Offensive the French Army was suffering from extremely low morale, resulting in mutinies and misconduct on a scale that threatened the field-worthiness of entire divisions.

Although the period of the battle saw spells of good weather lasting long enough to dry out the land, Passchendaele has become synonymous with the misery of fighting in thick mud. Most of the battle took place on largely reclaimed marshland, swampy even without rain. The extremely heavy preparatory bombardment by the British tore up the surface of the land, and heavy rain from August onwards produced an impassable terrain of deep "liquid mud", in which an unknown number of soldiers drowned. Even the newly-developed tanks bogged down.

The Germans were well-entrenched, with mutually-supporting pillboxes which the initial bombardment had not destroyed. After three months of fierce fighting the Canadian Corps took Passchendaele on 6 November 1917, ending the battle, but in the meantime the Allied Powers had sustained almost half a million casualties and the Germans just over a quarter of a million. Passchendaele was the last gasp of the "one more push" philosophy which posited that the stalemate of attritional trench warfare could be broken by brute offensive action against fixed positions. Its comparative failure and the horrendous conditions, in which it was fought, damaged Field-Marshal Haig's reputation and made it emblematic of the horror of industrialised warfare.

First Battle of Passchendaele

The First Battle of Passchendaele, on 12 October 1917 began with a further Allied attempt to gain ground around Poelkapelle. The heavy rain again made movement difficult, and artillery could not be brought closer to the front owing to the mud. The Allied troops were fought-out, and morale was suffering. Against the well-prepared German defences, the gains were minimal and there were 13,000 Allied casualties.

By this point there had been 100,000 Allied casualties, with only limited gains and no strategic breakthrough.

Second Battle of Passchendaele

26 October - 10 November

Canadian general Sir Arthur William Currie, who led the Canadian Corps in the Second Battle of Passchendaele. Currie correctly predicted that the Canadians would incur from 16,000 to 20,000 casualties if they were to be successful at defeating the Germans.

At this point two divisions of the Canadian Corps were moved into the line to replace the badly depleted ANZAC forces. After their successes at Vimy Ridge and the Battle of Hill 70, the Canadians were considered to be an élite force and were sent into action in some of the worst conditions of the war.

Upon his arrival, the Canadian Commander-in-Chief General Sir Arthur Currie expressed the view that the cost of the objective would be sixteen thousand casualties. While Currie viewed this figure as inordinately high in relation to the value of the objective, Haig was used to casualty figures in the hundreds of thousands after years of huge allied losses, and he ordered the offensive to proceed.

The Canadians moved into the line during mid-October, and on 26 October 1917, the Second Battle of Passchendaele began with twenty thousand men of the Third and Fourth Canadian Divisions advancing up the hills of the salient. It cost the Allies twelve thousand casualties for a gain of a few hundred yards.

Reinforced with the addition of two British divisions, a second offensive on 30 October resulted in the capture of the town in heavy rains. For the next five days the force held the town in the face of repeated German shelling and counter-attacks, and by the time a second group of reinforcements arrived on 6 November, four-fifths of two Canadian divisions had been lost.

Their replacements were the First and Second Canadian Divisions. German troops still ringed the area, so a limited attack on the 6th by the remaining troops of the Third Division allowed the First Division to make major advances and gain strong points throughout the area.

One such action on the First Division front was at Hill 52; the Tenth Battalion, CEF were called out of reserve to assist an attack on Hill 52, part of the same low rise Passchendaele itself was situated on. The Battalion was not scheduled to attack, but the Commanding Officer of the Tenth had wisely prepared his soldiers as if they would be making the main assault – a decision that paid dividends when the unit was called out of reserve. On 10 November 1917, the Tenth Battalion took the feature with light casualties.

A further attack by the Second Division the same day pushed the Germans from the slopes to the east of the town. The high ground was now firmly under Allied control.

Taken from 28th (North West) Battalion History to show the kind of battle Frank might have encountered.

28th Battalion History - Passchendael to Armistice - 1917-1919

(http://www.nwbattalion.com/history6.html)

April 12, 1917

The Battalion moves to Bois Des Alleux. Casualties for the day - one O.R. DOW.

April 14, 1917

The Battalion put to work on road in Vimy and one company on the Lille-Arras road. The task is completed at 2100 and the Battalion moves into the old German trenches (Red Objective) on Vimy Ridge. Casualties for the day - one O.R. KIA.

April 15, 1917

Casualties for the day - one O.R. KIA.

April 16, 1917

The Battalion relieves the 24th Battalion in support in Vimy area. "D" Company deployed along a line drawn through points T.19 d.4.6 to road B.2.a.5.3.

April 17, 1917

The Battalion relieves the 31st Battalion in the line.

April 19, 1917

The Battalion is relieved by the 29th Battalion and moves to support position previously occupied.

April 20, 1917

The Battalion is relieved by the 27th Battalion and moves to observation line. Casualties for the day - five O.R. KIA, three O.R. missing.

April 21, 1917

The Battalion is relieved by the 19th Battalion and moves into rest area at Aux Reitz.

April 22, 1917

The Battalion holds Divine Service.

April 26, 1917

The Battalion relieves the 26th Battalion in the support area.

April 27, 1917

"D" Company in support area 0.62, Neuville St.Vaast.

May 8, 1917

Early in the morning, with light rain & heavy mist, and after a heavy barrage of gas shells, a group of German troops intent on an assault on the British troops at Farbus, got lost and blundered into the Battalion's lines at the Arleax loop and made it into the trenches. The 28th was in the process of being relieved by the 19th battalion. Despite the confusion of the relief, the two battalions stood together and threw back the enemy with a counter attack. The Battalion then moved to support area at 0.62, Neuville St.Vaast.

May 10, 1917

The Battalion moves back to camp near Aux Reitz.

May 13, 1917

The Battalion holds Divine Service, then relieves the 25th Battalion in the Main Resistance Line at Thelus. "D" Company is deployed from Thelus Trench to Lille-Arras road.

May 17, 1917

The Battalion is relieved by the 27th Battalion in Ridge Line and battalion moves into billets vacated by 27th Battalion at Neuville St.Vaast

May 19, 1917

The Battalion relieves the 25th Battalion in support, forward area along Bailleul-Riaumont-Loos line.

May 23, 1917

The Battalion relieves the 31st Battalion in front line. "D" Company in reserve at Arleux-Mont Foret Switch from T.16.d.1.7 to T.23.a.0.3.

May 26, 1917

The Battalion is relieved by the 18th Battalion and moves to Divisional reserve near Aux Reitz.

May 27, 1917

The camp is shelled by a large gun, no casualties.

May 31, 1917

The Battalion moves from rest camp at F.11 (Sheet 51.c) to Estree Cauchie.

August 21, 1917

During the attack on Lens, the 29th Battalion took heavy casualties when the Germans launched a spoiling attack. The 28th supported the 29th in pushing forward, clearing most of Nun's Alley & the northeast end of Cinnabar Trench. The Germans still held four to five hundred yards of Cinnabar Trench and several small trenches off Nabob Trench. This made the Canadian positions quite precarious. Further attacks by other battalions eventually consolidated the position by the end of the day.

October 30 - November 6, 1917

Passchendaele - The 78th Winnipeg Grenadiers had brought the battleline to the edge of Passchendaele on October 30th. The Canadians regrouped & the 28th was moved up to continue the attack. Alex Ross recalled:

"It was the one job we went into with no real heart. I had never seen my men so depressed as we moved into the Salient. They knew what the Salient was like, always had been like. It was the graveyard of everybody."

November 5, 1917

Operation Order 159 By C.R.A. 2nd Canadian Division, 5th November, 1917.

1. Intention.

The 2nd Canadian Division has been ordered to attack and capture Passchendaeleon (Za) Day.
The 1st Canadian Division are attacking Massel Markt at the same time. The operation will be known as ATTACK (8). Objectives are shown on the attached Barrage Map...

4. Infantry.

(a) The RIGHT ATTACK will be carried out by the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade (Hqrs. D.21.a) with the 26th Battalion.

(b) The LEFT ATTACK will be carried out by the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade (Hqrs. D.15.b) with the 27th Battalion on the RIGHT, 31st Battalion in CENTER and 28th Battalion on LEFT...

6. S.O.S. & Light Signals.

(a) The S.O.S. Signal is a rifle Grenade signal showing three parachute lights, vis RED over GREEN over YELLOW.

(b) The Capture of Objective Signal will be THREE WHITE VERY LIGHTS fired in quick succession.

(excerpts from 2nd Divisional Artillery Headquarters War Diary)

Place: Boethoek
Weather: Fine

In the early hours of the morning the 27th Battalion moved up from POTIJZE to HILL 37 & 28th Battalion moved up after daylight to intermediate assembly positions in the vicinity of HILL 37. At mid-day units dispersed as follows:

29th Battalion - front line outposts and close support,
31st Battalion and 6th Trench Mortar Battery - ABRAHAM HEIGHTS,
27th Battalion - HILL 37,
28th Battalion - in rear of 27th Battalion at HILL 37.

In the course of the morning Brigade Major visited front line battalion and all units with a view to making final arrangements for assembly and times for forward movement of units, guides, rendezvous, etc. 5th C.I.B. also visited. By 3:00 p.m. all arrangments completed and necessary adjustments made. Shortly after dusk 31st Battalion followed by 27th Battalion and 28th Battalion in the rear commenced moving forward.HILL37 was heavily shelled causing casualties to 27th Battalion as the Battalion were moving off. Assembly was completed by midnight, when 29th Battalion moved back into Brigade support. 29th Battalion brought down an Enemy Aircraft by Lewis fire about 10:00 a.m. *(excerpt from 6th Brigade Staff Headquarters War Diary)*

November 6, 1917

Clear skys, turning to cloudy but no rain. Pastor van Walleghem observed an enormous artillery barrage by several thousand cannons firing explosive and shrapnel shells with red and white rockets intermixed is opened up on the German positions from Wytschaete to Vrijboch at 6:00 AM. The Battalion moved forward as the barrage began. They came under heavy machinegun fire as the men struggled in the deep mud of the Ravebeek valley. The 6th Brigade report records thet the men "being knee deep, and in places waist deep, in mud and water".

When the 28th entered Passchendaele, The buildings had been smashed flat and mixed with the earth. Corporal H.C. Baker recounted that shell exploded bodies from previous attacks were scattered everywhere so that you could not avoid stepping on them and the German's fought a tough rear guard battle that was murderous for both sides.

Men of the 28th were "falling like ninepins" but it was worse for the Germans. If they stood to surrender, they would be caught in the machinegun fire from their rear and killed, if they tried to move back, they were caught in the Allied artillery barrage. The advancing men moved from shell hole to shell hole and crouched in the cellars of destroyed buildings. By 7:10 am, the Canadians were streaming through the village, and bayonetting the Germans in the rubble along the main street. When they encountered pillboxes, especially at the north exit of the village, the soldiers laid down covering fire with Lewis guns and rifle grenades and then outflanked them. By 8:45 am, the village had been taken.

Another trouble was low flying enemy aircraft. The visibility limited air to air fighting, so both sides aircraft spent their time strafing the others infantry. Alex Ross recalled "... Low-flying airplanes. They came over and did quite a lot of damage, machinegunning, and for some reason or other we were not able to chase them away."

The Germans opened up a counter-barrage with their heavy artillery in preparation for a counter-attack. When that attack came, the Canadian troops fired signal rockets & the Allied artillery brought down a screening barrage. From close behind the forward positions, the Battalion's Lewis guns, as well as the Brigade's machineguns and captured German machineguns fired close over the heads of the Canadian troops.

Corporal H.C. Baker was then detailed to a group of stretcher-bearers in an attempt to get some of the wounded out. Nine bearers were carrying three wounded when a barrage caught them, killing four of the twelve men and wounding two of the bearers. Baker got his patient, an American with a smashed foot, back to the dressing station (a captured German pillbox), only to be directed to take him further back. On passing the dressing station on the way back to the frontlines, Baker saw that a heavy shell had landed amid the wounded outside the pillbox. All that could be seen was a large hole and some pieces of the men.

Corporal P.H. Linsell of 28th Battalion rushed through artillery barrage & Machinegun fire, captured a German machinegun at bayonet point, taking 16 prisoners. Private Harry Badger of the 28th attacked two German pillboxes. It is reported that, when called on to surrender by Badger, six soldiers emerged from the first pillbox & were bayoneted by private Badger. The second pillbox then surrendered and these troops pointed out a third strongpoint that also surrendered to Badger. In all, 15 prisoners were taken by this fellow.

The 27th Battalion completed the capture of Passchendaele Village, while the 28th and 31st Battalionscaptured the ridge north of the village.

Sir Douglas Haig wrote in his diary:

"Sunrise was red and the sky looked "lowering," but only a few drops of rain fell about 9 a.m., and then the day was fine. Glass began to fall last night. "Meteor" prophesied wind, but the day was quiet. Glass steadied at noon.

Canadian Corps attacked this morning at 6 a.m. with two divisions (2nd Division on right; 1st Division on left) north-eastwards along the Passchendaele ridge and on the spur north and north-west of the village.

The operations were completely successful. Passchendaele was taken, as also were Mosselmarkt and Goudberg. The whole position had been most methodically fortified - yet our troops succeeded in capturing all their objectives early in the day with small loss - "under 700 men"; the left battalion of the 2nd Division had hard fighting. 21 officers and 408 other ranks were taken prisoner. Today was a very important success."

(Sir Douglas Haig's Diary)

Place: Boethoek
Weather: Fine

During the early hours of the morning the enemy put down his usual intense barrage in the forward area. Largely due to most careful observation of hostile fire, the troops were assembled clear of the shelled area, and only very few casualties were caused whilst waiting for ZERO hour. ZERO hour was set for 6:00 a.m. when our barrage was put down. the barrage was even and very intense.

The attack of the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade was carried out as per instructions. The attack throughout was entirely successful, the assaulting waves carrying all before them. The Barrage inflicted many casualties on the enemy who was holding his line in strength. An examination of the battlefield after the attack disclosed the excellent bayonet work of the Brigade, a very large number of the enemy dead lying along this line. No prisoners were taken here.

Considerable opposition was met from the "pillboxes" and from enemy lying in shell holes in their immediate vicinity. Here again the special attention given during training to the attack on isolated strong points of this nature proved its value. In every case these strong points were engaged by covering fire and outflanked.

At about 6:50 a.m. word was received that our men could be seen going over the hill and entering the village. Here again considerable opposition was met with and later many enemydead were to be seenon the main street and amongst the ruins of houses and cellarsshowing bayonet wounds. By 7:45 a.m. the final objective of the 27th attalion on the right and 28th Battalion on the left had been reached, and three WHITE very lights were observed on either flank, which was the signal for final objective captured. In the mean time the 31st Battalion were temporarily held up by "pillboxes" situated in the N.E. corner of their objective, but shortly after word was received that all objectives had been gained throughout the Brigade.

The attack of the 5th Brigade on our right was limited to an advance of their existing line to the slopes east of the ridge and beyond the ZONNEBEEKE Road, and was entirely successful. That of the 1st Division 1st Brigade on our left was also successful, and in the course of the morning the consolidation of our newlt won positions was completed and touch established on both flanks. The casualties of the Brigade for the operation were:

12 officers and 178 other ranks killed
30 officers and 659 other ranks wounded
70 other ranks missing.

The prisoners captured included the Battalion Commanders, vis., the Commander of the 10th Grenadiers and Commander of a Bavarian Regiment, with their Adjutants. The Bavarian Battalion Commander commanded the supporting Battalion which fact no doubt accounts for the failure on the part of the enemy to make an immediate counter attack of a serios nature. Total prisoners: 15 officers and 230 other ranks, 16 machinguns and 1 Minenwerfer.

During the day hostile planes were particularly active and fired on the men in our new positions. Hostile artillery fire on the whole of the high ground was very intense, also particularly so on approaches from the rear and the support areas. All tracks, headquarters and dressing stations etc. were sujected to intense fire. Despite all manner of hostile activity, which included attempts to regain the position, our gains were consolidated and the work of carrying forward water and ammunition to the front line was accomplished the evacuation of the wounded was also carried out.

(excerpt from 6th Brigade Staff Headquarters War Diary)

November 7, 1917

Battalion relieved by the 22nd Battalion. The men were told to pick up a wounded man, take him to the supply dump and then go to Ypres. Corporal Baker tried to find one of the fresh troops to help with the wounded.

"I went up the trench and called out "Hi there". There was no answer but I could make out blurred figures below, so I slithered down in, thinking they were sleeping. I shall never forget what I found. Down that stretch of trench the boys were sitting in grotesque positions, and every one was dead. The trench was only shell holes joined up, and it was open to overhead schrapnel fire from both sides."

Private Jacques Lapointe of the 22nd described the scene he saw when he arrived in relief:

"In a flooded trench, the bloated bodies of some German soldiers are floating. Here and there, too, arms and legs of dead men stick out from the mud, and aweful faces appear, blackened by days and weeks under the beating sun. I try to turn from these dreadful sights, but everywhereI look bodies emerge, shapelessly, from their shroud of mud. It would seem that life could never return to these fields of abundant death."

They made their way, by blasted road, duckboard & swamp to Ypres. There they directed to a covered-in stall and received a meal of hot soup. Bivouac in cemetery near Ypres. The next morning they discover that they are on what had been No Mans Land in the First Battle of Ypres in 1914 and, two years later, the blasted bodies of the French and Belgian soldiers remained unburied, gold braid, blue jackets, red panteloons, high topped boots and fancy dress helmets - elite troops to be sure. Not many men were left of the 28th to answer the roll call. H.C. Baker recalled:

"If there was no response when a name was called, the sergeant would shout out, "Anybody know anything about him?" Sometimes someone replied. More often there was silence. My impression was that we had won the ridge and lost the battalion..."

The ridge had not been entirely taken, But the Allies were well onto it with the help of the ANZACs and the Royal Navey Division. The ridge was finally secured after another attack by fresh troops on November 10, 1917, 156 days after the start of the battle of Passchendaele.

March 21, 1918

The Germans attack on a wide front pushing every one back except the Canadians. Rather than attack the Canadians at Vimy, they went around to either side. Alex Ross recalled:

"We expected it (the German attack) but were shocked at the advances they made. They were so spectacular as compared to anything that we had experienced before that we just couldn't understand it. When you heard of advances of ten or twelve miles a day why it was incredible. That we couldn't understand."

May 18/19, 1918

In Wanquetin, between Lattre-St. Quentin and Fosseux, a cabin was stuck by a bomb dropped by a German airplane on the night of May 18/19, killing 15 soldiers and wounding 20. The cabin had been occupied by troops from the 28th Battalion.

August 9, 1918

Amiens - The 28th and 27th take over the lead in the advance after the 29th drive the Germans out of a sugar factory.

August 26, 1918

The 27th & 28th Battalions outflank an enemy pocket opposite Neuville-Vitasse and round up the surprised defenders with ease. Another attack was then launched under a powerful barrage by these units at 4:30 PM. The attack was aimed at the high ground to the east of the River Cojuel, southeast of Wancourt, with the objective of the ruins of Wancourt Tower, 1200 yards south of Guemappe. At 4:40 PM, the 27th and 28th Battalions crossed the river, which was dry with steep banks, and attacked the ridge. The were supported by an effective artillery barrage. Despite great amounts of wire at the crest of the ridge, the high ground was taken, only to meet enfilade fire from a strong point, an outpost of the Hindenburg Line in the British section, on the right that had not yet been knocked out. A company of the 28th was sent over into the British section and soon knocked it out.

Meanwhile the 27th was rebuffed in an attack on the "Egret" trench on the German forward slope after one company made it into this trench, but was forced back by heavy fire from both flanks. The 27th and 28th dug in at dusk, short of their objective. An assault on Egret Trench was made after dark,

separately, by the 27th and 28th without a preparatory barrage, surprising the defenders and pushing them out. The commander of 6th Bigade, Brigadier General Arthur Bell, stated that "The operation was brilliantly carried out."

October 8-9, 1918

Second Division brought up and encircled the city of Cambrai and moved up to a canal. At midnight, they moved across the canal. Alex Ross recalls:

"So on a pitch black night and a little rain, we went down that slope in the darkness, undetected, rushed the canal, captured it, and across, then right through to Cambrai. With the Third Division on the right we advanced through Cambrai, cleared it out and reached the north".

October 11, 1918

General Burstall, Second Division Commander, ordered sixth Brigade to capture the Village of Iwuy on the division's left, as part of a complex battle plan. This village was on the heights east of the Erclin River and was the key position in the German rear guard. The attack was expected to be tough, as the 18th battalion had been pinned down the previous day after gaining a toehold across the dry bed of the Erclin. Lieutenant Doug Oliver of the 18th recalled that "the machinegun fire was so violent you could lie on your back and watch the berry bushes being clipped off above your head... We couldn't move at all."

At 9:00 AM, the Battalion assaulted the sprawling village of Iswuy (Iwuy) which was held by units of the German Ersatz Division. There was heavy street to street, house to house fighting. The 31st Battalion came in to support, making the capture of the village by midday possible. General Burstall's plans were eventually cancelled due to the delay in taking Iwuy and a counterattack on the Division's right by the Germans, who used seven German and captured British tanks in the attack.

November 11, 1918

Private George Lawrence Price led a patrol across the Canal Du Centre, near Havre. At 10:55 AM, a German sniper shot Private George Lawrence Price of 28th Battalion in the chest. Pvt. Price died by 11:00 AM, the only Canadian killed that day. Private Lawrence is believed to be the last soldier under British command (and possibly on the western front) killed in the Great War and the only Canadian to die this day. Visit The Last Hours, The Last Man for the events leading to Private Price's death.