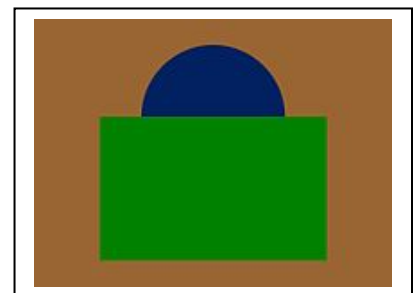




Private Walter Barter (Number 414982) of the 72nd Battalion (*The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada*), Canadian Expeditionary Force is interred in La Sucrierie Cemetery, Ablain St-Nazaire: Grave reference III.C.11.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder flash of the 72nd Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force is from Wikipedia.*)

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a miner, Walter Barter appears to have left behind him little information a propos his departure from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Nova Scotia.

It was there that he was recorded as having presented himself for medical examination, in the industrial city of Sydney, on August 12 of 1915, and as also having enlisted and attested before having been *taken on strength* by the 40th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force on that same day*. Four days later, on August 16, his attestation became official, the Commanding Officer of the Battalion declaring – on paper – that... *having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.* He was thereupon attached to ‘B’ Company – then later to ‘C’ Company - of the 40th Battalion.

**On his attestation paper he cites St. John’s, Newfoundland, as his birthplace; on his medical form it is recorded as Caledonia (Caledonia Mines, Glace Bay).*

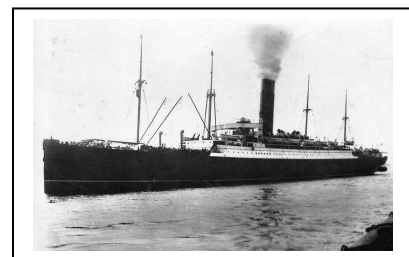
The 40th Battalion had been organized as of January 1 of 1915 and recruited in Nova Scotia. On May 11 of that year it mobilized at the Army Camp at Aldershot where the novice soldiers began their training. However, by the time of Private Barter’s enlistment, the unit had already been transferred to the military establishment at Valcartier, Québec, to where Private Barter was likely immediately posted.

(Right: Canadian artillery being put through its paces at the Camp at Valcartier. In 1914, the main Army Camp in Canada was at Petawawa. However, its location in Ontario – and away from the Great Lakes – made it impractical for the despatch of troops overseas. Valcartier was apparently built within weeks after the Declaration of War. – photograph (from a later date in the war) from The War Illustrated)



The 40th Battalion continued its training at Valcartier, just to the north of the city of Québec until October of that same year, 1915, when it took ship at Québec. The unit’s eleven-hundred forty-three personnel embarked onto His Majesty’s Transport *Saxonia* on October 18, 1915, and sailed for the United Kingdom on that same day.

Private Barter and his battalion were accompanied on the voyage by at least one other unit taking passage to the United Kingdom, the 41st Battalion of Canadian Infantry.



(Right above: The photograph of Saxonia is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

Ten days later the vessel docked in the English south-coast port-city of Plymouth from where trains transported the some eleven hundred personnel of the Battalion to the military camp at Bramshott in the southern English county of Hampshire. Private Barter’s Battalion was apparently the first Canadian contingent to be stationed there.



(Preceding page: *Royal Canadian Legion flags amongst others adorn the interior of St. Mary's Church in the English village of Bramshott. – photograph from 2016*)

Still with the 40th Battalion, on November 27, 1915, Private Barry made the first of what was to be a number of visits to hospital when he was admitted into the Military Hospital at Bramshott for attention to what was diagnosed to be rheumatism. He apparently remained under medical care until his discharge on February 1 of the New Year, 1916, reporting to the Canadian establishment at Shorncliffe adjacent to the English-Channel town and harbour of Folkestone.



By this time it had been decided that the 40th Battalion was to become the 40th Reserve Battalion and it had been transferred to East Sandling Camp, a part of the Shorncliffe complex. Thus Private Barter found himself in the county of Kent.

(Right above: *Little remains of Shorncliffe Military Camp today apart from a barracks occupied by Gurkha troops. The Military Cemetery almost alone serves as a reminder of the events of a century ago. – photograph from 2016*)

Two weeks after his arrival at Shorncliffe, Private Barter was transferred to another unit. The 48th Overseas Battalion had recently been re-designated to become the 3rd Canadian Pioneer Battalion, and it was to this unit that he was now attached on February 16. He was now to be designated as a sapper.

It was less than a month later again that Sapper Barter was once more to travel overseas. On this occasion the seas in question were those of the English Channel, the crossing of which from nearby Folkestone to the port of Boulogne was to take mere hours rather than days. The Battalion embarked at 13.00 hours on March 9, to land at 17.00 hours – inclusive of the one-hour time difference – on the French side.



(Right above: *A view of the coastal town of Folkestone almost a century later as seen from the top of the white cliffs of nearby Dover – photograph from 2009*)

(Right below: *The French port of Boulogne at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

An advance party of the 3rd Pioneers had left two days earlier, travelling via the port of Southampton. But whereas that detachment had then found itself sent to the Canadian Base Depot at Le Havre, those passing through Boulogne were at first to spend a day at the nearby St. Martin's Camp, before then proceeding north by train to Godeswaerwede where the Battalion was then billeted.



The 3rd Pioneer Battalion was to be stationed in the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most lethal theatres of the entire Western Front, in the *Kingdom of Belgium*.

The role of Pioneer troops was to precede the regular infantry into a theatre of war to prepare the site for the following soldiery; thus its principal equipment, particularly during the Great War, was often the humble pick-axe and shovel.



(Right: Pioneer troops building a road in newly-won territory – from Le Miroir)

It had become evident, soon after the establishment of those opposing lines of trenches along the *Western Front*, that ordinary soldiers – and at times the requisitioned civilian labour gangs – often had little idea of the fundamentals of construction or, at times, the physique necessary to undertake that construction. Thus the armies organized units of Pioneers and Sappers.

The Pioneers, nevertheless, also faced the same rigours, routines and dangers of life at the front as did the regular battalions. Three days after its arrival in Belgium, Private Barter's unit was posted into the trenches to gain some first-hand experience: by March 15, the Battalion War Diarist was able to record three wounded and, on the morrow, four more - plus the first fatality.

Perhaps typical of the work allotted to the Pioneer Battalions is the following programme recorded in the War Diary entry of April 10:

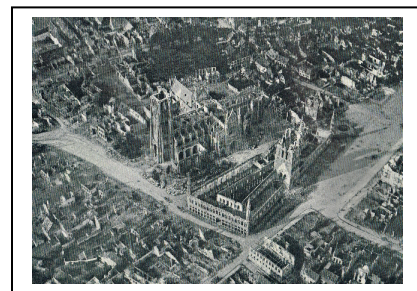
No 1 Coy:- R.S.1 and R.S.2

No 2 Coy:- 1. Tunnels under the Menin Road 2. GRAFTON STREET from CULVERT to FORRESTERS LANE 3. FORRESTERS LANE 4. C 7

No 3 Coy:- 1. REGENT STREET from Oxford STREET to GRAFTON Str. 2. R.S.3.

No 4:- (1). Dug-outs in ZILLEBEKE BUND (2) Survey of trenches in rear of R.3 Line inclusive (3) Survey of existing light tram-line (4) Construction of Machine Gun emplacements under the LILLE ROAD under instruction of the OC 6th Field Coy, CE (5) Connect up the SANCTUARY WOOD – ZILLEBEKE light train-line with the branch line which runs to ZILLEBEKE BUND from the GORDON HOUSE – KRUISSTRAAT line. (6) R.S.4 (7) The APPENDIX GAP (Appendix No C3)

From then until the end of May, a succession of roads, bridges, tram-lines and light-railway lines, defences and trenches dominate the pages of the Battalion War Diary. For the *Ypres Salient* this was a quiet time, the majority of casualties caused by enemy artillery fire. Infantry action on the front was limited to patrolling and to the occasional raid.



This was to change on June 2.

(Previous page: *The remnants of the centre of the medieval city of Ypres in 1916: by the end of the war it was barely recognizable. – Ypres la Morte is from Illustration*)

On that date the 3rd Pioneer Battalion was involved in the action – an enemy attack - in the area of *Sanctuary Wood, Hill 60, Railway Dugouts, the village of Hooge and Mount Sorrel*. While under fire for most of that period, until June 10 the unit worked day and night to restore damaged positions and to build new ones. From June 10 until 16 the Companies rotated so as to allow for some rest in billets in Ypres at night.



During those two weeks the Battalion lost some fifteen *killed in action*, one-hundred sixty-six *wounded** and eighteen *missing in action*.



**Almost inevitably, some of those wounded later died, the majority of those who remained missing were later to be presumed dead.*

(Right above: *The Canadian memorial which stands atop Mount Sorrel just to the south-west of the city of Ypres (today Ieper) whose spires and towers may be perceived in the distance. – photograph from 1914*)



(Right above: *Remnants of Canadian trenches dating from 1915-1916 at Sanctuary Wood – photograph from 2010*)

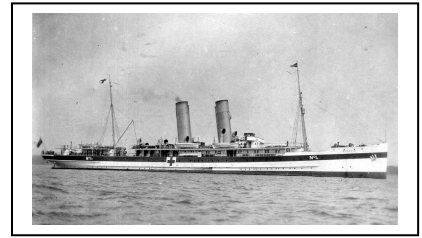
(Right: *Railway Dugouts Burial Ground (Transport Farm) today contains twenty-four hundred fifty-nine burials and commemorations – photograph from 2014*)

From this time until the end of August the 3rd Pioneer Battalion had its quarters in Pioneer Camp H, in the outskirts of the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres (today *Ieper*). In and about the city the construction – and re-construction - work was to continue. It was only at the end of August that the Battalion was presented with plans and orders for a transfer to another theatre of action – *the Somme*. The Canadians were about to travel south.

But, however, not Private Barter: It was at the end of that August of 1916... *While in billets in Poperinghe – fell and disabled his left hand. He states that the 2nd finger was badly bent and fractured and that the three other fingers sprained. At Bushey Pk. the 2nd finger was operated upon. On arrival at GCSH the first, and second and third fingers were held in a position of slight flexion. There is inhibition to flex or extend the fingers. The 1st phalanges joint of the middle finger is swollen and red. Physical condition is good heart & lungs normal.* (Later Medical Report of October 12, 1916 – Granville Canadian Special Hospital, Ramsgate)

(continued)

He had reported sick and had received preliminary treatment at a main dressing station at *Sanctuary Wood* on August 29; then there had been two more days spent in Poperinghe Imperial Hospital before his being transferred to the 13th General Hospital in Boulogne. There Private Barter remained for but a single day before being invalided back across the English Channel on September 4 on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *St. David*.



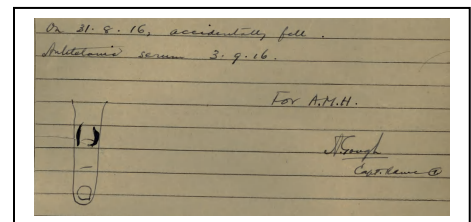
(Right above: *The photograph of HMHS St. David is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

Upon arrival in England he was attached to – likely only on paper - the Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre* at Folkestone before being transported to East Leeds Military Hospital at Harehills Road in that city to remain there under further treatment for a week.

**This was an office created to organize the comings and goings of wounded and sick who were undergoing medical treatment in the United Kingdom. Apparently it proved to be a rather inefficient system and was abandoned after a year.*

Private Barter was then discharged to Bushey Park Canadian Convalescent Hospital on September 12 where he was destined to spend a month. While he was there it appears that his broken nose was discovered which required additional attention.

The following stop on Private Barter's schedule was in the coastal town of Ramsgate, at the Granville Canadian Special Hospital, where he was admitted on October 12: apparently a merely-infected finger was becoming hard to treat effectively. X-Rays taken on October 16 thereupon revealed that he had bone chippings in that finger; by the 19th an abscess had formed despite draining; and the finger was still septic on October 26.



(Right above: *A diagram forwarded to Bushey Park Hospital from Leeds showing the extent of the damage to Private Barter's finger – copied from his personal files*)

Thus it was decided to operate and the procedure was performed on or about November 7 after which he was released to Chatham House for further convalescence. Upon his discharge from there - on or about January 24 of 1917 – he was returned back to the Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre. Private Barter was there ordered to the Canadian Convalescent Depot for a period of physical training to rehabilitate his finger which, although healed, was still lacking flexibility. There he was recorded as registered on January 27, to be released five weeks later, back to the CCAC on March 3.

Private Barter was not yet done with the medical services: The CCAC having transferred him temporarily to the British Columbia Reserve Depot at Seaford on the south coast, it

was only apparently a matter of two or three days before he was next admitted into Court Farm Hospital in Warlington for a completely different problem – venereal disease. He was held there until April 5 on which date he was discharged once more to the Canadian Convalescent Depot.

(Right above: *The community cemetery at Seaford in which are buried a number of Canadian soldiers, including two Newfoundlanders: Frederick Jacob Snelgrove and Ebenezer Tucker – photograph from 2016*)



Yet another month was to pass before Private Barter was sent on May 3 back to Seaford, to the 1st Reserve Battalion (*British Columbia*), there to await attachment to an infantry battalion on the Western Front. He was to wait some three months.

Transferred to the nominal roll of the 72nd Battalion (*The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada*) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, Private Barter crossed the English Channel once more on August 1 of 1917. He likely sailed from Portsmouth or Southampton on this occasion, to disembark at Le Havre where on that same date he is recorded as *on strength* at one of the Canadian Infantry Base Depots by then established in the vicinity of the coastal town of Étapes.



(Right above: *The French port-city of Le Havre at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

On August 17 Private Barter is documented as leaving the Base Depot to report *to duty* with the 72nd Battalion parent unit *in the field*, although he is not on file as having done so until September 2 – was he first ordered to the nearby Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp? He had been out of *active service* for just over a year.

* * * * *

The unit in which Private Barter was about to serve, the 72nd Battalion (*The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada*), had initially landed at Le Havre on August 13, 1916*, and two days later had been on its way to a camp near to, and then billeted in, the remnants of the medieval city of Ypres. The Battalion was an element of the 12th Infantry Brigade, itself a component of the 4th Canadian Division.

**The 72nd Battalion was arriving at Ypres about the same time as was the under-strength 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, after its sacrifice on the Somme, at Beaumont-Hamel.*

What follows is a brief history of the 72nd Battalion which corresponds to the period during which Private Barter was receiving treatment in the United Kingdom.

After a first six weeks spent in or near the *Ypres Salient*, the Battalion was withdrawn in order to transfer to the area of *the Somme* and to the still-ongoing fighting. While seemingly not as involved as were many of the other Canadian battalions which had joined

1st Somme at the end of August, the 72nd was blooded at the Ancre in November, during actions which were among the last the campaign.

By the end of November the unit was marching away to another theatre of the war, in the area of Villers-au-Bois to the north-west of Arras.

(Right: Wounded troops being evacuated in hand-carts from the forward area during the 1st Battle of the Somme – from *Le Miroir* or *Illustration*)



(Right above: *The Canadian Memorial at the Somme which stands to the side of the Albert-Bapaume Road near the village of Courcellette.* – photograph from 2015)



According once more to the Battalion War Diary, the following months were spent in and out of the trenches in the area of Loos. The only offensive action by the Canadians to be noted was a raid carried out on February 16; from start to finish it apparently lasted some fifty minutes. A different source remarks on the weather: an average temperature of minus eight degrees Celsius during January and March – nothing worth mentioning in a *Canadian* diary!



(Right: *The vestiges of the mining village of Loos as it was already in early 1915* – from *Le Miroir*)

(Right below: *A detachment of Canadian troops going forward during the winter of 1916-1917* – from *Illustration*)

On March 1 the unit was serving in front lines overlooked by German forces ensconced on the brow of a ridge in between the villages of Neuville St-Vaast and Vimy. A raid on the enemy lines was carried out on that day and numerous casualties were sustained – sixteen killed, three died of wounds, forty-two wounded and twenty-four missing of whom five probable prisoners.



It appears not to be documented as to whether the authorities felt the operation to have been a success or otherwise.

On the 3rd ...two German officers were seen to leave their front line... An officer of the 87th Battn went out and met them. They expressed their intention to carry our dead half way across “No Man’s Land” in order that we might bury them in our own ground. Several bodies were brought over this way. (Battalion War Diary)

For the remainder of the month the unit was in and out of the line, although only back at Vimy Ridge as of April 1 until the 4th. The majority of the activity during this month-long period was undertaken by the artillery of both sides – of course, the infantry was the main target.

(continued)

On April 9, after four days of intensive training and rehearsing the attack the 72nd Battalion was to be involved at Vimy Ridge, the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions having been attack on the Ridge itself.

On that April 9 the British Army launched a general offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* and was intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it was to be the most expensive operation of the War for the British, one of the few positive episodes being the Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.



The British campaign was to be an overall disappointment: the French offensive was to be a disaster.

(Right above: *The Canadian National Memorial which, since 1936, stands atop Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

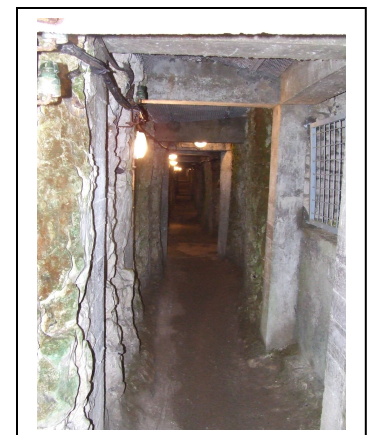
(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4th or 3rd Division equipped with all the paraphernalia of war on the advance across No-Man's-Land during the attack at Vimy Ridge on either April 9 or 10 of 1917 - from Illustration*)



On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions, for the first time acting as a single, autonomous entity, stormed the slope of *Vimy Ridge*, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.

Several kilometres of tunnel had been hewn out of the chalk under the approaches to the front lines of Vimy Ridge, underground accesses which afforded physical safety and also the element of surprise during the hours – and in some cases, days – leading up to the attack. The 72nd Battalion War Diary notes that the unit used **GOBRON TUNNEL** – later to be employed as a Regimental Aid Post - to advance towards the front before occupying the assembly trenches under cover of darkness.

(Right: *One of the few remaining galleries still open to the public – Grence Tunnel - at Vimy one hundred years later – photograph from 2008(?)*)



****This was the first occasion on which the Canadian Divisions were to act in concert as a Canadian Army Corps rather than been individually attached to a British force. In fact, British forces were now placed under its command.***

As history has recorded, the attack on Vimy Ridge was successful – at a price. The 72nd Battalion was to remain in the new front lines until April 14, consolidating newly-won positions and conducting small local offensive operations.

The end of April and most of May month was spent *in the trenches*, much of it in *Brigade Support* – not in the front lines – and a great deal of it working to consolidate positions. In fact, little further progress had been made after the heady successes of that first day, the terrain proving too difficult for the advance of guns and the necessary equipment – and, as usual, the Germans were quick to recover, although no serious attempt was made to re-take Vimy Ridge.

There was a costly success in the area of the village of Arleux-en-Gohelle and one less successful – but just as costly – at Fresnoy but apparently the Battalion did not figure directly in either of these operations.

After the official conclusion of the *Battle of Arras*, the Canadians were ordered posted only a short distance to the north, to the front adjacent to the mining area of the city of Lens and other nearby communities.

The unit was then transferred into a sector even closer to the village of Souchez. There, during the latter half of June, the Battalion made several offensive gestures to unsettle the Germans. The High Command thought that these raids kept the troops on their toes and that they were good for morale: for the most part, the troops in question apparently loathed them.



(Right above: The village of Souchez already looked like this in 1915 when the French passed control of the area over to the British. – from Le Miroir)

*****During the Great War, British and Empire (later Commonwealth) battalions had their time more or less equally divided into three postings: in theory a week was to be spent in the front lines, at times little more than a few metres separating them from the enemy forward positions; a second week was then served in support positions, perhaps a hundred metres or so behind the front; the unit was then withdrawn into reserve – either Brigade, Divisional or Corps Reserve, the former nearest to the forward area, the latter the furthest away.***



Of course, things were never as neat and tidy as set out in the preceding format and troops could find themselves in a certain position at times for weeks on end.

(Right above: A photograph of Canadian troops in support positions somewhere on the Somme in the autumn of 1916, only months earlier having been equipped with those steel helmets – from Illustration)

(continued)

The British High Command had by this time decided to undertake a summer offensive in the Ypres Salient, Belgium. Thus, in order to divert German attention from this area, it had also ordered operations to take place at the sector of the front running north-south from Béthune to Lens. The Canadians were to be a major contributor to this effort.



(Right above: An example of the conditions under which the troops were ordered to fight in the area of Lens during the summer of 1917 – from Miroir)

July was quiet, the first three weeks spent withdrawn behind the war zone to Viller-au-Bois. Even when the unit returned to the front to relieve the 43rd Battalion on the 25th, the Battalion War Diarist saw fit in his entry of the 31st, to write only... *The tour on the whole was a rather quiet one and a number of our Casualties were caused by gas shells*. The total casualties for the tour were 1 killed, 13 gassed and 16 wounded.*

**This was apparently the first occasion on which the Germans were to use mustard gas.*

August was spent for the most part at the front by the unit. But whereas a number of Canadian units were to be involved in larger operations, the 72nd was occupied by what appears to be a succession of patrols - by both day and by night in the area of the Lens suburb of Avion. It was only at the end of a thirty-nine day tour, on September 2 that the Battalion was relieved...



(Right above: Canadian troops looking over No-Man's-Land near the mining centre of Lens in the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir)

* * * * *

...and it was on this same September 2 that Private Barter was recorded as having reported *to duty* with the 72nd Battalion *in the field*. He was one of the reinforcement draft of ninety-nine other ranks which arrived on that day from the Canadian Base Depot at Le Havre.



(Right: Re-enforcements for an unidentified Canadian Scottish battalion on the march to the forward area in the north of France during the winter of 1918 – from Le Miroir)

On September 11, after nine days out of the trenches, the Battalion found itself back *in* them once more until the 19th – although this time only in Brigade Support where it found the time necessary to play a football match against another unit.

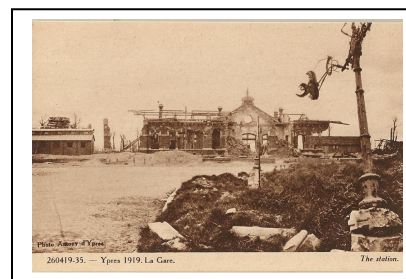
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After this tour, it was sent further back into the Reserve where it was to remain and to train until October 11. At this point, things were about to become more serious for Private Barter and his unit.

(Right: *A carrying-party loading up – one of the duties of troops when not serving in the front lines: The head-strap was an idea adapted from the aboriginal peoples of North America.* – from *Le Miroir*)

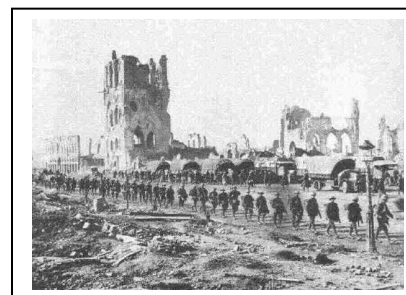


By the end of the following day, the 12th, having been transported from Bruay by train, the 72nd Battalion arrived at Steenbeque - a community in the very north of France and close to the border with Belgium - and marched to new billets. Eleven days later again, the unit was placed on thirty-seven busses to be forwarded to the area of Brandhoek, a village about half-way between Poperinghe and Ypres (today *Ieper*). On the 28th it boarded a train for the few remaining kilometres to Ypres.



(Right above: *The railway station at Ypres (Ieper) in 1919 – from a vintage post-card*)

It was not until those final weeks of October that the Canadian Corps became embroiled in the offensive to the north-east of Ypres. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



(Right: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917.* – from *Illustration*)

From the time that the Canadians entered the fray, it was they who shouldered a great deal of the burden. For the week of October 26 until November 3 it was the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions who spearheaded the assault, with the 1st and 2nd Divisions in reserve. From November 5 until the official end of the affair – November 10 - the reverse was true with the 2nd Division finally entering the remnants of Passchendaele itself.



(Right above: *Somewhere, perhaps anywhere, on the battlefield of Passchendaele during autumn of 1917.* – from *Illustration*)

Upon de-training at Ypres the 72nd Battalion now marched to the north-east outskirts of the city to halt in the vicinity of the village of Potijze. There the personnel were equipped with armaments and ammunition and then fed before being sent on their way to spend the night – there is no mention of shelter in the records, so perhaps in the open – nearer the front, at *Abraham Heights*.

(Right below: *Canadian soldiers performing their ablutions in a shell-hole, likely during Passchendaele – from Le Miroir*)

On the following day the unit moved towards the firing-line; by the evening of that 29th of October, Private Barter and his unit were in their jumping-off trenches. Early the next morning... *At 5.50 a.m. the barrage opened and according to schedule the attack commenced...* Battalion War Diary entry of October 30. *Our objectives all being taken the positions were consolidated...* Excerpt from Battalion War Diary entry of October 31. This was to be the unit's first and last participation in the campaign.



(Right: *The monument to the sacrifice of the Canadians which stands in the outskirts of the re-constructed village of Passchendaele (today Passendale) – photograph*)

Passchendaele was over quickly for Private Barter and the other personnel of the 72nd Battalion. That single action, however, had come at a price: fifty *killed*, two-hundred twenty *wounded* and six *missing*.



On November 3 the unit boarded a train at Ypres, de-trained at Cæstres in northern France, and then marched to a camp-site at Pradelles. There the unit remained for two weeks. It is not documented if Private Barter was a rugby player or not, but apparently the men took on the officers during this period – and lost.

November 17 saw the Battalion on the move again, on this occasion to a camp close to the community of Auchel, some few kilometres to the west of the larger centre of Bethune. Still well withdrawn from the front area, the personnel trained, were assigned to work parties, played more sports, learned new techniques – including the use of camouflage and gas - and were involved in platoon competitions.

It was a month before the 72nd departed Auchel to march to Canada Camp at Chateau de la Haie, then – inevitably – to the trenches, occupying them on December 19. A single day was spent in reserve positions before the unit moved forward into the support lines; then two companies moving forward once more and into the front lines on December 23. Christmas was quiet – at least as far as enemy activity was concerned and apparently the Canadians reciprocated.



(Right above: A large Canadian artillery piece – 220 cm calibre – under its camouflage netting somewhere on the Continent near Lens in 1917 or early 1918 – from Illustration)

(continued)

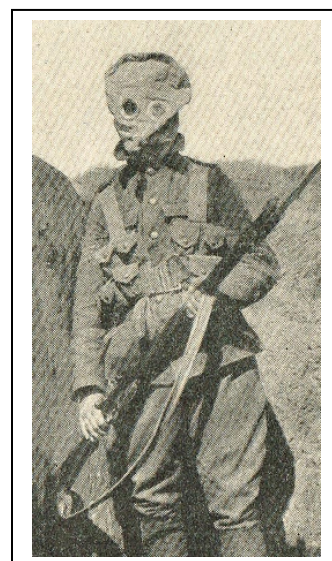
From Boxing Day until the Battalion was relieved on the 29th, however, the German mortars and artillery rendered life in those forward trenches somewhat hectic – once again the Canadians reciprocated.

Although the officer responsible for the War Diary appears to have neglected to enter it in his journal, the month of December offered something a little different to all the Canadian formations which were serving overseas at the time: the Canadian General Election. Polls for the Army were open from December 4 until 17, and participation, in at least some units, was in the ninety per cent range*.

***Apparently, at the same time, the troops were given the opportunity to subscribe to Canada's Victory War Loan. Thus the soldier fighting the war was also encouraged to help pay for it as well.**

On January 3 the Battalion was moved to new quarters at Hill Camp, the War Diarist noting his approval of matters: Hill Camp was very comfortable all the huts having stoves and fuel being plentiful. Private Barter and unit spent a week there, working and training hard but apparently not being shot at.

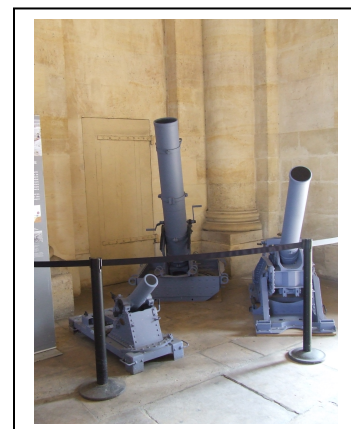
(Right: A photograph, from 1917, of a Canadian soldier during training in the use of his 'gas-helmet': As may be imagined, it was difficult for the wearer to perform the duties of a soldier, particularly in the event of an attack. – from Le Miroir)



The being-shot-at part resumed on the 9th when the Battalion was posted back to the trenches, likely in the support lines as the Diary mentions the unit relieving the 38th Battalion in the front lines only on the 14th. It also mentions patrols, wiring parties, and also both enemy shell-fire and rain frequently falling on the Battalion trenches, each doing damage in its own particular way to the Canadian positions.

On the 19th the unit was once more withdrawn from the front, on this instance by means of a light railway, back to reserve and to quarters at Vancouver Camp, Chateau de la Haie. Transferred to nearby Columbia Camp on the 24th, intensive training and work parties were once again the lot of the Battalion personnel.

On January 31, two companies moved forward into support from reserve; on February 4 the remaining companies moved forward as well. During this time, with the exception of local patrolling there was little if any infantry activity. However, the mortars and guns of both sides appear to have been steadily in action.



On February 8 the Battalion War Diary entry for the day merely cites: *Hostile artillery and trench mortar fire was light. Ours replied. The usual working parties were supplied.* There appears to be no report of casualties during this tour apart from a single officer killed. But, of course, there were.

(Previous page: *Trench mortars of different calibres in the Musée de l'Armée in Les Invalides, Paris* – photograph from 2015)

The son of George Barter (deceased) and Tryphena Barter* - to whom he had allocated a monthly \$15 or \$20 from his pay and to whom he had willed his everything - of St. John's, Newfoundland, where he is recorded to have been born, then latterly of McKeigan's Lane, Caledonia Mines, Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, where *she* was living as a widow at the time of her son's enlistment, Private Barter was reported as having been *killed in action* on that February 8 while serving in the trenches.

Walter Barter had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-three years and two months: date of birth at St. John's, Newfoundland, June 5, 1891.

Private Walter Barter was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



**There exist the following records which bear some perusal; the coincidences appear almost too plentiful for these persons not to be the same family:*

From St. Thomas' Anglican Church, St. John's, Newfoundland, Parish Records:

George Harris Barter – occupation baker - married Tryphena Hiscock on July 10, 1881, in St. Thomas' Church; both residents of St. John's

Residence: Barter's Hill, St. John's

Children: Ida Isabell b. February 26, 1882; George Alexander b. December 29, 1883; Horatio b. September 2(?), 1885; Fred James b. January 1, 1887; James Radford b. March 7, 1888; Katie Taylor b. October 18, 1891 (deceased September 19, 1892) (No further birth records available) (death records as of 1891 only)

From 1911 Nova Scotia Census (original)

George Barter, born June, 1853 – occupation baker – married Tryphena (recorded as Pryphna), born January, 1868; all recorded as born in Nova Scotia

Residence: Caledonia (ADDRESS OF MOTHER IN PRIVATE BARTER'S PAPERS)

Children: George A. b. December, 1887; James b. March, 1890; Walter (recorded as Balter) b. June, 1891; Blanch b. April, 1895; Hilda b. May, 1897; Ida (recorded as Idd) b. February, 1900; Maggie b. December, 1901; Ralph b. April 1904

(continued)

From 1921 Nova Scotia Census (original)

Tryphena Barter (widow), born (about) 1868, Newfoundland – of Glace Bay, Ward 3

Year of Immigration: 1902 (No apparent passenger list compatibility)

Ralph Barter listed as resident in household, registered as son of John & Mary Ann Baillieul (also in household with two young children) – Age 16

Any further information would, it goes without saying, be more than gratefully received – Alistair R.

The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 28, 2023.

