



**Private Thomas Caufield (perhaps also Coffield), Number 2552308, of the Reserve Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Lenham Cemetery\* in the English county of Kent.**

***(Right: The image of the Canadian Field Artillery (Style "A") cap badge is from the E-Bay web-site.)***

***\*The cross on the hill is a War Memorial created after the Great War and funded by the people of Lenham Village.***

**(continued)**

His occupations prior to military service variously recorded as being those of labourer and sailor, Thomas Caufield may well have been the young man entered on the passenger list of the *SS Kyle* on February 6 of 1916. The ship was making the crossing from Port aux Basques in the Dominion of Newfoundland to North Sydney, Cape Breton, in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. The sixteen-year old *Thos. Caufield* recorded by the ship's purser was on his way to the industrial city of Sydney.

Some fifteen months later, on May 23 of 1917 while still in Sydney – by now recorded as his place of residence - Thomas Caufield presented himself for enlistment, for a medical examination – which found him...*fit for the Over Seas Canadian Expeditionary Force* – and also for attestation. It was also at this time, confirmed by his first pay statements, that he was taken of strength by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reinforcing Draft of the 17<sup>th</sup> Battery, Canadian Field Artillery.

The formalities of his enlistment were brought to a conclusion five days later, on May 28, by a Lieutenant Yetman when he declared – on paper – that...*Thomas Caufield...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

Where exactly Gunner Caufield performed the six weeks of training immediately after his enlistment appears not to be recorded. What *is* documented is that on July 12 of that summer of 1917, he was transferred to the 75<sup>th</sup> Battery – perhaps only for training purposes as his files later record his as serving with his first unit, the 17<sup>th</sup> Battery.

A further pay record dated from September 1 until October 31 then places him at the large Canadian Artillery establishment at Petawawa, Ontario, but he was once more transferred,

(Right: *A British eighteen-pounder quick-firing artillery piece, the mainstay of the British and Empire (Commonwealth) artillery forces during the Great War, here seen at the Imperial War Museum, London – photograph from 2011(?)*)



The same card then shows him not only having forfeited three days' pay for *Absence Without Leave* during the month of November, but also as having then proceeded overseas on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of that same month – he had even written a will on November 21 in which he had bequeathed his everything to his father.

However, his departure from Canada was to be delayed as, on the supposed day of his embarkation, Gunner Caufield was being admitted into hospital in the community of Woodstock, New Brunswick. He was there for nine days, from November 23 until December 2, but no diagnosis of the problem appears on any record.

Five days later he was again under medical care, on this occasion at the Pitt Street Hospital in Saint John; he remained there for five more days and once again the diagnosis was documented as *none*.

(continued)



It was to be March of 1918 before Gunner Caufield eventually took trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom. On March 4, still at Woodstock, he underwent another medical examination which categorized him an A2 – fit enough by this stage of the war for overseas service. Then on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the month he re-wrote his will, still leaving his all to his father.

Gunner Caufield embarked in the still-devastated harbour\* at Halifax on March 23, 1918, onto His Majesty's Transport *Grampian*. The vessel sailed two days later, on March 25, to dock nine days later again in Liverpool\*\*. From there he was transported to the Canadian military complex of Witley – to the artillery facilities at Milford Camp - which by this time had been established in the south of the English county of Surrey\*\*\*.

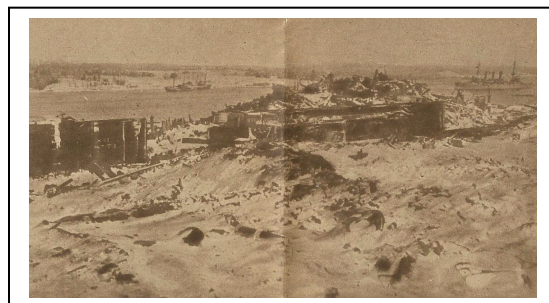


(Right above: *The likely pre-war image of Grampian is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site*)

As has been seen, Gunner Caufield had not travelled as originally scheduled, and it not sure to which unit, if any, he was attached for the voyage on *Grampian*.

*\*On December 6, 1917, a collision between two ships, one of them a French ammunition ship, the Mont Blanc, also carrying a large quantity of explosives, caused a fire and the eventual cataclysmic explosion. The blast killed some two-thousand people, seriously injured a further nine thousand, and devastated the city. Two years later, as the troops were returning from abroad, maritime traffic in the harbour was still being seriously affected.*

(Right: *This is part of downtown Halifax days after the catastrophe. The lmo, one of the ships directly involved is to be seen beached of the opposite side of the harbour. Apparently, according to the caption on the original picture, the heap of wreckage in the middle represents much of what remained of the Mont Blanc. – from Illustration*)



*\*\*While his Active Service Form has him has landing in the Scottish city of Glasgow, other sources confirm Liverpool as Grampian's destination. What is more, to be able to travel from Glasgow to Witley Camp in the county of Surrey on the same day is highly improbable, but Liverpool is only about half the distance.*

*\*\*\*Only a single unit can be confirmed as having travelled on the vessel – the 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Depot Battalion, Eastern Ontario Regiment, although it is almost certain that there were others.*

Three months after his arrival at *Witley Camp*, Gunner Caufield was admitted into the 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian General Hospital at the not-far-distant Canadian military complex at *Camp Bramshott* in the neighbouring county of Hampshire.

He was to remain there for the following twenty-two days undergoing treatment for mumps. By July 31 he was deemed as *recovered* and discharged to *duty*.



(Right: A photograph dated February of 1918 of a gun-team of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Siege Battery positioning one of their BL 6-inch 26 cwt\* howitzers, another British gun commonly used also by Commonwealth forces – from the Wikipedia web-site)

But it was to be less than eleven weeks before Gunner Caufield was in the 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian General Hospital once more, for influenza. He had apparently spent the previous week in the *sick hut* at *Witley Camp* complaining of *general weakness*. The immediate medical diagnosis was:

*Poorly developed boy aged 19, looks 16, signs of general weakness and anæmia...*

On October 19 there was a further brief addendum: *Slight rise in T (temperature)... Cause not apparent...*

A decision was taken on October 28... *Transferred to chest annex...soldier not very well.*

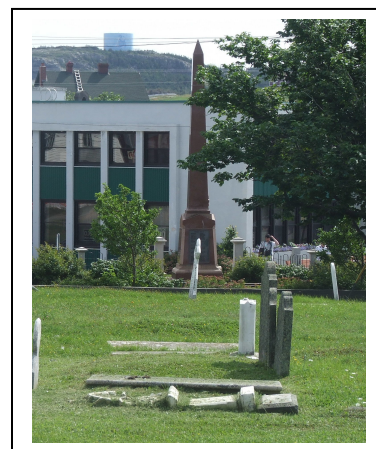
Batteries of tests were to follow, urine and sputum among the most frequent, but at the beginning of November the verdict was still being recorded as influenza. Then on November 6 came the not unexpected news of...*TB Positive*.

By this time the Canadian military medical services had taken control of a small sanatorium and turned it into a facility – a Canadian Special Hospital - specifically for the treatment of tubercular patients. It was in the outskirts of the village of Lenham in the county of Kent and it was there that Gunner Caufield was transferred on or about November 12, 1918.

Ten days later a medical board sat to determine his future: *not fit for duty; not fit for base duty; however...no discharge from Service as permanently unfit; and...recommended invalided to Canada...*

But his condition apparently deteriorated quickly.

The son of Peter Caufield (*Coffield* in other sources), fisherman, and of Anastasia Coffield (née *Power*) – to whom he had allotted a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay – of Bonavista, Newfoundland and, later, of Fisher Street, Whitney Pier, Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, he was possibly brother to Peter *Colfield* (sic), died of croup in 1915 at the age of nine months.



Thomas Caufield had enlisted at the apparent age of eighteen years and six months: date of birth at Bonavista, Newfoundland, December 21, 1898. Newfoundland Vital Statistics, however, have amended the year twice – to 1899 and then to 1900.



Gunner Thomas Caufield was entitled to the British War Medal for his overseas service. (He was eligible for it once he had left Canada\*.)

*\*Had Private Hiscock been a soldier of the Newfoundland Regiment he would have been eligible for it when he left Newfoundland as Canada was a foreign country. However, he had enlisted into a Canadian battalion which meant that he had to leave Canada to be eligible for the medal. (Had he been transferred back to serve in Newfoundland as a Canadian soldier, he would also been awarded the decoration.*



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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 26, 2023.