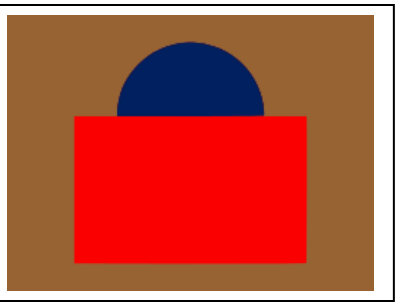
Private Michael Joseph Keefe (elsewhere *O'Keefe*) (Number 3080527) of the 14th Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*) lies buried in Crouy British Cemetery: Grave reference, V.D.4..



(Right: *The image of the shoulder patch of the 14th Battalion (Royal Montreal Regiment) is from the Wikipedia Website*.

(continued)

His former occupation being recorded as that of a *baker*, Michael Joseph Keefe appears to have left little trace of his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the mainland of North America. However, at some time he entered the United States of America and had been living there long enough to have a job and a permanent address – 84, Pearl Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts - where he lived at least his mother whom he named as his next-of-kin. Whether his parents had moved to the United States before, after, or accompanied by, their son, has thus far proved impossible to resolve.

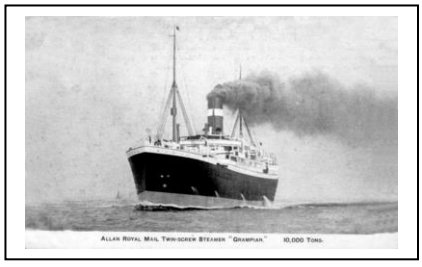
Towards the end of the year 1917, Michael Joseph Keefe decided to enlist in the Canadian Army and so travelled via Boston in the last week of December* to Montreal where on the 26th of that month he was recorded as having both enlisted and attested – the paper of December 26 having then been signed and dated by the magistrate two days later. In between those two dates, on December 27, he presented himself at the Montreal Mobilization Centre for a medical examination.

For some reason the American border papers which appear to record his crossing through Boston on his way to Montreal to enlist, bear the date December 29 – it could, of course be a different Michael Joseph Keefe but...

Private Keefe was *officially taken on strength* by the 1st Depot Battalion of the 1st Quebec Regiment on January 1 of the New Year, 1918, by Lieutenant Colonel Peché(?) Commanding Officer of that 1st Depot Battalion, who declared – on paper – that… *having finally been approved and inspected by me this day…I certify that I am satisfied with correctness of this Attestation.*

By this date he may well have already been billeted and in training at the *Guy Street Barracks* in Montreal as this is where both of the witnesses who signed Private Keefe's *Form of Will* appear to have been resident at that time.

His papers then document that Private Keefe travelled to Halifax to embark for the trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom. The ship is recorded as having been His Majesty's Transport *Grampian* – perhaps *Scandinavian* - and there may have been as many as four drafts to travel on her: the 3rd and 4th Drafts of the 1st Depot Battalion, 1st Quebec Regiment, and the 1st and 2nd Drafts of the 2nd Depot Battalion* of the 2nd Quebec Regiment. Of which of the two 1st Quebec Regiment Drafts Private Keefe was a soldier appears not to be recorded.



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

The task of the Depot Battalions was to instil only a minimum of training and discipline in the incoming recruits before despatching them to the Canadian Reserve Battalions in the United Kingdom, there to complete the job. Whereas in the earlier years of the Great War Canadian Battalions had spent months at home – in some cases over a year – before leaving for service overseas, that time was now cut to a matter of weeks.

(continued)

The records of the movements of the numerous Depot Battalions, apart from embarkation dates, are largely incomplete. Thus, *where Grampian* docked upon her arrival in the United Kingdom is yet to be discovered. However, it *is* recorded that Private Keefe's unit disembarked on February 16 and that later the same day the draft had been transported to *Camp Bramshott*, a large Canadian military establishment adjacent to the villages of Liphook and Bramshott – whence the name - in the English county of Hampshire.

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

It was also apparently on the day of his arrival that Private Keefe and perhaps the entirety of his draft were *struck off strength* from the 1st Depot Battalion and *taken on strength* of the 23rd Canadian Reserve Battalion (*Quebec*). He - and they - would undergo training at *Camp Bramshott* with the Reserve Battalion for the next three months.

On May 15, 1918, Private Keefe was on his way to France, likely via the south-coast English port of Southampton and Le Havre, the French industrial port-city on the estuary of the River Seine. At the same time he and his draft were transferred from the 23rd Reserve Battalion to the 14th Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*), already serving on the Continent.

(Right above: *The French port-city of Le Havre through which Private Keefe likely passed, at or about the time of the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

Having reported to the Canadian Base Depot in the vicinity of the coastal town of Étaples, there to be officially *taken on strength* by the 14th Battalion, Private Keefe was to wait a further six days to be forwarded to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp at Aubin-St-Vaast. There, five more days were to pass before he was despatched in a draft to his new unit which his papers record he joined on May 28.

*** * * * ***

The 14th Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*) had by that time been serving on the Continent since February of 1915 as an element of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself a component of the (1st) Canadian Division*. After its arrival from Canada via England, it had at first served in northern France in the *Fleurbaix Sector* just south of Armentières, before having been ordered into the *Ypres Salient* in April of that same 1915.

****Before the advent of the 2nd Canadian Division it was often simply designated as the Canadian Division.***

(Preceding page: *An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle - showing the shell of the medieval city of Ypres, an image entitled Ypres-la-Morte* (Ypres the Dead) – *By the end of the conflict there was little left standing.* – from *Illustration*)

Only a bare two months after its arrival on the Continent, and only days after it had moved into a north-eastern sector of *the Salient, the Canadian Division had distinguished itself during the *Second Battle of Ypres* in the spring of 1915.**

In fact, certain units were still not in position on the day of the first German attacks.

(Right: *The Memorial to the 1st Canadian Division – the Brooding Soldier - just to the south of the village of Langemark, stands where the Canadians withstood the German attack at Ypres (today Ieper) in April of 1915.* – photograph from 2010)

On April 22 of that year 1915, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the Germans had released chlorine gas in front of French colonial troops at the northern end of the *Ypres Salient*. The gas had then reportedly caused some six-thousand casualties in a very short space of time and had provoked a rout of the stricken defenders.

The Canadians, in the line just to the right, not having been affected to the same degree, had been ordered to fill the void left by the retreating French troops and to forestall a German break-through.

(Right above: *Entitled: Bombardement d'Ypres, le 5 juillet 1915* – from *Illustration*)

For its part, the 14th Battalion was to be called into action on April 22, the first day of the German attack, and had thereupon taken up defensive positions to the north-east of the city at Wieltje*.

Up until this date the Battalion War Diary had been a neat, detailed, type-written journal; as of April 22 it is a hastily-scribbled effort scratched in pencil, promising that the details will be appended at a later date. But, if nothing else, it shows the desperate situation of the next few days.

Companies of the 14th Battalion then had made a stand with the 13th Battalion at St-Julien (*Sin-Juliaan*) for the next two days before having been obliged to retire by the force of the German artillery activity. On several more occasions on the following days the Battalion – and the Canadians in general with some British forces – were to retire to a series of reserve trenches.

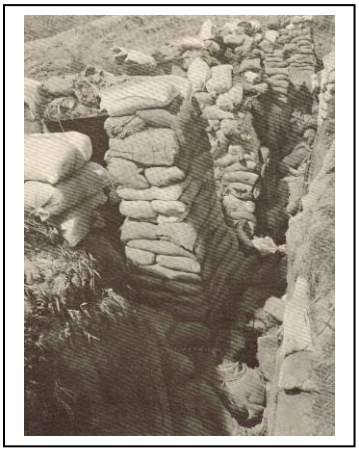
(Right above: *Troops, in this case the Liverpool Regiment, in trenches in the Ypres Salient. These are still the early days of the year as witnessed by the lack of steel helmets which came into use only in the spring and summer of 1916*. – from *Illustration*)

However, as history has recorded, the front had eventually been consolidated and the 14th Battalion was to be able to retire on the night of May 4-5 – a second document in the same source has 3-4. Only two weeks later it was to be in action once again.

At the beginning of May the British had responded to a French request for support during their operations in the Artois region, and the Canadians had been ordered further southwards* in mid-month to the area of Festubert and in June, to Givenchy-les-la-Bassée.

Most of the Canadian units had already been in northern France in the area of Bailleul – resting, re-organizing and re-enforcing after Second Ypres - when the orders had arrived.

(Right below: *German trenches nick-named the Labyrinth – complete with corpses - captured by the French during their Pyrrhic victory at Notre-Dame de Lorrette – Over one-hundred thousand French troops became casualties during this campaign in the Artois*. – from *Illustration*)



At Festubert the British gains were to be negligible, an advance of some three kilometres, and in the ten days during which the action had lasted, the British High Command was to contrive to divest itself of what had remained after the *Second Battle of Ypres* of its small, professional Army. There had also been a lot of good will lost between that High Command and the Indians and Canadians who had also incurred heavy casualties* – the Canadians particularly so after their losses during the aforementioned *Second Ypres.*

The Meerut Division losses totalled twenty-five hundred and those of the Canadian Division some twenty-two hundred. Those of the 14th Canadian Infantry Battalion had been reasonably light, however, sixty-seven all told.

After Festubert *some* of the Canadian forces had moved north almost immediately, into positions in the *Ploegsteert Sector* on the Belgian side of the frontier. There they were to remain until September and October of the following year when once again their services were to be required in France.

(Right: *A one-time officer in the Indian Army pays his respects to the fallen at the Indian Memorial at Neuve-Chapelle*. – photograph from 2010(?))

The 14th Battalion, however, was to be posted in June to the area of Givenchy-les-la-Bassée*, a small village not far distant south of Festubert.

Having been ordered into the forward trenches on two occasions during that month to support British efforts – and having endured the same sort of losses, although lesser in number, from repeating the same mistakes - by July 1 the unit had been back north in billets in the area of the Franco-Belgian border with the other battalions of the 1st Canadian Division in the *Ploegsteert Sector*.

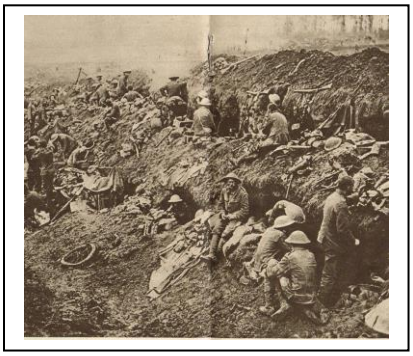
Since the place is oft-times referred to simply as Givenchy it is worthwhile knowing that there are two other Givenchys in the region: Givenchy-le-Noble, to the west of Arras, and Givenchy-en-Gohelle, a village which lies in the shadow of a crest of land which dominates the Douai Plain: Vimy Ridge.

(Right: *Some of the farmland in the area of Messines, Ploegsteert Sector, a mine crater from the time of the 1917 British offensive in the foreground* – photograph from 2014)

During the period of 1915-1916 now to be spent in Belgium, there were to be only two occasions on which units of the Canadian Divisions would be required to fight concerted infantry actions – the first to be the *Action at the St-Éloi Craters* and the second, the confrontation at *Mount Sorrel – otherwise there were to pass some fourteen months of the routines and rigours – and perils - of trench warfare**.**

In only the second of these engagements was the 14th Battalion to any extent engaged.

During the Great War, British and Empire (later Commonwealth) battalions had their time more or less 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 position at times for weeks on end.

(Right: *A photograph of Canadian troops in support positions somewhere on the Somme in the autumn of 1916, by that time equipped with steel helmets and Lee-Enfield rifles* – from *Illustration*)

The *Battle of the St. Eloi Craters* – the action to involve troops of the 2nd Canadian Division – was to officially take place from March 27 until April 17 of that spring of 1916. St. Eloi (*St-Éloi, Sint-Elooi*) was – and is - a small village some five kilometres to the south of the Belgian city of Ypres and it was to be there that the British would excavate a series of galleries under the German lines. These tunnels were then to be been filled with explosives which had been detonated on that March 27.

After an initial success the attack had soon bogged down and by April 4 the Canadians were to be replacing the exhausted British troops. They had had no more success than their British comrades-in-arms, and by the 17th, when the battle had been called off, the Germans were to be back where they had been some three weeks previously and the Canadians had incurred some fifteen-hundred casualties.

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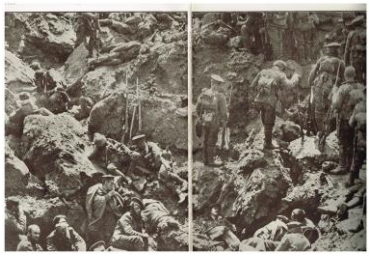
(Right: *Advancing in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine* – from *Illustration*)



Some six weeks later it was to be the turn of the 3rd Canadian Division to undergo *its* first major confrontation.

From June 2 to 14 was to be fought the battle for *Mount Sorrel* and also for the area of *Sanctuary Wood, Maple Copse*, *Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* between the German Army and the Canadian Corps*. The Canadians had apparently been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions dominating the Canadian trenches when the Germans had delivered an offensive, to overrun the forward areas and, in fact, to rupture the Canadian lines, an opportunity which fortunately they had not exploited.

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

It was an area of the Ypres Salient which had recently become the responsibility of the newly-arrived 3rd Canadian Division – officially in existence since New Year's Day, 1916, but not entirely operational until March of that year - that the Germans attacked. However, the situation soon became serious enough for units of the other Canadian Divisions to become involved.

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

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

The British Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, had reacted – perhaps a little too precipitately - by organizing a counter-attack for the following day, an assault intended to, at a minimum, recapture the lost ground. Badly organized, the operation had been a more than sobering experience: many of the intended attacks had not gone in – those that *had* done so, had gone in piecemeal and the assaulting troops had been cut to shreds - the enemy had remained *in situ* and the Canadians had been left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.

As for the 14th Battalion, on the day of the German attack, June 2, the unit had been serving in Divisional Reserve. However it had soon been called forward to the area of Zillebeke to where, during the night of June 2-3, it had advanced in individual companies and details. Having then advanced again on the following day the unit had recorded very heavy casualties – three-hundred seventy-nine *all ranks*.

On June 4 the 14th Battalion had been relieved and had retired, leaving behind two officers and fifty *other ranks* – all volunteers – to bury the dead. For the week that had followed the unit was to remain in the rear area.

The 14th Battalion War Diarist also recorded the following: *A large reinforcement of 150 men arrived on June 6th, and these were largely drawn upon to make up working parties of 150 sent out the following day. The part of the parties was to assist-in consolidation after the assault then pending. Before the assault took place the Regiment received a further 300 reinforcements and was again called upon to furnish large parties for difficult and dangerous jobs…*

(Right above: *Maple Copse, the scene of heavy fighting in June of 1916, and its cemetery wherein lie numerous Canadians* – photograph from 2014)

On the evening and night of June 12, Canadian attackers had moved forward into assembly positions and had gone over the top hours later, before dawn of the 13th. The 14th Battalion had not been a component of the attacking force but it was to accompany the attackers during the assault.

Its tasks had been many and varied: carrying small arms ammunition and bombs; stretcher-bearing and evacuation of wounded to dressing-station; supplying rations and water; wiring and carrying wire; and providing entrenching material – all of this to be accomplished while under fire.

The casualties are recorded in the War Diary: nineteen *killed in action*; twenty-two *wounded*; twenty-eight *missing in action*.

(Right: *A century later, reminders of a violent past close to the site of Hill 60 – it had even resembled a hill until a British mine blew the summit to smithereens in the first week of June, 1917 - to the south-east of Ypres, an area today protected by the Belgian Government against everything except the whims of nature* – photograph from 2014)

Then the drudgery of trench warfare was now to once again become the soldier's everyday lot – but perhaps after *Mount Sorrel*, for many it would have been a welcome respite.

For the 14th Battalion things were to remain thus until August 11 when it had marched directly from the lines to the area of Steenvoorde, a commune in northern France some twenty kilometres slightly to the south-west of Ypres. On the following morning the entire 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade – in a column almost ten kilometres long – had begun the trek towards the training area of the British 2nd Army.

(Right below: *Canadian troops likely in trenches built for training purposes – they are too prim and proper to be the real thing when compared to the photographs of the real thing – and here equipped with Short Lee-Enfield Mark III rifles*, during the late summer or early autumn of 1916* – from *The War Illustrated*)

The Canadian-produced Ross rifle was an excellently-manufactured weapon; its accuracy and range were superior to that of many of its rivals, but on the battlefield it had not proved its worth. In the dirty conditions and when the necessity arose for its repeated use - and using mass-produced ammunition which at times was less than perfect - it jammed, leaving its user defenceless at a critical moment.

By the summer of 1916 the Canadian units were exchanging it for the more reliable British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III, a rifle that was to ultimately serve around the globe until well after the Second World War.

The 14th Battalion had arrived at the training area on the morning of August 13 and had remained there in intensive exercises for two weeks. Then, on August 27, it had marched to the larger centre of St-Omer from where it was then to entrain for the journey southward to Conteville. Having arrived in *that* community at eleven-twenty in the evening, there was yet a three-and-a-half hour march to undergo before it reached its billets.

Perhaps the numerous four-hour route marches of the previous weeks had not been for nought. The 14th Canadian Infantry Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*) was well on its way to *the Somme*.

(Right above: *The once-impressive railway station at St-Omer, today in sore need of revitalization, through which the 14th Battalion of Canadian Infantry, passed on August 27, 1916* – photograph from 2016)

By September of 1916, the *First Battle of the Somme* had been ongoing for two months. It had begun with the disastrous attack of July 1, an assault which was to cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the short span of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

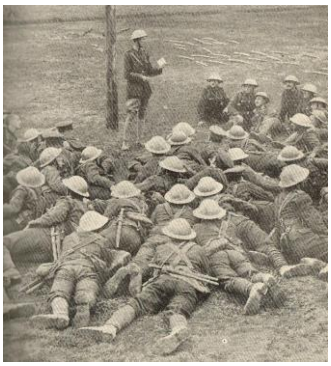
On the first day of *First Somme*, all but two small units had been troops from the British Isles, those exceptions having been the two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and the eight-hundred personnel of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment which was to lose so heavily on that July 1 at a place called Beaumont-Hamel.

As the battle had progressed, other troops, from the Empire (*Commonwealth*), were to be brought in; at first it had been the South African Brigade (July 15), the Australians and New Zealanders (July 23) before the Canadians had entered the fray on and about August 30 to become part of a third general offensive.

Their first major collective contribution was to be in the area of the two villages of Flers and Courcelette.

(Preceding page: *The Canadian Memorial which stands to the side of the Albert-Bapaume Road near the village of Courcelette* – photograph from 2015)

(Right below: *An image purporting to be that of a Canadian officer giving instructions to those under his command prior to the attack at Flers-Courcelette, mid-September 1916* – from *The War Illustrated*)



It was to be five days after having left St-Omer, on September 1, before the 14th Battalion would march – as it had done for the last four of those five days - into the large British military camp at *the Brickfields* (*la Briqueterie*), in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert – and also within range of the German artillery. Bivouacking there for a single night, on the morrow the unit had again marched, to billets in Albert itself.

The following afternoon, September 3, had seen the 14th battalion move into reserve positions at la Boisselle and on the following day again, into the front-line trenches of *the Somme*.

(Right: *Canadian soldiers at work in Albert, the already-damaged basilica in the background* – from *Illustration*)

The unit had been ordered to relieve troops of other units in the proximity of *Mouquet Farm* on September 6 and to physically improve the positions then occupied, a task undertaken with a greater or lesser degree of success. The relievers had incurred heavy hostile shell-fire and infantry attacks, and had suffered considerable losses before having been relieved in turn on September 7. The casualty count – *all ranks* - for the two days had amounted to: forty-five *killed in action*; one-hundred twenty-one *wounded in action*; and thirty-three *missing in action*.

On September 9 the 14th Battalion was to begin a fifteen-day period during which it was not to be involved in any infantry action: the afore-mentioned offensive of September 15 was to be undertaken by units other than the 14th Battalion. It, and a goodly number of other troops of the 1st Canadian Division, were to go on a multi-day march.

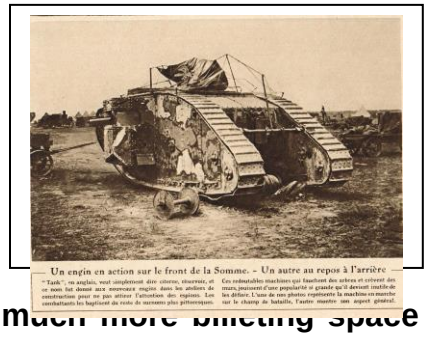
It was to be the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions, serving in the British Reserve Army, which would play a role at Flers-Courcelette on September 15 and the days following*.

(Right above: *Seen from the north, the village of Courcelette just over a century after the events of the First Battle of the Somme* – photograph from 2017)

Some of the first tanks ever to be used in battle had apparently been a positive element during the fighting of mid-September on the Canadians' Front.

(continued)

(Right below: *One of the tanks employed during the First Battle of the Somme, here withdrawn from the field and standing in one of the parks where these machines were overhauled and maintained* – from *Le Miroir*)



It was likely to free up billeting space for the new formations now arriving in the immediate area of Albert and Brickfields, that the 14th Battalion would march as far afield as Warloy, Hérissart, Montrelet – where four days of training was to take place – La Vicogne, Vadencourt – for two more days of training – before returning into reserve at *Brickfields Camp* where it was to remain until September 24-25.

Since the offensive of September 15-17 there was now, alas, much more billeting space available for the returnees of the 14th Battalion.

Over the course of the three days of September 26, 27 and 28, the Battalion was to storm the position by the name of *Kenora Trench*. It or parts of it were taken on three occasions, but for a number of reasons – not least of all German artillery and counter-attacks – the survivors of these assaults were to be obliged to pull back from the gains that they had made. By the time that the 14th Battalion was relieved it had been involved in continuous action for some forty-three hours – and had been back much in the place from where it had first advanced*.

This action had been a part of the larger operation known to history as the Battle of Thiepval Ridge.

(Right: *Some of the wounded being evacuated in hand-carts from the forward area during the First Battle of the Somme* – from *Le Miroir* or *Illustration*)

In the War Diary Appendix to this operation it is noted that the 14th Battalion had incurred a total of three-hundred seventy-four casualties: *killed in action*, *wounded in action*, *died of wounds*, *gassed*, *shell-shocked* and *missing in action*.

This number, added to the one-hundred ninety-nine incurred earlier in the month, on September 6-7 at *Mouquet Farm*, plus smaller losses at other times, had rendered this three-week period a more than expensive one for a unit which, on August 1, had numbered seven-hundred sixty-nine *all ranks*.

From the front lines the 14th Battalion had passed back through Albert to report to the reserve area at Warloy. An interlude of several days was now to elapse and it was not to be until October 6 that the Battalion would be once more even in Brigade Support, this to be followed by Close Support, although even while in these fairly safe positions further casualties had been inevitable.

And thus the 14th Battalion's role in the *First Battle of the Somme* was to draw to a close.

(continued)

By October 10 the unit had been back at *Brickfields* and in bivouacs; October 14 and 15 had been spent in supplying working-parties in Brigade Support for one last time; then on the morrow, October 16, the Battalion had begun to march to the westward and away from the sound of the guns.

(Right: *Burying Canadian dead on the Somme, likely at a casualty clearing station or a field ambulance* – from *Illustration* or *Le Miroir*)

At first to the west, then northwards by a semi-circular route, the Battalion had circumnavigated the city of Arras and marched beyond. At five twenty-five in the evening of October 27 it had arrived at its destination, Brigade Reserve in the area of Berthonal, to the north-west of Arras. It had been on the march for nine of the previous eleven days.

Having been one of the first Canadian units to serve at *the Somme*, the 14th Battalion had also been one of the first to retire from it. The sectors to which the entire Canadian Corps was now eventually to be posted would be those running roughly down the *Western Front* from Béthune in the north almost as far as Arras in the south.

In-between these two poles was the large mining centre of Lens and myriad smaller communities, their existence before the *Great War also* mainly dependent on the coal seams passing underground.

(Right above: *The remnants of the Grande Place (Grand'Place) in Arras which had already been steadily bombarded for more than two years by the end of the year 1916* – from *Illustration*)

It was to be December of that 1916 before the final Canadians retiring from *the Somme* were to make their way, as always mostly on foot, to this area which by that time had been becoming more and more a Canadian responsibility.

(Right: *A detachment of Canadian troops moving up to the front during the winter of 1916-1917* – from *Illustration*)

In the trenches the 14th Battalion had once more settled into the rigours and the routines – and tedium - of trench warfare – perhaps, however, a welcome respite for those who had experienced *the Somme*; infantry action for the most part was to be on a local scale – patrolling and raids – with only occasionally the latter having been delivered at battalion strength.

(continued)

Casualties for the most part had been due to enemy artillery – shell-fire apparently to be responsible for some two-thirds of *all* casualties on the *Western Front* - with snipers also taking their toll; but in fact, during this period it was to be myriad sicknesses and, perhaps surprisingly, more than that, dental problems which would keep the medical services occupied during this time.

During the winter months of 1917 the War Diaries had reported an increase in the time spent by the Canadian units in reserve positions, be they Corps, Divisional or Brigade. In reserve there had been the usual attractions of lectures, musketry, physical training, church parades, inspections – by politicians and officers of rank - training, courses, working-parties and carrying-parties. But there had also been sports to be played and even the occasional concert to enjoy.

(Right above: *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*)

(Right: *Canadian troops in front of a temporary theatre peruse the attractions of an upcoming concert*. – from *Le Miroir*)

Towards the end of March, however, there had been more than the usual training, there had been more construction under way, and officers and NCOs were to be withdrawn to attend special lectures. Something had apparently been in the offing.

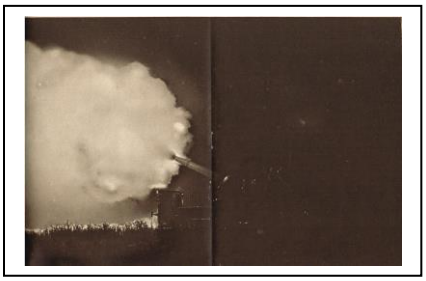
For the 14th Battalion, intensive training had begun for individual detachments: rifle-grenade and bombing sections; machine-gun and Lewis-gun sections; intelligence and signals personnel; and for others drill, musketry and bayonet practice.

But there was to be more: this was to be a programme of sometimes novel exercises undertaken by most, if not all, of the battalions of the Canadian Corps before the upcoming British offensive: learning the topography of the ground to be attacked; the use of the enemy's weapons which, when captured, were to be turned against him; the by-passing and thus isolation of strong-points instead of the costly assault; the coaching of each and every soldier as to his role on the day; the increased employment of aircraft in directing the advance; the concept of a machine-gun barrage; and the exchange of information between the infantry and artillery so as to co-ordinate efforts…

…and at *Vimy Ridge* and elsewhere, the use of tunnels and underground approaches to mask from the enemy the presence of troops and also to ensure the same troops' security.

As those final days before the offensive were to pass, the artillery barrage had been growing progressively heavier; on April 6, Good Friday, the War Diarist of another battalion was to describe it as…*drums. By this time, of course, the Germans had *also* been well aware that…*something was in the offing*…and their guns in their turn had by then been throwing retaliatory fire onto the Canadian positions - and their aircraft had been very busy.**

(Right below: *A heavy British artillery piece spews its venom into the middle of the night during the course of the preparatory bombardment before the First Battle of Arras.* – from *Illustration*)



It should be said that a great deal of the artillery used in the assault on Vimy Ridge was British and that a British Division also participated. Almost fifty per cent of the personnel who had been employed for that day were British, not to mention those whose contribution – such as those who dug the tunnels - allowed for it to happen.

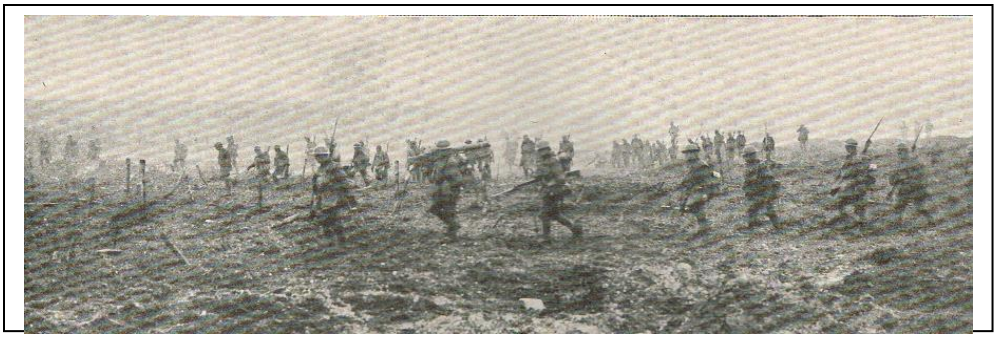
On April 6 the 14th Battalion had moved into front-line trenches in the *Thelus Sector* and had remained there.

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

While the British effort would prove an overall disappointment, the French offensive of *Le Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

(Right above: *The Canadian National Memorial which, since 1936, has stood on 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*)

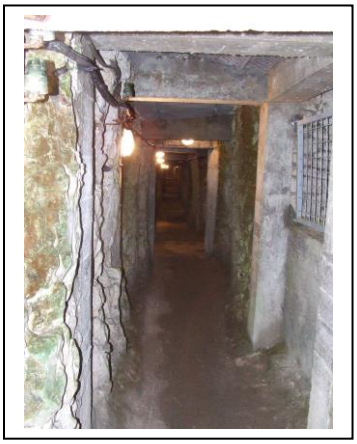


On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions*, for the first time having operated as a single, autonomous entity – the 2nd Canadian Division with a British brigade under its command – had stormed the slopes of and about *Vimy Ridge*, by the end of the next day having cleared them almost entirely of its German occupants.

Several kilometres of those tunnels had been hewn out of the chalk under the approaches to the front lines of *Vimy Ridge*, underground accesses which had afforded physical safety and also the element of surprise during the hours – and in some cases, days – leading up to the attack. But whether the 14th Battalion was to avail of their protection is not clear.

Excerpt from Battalion War Diary Appendix for April 9: ***At Zero Hour, 5.30 a.m., the assault on my Battalion Sub Sector was made with No 3 Company on the right flank, furnishing the two leading waves, No 1 Company 3rd wave and "Mopping Up" Parties, No 4 Company on the left flank and No 2 Company in similar position to No 1 Company on the right. Simultaneously the 15th battalion on my right and 16th Battalion on left flank, advanced.***

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



The 14th Battalion had been issued the responsibility of prising three objectives from the grasp of the enemy: the first, ***Eizeker(?) Trench*****, had been strongly defended by the Germans but was to be finally cleared; the** ***Black Line*** **had been taken with less trouble than expected; and the** ***Red Line*** **had been captured by ten past seven in the morning of that first day, apparently thanks to a well-delivered artillery bombardment of the position.**

Thus the 14th Battalion had been able to retire to a less-exposed position rearwards on ***Vimy Ridge*** **at 9. 40 a.m.…***in accordance with orders***.**

The 14th Battalion had gone to the attack numbering seven-hundred one ***all ranks*** **in the field at** ***Zero Hour*** **on that April 9, 1917; at the end of the day its total casualty count had been two-hundred eighty-eight – some forty per cent of its strength.**

The Germans, once having lost ***Vimy Ridge*** **and the advantages of the high ground, had then retreated some three kilometres in front of the Canadians whose further offensives were to be less successful than that of Easter Monday*; while some progress at times was to be made – at Arleux-en-Gohelle, for example - German counter-attacks had often re-claimed ground from the British and Canadian troops – as at Fresnoy in early May.**

****The positions to which they had retired had apparently been prepared, and some historians feel that the enemy had already anticipated withdrawal from the Ridge which was not, in fact, the ultimate defensive position that had been supposed.***

(Right above: ***A memorial to the fallen of the 1st Canadian Division stands in a field on the outskirts of the re-constructed village of Thélus. It was set there during Christmas of 1917.*** **– photograph from 2017)**

After the official conclusion of the ***Battle of Arras*****, on or about May 15, some of the Canadians had been re-posted not far to the north, to the mining area of the city of Lens and other communities. Others had remained** ***in situ*****, among them the 14th Battalion.**

(continued)

The 14th Battalion had remained in Divisional Reserve for the following eight days, then had marched to *Thelus Cave*, on the southerly flank of *Vimy Ridge*, by then in Canadian hands. There the unit was to relieve the 3rd Canadian Battalion and to act as Brigade Support, having subsequently supplied working-parties for bearing materials to the front line and for constructing dug-outs.

It had remained in the area of Mazingarbe until July 4 when it had then moved forward to relieve companies of the 16th and 15th Battalions in the front lines.

(Right above: *Canadian troops advancing to the front lines loaded with equipment for upcoming operations: the use of the head-band – the 'tump' – had been adopted from the North American aboriginal peoples.* – from *Le Miroir*)

The period from then until mid-July was to comprise little concerted infantry activity: there had been the usual patrolling at night, the occasional local raid – by both sides – and wiring parties working in No-Man's-Land. And of course there had been the ever-constant artillery duel, the cause of a number of casualties. On the 12th day of that month the 14th Battalion was to be in turn relieved, having then been withdrawn to *Fraser Camp* and ordered into Divisional Reserve.

(Right above: *Canadian soldiers perusing the upcoming program at a make-shift theatre in a camp somewhere behind the lines* – from *Le Miroir*)

The unit had then remained in Divisional Reserve for some three weeks – much of the time in training and becoming familiar with varied new equipment - although it had been obliged to change camps – on foot – on two occasions. On the afternoon of August 3 it had been transferred to Brigade Reserve and ordered to move south, once again to the mining community of Mazingarbe to where it had reported later in the day.

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

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 – as well as his reserves - from this area, it had also ordered operations to take place in the sectors of the front running north-south from Béthune down to Lens.

(continued)

(Preceding page: *Canadian troops advancing across No-Man's Land in the summer of 1917* – from *Le Miroir*)

The Canadians were to be a major contributor to this effort and one of the primary objectives of this Canadian campaign was to be the so-named *Hill 70* in the outskirts of the mining centre of Lens.

Those expecting *Hill 70* to be a precipitous and ominous elevation are to be surprised. It is hardly prominent in a countryside that is already flat, the highest points being the summits of slag heaps which date from the mining era of yesteryear. Yet it had been high enough to be considered - by the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie – as the key feature in the area, its capture more important than that of Lens itself.

(Right: *The portrait of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie is from Illustration*.)

(Right: *This gentle slope rising to the left is, in fact, Hill 70. A monument to the 15th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry stands nearby in tribute*. – photograph from 1914)

Objectives had been limited and had for the most part had been achieved by the end of August 15. However, due to the dominance of *Hill 70* over the entire area, it had been expected that the Germans would endeavour to retrieve it - and so it was to prove.

On the 16th several strong counter-attacks were to be launched against the Canadian positions, positions that by this time, within hours of their capture, had been transformed into defensive strong-points.

These defences had held and the Canadian artillery, which had been employing newly-developed procedures, was to inflict heavy losses on the enemy. *Hill 70* had thus remained in Canadian hands.

(Right above: *A Canadian 220 mm siege gun, here under camouflage nets in the Lens Sector, being prepared for action* – from *Le Miroir*)

The 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions had been entrusted with the responsibility of the attack and two of the three battalions of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade had been among the attacking forces. The 14th Battalion, however, had been kept in reserve at the outset, to play a reinforcing role whenever and wherever the 13th and 15th Battalions were to find themselves in difficulty.

(continued)

Having advanced to the assembly positions in the late evening of August 14, the six-hundred seventy-two personnel of the 14th Battalion had not been called into action until just after mid-day of August 15, the day of the attack, when the 15th Battalion had needed support when in a precarious situation.

Apart from that episode, the role of the Battalion had primarily been one of providing carrying-parties to supply ammunition to the troops in the forward area and then of evacuating wounded in the opposite direction.

(Right: *Canadians soldiers in the captured rear area of Hill 70 during the days after the battle* – from *Le Miroir*)

A total of one-hundred fifty-one *killed*, *wounded* and *missing* would be incurred by the 14th Battalion during the entire operation. A note to be found in the War Diary Appendix Number 7, concerning the action at *Hill 70*, is of a grim interest: *A most regrettable feature of the operations is the fact that the majority of the bodies, including that of one Officer, could not be discovered, notwithstanding the fact that the Battlefield was rigorously searched for same. It is presumed that they were either destroyed by shells, after they had fallen, or were covered over with earth and debris.*

This Canadian-led campaign had apparently been expected to continue into September and even longer, but the ongoing – since the last day of July - British summer offensive in Belgium had been proceeding less well than anticipated and the British High Command had been starting to look for reinforcements to make good the by-then exorbitant losses.

The Australians – stationed further to the south than the Canadians – the New Zealanders* and then the Canadians themselves had thus been ordered to prepare to move north. The Canadian Corps had been obliged to abandon its plans.

The Australians and the New Zealanders, originally collectively known as the Anzacs, by this time were two independent forces.

There were therefore to be no further major Canadian-inspired actions in the Lens-Béthune sectors and the troops yet again were to settle back into that monotonous but oft-times precarious existence of life in – and behind – the forward area. On most days, according to the Battalion War Diary, it had been the artillery which had fought it out – but, of course, the infantry was often to be the recipient of whatever had been on offer.

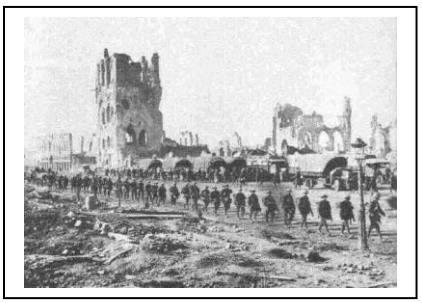
(Right above: *Canadian artillery troops manhandling a gun into position 'somewhere in Flanders' during Passchendaele* – from *Le Miroir*)

Even though it had become known that the Canadians were to be transferred north into Belgium, for the 14th Battalion there nonetheless was to be a nine-week interlude between the action at *Hill 70* and the transfer to its next theatre of operations.

(continued)

During this time the daily grind of life in the trenches had still been the rule - with several exceptions when the unit had been retired to areas behind the lines, particularly for training. But, also during this time, in the rear areas it was becoming apparent - this impression, as ever, gleaned from the Battalion War Diary entries - that sports were now being considered more and more to be a morale booster.

On October 20 of 1917 the Canadians of the 14th Battalion had been ordered north into Belgium and once more to the *Ypres Salient* from where the unit had departed some fourteen months before. Officially designated as the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign – ongoing since the last day of that July – was to come to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, having taken for a name that of a small village on a ridge that had been – at least latterly *professed* to have been - one of the British Army's main 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 were to enter the fray, it was they who had shouldered a great deal of the burden. For the week of October 26 until November 3 it was to be the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions which had spearheaded the assault, with the 1st and 2nd Divisions in reserve.

From November 5 until the official end of the affair – November 10 (other sources cite other dates) - the reverse was to be true with troops of the 2nd Canadian Division having finally entered the remnants of Passchendaele itself.

(Right below: *Somewhere, possibly anywhere or almost everywhere, on the battlefield of Passchendaele during the autumn of 1917*. – from *Illustration*)

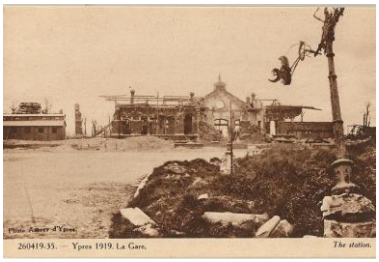
(Right: *The monument to the sacrifice of the Canadians which stands in the outskirts of the re-constructed village of Passchendaele* (*today Passendale*) – photograph from 2010)

The 14th Battalion was to begin its transfer from the area of Lens and up into Belgium on October 20. It had thereupon marched for three days until it had reached the vicinity of the northern French community of Staple. There it had been billeted in nearby farms until October 31 while it was to undergo training.

On that October 31 the 14th Battalion had departed Staple at six-thirty in the morning, had boarded a train at Ebblinghem at seven-forty-five, had arrived in the ruins of the railway station outside the southern ramparts of Ypres four hours later, and then had marched – as in a preceding photograph - through the shattered city and past the remnants of the venerable Cloth-Hall to Sin-Jaan and Wieltje to the north-east.

There the unit had occupied some old trenches where they were to become the targets of hostile aircraft later that day and during the night.

(Right below: *The vestiges of the railway station just outside the ramparts of Ypres where the Battalion detrained – the image is from 1919* – from a vintage post-card)



While many Canadian units were to suffer horribly serving at *Passchendaele*, the 14th Battalion was apparently not to be one of them. Of the ten days that the just over five-hundred strong unit was to spend in the forward area, five were to be served in Brigade Reserve, three in Brigade Support and two in the front line where it had remained in the relative shelter of the trenches.

Casualties for the entire operation were thus to be comparatively light: eleven *killed*, three *died of wounds*, seventy-three *wounded*, fifty-eight *gassed* and seven *missing* – *all ranks*.

(Right: *Canadian troops – not having proper bathing facilities - performing their ablutions in the water collecting in a shell hole at some time during the last month of Passchendaele* – from *Le Miroir*)

By November 12 the 14th Battalion had returned to France where the daily grind of trench warfare was to once more take hold.

By November 12 the 14th Battalion had returned to France where the daily grind of trench warfare was to once more take hold. After days at Hersin-Coupigny and a week of training at nearby *Alberta Camp*, unit was subsequently to be occupying front-line positions in the *Avion Sector* just to the south of Lens. Then on December 4 it had moved into Divisional Reserve at *Vancouver Camp* in the vicinity of Villers-au-Bois where it had begun training.

An extract from the 14th Battalion War Diary entry of December 10, 1917, allows an idea of some of the proceedings: *…Physical Training and Bayonet Fighting, Gas Helmet Practice, Lecture on Trench Duties, Practice in Saluting, Platoon and Company Drill and Gas Helmet Inspection.*

(Right above: *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*)

Although the officer responsible for the War Diary appears to have neglected to enter it in his journal, the month of December was to offer something a little different to all the Canadian formations which had been serving overseas at the time: the Canadian General Election.

Polls for the Army were to be open for the various units on dates between December 1 and 17, and participation, in at least *some* units, had seemingly been 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.

The winter of 1917-1918 was to pass in much the manner of the previous winters of the *Great War*, in stagnation. Any infantry activity had tended to be local: ever-present patrols and the occasional raid – an activity much in favour with the British High Command; apparently loathed by those whose duty it had been to undertake them. And most casualties were, as usual, still due to the enemy's artillery-fire and to his snipers.

(Right above: *This was Lens by the end of the Great War although much of the damage had been done by the spring of 1918.* – from *Le Miroir*)

The days, for the most part, were to be reported in the same journal as… *quiet* – the exceptions to the rule being described as… *very quiet*.

Then suddenly, on March 21, 1918, the first day of the spring, on an eighty-kilometre front to the south of Arras, the Germans were to blow holes in the British defences and had poured through.

Perhaps not many people realize how close the Germans came to victory in that spring of 1918. Having transferred westward the Divisions no longer necessary on the *Eastern Front* because of the Russian withdrawal from the War, they had delivered a massive attack, Operation '*Michael*', launched on March 21. The main blow had fallen at *the Somme* in the area of, and also just to the south of, the battlefields of 1916, and it had descended for the most part on the British Fifth Army troops there, perhaps particularly in positions adjacent to the French.

(Right: *While the Germans did not attack Lens – once source has this as being in the neighbouring community of Liévin - in the spring of 1918, they bombarded it heavily during the time of their offensive in order to keep the British uncertain about their intentions and thus to oblige them to retain troops in the area – one source has this as being nearby Liévin*. – from *Le Miroir*)

The German advance continued for some two weeks, petering out just in front of the city of Amiens. The ultimate failure of the offensive was a result of a combination of factors: British and Commonwealth resistance, fatigue, logistical problems and a great deal of French co-operation with the British were the most significant.

(continued)

A second but lesser such offensive, 'Georgette', fell in northern France and in Belgium on April 9, in the area where the Royal Newfoundland Regiment was serving with the British 29th Division. It also was to be successful for a while, but petered out at the end of the month.

(Right: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918* – from *Illustration*)

The area just to the south and west of Arras was at the northern extreme of the German offensive. Unsure as to what the enemy's intentions were, the High Command moved the 2nd Canadian Division into the area to forestall any attack if and when it occurred to protect the avenue to the Channel ports and also the coal-fields in the area of Béthune.

In the event, the offensive in that direction was stopped cold by the British Third Army before it reached Arras, but during the period of the crisis the Germans had stayed active enough to keep the British and Canadians wondering.

As for the situation to the north, it apparently was never deemed serious enough to warrant any Canadian movement in that direction.

(Right above: *The City Hall of Arras and its clock-tower in 1919 after some four years of bombardment by German artillery* – from a vintage post-card)

And as for the 14th Battalion during this period, unlike the entries in the War Diaries of some other Canadian Battalions, that of the 14th Battalion makes mention of the German advance as early as March 22, although the same writer on the following day appears to believe that… *Reports from the South say that the enemy have been repulsed on all but a few fronts and that the enemy have suffered heavy losses…* This, of course, was spurious information: at the time, the enemy was doing quite well.

The 14th Battalion, in fact, was to serve in reserve during much of the critical period, having been moved up into support at the end of March when it had been posted to Arras and billeted in the *Ronville Caves*. By the time that the unit had moved up into the front line on April 6 the War Diarist had been able to report the day as… *quiet*. During the month of March the total casualty count had been thirty, of which eleven dead.

(Right: *One of the several entrances into the Ronville Cave system - hewn in the rock under much of Arras - almost a century after its use by Commonwealth and British troops. It was used at different times by personnel of thirty-six different Army Divisions*. – photograph from 2012(?))

(continued)

April, May and June were to proceed at much the same tempo. The unit was to remain in Special Army Reserve until July 13, a period lasting forty-six days during which a great deal of training had been undertaken; but no-one had been shot at – at least not by the Germans.

And it had been, of course, on May 28 during this period that Private Keefe's *Active Service Form* had recorded him reporting to duty with his new unit.

*** * * * ***

On May 28 the 14th Battalion was serving in Special Army Reserve in the vicinity of Ostreville, some forty kilometres to the north-west of Arras. There is no specific mention of a reinforcement draft arriving on that day, but the Battalion numbers are reported as having increased by three officers and seventeen *other ranks* from the previous day.

As an introduction to the *Great War* on the *Western Front*, few newcomers could have had it easier than had Private Keefe. His new unit and he remained in Special Army Reserve from the time of his arrival until July 13, a period lasting forty-six days; much training was undertaken, but no-one was shot at – at least not by the Germans.

A further five days were to then be spent in Divisional Reserve before the 14th Battalion and Private Keefe had been ordered returned to the front lines – an eight-day tour during which time there appears to have been only a single casualty - a fatality.

The unit had been withdrawn once more into Divisional Reserve until the last day of the month. And then, on that July 31, all of a sudden, things had really begun to happen.

(Right: *The caption translated reads – a northern sector held by the Canadians: as can be seen – or perhaps guessed - it was a mining area for which they were responsible, in this case likely Lens which by the time of the Great War had also become an important railway hub*. – from *Le Miroir*)

Meanwhile, in the greater scheme of things, after the German offensives of March and April, a relative calm had descended on both fronts as the German threats had faded – the enemy had won a great deal of ground, but there had been nothing of any military significance lost to the Allies on either of the two fronts. Nor was the calm to be particularly surprising: the two sides, having been exhausted, were to now need time to once more re-organize and – less and less feasible in these later years of the war – to again re-enforce.

The Allies from this point of view had been a lot better off than their German adversaries – having two empires to draw from and with the Americans belatedly arriving on the scene. An overall Commander-in-Chief had been appointed, Ferdinand Foch, and he had been setting about organizing a counter-offensive. Thus the front was to remain quiet – until the second week in August.

(Preceding page: *Le Maréchal Ferdinand Jean-Marie Foch, this photograph from 1921, became Generalissimo of the Allied Armies on March 26, 1918.* – photograph from the *Wikipedia* web-site)

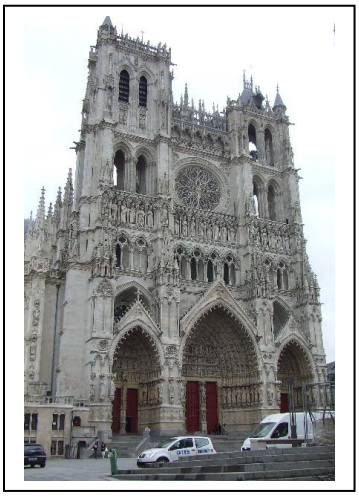
On July 31 the 14th Battalion had begun to move towards the area soon to become a battlefield. The first stage had been to Fosseux where the unit was to remain for four days. It had then been transported westward to Frévent where it had boarded a train.

By the morrow morn Private Keefe's 14th Battalion had been in the area of Hornoy, having journeyed in a southerly direction to the west of the city of Amiens.

(Right above: *In 1917 the British formed the Tank Corps, a force which became ever stronger in 1918 as evidenced by this photograph of a tank park, once again 'somewhere in France'. Many of the troops to be involved in the fighting from this time onwards underwent training in the company of tanks.* – from *Illustration*)

August 5, 6 and 7 had then passed as follows, as recorded by the 14th Battalion War Diarist: *…orders were received to move off at 7.00 P.M… The Battalion travelled all night on…busses and arrived at a place near AMIENS about 5.00 A.M. they then de-bussed and marched to BOVES a distance of about twelve kilometres…*

Later in the day orders were received to move forward. The Battalion formed up in column of route ready to move off at 12.15 A.M. They then marched to a position just North of GENTELLES, a difficult march owing to the congested traffic on the roads, which, to make matters worse, were heavily shelled…and several casualties occurred going in. They then remained in the trenches until dusk when they moved up to assembly positions…



(Right: *The gothic cathedral in the city of Amiens which the leading German troops had been able to see on the western skyline in the spring of 1918* – photograph from 2007(?))

But the 14th Battalion had not been the only Canadian unit on the move at this time. Within a matter of days, at the end of July and beginning of August of 1918, it had been almost the entire Canadian Corps which had been transferred from the sectors north of and around Arras to face the Germans on the front established at the time of their offensive four months earlier.

The majority of the Canadian forces had passed behind the city of Amiens before turning eastward, marching during the hours of darkness, to ensure surprise. This it had succeeded in doing, as the events of the few following days were to prove.

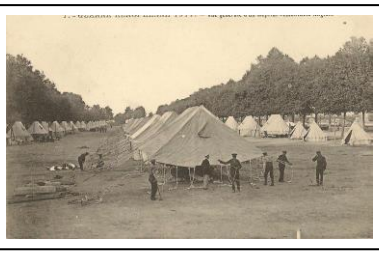
(continued)

Excerpt from 14th Battalion War Diary of August 8, 1918: *The 14th Canadian Battalion attacked at dawn on the morning of the 8th of August… The barrage was excellent and the Boche, taken absolutely by surprise, at first put up very little resistance, but as the advance progressed, his machine gunners put up a very fine fight and caused our men a number of casualties…*
…There was a dense ground mist which made communication very difficult, but all ranks showed great dash and initiative and the objective was finally captured and consolidated…

(Right: *A German machine-gunner who also gave his all* – from *Illustration*)

Casualty Report: *Was wounded in the head by the explosion of an enemy shell while taking part in operations on the 8th August, 1918. After receiving first aid and attention he was taken to No. 5 Casualty Clearing Station, where he died the same day.*

(Right above: *Canadian and German wounded from the first days of the battle – some cases more serious than others - waiting to be evacuated to the rear* – from *Le Miroir*)



(Right above: *A British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War* – from a vintage post-card)

The son of Michael Keefe (also *O'Keefe*), likely cooper – to whom he had willed his all on December 12, 1917, and to whom he had, as of February 1, 1918, allocated a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay - and of Anna (also *Annie* and possibly *Mary Anne*) Keefe (née *Barry*, deceased by 1922) of Harbour Grace, Newfoundland*, he was also twin brother to Agnes, and possibly brother to John-Barry and to Susannah.

They apparently emigrated from Newfoundland to the United States, her – and his? – address at the time of their son's enlistment 84, Pearl Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts. At the beginning of 1918, his father's – and her? – place of residence was at 36, Springfield Road, Somerville, Massachusetts and by January 18 of 1922, his address – she by that time deceased – was recorded as 58, Magazine Street, Cambridge.

Michael Joseph Keefe had enlisted at the *apparent age* of thirty-two years and five months: date of birth in Harbour Grace, Newfoundland, June 15-16, 1885.

Private Michael Joseph Keefe was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

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 23, 2023.