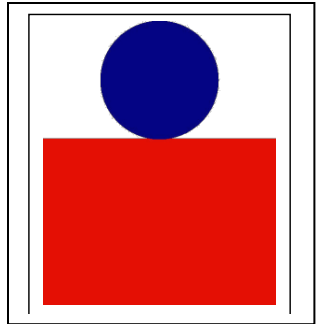




(Above: Flat gravestones – because of subsidence – have been laid in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery – photograph from 2011)

Private John George Mitchell, Number A/14689, of the 13th Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery: Grave reference VIII.C.154.

(Right: The image of the shoulder-patch of the 13th Canadian Infantry Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada) is from the Canadian Expeditionary Force Study Group web-site.)



(continued)

His occupation prior to military service documented as that of a miner, it is likely that John George Mitchell had worked in the area of North Sydney for some time before his enlistment, for that is where he married Gertrude H. Ross on May 8 of 1915, only some five weeks before his departure for *overseas service*. Originally from Westville, Nova Scotia, she and her husband-to-be – from Tilt Cove, Newfoundland, are recorded as residing in Sydney Mines at the time of their marriage.

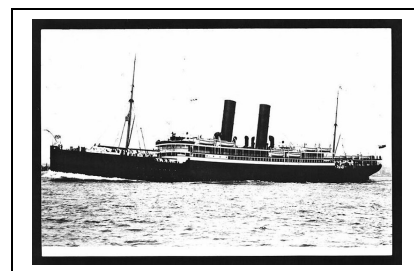
By the time of that wedding, Private Mitchell had enlisted; his first pay records show this to have been on February 23, likely at Sydney Mines, as this date appears as the first day for which he was remunerated for his services to the 40th Battalion (*Nova Scotia*) by the Canadian Army. It was then a month later, on March 22, that he underwent medical examination – this recorded as also having been undergone at Sydney Mines – and was found to be *...Fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*.

He attested nine days later again, the enlistment formalities coming to a close at that time when a junior officer, acting on behalf of the commanding officer of the 40th Battalion, declared – on paper – that *...John G. Mitchell, having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation*.

Its recruiting campaign completed, the 40th Battalion was mobilized at the military camp at Aldershot, Nova Scotia, on May 11 during that spring of 1915. From there, on June 21, the main body of the unit was despatched to the complex at Valcartier, Québec, to complete its training. But by that time, two detachments had already travelled overseas to become reinforcements for other Canadian Battalions which by that time were serving on the Western Front.

Private Mitchell had been a soldier in the first of these two drafts.

The ship that Private Mitchell was to board was the requisitioned *Anchor Line* passenger vessel, by that time His Majesty's Transport *Caledonia*.



(Right: *The photograph of the Anchor Line vessel Caledonia is from the Old Ship Photo Galleries web-site.*)

The date on which he and his detachment embarked was June 15, 1916, but the ship had already military personnel on board by the time it put into Halifax to embark Private Mitchell: the ship is documented as having sailed from Montreal on June 9 with “A” Squadron of the 7th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles and the 2nd Divisional Remount Depot on board. Her next stop was St. John, New Brunswick, on June 13, where she welcomed the 26th Battalion (*New Brunswick*); there were also Section 1 and the Headquarters Company of the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column, plus a part of the 2nd Divisional Cyclists Company.

The vessel sailed from St. John on the same day to next put into Halifax on the 15th for the 1st Draft of Private Mitchell's 40th Battalion and the No. 2 Heavy Battery of the Canadian Garrison Artillery.

Caledonia then immediately set out to cross the Atlantic to drop anchor in the English south-coast naval harbour of Portsmouth-Devonport nine days later again, on June 24.

From there it was a journey by train to the coastal area of the county of Kent – in the vicinity of the Channel ports of Dover and Folkestone – where the Canadians were busy establishing Shorncliffe, a large military complex.

(Right: *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*)



Private Mitchell’s detachment of the 40th Battalion was apparently stationed at Dibgate, one of the subsidiary camps, upon its arrival at Shorncliffe, for it was there and then, on that first day, that the draft was transferred to the 13th Canadian Reserve Battalion, with which unit it was to undergo the remaining weeks of its training before eventually being despatched to the Continent.

The day of that move was to be only two months hence: it was on August 29 that Private Mitchell crossed the Dover Straits on his way to France and, at the same time - perhaps August 28 - was *taken on strength* by the 13th Battalion (*Royal Highlanders of Canada*), already serving on the Continent. Six days later he was one of a re-enforcement draft of two-hundred sixty-five *other ranks* which reported to the 13th Battalion Transport Lines in the *Ploegsteert* Sector, Belgian Flanders, on September 4.

* * * * *

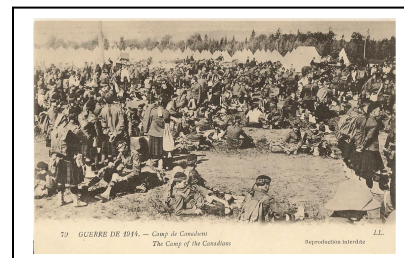
The 13th Battalion (*Royal Highlanders of Canada*) was an element of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself a component of the Canadian Division*. In mid-October of 1914 the Division had been the first force to arrive in Canada from the United Kingdom and then had been the first Canadian unit to set foot on French soil, which it had done in February of 1915 when it landed in the Breton port of St-Nazaire.



**Until the time that the 2nd Canadian Division was formed, this formation was simply referred to as the Canadian Division.*

(Right above: *The personnel of the Battalion wore a Black Watch tartan kilt, one version of which is shown here. – from the canadiansoldiers.com web-site*)

(Right: *The caption reads merely ‘Camp of Canadians’ but it is from the early days of the Great War, thus likely in either northern France or in Belgium. The troops are from a Canadian-Scottish unit. – from a vintage post-card*)



For the first weeks of its service on the Continent, the Canadian Division had been posted to the Fleurbaix Sector in northern France and just south of the border town of Armentières.

Two months later, in mid-April of that spring, the Division, moving north into the Kingdom of Belgium, had then taken up positions in the *Ypres Salient*, an area which would prove to be one of the most lethal theatres of the *Great War*.

However, for the first two months of the Canadian presence on the Western Front, the area had been relatively quiet and the personnel of the 13th Battalion began to fit into the rigours, routines and perils of life in the trenches*. That calm was about to change.

**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 and, less visible, British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III Rifles – from Illustration)

During the first days of the Canadian tenure *the Salient* had proved to be once again relatively quiet*. Then the dam broke - although it was gas rather than water which, for a few days, threatened to sweep all before it. The date was April 22, 1915.



**Most of the units of the Canadian Division had been in the Ypres Salient only days before the attack; in fact, others were still on the move to their new posting at the time.*

(Right: An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle of 2nd Ypres - which shows the shell of the medieval city, an image entitled Ypres-la-Morte (Ypres the Dead) – By the end of the conflict there was little left standing. – from Illustration)

The *2nd Battle of Ypres* saw the first use of chlorine gas by the Germans during the *Great War*. Later to become an everyday event, and with the introduction of protective measures such as advanced gas-masks, the gas was to prove no more dangerous than the rest of the military arsenals of the warring nations. But on this first occasion, to inexperienced troops without the means to combat it, the yellow-green cloud of chlorine proved overwhelming.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The very first protection against gas was to urinate on a handkerchief which was then held over the nose and mouth. However, all the armies were soon producing gas-masks, some of the first of which are seen here being tested by Scottish troops. – from either Illustration or Le Miroir*)

The cloud had been noticed at five o'clock in the afternoon of April 22. In the sector subjected to the most concentrated use of the gas, the French Colonial troops to the Canadian left wavered then broke, leaving the left flank of the Canadians uncovered, particularly that of the 13th Battalion which was obliged to call forward Number 3 Company, at the time in reserve. Then a retreat, not always very cohesive, by the entire unit became necessary.



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

By the 23rd the situation had become relatively stable – at least temporarily - and the positions in the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan held until the morning of the 24th when a further retirement became necessary. At times there had been breaches in the defensive lines but, fortunately, either the Germans were unaware of how close they were to a breakthrough, or else they did not have the means of exploiting the situation. And then the Canadians closed the gaps.

The 13th Battalion had been relieved on April 25 and had thereupon been withdrawn to some former French reserve trenches. Called forward again on April 28, it had remained in the area of the front until May 1 when it was ordered into Divisional Reserve in the area of Vlamertinghe, to the west of Ypres. On May 3 the unit had been ordered to move into northern France, there to re-enforce and to re-organize.



(Right above: *The Memorial to the 1st Canadian Division – the Brooding Soldier – stands just to the south of the village of Langemark (then Langemarck) at the Vancouver Crossroads where the Canadians withstood the German attack – abetted by gas – at Ypres (today Ieper) in April of 1915. – photograph from 2010*)

The information to be gleaned from the Battalion War Diary during the period of 2nd Ypres is at times understandably sparse. The number of casualties incurred is apparently not noted – neither does it seem to appear in the 5th Brigade Diary – but it was on April 28 that a re-enforcement draft of two-hundred seventy-six other ranks reported *to duty* to the unit.

In mid-May the 13th Battalion moved down the line to the south, over the Franco-Belgian frontier, and into the areas of Festubert and Givenchy. The French were about to undertake a major offensive just further south again and had asked for British support.

There at Festubert a series of attacks and counter-attacks took place during which the British High Command managed to gain some three kilometres of ground but also contrived to destroy, by using the unimaginative tactic of the frontal assault, what was left of the British pre-War professional Army.

The Canadian Division was also to contribute to the campaign but – not possessing the same numbers of troops – was not to participate to the same extent. It had nonetheless suffered heavily.

(Right: A one-time officer who served in the Indian Army during the Second World War, pays his respects to those who fell, at the Indian Memorial at Neuve-Chapelle. – photograph from 2010(?))



The role of the 13th Battalion had been to relieve the 16th Canadian Battalion after its attack planned for May 20 on a German-held position, at which time it was then to consolidate and to defend that same position. Despite heavy losses the 16th Battalion captured its objective, positions which then the 13th Battalion occupied.

On the next day, May 21, the unit fought and repelled a strong German counter-attack before then being relieved on the following day again.

The Canadian Division and Indian troops, the 7th (Meerut) Division* also having been ordered to serve at Festubert, had hardly fared better than the British, each contingent – a Division - incurring over two-thousand casualties before the offensive drew to a close.



(Right above: Number 63525, Private J.S. Kennedy, a Newfoundlander in Canadian uniform, lies in Guards Cemetery, Windy Corner, at Festubert. – photograph from 2015)

The French effort – using the same tactics - was likewise a failure but on an even larger scale; their campaign was to cost them just over one hundred-thousand *killed, wounded and missing*.

**The Indian troops also served – and lost heavily – in other battles in this area in 1915 before being transferred to the Middle East.*

On May 22 the 13th Battalion marched away from Festubert to billets in or near to the community of Essars. This reprieve was to last for two weeks, until June 5, when it was ordered further south to Givenchy-les-la-Bassée*, a small village not far distant south of Festubert. Ordered into the forward trenches on two occasions during that month to support British efforts – and incurring many of its casualties due to repeating the same sort of mistakes as at Festubert – by June 24 the 13th Battalion was retiring from the area. At about the same time, over a number of days, so was the entire Canadian Division.

**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.*

(continued)

As a part of that withdrawal from Givenchy, the 13th Battalion was to march to billets in Essars, in La Becque and then Steenwerck in the vicinity of Bailleul. From there it was to move eastwards and into Belgium, to the *Ploegsteert Sector*, just across the frontier.

Having reached the area of Ploegsteert on July 5, there the 13th Battalion remained – as did the entire Canadian Division. In the next months it came to be well-acquainted with the Franco-Belgian area between Armentières in the east – any further east would have been in German-occupied territory – Bailleul in the west, and Messines in the north; given the route marches enumerated in the War Diary and the itineraries used, it would have been surprising had it been otherwise.



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

It was to be a further eleven months before the 13th Battalion* would be involved in another major altercation. Of course, local confrontations – brought about by raids and patrols - were fought from time to time, and artillery duels and the ever-increasing menace of snipers ensured a constant flow of casualties.

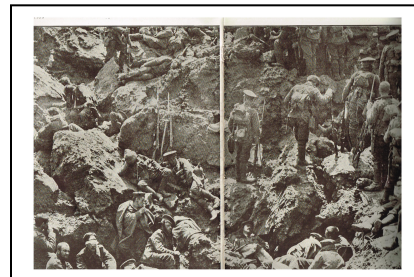
And, as has been previously noted, it was during the first week of September of the late summer of 1915, while it was posted to this sector, that Private Mitchell reported *to duty* with his new unit, the 13th Battalion (*Royal Highlanders of Canada*).

* * * * *

In September of 1915 it was the turn of the Canadian 2nd Division to land on the Continent and to also be posted to the Kingdom of Belgium. It was ordered stationed in the sector adjacent and to the north of the one held by Private Mitchell and the now-designated Canadian 1st Division. This area was several kilometres south of the city of Ypres and it was there, after some seven months of life in and about the trenches, that the 2nd Division was to fight its first major action of the *Great War*.

For the 2nd Division, the first weeks of April were not to be as tranquil as those being experienced during the same period by Private Mitchell and his comrades-in-arms of the Canadian 1st Division.

The *Action at the St. Eloi Craters* officially took place from March 27 until April 17 of that spring of 1916. St. Eloi was a small village some five kilometres to the south of the Belgian city of Ypres and it was here that the British had excavated a number of galleries under the German lines, there to place explosives which they detonated on that March 27, to be followed up by an infantry attack.



(Above right: *A purported attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – perhaps at St-Éloi – from Illustration*)

(continued)

After a brief initial success the attack soon bogged down and by April 4 the Canadians were replacing the exhausted British troops. They were to have no more success than had the British, and by the 17th of the month, when the battle was called off, both sides were back where they had been some three weeks previously – and the Canadians had incurred some fifteen-hundred casualties.

However, as previously noted, this confrontation was a 2nd Division affair and the personnel of the 13th Battalion during that period would likely have been disturbed by only the noise of the German artillery. By the beginning of the month of April, the personnel of the Private Mitchell's Battalion had undergone the afore-mentioned transfer to the sector to the north of that held by the Canadian 2nd Division and was in the area of the one-time village of Dickebusch.

For Private Mitchell there was now to be a presumably welcome pause from trench-warfare: from April 10 to 19 he was granted leave. It is likely - although not confirmed – that this time was spent in the French capital, but – Paris or not - *anywhere* other than the *Western Front* was undoubtedly a welcome reprieve.

This relatively peaceful period was to last a further two months. When the storm broke, it was to be in the sector for which the newly-arrived Canadian 3rd Division* was responsible.

**The Canadian 3rd Division had officially come into being on mid-night of December 31, 1915, and January 1 of the New Year, 1916. At first having operated in the Ploegsteert Sector in co-operation with the Canadian 1st Division, during that spring it had been ordered into the south-east area of the Ypres Salient.*

From June 2 to 14 the battle for *Mount Sorrel* and for the area of *Sanctuary Wood, Hooge, Railway Dugouts, Maple Copse* and *Hill 60* was fought out between the German Army and the Canadian Corps. The Canadians had been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions which dominated the Canadian trenches when the Germans delivered an offensive, overrunning the forward areas and, in fact, rupturing the Canadian lines, an opportunity which fortunately they never exploited.



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

(Right: *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*)



The Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, reacted by organizing a counter-attack on the following day, an assault intended to, at a minimum, recapture the lost ground.

(continued)

Badly organized, the operation was a dismal failure, many of the intended attacks never went in – those that did went in piecemeal and the assaulting troops were cut to pieces - the enemy remained where he was and the Canadians were left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.

The events of that June 2 interrupted what had already been a busy day for the 13th Battalion: route marches, bayonet exercises, gas-helmet drill and Company training had been followed by Battalion sports in the afternoon.

(Right: *Maple Copse Cemetery, adjacent to Hill 60, in which lie many Canadians killed during the days of the confrontation at Mount Sorrel – photograph from 2014*)



Then, at seven-thirty on that evening, after reports of a German break-through in the Canadian 3rd Division sector, orders had been given... *for the Battalion to 'stand to' and be ready to move at a moment notice... Soon after this the Battalion was ordered to proceed to the support of the Canadian 14th Battalion and made a forced march... to Zillebeke Etang...*

The 13th Battalion was not involved in the disastrous counter-offensives made by Canadian troops on June 3 but was, in fact, engaged in only defensive activities. Even so, the casualty count for June 2 and 3 numbered forty-four.

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



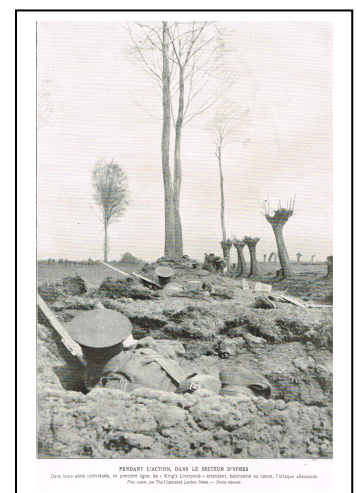
On June 4 there was no concerted action by the Canadians; the 13th Battalion spent much of its time consolidating positions and sending out reconnaissance parties, all the time receiving the attention of the German artillery.

Casualties for June 4 came to a total of forty-eight.

The War Diarist's entry for the 5th reports no infantry action undertaken by the Battalion. There were reported, nonetheless, *thirty killed, wounded or missing in action.*

(Right: *Troops – in this instance British – in hastily-dug 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 summer of 1916. – from Illustration*)

On June 6 the War Diarist once again reports little activity in the area of the 13th Battalion. Nor does he report – but, then, why should he? – the detonation, by the Germans, of mines under the Canadian positions at *Hooge Village.*



(continued)

The Germans had then managed to gain some territory before their advance was contained. The 13th suffered half-a-dozen casualties on that day.

Late in the night of the 7th, following a reportedly *uneventful* day – uneventful by the standards of the time – and with no casualties due to enemy activity, the Battalion was withdrawn to the south-west of Ypres, there to arrive in their billets at four o'clock in the morning of the 8th. The unit remained in the rear area until June 11 when it began a march which was to bring the Battalion back to the area of *Mount Sorrel* where it was to serve in the now-imminent assault.

By midnight of that June 12, some twenty-eight hours after beginning its return march, the 13th Battalion was in its allotted positions in the front and support trenches.

(Excerpts from the Battalion War Diary entry for June 12-13) At 1. 30 a.m. immediately our artillery lifted to the old British trenches, our men, the first and second line under Major K.M. Perry, the third and fourth under Major G.E. McCuaig sprang up on the parapet and set off at a steady pace, over very rough ground and through a heavy barrage and succeeded in gaining the first objective...

As soon as the bombardment of the old British lines lifted at 1.50 a.m. the party again advanced at this stage the going was very heavy...

The attack proceeded briskly, bombing the enemy down the trenches, and directly the final objective was reached, Major McCuaig sent up a red flare...

The affair was over by mid-morning, the remainder of the day to be spent in consolidation, taking care of the wounded of both sides and of prisoners... and in the burial of the dead.

The 13th Battalion retired later that night.

The engagements of the previous eleven days – from June 2 until the 13th – had thus culminated with this second and more successful - having been better prepared and also supported by a confident artillery programme - counter-attack by the Canadians on June 13. It was the final offensive of the confrontation, a military *quid pro quo* which left both sides in approximately the same positions which they had been occupying on June 2 when the affair had started.



(Right above: Hill 60 as it remains a century after the events of 1916 and 1917 – when its top was blown off by the detonation of a British mine on the first day of the Battle of the Messines Ridge - in the area of Mount Sorrel, the village of Hooge, Railway Dugouts, Sanctuary Wood and Maple Copse: It is kept in a preserved state – subject to the whims of Mother Nature – by the Belgian Government. – photograph from 2014)

For the two months which succeeded the confrontation at *Mount Sorrel*, things reverted to the everyday routines of trench warfare. There was no concerted infantry action by either side, such activity being again limited to raids and patrols. However, this did not preclude a lengthy casualty list at times*.

**For example, during the tour in the front lines of July 15 to 19 inclusive, the War Diarist noted fifty-seven killed, wounded and missing in action.*

During the month of August the Canadian Battalions were gradually withdrawn from the Ypres Salient and then ordered to camps for training in what was termed *open warfare*. It appears that the 13th Battalion was one of the first to retire, leaving the forward area for Brigade Support on August 7, then three days later moving further to the rear area to begin that period of training.

Three weeks later again, on the night of August 27-28, Private Mitchell's Battalion moved piecemeal to the railway station in the northern French centre of St-Omer.

The unit entrained there at seven o'clock in the morning to be conveyed south to Conteville, a distance of about eighty kilometres, where it arrived some nine hours afterwards, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

From there it was a further eight kilometres – this time on foot – to the awaiting billets.

(Right: Almost a century after Private Mitchell and the 13th Battalion passed through it on the way to the 1st Battle of the Somme, the once-splendid railway station in St-Omer is today in dire need of renovation – photograph from 2015)



For the following four days, Private Mitchell and his comrades-in-arms marched south-east, ending their trek at billets in the vicinity of the provincial town of Albert on September 1, before then moving onto support positions at La Boisselle on the very next morning.

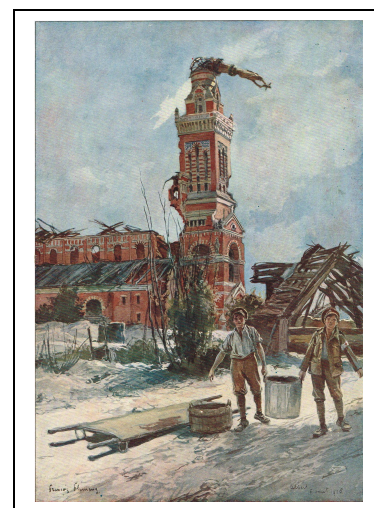
(Right: The Lochnagar Crater caused by the mine – claimed by some to be the largest man-made explosion in history up until that date – detonated at La Boisselle – photograph from 2011(?))



**La Boisselle was the site where, on the morning of the attack of July 1 of that same 1916, the British detonated the largest of the nineteen mines that they had excavated and set under the German lines. The crater, now a century old, is still impressive, even today.*

By that 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 space of only four hours - of which nineteen-thousand dead.

(Right: Canadian soldiers working in Albert, the already-damaged basilica shown in the background – from Illustration)

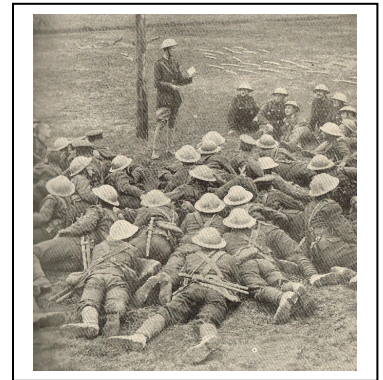


On that first day of *1st Somme*, all but two small units of the attacking divisions had been troops from the British Isles, those exceptions being the two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and the eight-hundred personnel of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland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

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

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

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



However, there was, twelve days before that general attack by the Canadians, on September 3, an assault put in by the 13th Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force at a place known as *Mouquet Farm*. Two Companies of Private Mitchell's 13th Battalion, Numbers 1 and 2, were sent forward to assist in this operation at nine o'clock that morning.

The 13th Battalion War Diary for September 3, 4 and 5 reads partially thus: *At 2.00p.m. No.3 Company... went forward and at 5.00 p.m. the remainder of the Battalion:-*

Headquarters – Pozieres Wood

Nos 1 and 2 Companies advanced and held the positions 73 to No. 1

93 to No. 2 and consolidated.

No. 1 Company, Bombing the German Communication, and No. 2 Company, repelling a German Attack...

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



...During the whole of Sunday Night, the men were heavily shelled, but showed great courage and endurance (sic).

Sept 4th. ...The heavy shelling continued the whole of the day, on the Front and Support Lines, the Battalion also suffered a heavy Counter Attack. We managed however to connect up 55 and 59 and make a fair trench...

(continued)

1916 5th Sept. ...The heavy shelling continued again on both sides, during the whole of the day, our Artillery was very active with guns of all Calibres, and fired over about two shells for every German one...

Maybe not a major affair in the eyes of certain authorities, the action at *Mouquet Farm* on September 3, 4 and 5 was to cost the 13th Battalion a total of three-hundred twenty-three casualties. The Battalion War Diary documents Private Mitchell as having been wounded on September 5.

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

He was evacuated to the rear from the field on that same day, to a Canadian Casualty Clearing Station in - or in the vicinity of - the community of Warloy. There he received medical attention for a gun-shot wound to his left thigh and buttock.

It was apparently to be six days later before he was further transferred, on September 11, to the 13th General Hospital established at Boulogne.

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

The son of Eli Mitchell (miner and fisherman) and of Eleanor (also found as *Elanore*) Jane Mitchell (née *Mackey*) of Beaver Cove/ Tilt Cove, Newfoundland, he was husband to Gertrude (see further above) - to whom as of July 1, 1915, he had allotted a monthly twenty dollars from his pay - their home on Barrington Street, in the community of Sydney Mines, Cape Breton*.

**It appears that John George had at least three siblings, two older sisters, Victoria Jane and Jessy Elizabeth, and also a younger one, Mary Elizabeth, who had died at the young age of six months.*

Private Mitchell was reported by the administration of the 13th General Hospital in Boulogne as having *died of wounds* on September 23, 1916.

John George Mitchell had enlisted at Sydney Mines at the *apparent* age of twenty-four years: date of birth at Tilt Cove, Newfoundland (from attestation papers), May 27, 1890.

Private John George Mitchell was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



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 26, 2023.