

Private James Charles Rose (Number 9953) of the 3rd Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated in the stone of the Menin Gate, Ypres (today *Ieper*): Panel reference 18-24-26-30.

(Right above: *The image of the shoulder flash of the 3rd Battalion (Toronto Regiment) is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)

(continued)

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *lather* (lathe operator?), John Charles Rose, with his parents and a brother and sister, emigrated from Newfoundland to the city of Toronto, Canada, at some time after the birth of that first sister, Maria, in 1887, but before the birth of a further sister, Florence, in Toronto, in 1891. At the time John Charles would have been some seven years of age.

The family then remained in the Toronto area, father John working as a carpenter, and sister Florence and brother Clarence were added to its number. By the time of eldest son John Charles' enlistment, his parents and younger siblings were resident at 103, Earlsdale Street in the city.

At the age of about twenty, in 1903 and 1904, according to his attestation papers, John Charles Rose had served in the 10th Infantry Regiment – the length of service is unclear: Royal Grenadiers, of the Canadian Militia. On August 12 of 1914, just a week and a day after the Declaration of War, he had enlisted once more – and twenty years later - into the same 10th Infantry Regiment, Royal Grenadiers, of the Canadian Militia.

Many units of the Canadian Militia had been originally formed partly to replace the departing British forces from the fledgling Dominion of Canada in the 1870s, to play a role in any necessary defence of the country. However, by law, the Militia was prohibited from undertaking operations outside the frontiers of the country; thus Private Rose's Royal Grenadiers could not anticipate any *overseas service*.

But the Canadian Militia units were not precluded from recruiting on behalf of the newly-forming Overseas Battalions which were now being authorized – nor were Militia personnel precluded from transferring to these new formations. Thus, to that end, fifteen officers and three-hundred eighty-six men of the 10th Infantry Regiment, Royal Grenadiers, left Toronto on August 21-22 bound for *Camp Valcartier*, the complex in the throes of being established at the time in Québec.



A second detachment was to follow on August 29, but it is probable that Private Rose was a soldier of the former as, on August 29, he was undergoing a medical examination at Valcartier, a procedure which was to find him to be...*fit for the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force*.

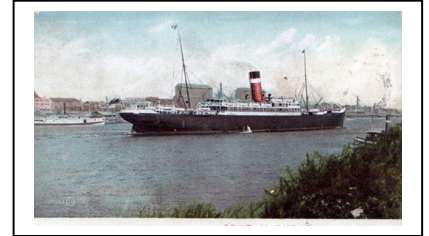
(Right above) *The above information and the photograph likewise entitled – is Private Rose one of those belligerent-looking figures? - is from an article by Nancy Frey to be found on the internet entitled: 10th Regiment "Royal Grenadiers" at Valcartier Camp, 1914.*

Three weeks and three days after his appointment with the doctor of the Army Medical Corps, Private Rose was attested on September 22, 1914, at *Camp Valcartier* and, on the same day, the formalities of his enlistment were brought to a conclusion when the Commanding Officer of the 3rd Canadian Overseas Infantry Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Rennie, declared – on paper – that...*James Rose...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

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



There was to be little time for training for the 3rd Battalion in Canada; it would have to be done once Private Rose had arrived in the United Kingdom. It was to be only days after his attestation, on September 25, that the 3rd Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*) boarded His Majesty's Transport *Tunisian* at Québec for the trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom.



(Above right: *The image of a peace-time Tunisian departing Montréal is from the bing.com/images web-site.)*

In fact, *Tunisian* was not a large vessel; although a trans-Atlantic liner of the *Allan Line*, she could accommodate only some one-thousand third-class passengers and a further four-hundred fifty in first and second class; thus Private Rose's Battalion, apart from perhaps some miscellaneous personnel, was to have the run of the entire ship.

If *Tunisian* followed the example – or perhaps it was she who set it – of other vessels, then, having weighed anchor in the *Port of Quebec*, she then was to *drop* it again only minutes later. On or about September 25, once having embarked all their military personnel passengers, she and a number of other ships then sailed *upstream* some two kilometres from Quebec City to spend the next few days afloat in *Wolfe's Cove*.

Whenever it was that *Tunisian* sailed from Québec – a number of the ships did so on September 30 - she was then to drop anchor days later further downstream, at the Gaspé. There the gathering convoy of thirty-one transports and its naval escort organized itself for the trans-ocean voyage before having finally sailed from Canadian waters on October 3.

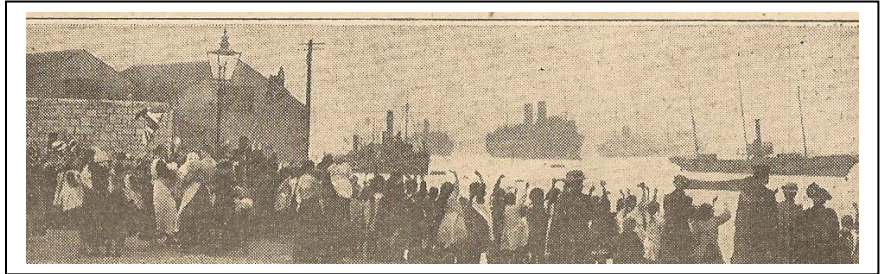
Whether Private Rose was aware of it or not is not documented but, on October 5, as the formation was passing along the south coast of Newfoundland, the small Bowring Brothers' steamer *Florizel*, carrying the *First Five-Hundred* of the Newfoundland Regiment overseas, sailed to meet it and to join it.

The convoy reached its destination, the English south-coast naval port of Plymouth-Devonport, on October 14. However, such was the poor organization of the port at that time, that some troops were to remain on board their ship for several days before disembarking. In fact the convoy had been sailing for Southampton but a submarine scare had brought about a change in plans and Plymouth-Devonport, undergoing refitting and renovations, was to be used – *faute de mieux*.

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Private Rose's Battalion was not one of those to spend the longest amount of time in the harbour on board ship: however, five days must have seemed more than long enough as the 3rd Battalion was not to set foot on land until October 19, whereupon it was immediately transported by train from Friary Station, Plymouth, to the large military encampment on Salisbury Plain.

The 3rd Battalion War Diarist concludes his entry of that day, then opens his entry for the next by noting that the subsequent railway journey was not to start until...1st train 10.45. P.M. 2nd train 11.45. P.M. ...arrived AMESBURY, 1st train. 5.30. A.M. 2nd train. 6.45. A.M.

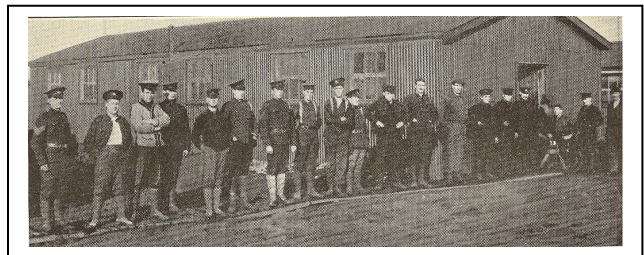


Bustard Camp, the unit's destination, was yet a further five or six hours' march distant, the trek was to be undertaken on foot, and *Bustard Camp* was reached at ten-thirty in the morning of the next morning, October 20.

(Right above: *The convoy carrying the Canadian Expeditionary Force at anchor in Plymouth Hoe on October 14, 1914 – from The War Illustrated*)

The Army Regulations of the day were such that troops were to undergo some fourteen weeks of training from the time of enlistment; at that point they were to be considered as being fit for *active service*. Thus the newly-arrived Canadians were to spend the remainder of October and up until the first week of February, 1915, in becoming proper *Soldiers of the King* – even if they were *colonials*.

On February 4 the Canadian Division* marched to a review area where they were inspected by His Majesty, King George V and the War Minister, Lord Kitchener**. The next few days were spent in final preparation for departure before, on February 8, the 3rd Battalion boarded a train at Amesbury to take it to the English west-coast port of Avonmouth.



*Often designated as such until, logically, the advent of the 2nd Canadian Division, when it became the 1st Canadian Division.

**For whom the Canadian city of Kitchener was named in 1916 – it had been called Berlin until then.

(Right above: *Canadian troops during the autumn of 1914 at Bulford Camp, Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire – from The War Illustrated*)

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At Avonmouth, Port of Bristol, on the same February 8, the 3rd Battalion – by then a component of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade - boarded HMT *City of Edinburgh*, the ship then sailing on the morning of February 9 as part of the Canadian Division Armada. While for many ships and their Canadian Division passengers – both animal and human - it was apparently to be a very rough and unpleasant voyage, the 3rd Battalion War Diarist makes no comment of it whatsoever.

Two days later, on February 11, the vessel dropped anchor in the French port of St-Nazaire on the coast of Brittany; the 3rd Battalion disembarked and, by five o'clock on that same evening, was travelling northwards by train to the area of the Franco-Belgian frontier.

The unit was, however, travelling northward without Private Rose among its ranks. There appears to be no reason given among his records – perhaps he had been considered to be lacking in training - but on the day of the *City of Edinburgh's* sailing from England, he had been transferred to the 9th Battalion at Tidworth, this Battalion having been ordered to stay behind in the United Kingdom to act as a training and reserve unit.

From this point on, unfortunately, Private Rose's records are incomplete and remain so even after the time that he – likely – re-joined the 3rd Battalion in the field on April 28, in the Belgian village of Vlamertinghe, during the *Second Battle of Ypres*.

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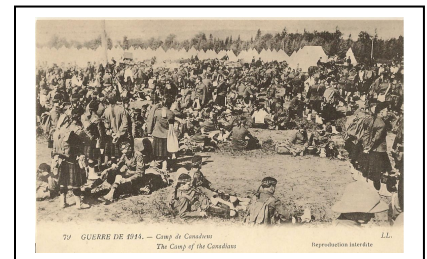
By February 17 the 3rd Battalion had reached the northern French town of Armentières on the Franco-Belgian frontier where it was to spend a week. During the month which followed, the unit had then served in and about the *Laventie Sector*, to the south of Armentières and it was not to be until April 18, at twenty-five minutes past ten in the morning, that the unit – in fact, the entire 1st Infantry Brigade - had traversed the Franco-Belgian frontier into the *Kingdom of Belgium*.



(Right above: *While the caption reads that these troops are 'English', this could be any unit in British uniform – including Empire (Commonwealth) units. It is early in the war as there is no sign of a steel helmet.* – from a vintage post-card)

The Brigade had crossed the frontier to the west of the Belgian town of Poperinghe where it was then to remain for two days before it had advanced eastwards to Vlamertinghe for two more. It was at that moment that the Germans had decided to launch their attack in an effort to take the nearby city of Ypres.

(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)

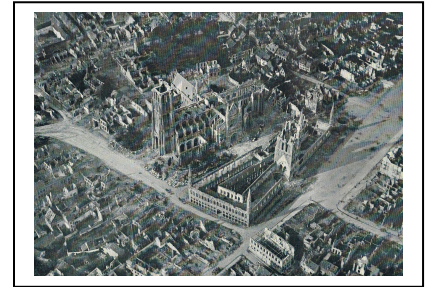


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The other units of the Canadian Division had also been serving in the *Ypres Salient* for only a very short space of time. During these first few days of Canadian tenure *the Salient* had proved to be relatively quiet. Then the dam had broken - although it had been gas rather than water which, for a few days, was to threaten to sweep all before it. The date was April 22, 1915.

(Right below: *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 *Second Battle of Ypres* was to see the first use of chlorine gas by the Germans during the *Great War*. It was 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 had been overwhelming.



(Right: *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 first been noticed at five o'clock in the afternoon of that April 22. In the sector subjected to the most concentrated use of this new weapon the French colonial troops, serving to the Canadian left, had wavered, then had broken, leaving the left flank of the Canadians uncovered.

Thus a retreat, not always very cohesive, had become necessary while, at the same time, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 1st Infantry Brigade were being moved forward to support the efforts of the French and of the Canadian 3rd Infantry Brigade to hold the line.



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

By the second day, the 23rd, the situation had become relatively stable – at least temporarily - and the positions in the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan had been held until the morning of the 24th when a further retirement was to become necessary.

At times there had been breaches in the defensive lines but, fortunately, either the Germans had been unaware of how close they had come to a breakthrough, or else they had been without the means to exploit the situation. And then the Canadians had closed the gaps.

The 3rd Battalion was to remain attached to the 3rd Brigade to the north-east of *the Salient* until April 26 when it had been withdrawn to Vlamertinghe where it had re-joined – at least on paper - the 1st Brigade. Having remained there to repose on the following day, the unit had next been ordered forward to the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan to dig trenches.

By that evening some twelve-hundred yards had been excavated whereupon the Battalion had returned to Vlamertinghe.

(Right below: *Troops of 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 summer of 1916. – from Illustration*)

There at Vlamertinghe it was to remain until May 3 at which time it had been withdrawn to the vicinity of the northern French centre of Bailleul, there to re-enforce and re-organize.

It had needed to do both: Between the dates of April 22 and 30 (inclusive) the Battalion had incurred some four-hundred sixty-nine casualties – *killed, wounded and missing in action.*

(Right below: *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*)

Some re-enforcements *had* already arrived however, they having done so on April 28 while the Battalion had been re-grouping in the vicinity of Vlamertinghe. It had been a draft of four officers and thirty-two *other ranks* which was to report at two o'clock that afternoon, having been sent to bolster the depleted ranks of the unit.

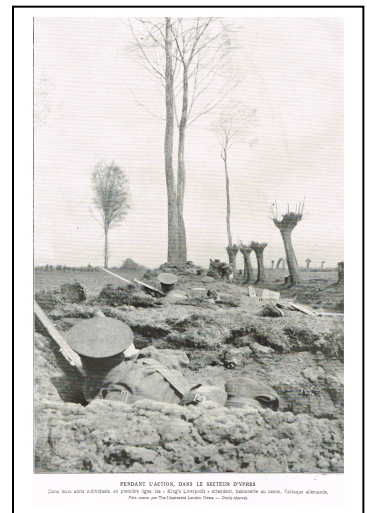
However, it is only studied speculation which places Private Rose among that number.

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Heavy enemy shelling later that afternoon ensured a few more casualties before the Battalion, as already seen above...*marched to area W. of ST-JULIEN for the purpose of digging a line of trenches to be held by the British Lahore Div*...*(Excerpt from 3rd Battalion War Diary entry for April 28, 1915)

**The Lahore Division was an Indian Army formation even though its main artillery and one infantry battalion in four – per brigade - was British.*

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Late in the evening of May 1, the 3rd Canadian Infantry Battalion had been called upon to entrench and to man a position identified in the War Diary as *Crossroads* but at one o'clock in the morning of May 1-2...*the situation reported to be in hand and...Bn ordered to return to Bivouac at VLAMERTINGUE. Arrived at 4. A.M. Bn rested during the day.* (Excerpt from 3rd Battalion War Diary entry for May 1, 1915 – there is no entry for May 2)

(Right below: *Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery, in the reconstructed village, within the bounds of which lie two soldiers of the Newfoundland Regiment* – photograph from 2012(?))

The son of John H. Rose, carpenter, and of Harriet Rose (née *Hatch*) of Grand Bank, Newfoundland, before Toronto, Ontario, Canada, he was also brother to Edward-John, Maria-Forsey, Florence and to Clarence.



Private Rose was reported at first as *missing in action* on May 2, 1915: Casualty report – *Previously reported missing now for official purposes presumed to have died on or since May 2nd, 1915.* – report dated 19/9/16

John Charles Rose had enlisted at the apparent age of thirty years and nine months: date of birth at Grand Bank, Newfoundland, November 15, 1883 (from attestation papers). While a copy of Grand Bank Methodist Parish Records cites 1885 as the year, it also does so for his brother, Edward John – thus perhaps 1883 is more likely correct.

Private John Charles Rose 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 24, 2023.