

Private Edgar Stanley Seeley (Number 790363) of the 47th Battalion (*British Columbia*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated in the stone of the Canadian National Memorial which stands on *Vimy Ridge*.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder-patch of the 47th Battalion (British Columbia) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force is from the Military Wiki web-site.*)

(continued)

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a machinist, Edgar Stanley Seeley appears to have left but a single piece of information a propos his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland: that in November of 1911 he had entered the United States

through the port of Vanceboro, Maine, having recorded that he was a labourer on his way to the community of Contoocook in the state of New Hampshire*.

**On a paper of a later date Private Seeley cited a sister, a Mrs, F.A.(I?) Butler living at 243 Wilson Street, Manchester, New Hampshire.*

However, Edgar Stanley Seeley had returned to Canada by August of 1915. His first pay records show that the Canadian Army began to remunerate Private Seeley for his services on the thirteenth day of that month, in British Columbia. The same file also notes that he was taken on strength by the 54th Battalion (*Kootenay*) on the same day, to be assigned the Regimental Number 429151.

It may be that he enlisted in Vernon B.C. although there appears to be no record of this, but only six days later, on August 19, Private Seeley was in that community, there to undergo a medical examination – which pronounced him as...*fit for the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force.*

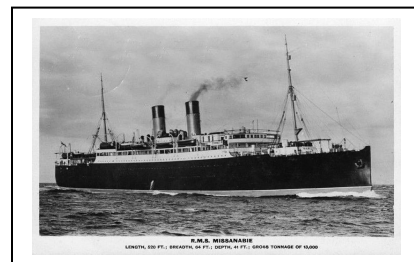
When exactly he attested on this occasion is not clear, but on August 26 the formalities of his enlistment were brought to a conclusion when the commanding officer of the 54th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel A.G.H. Kemball, declared – on paper – that...*Edgar Stanley Seeley...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of the Attestation.*

Apparently by this time, as of June of 1915, the 54th Battalion had been mobilized and was training at *Vernon Camp*, which is surely where Private Seeley was to spend the next two months. However, perhaps because the Battalion was of surplus strength, on October 12 he was transferred to the 47th Battalion (*British Columbia*) based in the British Columbia community of New Westminster.

The 47th Battalion was affiliated to the 104th Westminister Fusiliers, a Canadian Militia Regiment which was instrumental in the recruiting drive of the Battalion*. Apparently the two units trained in tandem, likely partially at least at the Armoury in New Westminster.

**The forces of the Canadian Militia were by law unable to operate outside the borders of the country. However, they were permitted to recruit on behalf of the Overseas Battalions which were being authorized since the beginning of the conflict. While the Militia units were utilized for local defence, a great number of their soldiers transferred to the Battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.*

Private Seeley was now to wait only a month before His Majesty's Transport *Missanabie* was scheduled to sail from Montreal to the United Kingdom. In the meantime of course, the 47th Battalion would have to traverse the greater part of the country by train. It did so and on November 13 of 1915, the 47th Battalion embarked, the vessel then sailing later that day.



Private Seeley, however, was not on board.

(Preceding page: *The photograph of His Majesty's Transport Missanabie – the ship on which Private Seeley never sailed - is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

It is difficult to place Private Seeley during this period. He was *struck off strength* by the 47th Battalion on November 7, at the time being recorded as a deserter: but when had he abandoned his unit – in Montreal, during the cross-Canada train-ride, or even before?

There appear to be no viable pay records in his dossier from October 12, 1915, when he transferred to the 47th Battalion, until January 8 when he was taken on strength by the 131st Battalion (*Westminster*), also based in New Westminster.

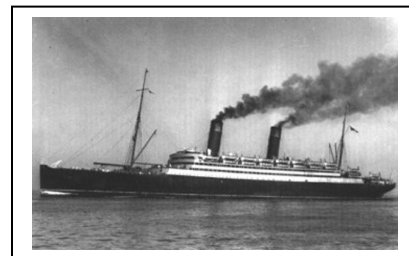
Neither does Private Seeley appear to have suffered any consequences – apart from the loss of pay – because of the incident; nor seems there to be any reason offered for his desertion. And then, just into the New Year of 1916, he was once more enlisting into the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Even *then* his story is still a little convoluted as a further par record mentions not money, but a transfer on January 8, 1916, from the 104th Regiment (*Westminster Fusiliers*) - to which he had apparently been attached since New Year's Day – to the 131st Overseas Battalion (*Westminster*) of the CEF.

On January 8, 1916, Edgar Stanley Seeley, went through the process of enlistment – this does not preclude his attachment to the Canadian Militia unit (see above): medical examination – fit again – attestation and the written satisfaction of all of the above, on behalf of his new commanding officer, by a Major Cunningham.

The 131st Battalion was, as has been seen, also based in New Westminster; it was also affiliated with the 104th Regiment (*Westminster Fusiliers*) and, as in the case of the 47th Battalion up until the time of its departure, was to train with that unit. It was now to do so for a further nine months until it too travelled, across the *entirety* of the country, to the Nova Scotian capital and port-city of Halifax.

Upon the outbreak of war the Royal Mail Ship *Caronia*, a vessel of the *Cunard Line*, had been requisitioned by the British Admiralty to serve as an Armed Merchant Cruiser. In 1916 this role had been amended to that of a troop transport and it was as such that, on November 1, 1916, she took on board Private Seeley's unit as well as the 102nd Battalion.



(Right above: *The photograph of the RMS Caronia is from the Caronia (1905) Lost Liners web-site.*)

On the day before, the 110th and the 114th Battalions of Canadian Infantry had also embarked; on this occasion, well over four-thousand military personnel were to take passage on *Caronia* to the United Kingdom.

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The ship sailed on the same November 1, to arrive in the English west-coast port of Liverpool ten days afterwards, on



November 11. From there the 131st Battalion was transported by train to the large Canadian military complex of *Shorncliffe*, established by this time on the Dover Straits, Kent, in the vicinity of the harbour and town of Folkestone.

(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*)



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

There the entire 131st Battalion (*Westminster*) – some one-thousand personnel all told - was absorbed on November 14 by the 30th Canadian Reserve Battalion* based at the subsidiary *East Sandling Camp*. It was a posting that for some, Private Seeley among that number, was to be of a very short duration**.



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

**Before the end of the Great War, Canada was to have despatched overseas two-hundred fifty battalions – although it is true that a number of these units, particularly as the conflict progressed, were below full strength. At the outset, these Overseas Battalions all had presumptions of seeing active service in a theatre of war.*

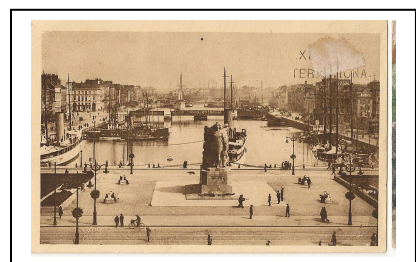
However, as it transpired, only some fifty of these formations were ever to be sent across the English Channel to the Western Front. By far the majority remained in the United Kingdom to be used as re-enforcement pools and they were gradually absorbed, particularly after January of 1917, by units that had by then been designated as Canadian Reserve Battalions.

***The 30th Reserve Battalion was itself absorbed, by the newly-formed 1st Canadian (Reserve) Battalion on January 4, 1917.*

Only thirteen days afterwards, on November 27, he was once more transferred, on this occasion to his previous unit, the 47th Battalion, which was already serving on the Continent. On the same day he was *struck off strength* by the 30th Reserve Battalion and placed on board ship to sail to France.

While there appears to be no record on the itinerary taken by Private Seeley, he likely passed through the nearby harbour at Folkestone and landed on the coast opposite in Boulogne. He would then have entrained for the Canadian Base Depot in proximity to the industrial city of Le Havre on the estuary of the River Seine.

At Le Havre he was *taken on strength* at the Base Depot to be organized and trained before being despatched to his new unit. This occurred thirteen days later, on November 11; two



days later again, Private Seeley reported *to duty* with the 47th Battalion.

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

It is likely that he was among the ninety-two re-enforcements who arrived in the town of Albert at fifteen minutes past six on that evening. The fighting companies of the 47th Battalion were in the front-line trenches at the time, so the town of Albert appears to be where the new arrivals remained for the time being.

The 47th Battalion was fighting in the final actions of the *First Battle of the Somme*.

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The 47th Battalion (*British Columbia*) was a component of the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself an element of the 4th Canadian Division, and it was as a unit of that 4th Canadian Division that the Battalion had landed in France in August of 1916, some three months prior to Private Seeley's arrival. The 4th Canadian Division was the last such formation to arrive on the Continent, having been preceded by three others.

**There was also to be a Canadian 5th Division but, once having been formed, it remained in the United Kingdom for the duration of the Great War.*

From the time of the arrival of the (1st) Canadian Division* on the Continent in February of 1915, *it* and the succeeding Divisions had spent much of their time on the *Western Front* in the *Ypres Salient** - one of the most lethal theatres of the entire *Great War* - and also in that part of the front leading southwards from there to the Franco-Belgian frontier area.



By the summer of 1916 there were to be four Canadian Divisions serving there, a fourfold increase on the numbers which had fought in the *2nd Battle of Ypres* in April of the previous year.

**The 1st Canadian Division – until the arrival of the 2nd Division it had logically been designated as simply the Canadian Division – had also served on two occasions in northern France, from February to April of 1915 in the Fleurbaix Sector, and also in May and June of the same year, during the confrontations at Festuberg and Givenchy.*

(Right above: *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 to be little left standing. – from Illustration*)

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By the end of the month of August, the majority of the elements of the Canadian 4th Division had landed on the Continent. They *also* were despatched to the *Kingdom of Belgium*, there to learn their trade*, being used in tandem with the 1st Canadian Division in and about the area to the south-west of Ypres.

****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)

This co-operative arrangement did not last long. The British High Command was about to call on the Canadians to supply troops to replace those who had fallen in battle on fields one-hundred kilometres to the south. By the end of September, most of the Canadian troops remaining in Belgium were those of the 4th Division: the other three Divisions had departed.

As much as a month earlier, by the end of August, a number of units of the 1st and 2nd Divisions had *already* been ordered on their way southwards. The 47th Battalion, soon to be undergoing intense preparatory training, was in its turn, and in little more than a month's time, on October 3, also to be making that journey to *the Somme*.

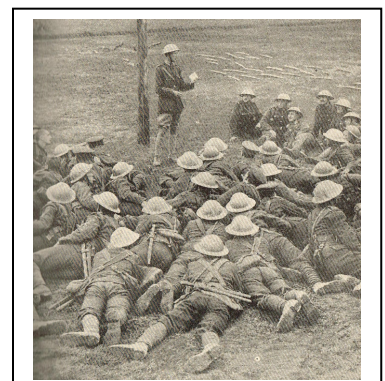
Meanwhile, by the beginning of that October, the *First Battle of the Somme* had been ongoing for three months. It had begun with the disastrous attack of July 1, an assault costing the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the short space of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

On 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.



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



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 or about August 30 to become part of a third general offensive.

The first major collective contribution of the newly-arrived Canadians was to be in the area of the two villages of Flers and Courcellette, a confrontation which was to occur five weeks before the arrival of the 47th Battalion on the scene.

(Right above: *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*)

By the beginning of October the 47th Battalion was preparing for its move to *the Somme*. To that end, at mid-day of October 3, the unit began a four-and-a-half-hour march to the railway station at St-Omer.

There it boarded a train which was to leave at half-past five on that afternoon, and to arrive twelve hours later in the town of Doullens. An hour-long wait followed by an hour-long march saw the unit in its billets at seven-thirty on the morning of October 4.

(Right: *Almost a century after the 47th 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*)

(Right: *The small, country town of Doullens at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

The remainder of the transfer to the area of *the Somme* was now to be made on foot. Stopping in places such as Hérissart and Warloy during a long and circuitous march, at half-past mid-day on October 8, 1916, the 47th... Battalion arrives at **BRICKFIELDS** having marched via **SENLIS** and **BOUZINCOURT** and bivouacs on area allotted (Excerpt from the 47th Battalion War Diary).

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

(continued)

The 47th Battalion remained on the site at *Brickfields** for only two nights before the majority of its personnel was moved to nearby *Tara Hill Camp* for a further five days; this is not to say, however, that the officers and men of the unit were inactive. Apart from the day on which they moved camp, they supplied as many as four-hundred personnel per day to act as working-parties, not always a safe job, as several casualties were to testify.



****La Briqueterie (Brickfields), scene of a large British camp at the time, was in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert.***

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

On October 16 there was a short tour in the trenches but at this time no reported infantry activity, the several casualties being due to enemy artillery fire.

Thereafter, life for the 47th Battalion reverted to the routine of the trenches that it had known in the *Ypres Salient* in August and September – although it was surely now even less pleasant than on that former occasion. This relative calm was to last for just under a month.

Excerpt from 47th Battalion War Diary entry of November 10: 7 P.M. *Battalion leaves Brigade Reserve to occupy trenches for the purpose of carrying out a minor operation. It was scheduled for that night of November 10-11.*

The *minor operation* in question was to be an attack on the *Regina Trench* system. This German strongpoint and defensive system had already resisted several attempts to take it, all but one of these previous efforts having been both costly and futile*. The Battalion War Diarist recorded the following:

...The attack which was made at 12 midnight was completely successful, its objective being captured and held in spite of heavy enemy barrage and machine gun fire, a considerable number of prisoners and two machine guns were captured...

Unfortunately he was also able to record forty-two *killed in action*, fourteen *missing in action* and one-hundred ten *wounded*.

(Right: Regina Trench Cemetery – Regina Trench was adjacent to another strong-point, Kenora Trench – and some of the ground on which the Canadian battalions fought in the autumn of 1916 – photograph from 2014)



****And, in fact, on the single successful occasion – also costly - the Germans had been able later to recapture the position. The strong-point was not to be definitively taken by the Canadians until that November 10-11, some three weeks afterwards as recounted above.***

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



Once more it was life in – and out of - the forward area, with reinforcements arriving to fill the depleted ranks. One of those to do so, on November 13 in a draft of ninety-two *other ranks* from the Base Depot, was Private Seeley.

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Two days after Private Selley's arrival in Albert, those serving in the forward area were relieved – five wounded on that day – and returned to billets in the town. The reprieve lasted until November 18 when the Battalion was ordered back into the trenches – six killed and three wounded during the relief. It was likely Private Seeley's first taste of the perils of life at the sharp end.

Withdrawn again just two days later, the unit was in reserve for the next five. Next it was forward again...for the last time.

The Battalion served in the area of Le Sars in the trenches as late as November 24, having its final incurred casualties of *the Somme* - of which two dead - on the previous day; thus the unit had apparently been little affected by the decision that *officially the First Battle of the Somme* was considered to be concluded on November 18 – other sources cite other dates.



On that November 24 the unit was relieved – by another Canadian battalion - and withdrew from the field. On the next day again, Private Seeley's Battalion began to march away from Albert and from *the Somme*.

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

The Canadian forces retired from *the Somme* – some were to be leaving the area before others even arrived – over a period of the two months of October and November. They left by a semi-circular route: at first in a westerly direction before then wheeling northward.

Passing to the west of the battered city of Arras and then beyond, the Canadians found themselves posted in sectors just to the north of the aforementioned Arras and south of the town of Béthune, roughly a thirty-kilometre front running north to south, and comprising most of the coal-mining area of northern France.



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

(continued)

The important coal-mining region into which most of the Canadian Corps had by now been withdrawn after having served at *the Somme* – the thirty kilometres of sectors, from Arras in the south to Béthune in the north – was now to



become an area of Canadian responsibility until October of the following year, 1917.

(Right: *The northern French town of Béthune, the original photograph likely taken towards the end of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Winters on the *Western Front* during the *Great War* tended to be rather dormant affairs, there being little concerted infantry activity except on a local level. There was the inevitable patrolling and the in-favour raiding – the 47th was involved in a number*. The raid was a favourite of the British High Command which felt it was good for morale – although those whose were unfortunate enough to be ordered to undertake these actions apparently were often not in agreement.

Most casualties during these winter months were inflicted by the enemy artillery – at times particularly active - and his snipers, although it apparently was the *sick parades* and particularly the dentistry problems that kept the medical facilities the most active.

**On two occasions incurring at least fifty casualties.*

Battalion War Diaries – including that of the 47th - during this period of December to March of the following spring, for days in a row, even with the unit posted to the front area, report things as *quiet*.

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



During the month of March many of the Canadian Battalions had spent much of their time in intensive training. Among these exercises were to be some different developments: use of captured enemy weapons; each unit and each man to be familiar with his role during the upcoming battle; plaster of Paris scale models and the construction of ground layouts built, thanks to aerial reconnaissance, to show the terrain and positions to be attacked; the introduction of the machine-gun barrage; and the excavation of kilometres of approach tunnels, not only for the safety of the attacking troops but also to ensure the element of surprise.

The 47th Battalion, on the other hand, had spent much of that month of March in the trenches at the front and it was not until the April 2 entry of the War Diary noted... *Rest and preparation for training*. Apparently on April 6 there was held a Sports Day.

On the early morning of April 9 the British Army 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 daily count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it was to be the most expensive operation of the War for the British, one of the few positive episodes being the



Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.

The British campaign overall proved to be yet another disappointment: the French offensive was yet a further disaster.

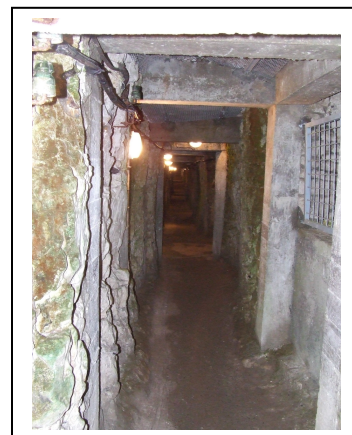
(Right above: *The Canadian National Memorial* which, since 1936, has stood on *Vimy Ridge* – photograph from 2010)

On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian divisions, for the first time acting as a single, autonomous entity under Canadian command, stormed the slope of *Vimy Ridge*, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants. The 3rd and 4th Divisions attacked the *Ridge* itself, the 1st and 2nd were to deal with other objectives on the right-hand, and southerly, slope of the summit.

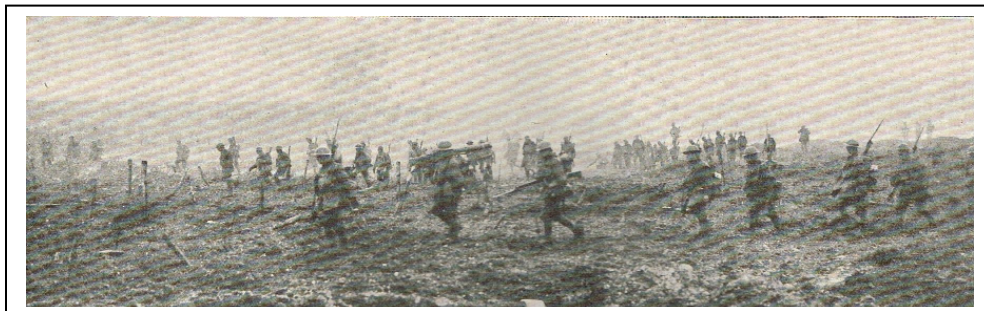
(Right below: *Grange Tunnel*, one of the few remaining galleries still open to the public at *Vimy* one hundred years later – photograph from 2008(?))

The 47th Battalion appears not to have taken a leading role during the operation at *Vimy*. The Canadian 10th Infantry Brigade of which the 47th Battalion was a unit, had been issued orders to capture a promontory known as...*the PIMPLE*. Originally an objective of the first day, April 9, the attack on *the PIMPLE* was postponed due to problems in the area of nearby Hill 145 – on which the *Vimy Memorial* stands today.

Even when the assault went in successfully on the following day the 47th Battalion was to serve *in support* and was called forward only during the evening of April 10 to relieve the 44th Battalion.



(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*)



There had been, on those first two days, April 9 and 10, the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted breakthrough – but such a follow-up on the previous days' successes had proved logistically impossible.

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The Canadians contented themselves with consolidating the captured positions and awaiting the expected counter-attacks which, in fact, never really materialized.

By April 11, the Germans, although having withdrawn some three kilometres, were busy sealing any possible breach and constructing new defences. The conflict was thus once more to revert to one of inertia.

(Right: *Canadians under shell-fire occupying the third line of trenches on Vimy Ridge: the fighting of the next few days was to be fought under the same conditions.* – from *Illustration*)



The official conclusion of the *Battle of Arras* is recorded as May 16, 1917, but well before that date the offensive had lost the momentum of the first few days. British interest was already turning northwards to Belgium and the *Ypres Salient*, and to a summer offensive that was to become one of the most murderous of the entire *Great War: Passchendaele*.

May 16, apart from heralding the end of *First Arras*, was the first day of twelve that were perhaps as pleasant for Private Seeley's unit as it ever was to become on the *Western Front*: the 47th Battalion remained behind the lines training but also indulging in sports, parades, inspection and – for some personnel – leave granted, often back to the United Kingdom: not for Private Seeley, *that would come later*.

It was not until the night of May 28-29 that the unit returned to the forward area, the march into position being noted in the War Diary as having been one of... *very little activity*. Two hours later all that changed as a heavy German artillery barrage welcomed the newcomers to the front.

Not many casualties appear to have resulted from the shelling of that night but during the following days, until June 4 when the 47th Battalion in turn was relieved, a further thirty-three were counted.

(Right: *Canadian troops under artillery fire in the area of Lens at some time during the summer of 1917* – from *Le Miroir*)



It was not to be until the night of June 19-20 that the Battalion made its way forward again to relieve the 78th Battalion. And if no-one else was too happy about the change of venue, at least the Battalion Headquarters Staff appeared to be, as the War Diarist saw fit to report... *the dugouts are very deep and by far the best we have been in*. How those other than the Headquarters Staff were faring was not recorded.

On the final day of this six-day tour in the area of Givenchy (*Givenchy-en-Gohelle*), on June 25, a *minor offensive operation* was undertaken by the 47th Battalion against German positions: *Objectives; Canada, Toronto and La Coulotte trenches as far south as La Coulotte Road*. Five killed in action and fifteen wounded – then the Battalion was relieved and retired to *St. Lawrence Camp*.

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

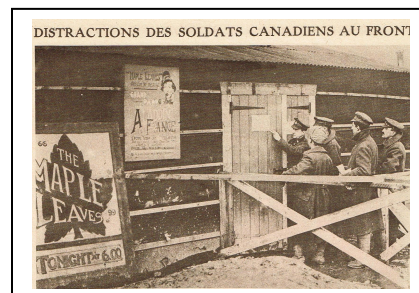


The next six-week period was to be a succession of posting into the rear areas for Private Seeley and the 47th Battalion: *St. Lawrence Camp*; *Chateau de la Haie*; *Verdrel*; *Blue Bull Tunnel* (sorry, but cannot find any details); *Niagara Camp*; and *Zouave Valley* where they played baseball – not that it hadn't been played everywhere else.

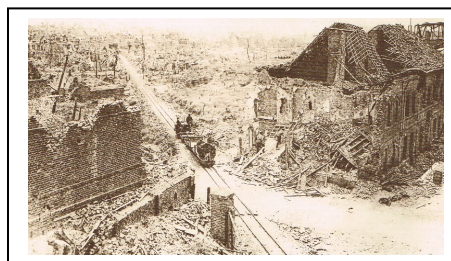
(Right: *Canadian soldiers stand in front of a temporary theatre and peruse the attractions of an upcoming concert. – from Le Miroir*)

And it was now Private Seeley's turn for some leave. What the attraction was in Marseilles has not been given to us to know, but he was granted ten days' leave there – a long journey, Marseilles being almost one-thousand kilometres distant.

Having departed on August 9, he was reported as having returned on August 19. The curious thing is that by that latter date he – *officially* – was later to be counted as already possibly dead. Of course he wasn't *really* dead by then - because he was to be posted to the front upon his return *to duty*.



The Battalion had relieved the 75th Battalion on the night of August 17-18 in the front-line trenches and for the first number of days the only apparent hostility was to be shown by the artillery of both sides. However, early on the morning of August 22 the Battalion attacked the enemy positions along the Lens-Arras road.



(Right: *The city and mining-centre of Lens in a calm period towards the end of the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)

The fighting included assaults on enemy strong-points and there was house-to-house fighting all day, much of it, according to the War Diarist, of a hand-to-hand nature...*and 100 of the enemy were accounted for, including 7 unwounded prisoners; the situation made it unwise to take many prisoners... The night was marked by much artillery activity on both sides, also machine-gun fire.* (Excerpt from 47th Battalion War Diary entry of August 22, 1917)

The attack continued on the morrow and was to include a raid on a tunnel system. The Canadians made gains earlier on but the Germans counter-attacked and forced several Canadian withdrawals before the situation stabilized when further enemy thrusts – six in all says the Diarist – were all repulsed.

The two days following were relatively quiet, consolidation of positions, replenishing ammunition and other stores, and the evacuation of wounded being the priorities - apart from the ever-present evasion of the shell-fire of the enemy guns.

During the night of August 25-26 (despite the fact that the War Diarist has 24-25) the 47th Battalion was relieved. Wagons met the unit behind the lines at Souchez and transported it to the rear, back to *Niagara Camp*.



It was not until that time at *Niagara Camp* that there was to be the opportunity to count, all told, the cost of those seven days in the trenches: fifty-five *killed in action*, one-hundred seventy-seven *wounded*, sixteen *wounded - remained on duty*, three *missing in action*.

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

The son of Captain John A. Seeley, mariner – to whom he had willed his real estate and to whom as of January, 1917, he had allotted a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay - and of Orpha Seeley – of Channel, Newfoundland, then later Pender Harbour before Irving’s Landing, British Columbia, he had at least one sibling, his sister (see above) living in the United States, to whom he had willed his personal estate.

Private Seeley was reported as having been *killed in action* between the dates of August 18 (also see above) and August 26, 1917 during an...*attack at Lens*.

Edgar Stanley Seeley had first enlisted at the age of twenty-one years and nine months: date of birth – from attestation papers – in Channel, Newfoundland, November 11, 1893.

Private Edgar Stanley Seeley 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 25, 2023.

