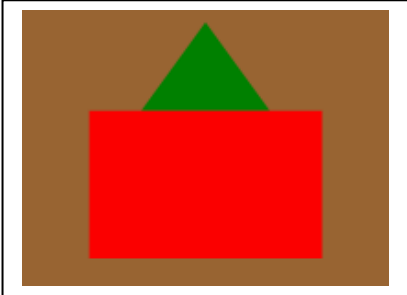




Lieutenant Edward Slattery, DCM, MM & 2 Bars (Number 457479 prior to his Imperial Commission*) of the 3rd Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Valley Cemetery, Vis-en-Artois: Grave reference A.10.

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

(continued)



**Officers were often promoted from the ranks, as was Lieutenant Slattery, in which case their records contain an enlistment number – although it then was no longer referred to. However, many other officers did not enlist at all but, upon request, were granted a Commission from the outset of their service; they therefore were to have no enlistment (regimental) number.*

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *labourer*, Edward Slattery has left behind him little information *a propos* his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Québec except that, according to the 1911 Census, by that time his parents and seven of their children – an unconfirmed source suggests that there were altogether nine Slattery children – were living at 40, Colbourne Street in the Ste-Anne District of Montreal.

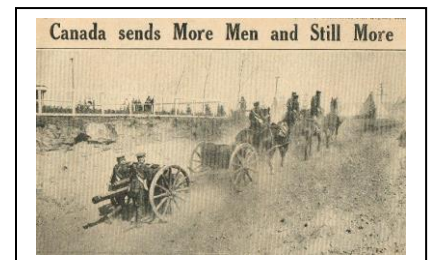
It is also certain, of course, that he was still resident in Montreal – by then at 437, Magdalen Street - in June of the year 1915, as that is both where he and when he enlisted.

It was on the eighteenth day of that month that Edward Slattery presented himself for enlistment*, for a medical examination – which found him...*fit for the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force* – and also then for attestation. The entire procedure of enlistment was then brought to a conclusion by the end of the day when the commanding officer of the 60th Overseas Battalion (*Victoria Rifles*), Lieutenant-Colonel F.A. DeLong Gascoigne, declared – on paper – that...*E Slattery...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

**He had been recruited by the 3rd Regiment, Victoria Rifles of Canada, of the Canadian Militia. The Militia was, by law, not able to operate outside the borders of the country; however, this did not preclude these units from working on behalf of the newly-forming Overseas Battalions. Indeed, many of these recruits had already previously been soldiers of the Militia Regiments.*

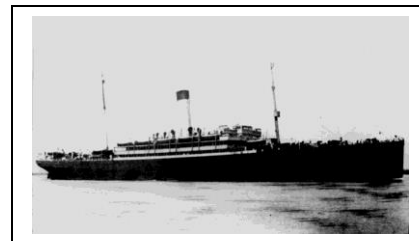
Private Slattery was to train for the two succeeding months at *Camp Valcartier*, just to the north of Quebec City, but while most of the Battalion had still a further two months to spend in Canada, he and some two-hundred fifty other personnel, designated as ‘E’ Company, were now to be ordered overseas to serve as re-enforcements for other units already on *active service* on the *Western Front*.

(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*)*



It was in the port of Montreal that the (1st) Reinforcing Draft of the 60th Battalion took ship on board His Majesty’s Transport *Scandinavian* on August 27, 1915. Private Slattery’s unit was not to travel alone: also taking passage to the United Kingdom on the vessel were the 1st Draft of the 59th Battalion, a draft of the 90th Regiment and the personnel of the 5th Canadian General Hospital.

Scandinavian sailed later on that August 27 to dock some eight days later, after an uneventful ocean-crossing, in the English south-coast naval harbour and establishment of Plymouth-Devonport.



(Right: The image of the SS Romanic in White Star Line colours before she became Scandinavian of the Allan Line in 1912 is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

(Right: The harbour of Plymouth-Devonport as it was almost a century after the Great War, and a lot less busy than at that time - photograph from 2013)



On that September 4 the 60th Battalion Reinforcement Draft was transported by train to the large Canadian military complex of *Shorncliffe* on the coast of Kent and in the vicinity of the harbour and town of Folkestone, a busy place at that time as the 2nd Canadian Division was in the process of shipping out from *Shorncliffe* to the Continent.



Only two days later the entire draft was absorbed by the 23rd Battalion, also based at *Shorncliffe*. The 23rd was an overseas unit which was to get no further than the United Kingdom where, by the autumn of that 1915, it had already become a reserve pool for those battalions serving on the Continent. It was later to officially become one of the new Reserve Battalions, these to be formed in early 1917, although it *did* retain its number, 23*.

(Right above: 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)



**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.

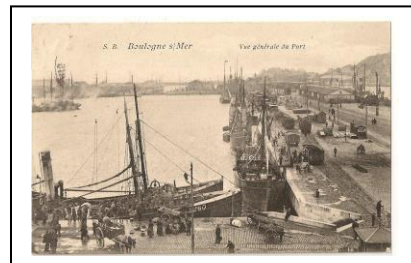
In the meantime, it was once more HMT *Scandinavian* which was to transport an element – in fact, the main body - of the 60th Battalion overseas from Canada, in November, 1915. Having sailed from Montreal on the 6th day of that month, the ship arrived in Plymouth* on November 16, nine days later. From there, however, the Battalion was ordered, not to *Shorncliffe*, but to the new Canadian military complex of *Bramshott*, in the southern 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*)

**A second source has an unlikely Portsmouth.*

Two weeks after the day that *Scandinavian* had disembarked the 60th Battalion in England, Private Slattery was embarking for France, likely passing through nearby Folkestone and the French port of Boulogne on the coast almost opposite, only some two hours sailing-time distant. From there he would have travelled southward to Rouelles, in the vicinity of the industrial city of Le Havre where the Canadians had created a large Base Depot to organize the arrivals coming from England before despatching them to their new units. He reported there *to duty* on December 1.



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



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

Once at Le Havre, Private Slattery was officially *taken on strength* by the 3rd Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*) although it was to be a further nine days before he was despatched to join his new unit. This, according to the 3rd Battalion's commanding officer, occurred two days later again – although the Battalion War Diarist has recorded December 13 as the day on which a draft of thirty-six *other ranks* arrived in the area of Dranoutre, some two kilometres to the north of the Franco-Belgian frontier.

* * * * *

The 3rd Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*) of Canadian Infantry had, by the time of Private Slattery's arrival *to duty*, been serving on the Continent for some nine months. After a stormy passage from the west coast of England, it had disembarked in the French port of St-Nazaire on February 11 of 1915. The 3rd Battalion was a component of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself an element of the Canadian Division*.

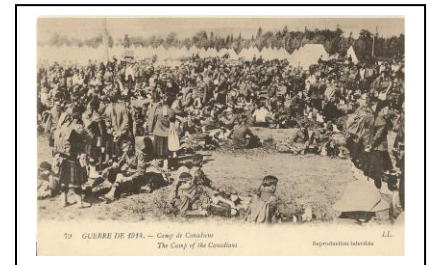
**The Canadian Division was designated thus until the formation of the Canadian 2nd Division when, logically, it then became the Canadian 1st Division.*

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 Canadian Infantry Brigade – had traversed the Franco-Belgian frontier and advanced into the *Kingdom of Belgium*.



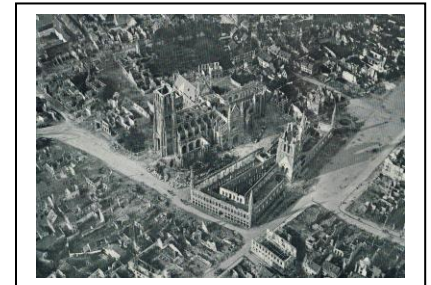
(Right above: *While the caption reads that these troops are ‘English’, this could mean any unit in British uniform – including Empire (Commonwealth) units. This is early in the war as there is no sign of a steel helmet. – from a vintage post-card*)

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 continuing 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*)

The other units of the Canadian Division had also only been serving in the *Ypres Salient* for a very short space of time, just days. During this limited period 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 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 little left standing. – from Illustration*)

The 2nd *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.

(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 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 to be 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 remained intact until the morning of the 24th when a further retirement was to become necessary.

At times there were to be breaches in the defensive lines but, fortunately, either the Germans had been unaware of how close they were to a breakthrough, or else they had not had the means to exploit the situation. And then the Canadians had closed the gaps.

The 3rd Battalion had remained attached to the 3rd Brigade to the north-east of the Salient until April 26 had been ordered to withdraw to Vlamertinghe and had re-joined – at least on paper - the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade. Having remained there to repose on the following day, the unit had next been sent forward to the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan to dig trenches. By the evening of that day some twelve-hundred yards had been excavated whereupon the Battalion had then returned to Vlamertinghe.



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

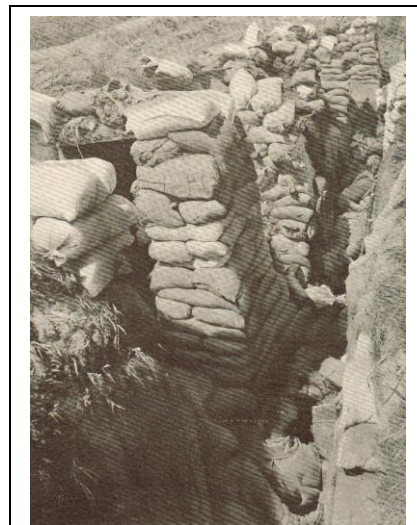
It needed to do both: Between the dates of April 22 and 30 (inclusive) the Battalion had incurred some four-hundred sixty-nine casualties – *killed, wounded and missing in action*.

(Right 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*)

(continued)

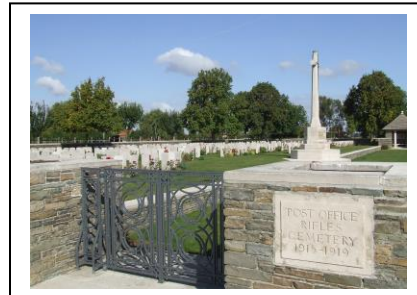
On May 15 the 3rd Battalion had been ordered down the line south into France and into the areas of Festubert and Givenchy. The French were about to undertake a major offensive just further south again and had asked for British support.

(Right: A French photograph of German trenches – complete with dead defenders and perhaps attackers - captured in the area south of Givenchy before it was to become an area of British responsibility – from Illustration)



There at Festubert and then at Givenchy a series of attacks and counter-attacks was to take place in which the British High Command would manage to gain three kilometres of ground but would also contrive to destroy, by the use of the unimaginative tactic of the frontal assault, what was left after *Second Ypres* of the British pre-War professional Army. The (1st) Canadian Division was also to contribute to the campaign but was not to participate in the operation to the same extent.

(Right: The Post Office Rifles Cemetery at Festubert wherein lie some four-hundred dead, only one-third of them identified. – photograph from 2010)



It nonetheless suffered heavily. It and the 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 – was to incur over two-thousand casualties before the offensive drew to a close.

The French effort further south – using the same suicidal tactics - was to likewise be a failure but on an even larger scale; it would cost them over one hundred-thousand *killed, wounded and missing*.

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

(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(?))



On the first day of June the 3rd Battalion had been relieved from its posting at Festubert; a few days hence, however, it was to be 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 with the same results, although less numerous, from having repeated the same mistakes – on or about June 24 the Canadian Division was to be retiring from the area.

(continued)

**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.*

As a part of that withdrawal from Givenchy, the 3rd Battalion was to march to billets in or near to the community of Oblinghem, two kilometres removed from the larger community of Béthune. From there it was to move towards and back into Belgium, to *the Ploegsteert Sector*, just across the frontier.

Having reached the area of Ploegsteert, there the 3rd Battalion would remain – as would the entire (1st) Canadian Division. In the next months it was to become 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 Battalion War Diary and the itineraries used, it would have been surprising had it been otherwise.

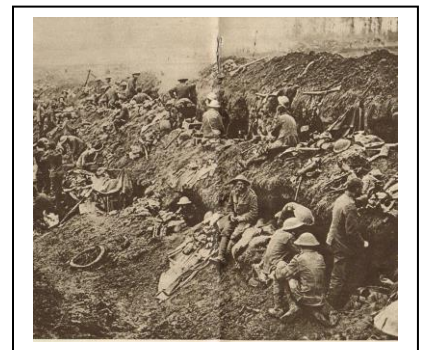


(Right above: *Some of the farmland in the area of Messines, Ploegsteert Sector, a mine crater from the time of the 1917 British offensive to be seen in the foreground – photograph from 2014*)

The 3rd Battalion, when out of the forward area, was often to be found billeted in or in the vicinity of the Belgian community of Dranoutre (today *Dranouter*) at no distance at all from the frontier itself.

It was now to be a further nine months before the 3rd Battalion would be involved in a further major altercation. Of course, local confrontations – brought about by raids and patrols - were to be fought from time to time, and artillery duels and the ever-increasing menace of snipers were to ensure a constant flow of casualties. But by far the greatest part of that period was to be spent submitting to the routines, to the rigours and to the perils of that daily grind in the trenches*.

**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.

(Preceding page: 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)

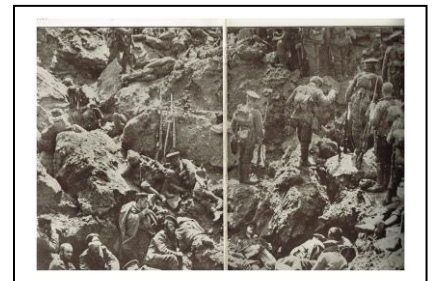
In the meantime, in September of 1915 it had been the turn of the 2nd Canadian Division to land on the Continent through Boulogne and to also immediately be posted north into Belgium. This formation was not to be stationed in the *Ypres Salient* as had been - or on the frontier itself, as at that time were - the units of the now-1st Canadian Division, but in-between, down the line south of Ypres and in the area of St-Éloi. It was there, after some seven months of that morose life in and about the trenches, that the 2nd Division was to fight its first major action of the *Great War*.

Also in the meantime, of course, in December of 1915, and therefore some months prior to the 2nd Canadian Division's first altercation with the enemy, Private Slattery's reinforcement draft from the Base Depot had joined the 3rd Battalion in the *Ploegsteert Sector* where he was to remain until the first days of April, some fifteen weeks later.

* * * * *

For the personnel of the above-mentioned 2nd Canadian Division, the first weeks of April were not to be as tranquil as those being experienced during the same period by Private Slattery and the other personnel of the 3rd Battalion.

The *Action at the St. Eloi Craters* officially took place from March 27 until April 17 of that spring of 1916. St-Éloi was – and still is - a small village some five kilometres to the south of the Belgian city of Ypres and it was in this area that the British had excavated a series of galleries under the German lines, there to place explosives which they would detonate on that March 27. That detonation had been followed up by an infantry assault.



(Right above: A purported attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – perhaps in the area of St-Éloi – from Illustration)

After a brief initial success the attack soon bogged down – due to those very mine-craters which, filled with water, were to prove impassable - and by April 4 the Canadians were replacing the exhausted British troops. They were to have no more success than had 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 had been a 2nd Canadian Division affair and the personnel of the 3rd Battalion during that period would likely have been disturbed by only the noise of the German artillery and by the efforts necessitated by the unit's transfer into its new sector of responsibility.

(continued)

It was on April 1 that the 3rd Battalion began a two-day march moving closer to Ypres and, more precisely, by a semi-circular itinerary, to the area of *Bedford House* and *Dickebusch*, a sector just to the south-west of the city.

On April 11 it was posted to the forward area and the trenches further to the east. Thus the unit was well placed to be of service during the crises of June 2-13*.

**The 3rd Canadian Division had come into official being at midnight of December 31, 1915, and January 1 of 1916 and in late March had taken over responsibility for a south-east sector of the Ypres Salient (see below). Thus, when the 1st Canadian Division had moved up to Dickebusch in April, it meant that the three Canadian Divisions were now serving side by side.*



(Right above: *From La Clytte Military Cemetery, looking northwards over the three kilometres which separate it from the neighbouring village of Ouderdoom (today Ouderdom): this is ground over which the 3rd Battalion passed in March and early April of 1916 on its way to the Salient. – photograph from 2017)*



(Right: *Bedford House Cemetery on a misty autumn morning: there are just fewer than twenty-two hundred graves within its bounds, some two hundred of them Canadian. – photograph from 2014)*

From June 2 of 1916 until June 13, eleven days following, was fought the battle for *Mount Sorrel* and for the area of *Hooge*, *Sanctuary Wood*, *Maple Copse*, *Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* 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 of which they never took advantage.

(Right above: *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-east of the city of Ypres (today Ieper) whose spires and towers may be perceived in the distance – photograph from 1914)*

(continued)

The British Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, reacted – perhaps a bit 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 was to be a horrendous experience, many of the intended attacks never went in – those that *did* go in, went in piecemeal and the assaulting troops were cut to shreds - the enemy remained where he was, and the Canadians were left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.

Ten days later the Canadians again counter-attacked; on this occasion they had been better prepared and were better supported. The lost ground for the most part was recovered, both sides were back where they had started – except for a small German gain at *Hooge* - and the cemeteries were that much fuller.



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

As for Private Slattery’s 3rd Battalion, at the outset of the battle, during the evening of June 2, it had been ordered to *stand to*; then, at three o’clock the next morning the unit had been ordered forward from the *Dickebusch Huts* into the support area. By mid-day of June 3 the unit was further forward, at the *Railway Dugouts* – having sustained twenty casualties on the way in - in the south-east sector of *the Salient* and some two kilometres behind *Maple Copse*. From there the 3rd Battalion had supplied working-parties and burial-parties for the remainder of the day.

The unit was to remain at *Railway Dugouts* until the early morning of June 9 when it was relieved by the Canadian 25th Battalion. Not having been directly involved in any infantry activity while at *Railway Dugouts*, the 3rd Battalion had nonetheless continued to provide working-parties for the area of *Hill 60* and during these several days had been almost constantly subjected to bombardment by a very active and efficient German artillery. Now it, Private Slattery’s unit, was to withdraw.

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



The relief lasted for two days. On June 11, the 3rd Battalion was ordered back into the same area, close to the village of Zillebeke. On the following day the unit moved up towards the forward area: the *Battle of Mount Sorrel* was about to come to its violent conclusion.

Maving moved up and into their jumping-off trenches by ten o’clock on the evening of June 12, the personnel of the 3rd battalion was now to be witness to the intense forty-five-minute barrage undertaken by the Canadian artillery just after midnight.

(continued)

At one-thirty in the morning the curtain of fire lifted towards the rear of the German front lines which were then rushed by the infantry. The succeeding German lines were then attacked and carried, again using the same co-operative tactics between the artillery and infantry.

(Right below: *Hill 60 as it remains a century after the events of 1916 and 1917 – when the detonation of a British mine under the summit removed any resemblance to a hill - in the area of Mount Sorrel, the village of Hooge, Sanctuary Wood, Railway Dugouts and Maple Copse: It is kept in a preserved state – subject to the whims of Mother Nature – by the Belgian Government. – photograph from 2014*)

By eleven o'clock that evening when the 3rd Battalion was once again relieved, the unit had incurred forty-four *killed in action or died of wounds*, two-hundred eighteen *wounded* and ninety-three *missing in action*. Thus ended the *Battle of Mount Sorrel*: status quo.

But Private Slattery had been involved during only the first days of the battle: then he had been wounded.



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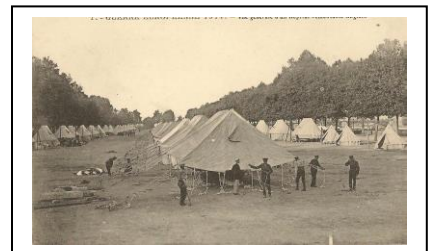
If his personal records are to be believed, June 4 of 1916 was a busy day for Private Slattery. He is reported as having been admitted into the 1st Canadian Field Ambulance – likely an advanced dressing station - for treatment to shrapnel wounds to his head and to the right leg.

He was then forwarded to the Number 1 Divisional Rest Station and to the 3rd Canadian Casualty Clearing Station – the latter at the *Rémy Sidings*, Lijssenhoek, south of Poperinghe – both on that same day, although in which order this occurred appears not to be recorded*.

From the last of these he then made the journey to the Number 1 Canadian General Hospital at Étaples for yet further treatment, now to a slightly-wounded right hand**.

**It is not impossible that Private Slattery was wounded on two occasions that day. It may have been while at the Rest Station, after having received attention to his head and leg, that his hand was injured.*

***It should be remembered that these were the days before anti-biotics and the even the most innocuous injury could be dangerous if not treated promptly and carefully.*



(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: Other such medical establishments were of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card*)

(continued)

The wound to the hand was apparently of a more serious nature than those to his head and leg – these latter two are mentioned no more. But Private Slattery was to stay in hospital for three weeks for treatment to the hand until June 25, before being released to travel to the Canadian Base Depot close to Le Havre. After a further five days there, on June 30 he was categorized as Class ‘A’ and therefore once again *fit for duty*. Even so, that duty was not to be with the 3rd Battalion as he is not reported as having departed from Le Havre until August 4 of that 1916.

And even when he did, on August 4, Private Slattery was not to immediately return to the 3rd Battalion, but to report to the 1st Entrenching Battalion*, only recently organized and officially serving only since the first day of August. In fact, the unit had just arrived from England and was in the process of moving from France to Belgium. On August 4 its train passed through Le Havre and it was *there* that Private Slattery reported *to duty*.

The unit’s first posting was to be in the area of Dickebusch and Boeschepe in the *Ypres Salient* with the 1st Canadian Division, a sector which the 1st Entrenching Battalion and Private Slattery reached only on August 6. Two days later the unit was already hard at work preparing positions for its own Headquarters’ facilities.

**These units, as the name suggests, were employed in defence construction and other related tasks. They comprised men who not only had at least a fundamental knowledge and experience of such work but who also had the physique to perform it. However they also came to serve as re-enforcement pools where men awaiting the opportune moment to join their appointed unit might be gainfully employed for a short period of time.*



(Right above: *Canadian troops from an unspecified unit engaged in road construction, this also being a job to which entrenching battalions were to be assigned – from Le Miroir or Illustration*)

Hardly had Private Slattery concluded his task constructing the Headquarters’ positions at Dickebusch – or maybe the job was to be left unfinished - before he was despatched on August 10, as one of a detachment of forty re-enforcements to return to his own 3rd Battalion – which by that time was on the move.

* * * * *

For the 3rd Battalion, after the conclusion of the encounter at *Mount Sorrel* and Private Slattery’s imposed departure to hospital, the remainder of the month of June, that of July and the first days of August had been a reversion to the routines of trench warfare, the 3rd Battalion having remained posted in much the same area south and south-west of Ypres.

On August 9 the Battalion had marched west across the frontier and to the vicinity of the northern French town of Steenvoorde. It was to be a further fourteen months before the unit would return to the *Kingdom of Belgium*.

(continued)

The 3rd Battalion War Diary entry of August 10 notes simply: *En route... Draft of 40 o.r. from entrenching battalion...* Private Slattery had returned.

* * * * *

Two days later again after the arrival of Private Slattery's draft, and after a further march of some fifty kilometres, still towards the west, the 3rd Battalion reached its destination and its billets – ...*very comfortably settled*...notes the War Diarist - at Tournehem. The unit was to remain there for the following two weeks, time that would be occupied in training and by route marches. It was then to be ordered southwards and to the area of the British offensive of that summer, *the Somme*.



(Right above: *Canadian troops likely in trenches built for training purposes – they are too prim and proper to be the real thing – and here now equipped with steel helmets and 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.

It was ten o'clock in the evening of August 27 when the 3rd Battalion marched out of Tournehem on its way to the railway station at Audvieuq. Apparently, according to the unit's War Diary... *Civilians extremely sorry to see battalion go.* Having then arrived at the station at one-thirty in the morning, the Battalion was obliged to wait a further ninety-five minutes before the train departed.



Having travelled at first by train, then by bus, and finally on foot, Private Slattery's Battalion arrived in the provincial town of Albert in the French *Département de la Somme* on the penultimate day of August.



By that September of 1916, the *First Battle of the Somme* had been ongoing for two months. It had begun with the wretched 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.

(continued)

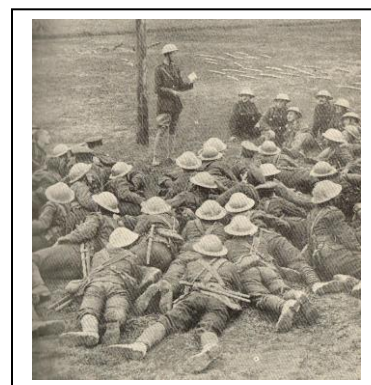
(Preceding page: *The Canadian Memorial which stands by the side of the Albert-Bapaume Road near the village of Courcellette* – photograph from 2015)

On that first day of *First Somme*, all but two small units of the attacking divisions 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), then the Australians and New Zealanders (July 23) before the Canadians had entered the fray on or about August 30 to become part of a third general offensive. Their first collective major action was to be in the area of the two villages of Flers and Courcellette.

Meanwhile, on August 30, the 3rd Battalion marched to the large military encampment which had been designated as *Brickfields Camp (La Briqueterie)* in the near proximity of the provincial town of Albert. A few hours later the unit was allotted billets in the town itself, accommodations which at least the War Diarist found to be... *quite comfortable*.

(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*)



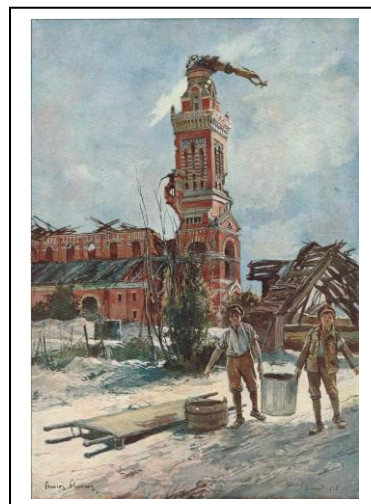
On the following day, August 31, the Canadian newcomers were to find themselves in likely less luxurious quarters after having moved up to the forward area in order to relieve an Australian unit in the so-called *Sausage Valley*.

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

The second day of September subsequently saw the 3rd Battalion move forward again, on this occasion into the front-line trenches in the area of *Mouquet Farm*. There appears to have been no coordinated infantry action during this period but enemy planes apparently put in an appearance and the unit was to be shelled almost incessantly for the duration of the six-day tour.

Even without there having been any infantry action, by the end of that period Private Slattery's Battalion had incurred a casualty count of twenty-two *killed in action* and a further one-hundred forty-five wounded.

(continued)



The 3rd Battalion retired to the *Brickfields Camp* on September 8 but apparently not too far away from the front for *one* of its four Companies to be ordered to mount a reportedly successful raid on enemy positions on the morning of the 10th.

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

On the following day again, September 11, the entire 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade began a five-day circular march around the region, a trek which was to see it arrive back in the *Brickfields Camp* on September 16. Only the day before, of course, Canadian units had attacked in the area of Flers-Courcelette as part of a larger general offensive*. As it happened, the endeavours by the Canadian 2nd Division at Courcelette** were to be one of the very few successful ventures on a day when most of the news from the other attacks was again to be disappointing.



It was now on the evening of September 17 that Private Slattery’s unit was ordered to move forward to the trenches in front of Courcelette, there to relieve the 25th Battalion of the Canadian 2nd Division. The 3rd Battalion was withdrawn from that forward area again on September 20, the tour having cost a total of ninety-four casualties (also see the citation of Private Slattery’s decoration below), many of them, according to the War Diarist, unfortunately having been caused by *friendly* artillery fire falling short.



(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*)

**Having already been in action since the end of August, many of the units of the 1st Canadian Division were not to fight at Courcelette, having been sent for on a five-day walk. This not the last time that this would occur and was likely to free up billeting space for the incoming troops, many of them from the 2nd Canadian Division, who were to be among the attackers on September 15.*

***Some of the first tanks ever to be used in battle had apparently been a positive element during the fighting of the day on the 19th Battalion’s Front.*

(Right: *One of the tanks employed during the 1st 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*)



Back up in the trenches for but a single day, on September 24 the unit had to contend with three local counter-attacks by the Germans. These were beaten off but, of course, at a price: eight *killed* and sixty-five *wounded* all told. Relief was to come at midnight.

Then there was to be another march undertaken by the entire 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade – of eight days’ duration on this occasion - commencing on September 26.

Subsequently, upon its return to Albert, the 3rd Battalion received re-enforcements and immediately began to prepare for a further operation only days later. On October 7 it was ordered to vacate its billets in the town and to proceed to assembly points in the appropriately-named *Death Valley*.

According to the Battalion War Diarist, the numbers of the attacking party from the 3rd Battalion – to be compared to the casualty list (see below) – and even including the newly-arrived draft of ninety re-enforcements, amounted to just fourteen officers and four-hundred eighty-one *other ranks*, less than fifty per cent of British (and therefore Canadian) regulation establishment strength for an infantry battalion.

The same Battalion War Diarist has dedicated over three pages to the events of October 8 during the attack by the 3rd Battalion on the enemy *Regina Trench* system. The following is a resume of the same events based upon excerpts from the War Diary of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade:

(Right: *Regina Trench Cemetery and some of the area surrounding it which was finally wrested from the Germans by Canadian troops on November 10-11 of 1916 – photograph from 2014*)



Zero hour (4.50 a.m.) – The 3rd Canadian Battalion advanced straight to their objective and found little trouble in passing through the enemy’s wire which had been fairly well cut by the artillery. They met with some resistance from the enemy but soon overcame this and succeeded in taking their objectives which they at once began to consolidate...

...in front of the Quadrilateral many gaps were found which allowed the troops (of the 4th Battalion to) enter the German trenches. Some congestion was caused by mixing with the 3rd Canadian Battalion until a bombing party had worked along the front line trench...

...the enemy commenced very strong bombing attacks against both Battalions. The force of these attacks was against the Quadrilateral and apparently came along the trenches leading to it from the northeast and northwest. An extremely heavy artillery bombardment was opened about the same time on our newly captured trenches and on our jumping off trenches.

The bombing posts were driven in at the Quadrilateral and the enemy forced our men along the trenches to the southwest and southeast. The local commanders reorganized bomb sections and led them forward but could not relieve the pressure and our men were finally forced to retire to the jumping-off trenches.



A few of the 3rd Canadian Battalion remained in the left of the German trenches but these men were withdrawn at dark...

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

By the end of the day the casualty count, *all ranks*, was as follows: *Killed in action* – thirty-four; wounded – one-hundred-fifty three; *missing in action* – one-hundred fifty-two (Extracted from the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary).

Out of the four-hundred ninety-five personnel of the 3rd Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*) who had attacked on that morning of October 8, 1916, just one-hundred fifty-six remained on duty to be counted at muster. The Battalion War Diary differs, citing that... *1 officer and about 85 O.R. were left*. Terrible... whichever version one chooses to believe.



(Right: *Ninety-eight years later, the land on which the action was fought, as seen from Regina Trench Cemetery – photograph from 2014*)

It was at this time that Private Slattery received recognition on two occasions: on October 6 it was announced to the Battalion authorities that he had been awarded the Military Medal; and two days afterwards, on the day of the attack on *Regina Trench* – perhaps as a consequence of the numerous casualties of the day – he was promoted *directly* to the rank of sergeant.

The *London Gazette* (29854, page 12057) of December 8, 1916, cites that: *His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to confer the Military Medal for bravery in the Field to the undermentioned Non-Commissioned Officers and Men... 457479 Pte. E. Slattery, Inf.*



From...*Canada, Military Honours and Awards Citation Cards*:

MM While acting as Company runner near Courcelette on September 17th 1916 for 60 hours this man carried messages continuously between Company and Battalion H.Q's he made at least one trip every three hours over several hundred yards of ground that was shelled continuously.

On October 13 a draft of fifty re-enforcements arrived in Albert to bolster the strength of the 3rd Battalion. They were just in time to march from there with the remnants of the unit... away from *the Somme*. In fact it was the entire 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade which passed the starting point at eight o'clock on that morning of what was apparently... *a fine day* - from the point of view of the weather as well.

The itinerary of the march took the 1st Brigade at first well to the west before it turned northwards to pass behind – again to the west of – the battered city of Arras.



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

By October 24, having left Albert ten days earlier, Sergeant Slattery's unit came to the end of its trek in the vicinity of Camblain l'Abbé – a small community some fifteen kilometres to the north-west of Arras – to be posted to Divisional Reserve.

(Right: *Camblain l'Abbé, the village shown here to be a little less busy than it had been a hundred years before – photograph from 2017*)



This was the area – from just north of Arras in the south to Béthune in the north - to which all the Canadian units withdrawing from *the Somme* were sooner or later to find themselves and where they were to remain – even including the time of the *Battle of Arras* the following spring - until October of 1917.

Some seven weeks after Sergeant Slattery's arrival at Camblain l'Abbé, he was granted a ten-day leave of absence. His destination does not appear to be documented although, as he appears to have been absent for *thirteen* days – December 14 to 27 – it may well be that he spent his leave in the United Kingdom, the extra time having been allowed for travel.

The winter of 1916-1917 was one of the everyday business of life in - and out of - the trenches. There was to be little if any concerted infantry activity apart from the constant patrolling and the occasional raiding by both sides. This latter activity was encouraged by the High Command who felt it to be a morale booster which also kept the troops in the right offensive frame of mind: the troops who were ordered to carry them out in general apparently loathed these operations.

There was of course the daily trickle of casualties, for the most part due to the enemy's artillery and to his snipers. To this should be added, it ought not be forgotten, the daily count of those sick - plus a surprising number in need of dental work - who also helped to keep the field ambulances and the casualty clearing stations busy.



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

On March 9 Sergeant Slattery's Battalion was withdrawn to a training area in the proximity of the community of Cambligneul. It was to remain there for eighteen days, undergoing a programme that was to be the eventual lot on the majority, if not all, of the battalions of the Canadian Corps before the upcoming British offensive.

Something, this becoming obvious to all, was in the offing and the Canadian troops were soon to be busy digesting a variety of new ideas in soldiery: 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 frontal 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*, the use of tunnels and underground approaches to mask from the enemy the presence of troops and also to ensure the same troops' security.

On March 27 the unit moved to the area of Écoivres and St-Éloi in order, from there, to relieve another battalion in the forward area; it remained there until April 1, on that date moving back into support. A further four days and Sergeant Slattery and his comrades-in-arms were back at Camblyneul.

(Right and right below: *The village of St-Éloi* at an early period of the Great War and a century later: The ruins of the Abbey St-Éloi – destroyed in 1793 – are visible in both images. – from Le Miroir and (colour) from 2016*)

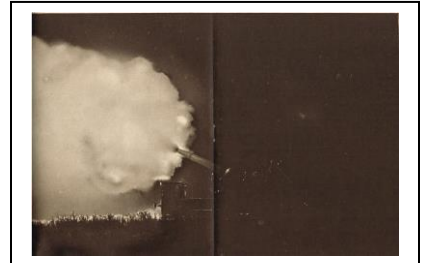


**Not to be confused with St. Eloy (St-Éloi) in southern Belgium where Canadian forces also served: Mont St-Éloi is to be found to the north-west of the city of Arras in northern France and was, at the time, well behind the lines.*



As these final days passed, the artillery barrage had grown 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 were well aware that something was in the offing and their guns in their turn were throwing retaliatory fire onto the Canadian positions - and their aircraft were constantly busy overhead.



(Right: *A heavy British artillery piece continues its deadly work during a night before the attack on Vimy Ridge. – 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 – see above - 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 all to happen.*

On April 8 the 3rd Battalion was to move to its assembly points – although not through any of those kilometres of tunnels of which so much has rightly been written. The War Diarist noted the address of the Battalion's Commanding Officer... *stating that we had one of the most difficult feats to perform and had been given the honoured position of the right of the Canadian Corps and he had every confidence that the Battalion's work would be as gallant and steady in the attack and as firm in holding and consolidating as ever...*



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

On April 9 of 1917 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 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 being the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.

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

On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions, for the first time acting as a single, autonomous entity – and with a British brigade now 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.

(Right: *The monument to the Canadian 1st Division which stands just outside the village of Thélus was erected during the Christmas period of 1917. – photograph from 2017*)

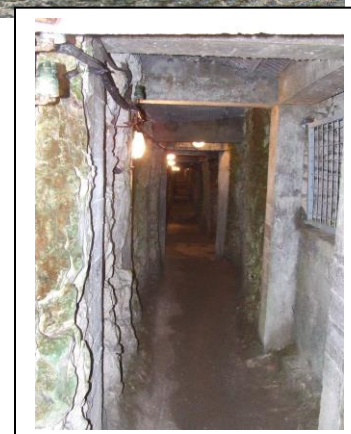


(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4th or 3rd Division, burdened with all the paraphernalia of war, on the advance across No-Man's-Land during the attack at Vimy Ridge on either April 9 or 10 of 1917 - from Illustration*)



The 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions had been charged with the responsibility for the *Ridge* itself; to their immediate right had been the 2nd Canadian Division – with a British brigade under its command - attacking in the area of the village of Thélus on the southern slope; and to the right again the 1st Canadian Division had been ordered to clear the area lower down the slope again towards the village of Roclincourt.

On April 10 the Canadians finished clearing the area of *Vimy Ridge* of the few remaining pockets of resistance and began to consolidate the area in anticipation of German counter-attacks – attacks which in fact really never amounted to much.



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

(continued)

There had on those days perhaps been the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted breakthrough – but such a follow-up on the previous day's success had proved logistically impossible thanks to the inclement weather and also because of the orders to consolidate. Thus the Germans closed the breach and the conflict once more reverted to one of inertia.

The remainder of the relatively short, five-week long, *First Battle of Arras* was not to be fought in the manner of those first two days and, by the time that the confrontation officially concluded, little else had changed and the Germans had recovered from the initial Canadian success.

By mid-day of April 11, the cost to Sergeant Slattery's Battalion for the first two days of April 9 -10 had been counted: they had amounted to thirty *killed in action*; seventy-three *wounded*; and fifteen *missing in action*. There were more to come before the end of the month: seven *killed*, forty-one *wounded* and three *missing**.



**A second source cites one-hundred eighty-five as the total.*

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

During the *Battle of Arras*, the success at *Vimy Ridge* had been almost the sole exception to the rule*, the rule being costly engagements more often than not accomplishing very little. Arleux-en-Gohelle on April 28 gained some ground for the Canadian attackers but at great sacrifice.

The confrontation at Fresnoy on May 8, in which Sergeant Slattery's 3rd Battalion – and the entire 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade - played a role, was otherwise; the losses to the Battalion were to be greater than those at Vimy Ridge: forty-four *killed*; one-hundred sixty *wounded*; and *twelve* missing – *and* the Germans retained the village.

**This was so not only for the Canadians. The British, Australians and South Africans experienced bloody reverses, not to forget the Newfoundland Regiment and its four-hundred eight-seven casualties on April 14 at Monchy-le-Preux* (see immediately below).*

**On April 14, 1917, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had been ordered into an attack which was militarily untenable. It had failed and the enemy had organized a counter-attack. The remnant of the Battalion, its commanding officer, and a single soldier of the Essex Regiment – ten men in all – had held off this attack until re-enforcements arrived. All ten had subsequently been decorated.*

Although sources differ somewhat, the Newfoundland unit incurred losses of some four-hundred sixty on that day – killed in action, wounded, missing in action and taken prisoner – a count second only to that on the field at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916.

(continued)

(Right: Seen from the west from the British point of view, and also from the Arras-Cambrai Road, this is the re-constructed village of Monchy-le-Preux almost a century after the events of 1917 and 1918. – photograph from 1914)

On May 6 the 3rd Battalion retired to the area of Petit Servins where it was to remain until the first days of the month of June. It was then transferred to another vicinity, identified only as F.11, for training which lasted for a week, during which period the unit also received the attentions of some German aircraft which dropped a number of bombs on top of Sergeant Slattery.



The 3rd Battalion War Diary Appendices for that same month of May of 1917, document that Sergeant Slattery was now to receive a first Bar* to his Military Medal. The award was gazetted** (see below) some two months later.

**A Bar to a medal is the equivalent of a second such decoration.*

***Appearing by Authority in the London Gazette, a government document published periodically in which are found announcements of official awards, appointments, promotions and the like.*

The *London Gazette* (30172, page 6825) of July 9, 1917, cites that: *His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of a Bar to the Military Medal to the undermentioned Non-Commissioned Officers and Men... 457479 Sjt. E. Slattery*, Can. Inf**.*



**Serjeant*

From...Canada, Military Honours and Awards Citation Cards:

MM Bar This N.C.O. acted with great gallantry throughout the attack of FARBUS WOOD on April 9th 1917 under very trying circumstances. Early in the engagement he was wounded but refused to leave his men and continued the assault, being of great assistance to his Company Commander in siting and digging the main line of resistance.

(Right above: *The bar is worn across the medal ribbon; in this instance the ribbon shown is the Military Medal, to which he was later to receive a second Bar.*)

Only a month later, the 27th day of June was the occasion of notification of a further decoration for Sergeant Slattery, likely for his conduct at some time during the *First Battle of Arras*, but neither the date nor the venue of the episode appears to have been documented. A month later, the decoration was gazetted as follows:

The *London Gazette* (30204, page 7663) of July 26, 1917, cites the following:

His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal to the undermentioned Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty in the Field... 457479 Sjt. E. Slattery, Can. Inf**.*

DCM, No. 457479 Sergeant E. Slattery

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty – in leading his platoon to other objectives with great dash, and by his personal supervision and gallantry, repulsing several hostile counter-attacks – His determination was a splendid example to his men.



The remainder of the month of June and then all of July comprised once again the rotations of the troops into the front, support and reserve positions. The casualties of the last ten days of that month of July while the Battalion had been in Brigade Support had come to five *killed* and fourteen *wounded*.

(Right: *The remnants of the village of Loos (see below) as it was already in early 1915 – from Le Miroir*)



The first nine days of August were again quiet, seven of them having been spent in billets in the mining community of Nœux-les-Mines. On August 10 Sergeant Slattery and his Battalion were ordered forward into the Left Sub-Sector at Le Bis 14 and near to the mining village of Loos.

The 3rd and the other battalions of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade were relieved four days later, on August 14, and Sergeant Slattery's unit withdrew to Noeux-les-Mines whence it had marched only days before. The relieving troops were of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, 1st Canadian Division. On the morrow, *they* and the 2nd Brigade, in conjunction with units of the 2nd Canadian Division, were to launch an attack on German positions to the north of the city and mining-centre of Lens.

The 3rd Battalion, meanwhile, was to remain in reserve until the afternoon of August 16: it then relieved elements of the 3rd Brigade which had incurred severe casualties during not only the attack of the 15th, but also during the night of the 15th-16th when the enemy had made several counter-attacks.

This was not a confrontation fought in isolation. The British High Command had long since by this time – even before the *First Battle of Arras* - decided to undertake a summer offensive in the *Ypres Salient*, Belgium. Thus, in order to divert German attention – and also his reserves - from *that* area, it had also ordered operations to take place at the sectors of the front running north-south down from Béthune to Lens.



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

(continued)



The Canadians were to be a major contributor to this effort and the attack by the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions at Lens on August 15 was a part of this campaign.

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

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 was high enough to be considered - by the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie – to be the key feature in the area, its capture more important than the city of Lens itself.

(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*)



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

Objectives were limited and had for the most part been achieved by the end of August 15. Due to the dominance of *Hill 70* over the entire area, it was expected that the Germans would endeavour to retrieve it and so it proved; on the 16th several strong counter-attacks were launched against the Canadian positions, positions that by this time had been transformed into defensive strong-points.



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

As has already been recorded in a previous paragraph, the 3rd Battalion had moved up to the forward area to relieve troops of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade and to take over support positions. It appears that by this time Sergeant Slattery was serving with 'A' Company which took over the Old German Front Line and adjacent support positions at five o'clock in the morning of August 17.

(Right below: *Canadian troops advancing under fire in No-Man's-Land during the summer of 1917 – From Le Miroir*)

From there, just after midnight of the night of August 17-18, Sergeant Slattery's unit had begun to supply carrying-parties. The troops of the nearby 2nd Battalion, already short of small-arms ammunition and bombs (hand-grenades) were being counter-attacked and heavily shelled during that night and the situation was becoming critical: rations and water were by that time non-existent and casualties numerous.



(continued)

The morning was to bring no amelioration to the situation and the Germans were once more massing and threatening. The carrying-parties of the 3rd Battalion were therefore obliged to once more supply their comrades-in-arms, and now over open ground and in plain view of the enemy. That it was to be accomplished at all seems fortuitous: that it was to be done also without casualties – as it was - appears miraculous.

On the next day it was the 3rd Battalion's turn to move into the front line, relieving the hard-pressed 2nd Battalion which thereupon retired to the support area. During those preceding two days, Sergeant Slattery's Battalion had incurred casualties of sixteen *killed in action*, fifty-two *wounded* and a single other rank reported as *missing in action*: serving in a carrying-party was an oft-times a perilous occupation – not that the patrolling and wiring which it was now to undertake was any safer.

On the night of August 20-21 the 3rd Battalion was relieved by a unit of the Canadian Mounted Rifles and retired to the area of the mining village of Mazingarbe for a change of underclothing, outer clothing – and even some new uniforms were provided, as was a bath. On the 23rd ...*The Battalion moved to ORLENCOURT and MONCHY-BRETON for two or three weeks rest... Billets crowded, otherwise good... Battalion strength now 33 Officers and 823 Other Ranks...* (Excerpts from 3rd Battalion War Diary entry for August 23, 1917)

Apparently the Canadian offensive campaign of the summer had been planned so as to continue into September and even longer, but the ongoing British offensive in Belgium was proceeding a great deal less well than expected and the High Command was looking for reinforcements to make good the exorbitant losses.

The Australians, New Zealanders and then the Canadians were ordered to prepare to move north, thus the Canadians were obliged to abandon any further offensive plans that they might have had.

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



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 at times precarious existence of life in – and behind – the forward area.

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

During this time the daily grind of life in the trenches was still to be the rule. On most days, according to the Battalion War Diary, it was the artillery which was active – but, of course, on most days the infantry was usually the target.



However, there were several occasions on which the unit was retired to areas behind the lines, particularly for training, yet the War Diary also shows that sports were being considered more and more to be a morale booster among the troops.

For its part, the 3rd Battalion football – the round ball - team won the Brigade championship and its officers defeated their counterparts of the 1st Battalion in indoor baseball by the score of 20 – 4.

Whether Sergeant Slattery was a football player appears not to be recorded.

On September 3 the 3rd Battalion began to move forward from the rear area of Monchy-Breton and by September 5 was installed as Brigade Reserve in the Cité St-Pierre in the outskirts of the major centre of Lens*. There, during a tour which was to last seventeen days, it and its sister battalions of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade, succeeded one another into support and front-line positions as has been described in an earlier paragraph.

**The so-called Cités – often named after saints – were the suburban communities which had grown up around the numerous colliery pit-heads – ‘les fosses’ (see below) - in the area of Lens.*

During this period, the Battalion’s activities ranged from more football matches against other Canadian units to offensive patrols against German ones; from a Lewis-Gun – a light machine-gun – school to carrying-parties; and from a *tug-of-war* competition which the Battalion team lost...to a *real-war* German raid on September 19 which the Battalion team was reported to have won.

Apart from the afore-mentioned patrolling there was little offensive action reported during this time and, as usual, the majority of casualties were victims of enemy artillery activity*.

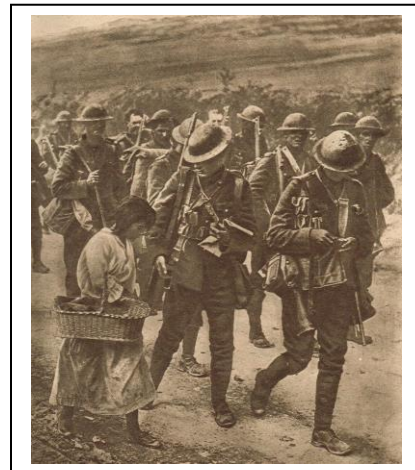
**It has been estimated that during the Great War between sixty and seventy per cent of Casualties on the Western Front were due to artillery fire.*

(Right above: A Canadian carrying-party – some of the work done by troops when in support and reserve – on the Lens front during the summer of 1917: The use of the head-band – the Tump - to facilitate carrying had by that time been adopted from the indigenous peoples of North America. – from *Le Miroir*)

Sergeant Slattery and his 3rd Battalion retired from the area of Cité St-Pierre on September 22 to the vicinity of Fosse 10*, Sergeant Slattery’s Company ‘A’ having been relieved by a British (*Imperial*) unit.

**Fosse, apart from meaning ‘ditch’ in French, also signifies the pit-head or shaft of a mine.*

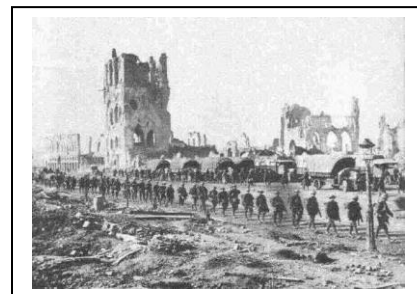
(Right above: Canadian soldiers on the march in the rear area during the summer of 1917, reportedly – by the publisher - buying out-dated English newspapers from a young French girl – from *Le Miroir*)



On September 25 the 3rd Battalion moved further to the rear again, to the area of Bruay, where it remained until October 7 when it was ordered forward to *Noulette Huts* in the vicinity of Aix-Noulette. On both occasions, training – well-laced, nonetheless, with sports - was the primary activity. Then five days later, on October 12, the unit was withdrawn to rest billets – *pretty fair*...recorded the War Diarist – at Haillicourt.

The *rest* in question lasted some two days before it was supplanted by more musketry, bayonet-fighting, physical-training, lectures and inspections, all presumably with the upcoming posting to the fighting in Belgium in mind.

It was not to be until the final weeks of October of 1917 that the Canadians became embroiled in the British-led offensive to the north-east of Ypres. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign has come to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was – at least ostensibly - one of the British Army's objectives.



(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres and past the Cloth Hall on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

From the time that the Canadians entered the fray, it was they who shouldered a great deal of the burden. From the week of October 26 until November 3 it was to be the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions which spearheaded the assault, with the 1st and 2nd Divisions in reserve. From November 5 until the official end of the affair the reverse was true with troops of the 2nd Canadian Division finally entering the remnants of the village of Passchendaele itself.



(Right above: *An unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield during the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

Excerpts from the 3rd Battalion War Diary entry of October 20, 1917: *The Battalion started to move to Belgium today at 8.40 a.m.... The move took place as a Brigade march, this unit being the third in the line... The Battalion arrived in Ham en Artois at 2.45 p.m. in splendid condition... Billets are good, although limited.*

The march continued for the following two days before the Battalion halted, after a tiring long, final trek, in the billeting area of the two northern French communities of Terdeghem and Cassel. This ground was to be the Battalion's posting for the next nine days, a period of intense training, practice assaults and of lectures, all *a propos* the unit's imminent role in the attack on the *Passchendaele Ridge* itself, an assault that was to be launched on August 26 by the Canadian 3rd and 4th Divisions in conjunction with British and other Commonwealth forces.

Sergeant Slattery was not, however, to be a part of the *Passchendaele* campaign. It seems likely – although not confirmed - that he was one of the five *other ranks* whom the War

Diarist recorded as having departed from the Battalion on October 27; they were en route back to the United Kingdom.

If this was so, then of course he was not to hear the news to be documented in the War Dairy on October 29.

Excerpt from 3rd Battalion War Diary entry of October 29, 1917: *...The following decorations were published today for gallantry during last tour in the line, from September 5 to September 22, in front of LENS.*

457479 – Sergeant E. SLATTERY – 2nd Bar to the MILITARY MEDAL. “A” Coy.

The London Gazette (30540, page 2409) of February 22, 1918, cites that: *His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of a 2nd Bar to the Military Medal to the undermentioned Non-commissioned Officers and Men... 457479 Sjt. E. Slattery, D.C.M., M.M., Can. Inf**.*



*(M.M. gazetted 9th December, 1916)
(1st Bar gazetted 9th July, 1917)*

(Right above: The second bar is also worn across the medal ribbon; in this instance the ribbon shown is that of the Military Medal shown on a previous page. The author could find no image of an MM & 2 Bars.)

* * * * *

The reason for which Sergeant Slattery left the 3rd Battalion in late October of 1917 to be transferred to the United Kingdom was that he had been selected to attend an (*Officers*) Cadet School. For this purpose, on October 31, he was *taken on strength* by, and posted to, the Central Ontario Regimental Depot at *Shorncliffe**.

**Whether this was where he was to do some of his officer training - although perhaps not likely - is not clear.*

There now followed a posting which, since it was of less than a single day's duration, may well have been purely bureaucratic in nature: to the Headquarters of the *Overseas Military Forces of Canada* at nearby *East Sandling Camp*. There he was attached - and thereupon ceased to be attached - all on November 2, 1911.

Sergeant Slattery was next posted *on Command* to the OTC (*Officer Training Course* - or is it *College*?) at Bexhill-on-Sea where, since May of that year, Canadian officer candidates had been sent. Eleven weeks later, on January 26, 1918, he was *struck off strength* at Bexhill, having been granted an Imperial Commission on that day to the rank of (*Temporary*) Lieutenant*. His new appointment was to the 1st Central Ontario Regiment at *Shorncliffe* where he was *taken on strength* the following day, January 27 – see also below.

The London Gazette (30540, page 1925) of February 8, 1918, cites the following:

(continued)

Central Ontario Regt.

The undermentioned to be Temp. Lts:-

26 Jan., 1918

...No.457479 Serjt. E. Slattery, D.C.M., M.M...

A second source then documents Lieutenant Slattery as having been *taken on strength* on that same January 27 by the 12th Reserve Battalion (*Central Ontario*). This unit at the time was also based at *East Sandling Camp*, and since *East Sandling* was in fact a subsidiary camp of the overall Canadian military complex of *Shorncliffe* – and since the 12th Reserve battalion was in the service of the *Central Ontario Regiment* - *both* reports of his posting on that date are likely to be correct.



(Right above: *The venerable gymnasium, seen here from the entrance to the Military Cemetery, perhaps today still stands at Shorncliffe. – photograph from 2016*)

Five weeks later, on March 2, the 12th Reserve Battalion was transferred to *Witley Camp*, another Canadian establishment, this one in the southern extremity of the county of Surrey. Once again, Lieutenant Slattery's posting was to be relatively short: it was to last just over five weeks.

On April 9, 1918, he was *taken on strength* by his former unit, the 3rd Battalion, and proceeded overseas once more to France. Two days later Lieutenant Slattery was reported as having arrived at the 1st Canadian Infantry Base Depot in the vicinity of the coastal town of Étapes.

From there, two days later again, on April 13, he was forwarded to – and reported to - the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp at Calonne-Ricouart, some eighty kilometres to the east of Étapes. There he was to await expedition to his unit.

In fact, Lieutenant Slattery was to wait a further two months for that moment. In the meantime, on May 18, he was to be withdrawn from the CCRC...*for instructional purposes...*a term about which neither his papers nor his pay records, unfortunately, present any details. It was on July 11 that Lieutenant Slattery reported back to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp by then situated at Aubin-St-Vaast.

There now appears a confusing eight-day period at the beginning of which, on July 13, Lieutenant Slattery was recorded on his *Active Service Form* by the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp as...*Attd. 1st Div. Wing from 3rd Bn...*before, on July 21, the same source then entered...*To 3rd Bn. T.O.S. in error...*

Whatever the error, it would appear that Lieutenant Slattery *did* re-join his Battalion during the month of July, likely on the reported 21st, while it was withdrawn to the '*Y*' *Huts Camp* at Étrun, some few kilometres to the west of the city of Arras.

* * * * *

Whether Sergeant Slattery was still on the spot to enjoy it or not, on the day of his reported departure to England, October 27, there had been a visit to the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade – and thus the 3rd battalion – by the Divisional Commander and by the Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur W. Currie...

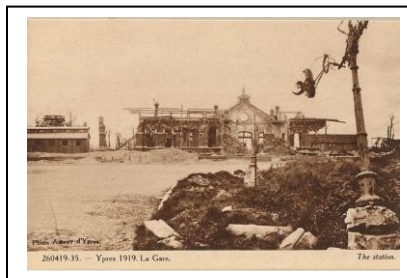
After a short inspection the Brigade was formed into a hollow square, when the Corps Commander gave the Brigade a talk, he told how the Canadian Corps had been brought North for the express purpose of taking PASSCHENDAELE RIDGE, and how the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions had started the attack yesterday by gaining all their objectives on BELLEVUE SPUR, after tough fighting, and that the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade would have the honour of attacking PASSCHENDAELE RIDGE, the final objective. After three hearty cheers...the Brigade marched past... (Excerpts from the 3rd Battalion War Diary entry for October 27, 1918)

(Right: *In the stone of the Menin Gate at Ypres (today Ieper) there are carved the names of British and Empire (Commonwealth) troops who fell in the Ypres Salient during the Great War and who have no known last resting-place. There are almost fifty-five thousand remembered there; nevertheless, so great was the final number, that it was to be necessary to commemorate those who died after August 16 of 1917, just fewer than thirty-five thousand, on the Tyne Cot Memorial (see below). – photograph from 2010)*



Then, only six days later, the 3rd Battalion was to be on the move across the frontier and, after some fourteen months absence, would be back in the *Kingdom of Belgium*.

At twenty minutes to seven on the morning of November 2, a train pulled out of Bavinchove station. The 3rd Battalion was on board – as also was the 2nd Battalion - having earlier that morning marched from Cassel, and both were now on their way to the vestiges of the railway station at Ypres.



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

It was not a long journey, perhaps some twenty-five kilometres – the line no longer exists today – which took two hours and ten minutes to complete. From the railway station on the southern outskirts of the city the Battalion marched – perhaps as per the photograph of an above page – in a north-easterly direction across the ruins of the place to its bivouacs in the vicinity of Wieltje.



(Right above: *Canadian soldiers on the Passchendaele Front using a shell-hole to perform their ablutions – from Le Miroir)*

Then having settled down in the mud for the night, on the next morning the unit drew its battle equipment. 'C' and 'D' Companies were then ordered to the forward area, as were 'A' and 'B' on the following day, November 4, following in their predecessors' footsteps. The four companies moved into their allotted positions during the night of November 4-5.

The next day was spent mostly *in situ* and sheltering from the German artillery which was to be nonetheless responsible for a number of casualties. At dusk the infantry units began to move forward into their various assembly positions and at...7.10 p.m...ZERO hour received from Brigade. Watches were thereupon synchronized, final details accommodated, and apparently the remainder of what was to be a short night was...relatively quiet.



(Right above: *Just a few hundred to the south-west of Passchendaele – and looking in the opposite direction from the site of the monument pictured below – this ground lies in the direction of Zonnebeke – a kilometre or so away - where the 3rd Battalion was positioned on and about November 6, 1917. – photograph from 2010*)

Zero hour for the **ATTACK ON VINE COTTAGES** had been fixed for six in the morning and the guns began to lay down their barrage right on time. An appendix in the 3rd Battalion War Diary which recounts the operation in detail, cites that for about three hours, from seven in the morning until ten o'clock, the different units were reporting having reached and taken their objectives. Numbers of enemy prisoners were also claimed to have been captured and were being shepherded to the rear.

Nevertheless, as the morning progressed there were soon other reports arriving...*enemy shelling quite heavy...urgently require stretchers and bearers...enemy thought to be massing for a counter attack...heavy casualties from Machine Guns...losses heavy...and...steady stream of men coming through the Dressing Station.*

By one o'clock on the afternoon of November 6, the reports in the appendix begin to pass into the *aftermath* stage of the fight: casualty reports, ammunition and water requirements, evacuation of wounded, burial of the dead, prisoner counts and those of captured weaponry and material. At ten minutes to seven that evening the situation was reported simply as...*very quiet.*



(Right above: *The Canadian Memorial which today stands on Passchendaele Ridge – photograph from 2015*)

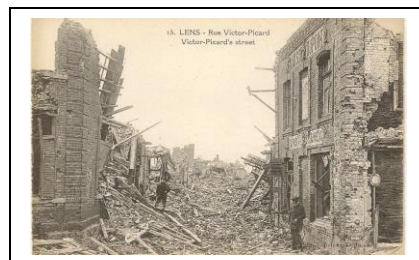
By the following evening the 3rd Battalion was in the process of being relieved and, by two o'clock in the morning of November 8, this was reported as having been completed. Some two hours later the unit had returned to the encampment at Wieltje; in the afternoon it marched to Ypres railway station; and by six o'clock that same evening it had travelled westward to *Derby Camp* in close proximity to the village of Brandhoek – a *very muddy camp*...writes the War Diarist.

Ninety minutes after his arrival at *Derby Camp* the same officer War Diarist had by then reported the cost of the recent action to the Battalion: **3 Officers Killed, 6 Officers Wounded, 61 Killed, 22 Missing, 148 Wounded.**

(Right: *In Tyne Cot Cemetery there lie just fewer than twelve-thousand dead of which some seventy-five hundred remain unidentified; on the Tyne Cot Memorial – the panels on the wall – are commemorated a further thirty-five thousand who have no known grave. Among them are to be counted many of those who ‘had the honour’ of attacking Passchendaele Ridge. – photograph from 2010*)



For the personnel of the 3rd Battalion the *Passchendaele* campaign had been short, a day over a week in all. On November 10 it left *Derby Camp* and was transported by bus back into France. Including that first day, the transfer was to take in all a total of four days with the Battalion overnighing in Robecq, Annezin, Fosse 10 and finally in billets in the town of Liévin, just to the west of Lens.



(Right above: *After four years of constant bombardment – by both sides – the city of Lens looked like this at the conclusion of the conflict – from a vintage post-card*)

On the next day again, November 14, the Battalion's four Companies moved into positions - reserve, support and front - in the *Lens Sector* in front of the *Souchez River*, there relieving British units. It was now back into the everyday grind of existence in the trenches of the Western Front.



(Right above: *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*)

It was now to be eight days before the twenty-three officers and five-hundred seventy-six other ranks of the 3rd Battalion were ordered elsewhere. In the meantime the current tour was to prove to be relatively calm – one *killed in action*, two *died of wounds* and twenty-three *wounded*. This compared to *Passchendaele*...

The unit thereupon retired on November 22 to an encampment in the rear area near Guoy-Servins. There it was to remain until December 2, engaged mostly in training and exercises both physical and mental.

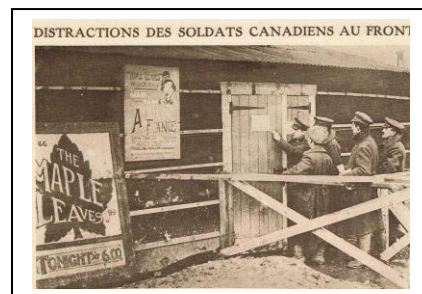
There was also to be a special event of sorts during that month of December, 1917: the Canadian Forces overseas were to participate in the National Election. The War Diarist of the 3rd Battalion makes mention of the vote taking place among Battalion personnel on December 1; he makes no comment on the unit's participation, but in some instances, in other units, it was reported that ninety per cent and more cast their ballot*.

(continued)

**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.*

Christmas for the Battalion was held behind the lines which perhaps allowed for a little more frivolity than otherwise would have been the case; and at midnight on December 31...*the Band and all the Officers saw that the New Year was ushered in in a proper manner, by serenading the Commanding Officer. All training was cancelled for the day, and the Battalion was given a holiday...*

Apart from those happy interludes, the routine of the day – front, support, reserve, rain, snow, mud, patrols, wiring, raids, shelling, the new mustard-gas, sniping, bombing, carrying-parties, working-parties, inspections, church, sports, concerts, musketry, drills, route-marches, cuts, scrapes, tooth-ache, colds, 'flu and the occasional bath - was to prove much the same during this fourth winter of the Great War as it had been during the previous three.



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

Thus the winter passed for the 3rd battalion, much of it in the *Lens Sector* when in the forward area. And then it was the first day of spring.

Perhaps not many people – the Battalion War Diarist appears to have been one of the few exceptions - realize how close the Germans were to come to victory in that March and April of 1918. On March 21, about mid-day, the Battalion personnel had been aware of the sound of gun-fire and then...*News received that the Hun has attacked with 30 Divisions on a 50 mile front to our south, situation obscure.*

On the following day...*No further news of Hun offensive...*and the Battalion had been relieved by the 47th Battalion as planned and had been ordered to move to the rear into *Army Reserve*.

Having transferred the Divisions no longer necessary on the Eastern Front because of the Russian withdrawal from the *Great War*, the Germans had now unleashed a massive attack, designated as Operation '*Michael*', on March 21.

The main blow was to fall at *the Somme* in the area of, and also just to the south of, the battlefields of 1916, and it had fallen for the most part on the British and Commonwealth troops there – particularly where they were adjacent to French forces - but well to the south of the Canadian sectors.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *While the Germans were not to attack Lens – one source says this is a photograph of nearby 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 to oblige them to retain troops in the area. – from Le Miroir*)

The German advance was to continue for just over two weeks before it petered out in front of the city of Amiens. The ultimate failure of the offensive would be the result of a combination of factors: British and Commonwealth resistance, fatigue on both sides, German logistical problems and a great deal of French co-operation with the British were the most significant.

**A second but lesser such offensive, ‘Georgette’, was to fall in northern France and in Belgium on April 9, in Flanders, the area where the Royal Newfoundland Regiment was serving, mostly with the British 29th Division. It also had been successful for a while, but was struggling by the end of the month and much for the same reasons.*



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

It was not until five days after the first attacks that any sense of urgency appears in the Battalion War Diary: shelling at Loos was mentioned on March 22 and, almost as an afterthought, following a report on an officers vs. men baseball game in the March 24 entry...*Enemy offensive continuing.*

On March 26 the...*Battalion stood to from 5.30 AM and was ready to move off at one hours notice in anticipation of a hostile attack near Oppy. In view of a probable move orders were issued about 10.00 AM for Battalion to stand down and rest men as much as possible.* (Excerpt from the 3rd Battalion War Diary entry of March 26, 1918) Nothing further had transpired on that day.

On the following morning, the 3rd Battalion had marched to *Ottawa Huts* in the area of Mont St-Éloi and Écoivres where it had then awaited further orders. When these had arrived, the 3rd Battalion was to move by bus by a circuitous route – via Frévent and Doullens – to the area of Mondicourt some forty kilometres to the south-west of Arras.



(Right above and right: *Écoivres Military Cemetery – adjacent to Mont St-Éloi - seen at the time of - or just after – the Great War, and as it appears a century later – from a vintage post-card and (colour) from 1915*)

More orders were subsequently to follow thus, by the late evening of March 28, the unit personnel had been preparing to occupy its billets in huts at Simencourt, just west of Arras.



(continued)

By then, the Battalion had already travelled a total of some one-hundred thirty kilometres that day only to end up twenty kilometres distant from Mont St-Éloi, from where it had set out less than twenty-four hours before.

The Battalion's agony was, however, yet far from being finished. Excerpt from 3rd battalion War Diary entry of March 29, 1918: *Divisional Staff Officers arrived at 12.15 AM and stated that Battalion must move to DAINVILLE. Busses were supplied and Battalion was clear of SIMENCOURT by 1.30 AM arriving in DAINVILLE about 3.00 AM...*

...No billets were allotted to the Bn but as the civilians evacuated the town yesterday, the Battalion billeted itself. Everyone dead tired and slept quite soundly until 10.00 am...

It was likely of little consolation to later learn that many other Canadian units had been experiencing the same sort of confusion during this hectic period. Finally, the 3rd Battalion had been posted to support positions near Beauvins (Was this *Beaurains?*) at eight o'clock that same evening.

However, by the end of the first week in April, the situation to the south, on the *Amiens Front*, while still dangerously uncertain, was becoming stable enough – the British 3rd Army had stopped dead the enemy advance towards Arras - for the Canadians to be at least partially withdrawn from the positions to the south and south-west of Arras that they had occupied* - nor, when it came on April 9, does it appear that the German offensive to the north warranted any move by the Canadians in that direction.

**The Canadians had been retained in situ because the enemy objectives had not been evident to the British High Command – nor, as the battle progressed, were the Germans apparently to remain faithful to their original plans. The Canadians were held back to forestall any German attempt to break through to the Channel ports and to block a possible enemy advance in the direction of the coal-fields around Béthune.*

Thus, at the end of the first week in April, the 3rd battalion had retired to Villers-au-Bois, a dozen kilometres north-west of Arras – and just up the road from Mont St-Éloi.

(Right: *Villers Station Cemetery, Villers-au-Bois, is the last resting-place for just over one-thousand two-hundred Commonwealth military personnel and thirty-two former adversaries. – photograph from 2017*)



For the remainder of April and into May the unit was posted to forward areas in the Fampoux Sector, and to such places as Louez, Marœuil, Izel-les-Hameaux and Caucourt when withdrawn to the rear. By that time the two German offensives had been brought to a standstill and the Battalion was to be able to spend a great deal of its time to the rear – almost all of June having been spent in reserve at Caucourt.

Thus a relative calm had descended on the front as the German threat had faded – the enemy had won a great deal of ground, but had gained absolutely nothing of any military significance on either of the two fronts.

(continued)

Nor was the relative tranquility to be thought particularly surprising: the efforts of both sides had been exhausting and time had been needed to once more re-organize and – less and less feasible in these later years of the war – to re-enforce.

The Allies from this point of view were now to be a lot better off than their German adversaries – they had had two empires to draw from and the Americans had been belatedly arriving on the scene. An overall Allied Commander-in-Chief had been appointed, Foch, and he was setting about organizing – some sources feel the term to be more than a little flattering - a counter-offensive.

Thus the front was to remain quiet – until the second week in August.

(Right: *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*)



In the meantime, however, in July, life for the 3rd Battalion was to be a little less sedentary than it had been in June.

During the first two weeks of that month it was posted to the vicinity of Agnez-les-Duisans; this was followed by four days in the forward area, once more in the Fampoux Sector; three days were subsequently passed at *Stirling Camp* where the unit supplied working-parties and carrying-parties to transfer small-arms ammunition from rear dumps to Brigade dumps; then during the night of July 19-20 the Battalion moved into the ‘Y’ *Huts Camp* at Étrun.

It was there at Étrun that on July 21, according to his own personal active service records, Lieutenant Slattery reported *to duty* once more with his 3rd Battalion. Now there was to be just one more transfer for the unit personnel before the end of the month, this to the front line in the *Neuville-Vitasse Sector* south of Arras where Lieutenant Slattery’s Battalion moved on July 23.

* * * * *

After a week at Neuville-Vitasse, on the night of the final day of the month, July 31, during which a minor German raid had been countered, the 3rd Battalion of Canadian Infantry was ordered relieved, this being completed on foot by a quarter past two in the morning. At this time the unit was then transported by bus to the rear to Berneville, a task reported as having been accomplished two hours later again.

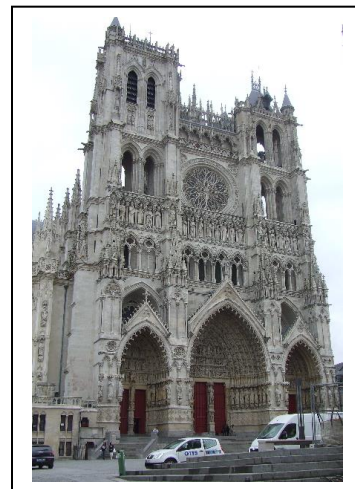
During the afternoon of that same August 1, and travelling again by foot and bus, Lieutenant Slattery’s Battalion was to move to the west, to the area of Beaufort from where, in two days’ time, it would take a train...*for a move to an area at present unknown. The Battalion will entrain at PETIT HOUVIN tomorrow night.* (Excerpt from the 3rd Battalion War Diary entry of August 2, 1918)

The rendezvous with the train should have taken place at twenty minutes to four in the morning of August 4 – but it was almost an hour late - the destination being Rambures, a community some forty kilometres to the west of the cathedral city of Amiens.

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

As the latter stages of the move were to be made on foot, it took almost twelve hours to get there, but, apparently, the War Diarist seems to have felt that the comfortable billets and welcoming inhabitants – perhaps because troops had not often been billeted there - was adequate compensation.

It was while at Rambures that the Battalion became aware of the operation that it was about to undertake: Excerpt from the 3rd battalion War Diary entry of August 4, 1918: *...the 1st Canadian Division would make an attack in a few days; the 3rd Brigade will attack, the 1st Brigade will go through them; and the 2nd Brigade will go through the 1st. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions of this Brigade will be the attacking Battalions for this Brigade, the 1st Battalion being in Reserve.*



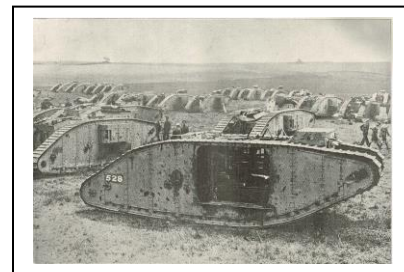
There was to be no training on August 5 during the day as the Battalion was to be on the move again that night. From the vicinity of Rambures it boarded busses for *Boves Wood* at half-past nine in the evening, enduring another twelve-hour journey before arriving there – eleven kilometres to the south-east of Amiens.

The 3rd Battalion was not moving alone: a large number of other Canadian units – indeed the entire Canadian Corps – had by that time begun to move in a semi-circular itinerary to the west of Amiens, then south, then east again to finish in front of the city.

This movement was to be effected in only a matter of days, much of it on foot, and all of the latter stages during the hours of darkness.

It was intended to surprise the enemy – and it did.

On August 6, upon its arrival there, the Battalion had encamped in the Bois de Boves (*Boves Wood*) and during the late evening and night of the same day, had moved into the Bois de Gentelles (*Gentelles Wood*). It there stayed until the night of August 7-8 when it had moved into its jumping-off positions by fifteen minutes to mid-night: the Allied attack – on this occasion well supported by tanks - was to commence on the morrow morn.



The Battalion War Diarist reported that...*The Assembly was carried out without difficulty, the enemy being very quiet.*

(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’. – from Illustration*)

Zero hour had been designated as twenty minutes past four on the morning of August 8 by which time the supporting tanks were already moving forward. The 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade, being in support, was to be the second such unit of the 1st Canadian Division to move forward into the attack.

Excerpts from the 3rd Battalion War Diary entry of August 8, 1918: 4.20 a.m. Very misty. Our guns opened fire. Artillery support does not appear to lack in volume. 3rd Brigade commenced to advance.

4.50 a.m. Wounded 3rd Brigade men report attack progressing satisfactorily, Exceedingly misty.

5.10 A.M. Battalion commenced to move forward from Assembly positions to GREEN Line. Companies moving in two lines of platoons in single file at 100 yards distance and 100 yards interval, with "B" Company on Left, "D" Company on the Right, "A" Company 300 yards in rear of "B" Company and "C" Company 300 yards in rear of "D" Company, and Battalion Headquarters halfway between "A" and "C" Companies. Mist very heavy.

5.55 a.m. Battalion passing through old German front line; fog thickening; cannot see a man at 20 yards; all marching being done by compass, by platoons.

At ten minutes past six the fog lifted and it was then realized, perhaps not surprisingly, that some units were out of touch. However, the advance continued until half past six when the first serious opposition, heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, was encountered.

7.10 a.m. As the enemy are not retiring...and there do not appear to be any 3rd Brigade troops in the vicinity, and as this Battalion was due to advance from GREEN Line at 8.20 A.M., Battalion Headquarters and No. 4 platoon commenced to advance against the enemy, in the face of exceptionally heavy rifle and Machine Gun fire, which caused a great many casualties... When the advance reached a point of about 60 yards from the enemy, they retired on the double, our troops following them up and causing them many casualties...

At nine o'clock the Battalion Headquarters group arrested its advance to despatch the following situation report to Brigade:

"3rd Canadian Battalion arrived at GREEN Line at 8.25 A.M. Battalion is now advancing on LEMAIRE WOOD. Strength approximately 200 Other Ranks. Are in in touch with 2nd Canadian Division on the Left, but are not in touch with the 4th Battalion... The heavy fog this morning rather hindered our organization. Am pushing on to the final objective, but consider that I should have a couple of additional Companies to assist me in securing the high ground... Our heavies* are troubling us a great deal by short-shooting..."

***Howitzers and other large-calibre artillery pieces**

By about noon, having overcome fierce resistance, particularly from a series of strong-points, the attacking platoons had pushed forward to occupy the high ground and, some moments later, the troops of the 10th Canadian Battalion of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade began to pass through according to plan.



(Right above: *Canadian soldiers consolidate newly-won positions while others cross a river on an improvised bridge. – from Le Miroir*)



The fighting by the 3rd Battalion was now over for the remainder of the day and the personnel began to consolidate their captured positions and particularly to secure the hard-won high ground.

(Right above: *A group of German prisoners, some serving here as stretcher-bearers, being taken to the rear after their capture by Canadian troops: a tank may be seen in the background – from Le Miroir*)

The casualties incurred during the attack of August 8, 1918, had been – *all ranks* – thirty-two *killed in action*, one-hundred sixty-five *wounded* and eight *missing in action*. The gains, however, along the entire front, had been prolific*.

**On the first day the advance on the Canadian Front had been as much as eleven kilometres, a feat unheard of since the opening months of the Great War in 1914 – although the opening day of the Battle of Cambrai, 1917, as well as the German advances during that spring of 1918, may well have been harbingers.*

The tanks had been an immense assistance to both the Canadians and the Australians. The British and French on the left and right flanks, without them, were, on the other hand, to fare less well on that August 8.

The advance was to continue on the following day; however, as the 3rd Battalion had been designated as the reserve formation for the day's operations, it was not until after mid-day that, having moved to assembly points close to Le Quesnel, it began to move forward behind the 1st, 2nd and 4th Battalions.



(Right: *Hillside Cemetery, Le Quesnel, in which lie at least two Newfoundlanders who wore a Canadian uniform – photograph from 2015*)

Despite the general slowing of the advance, several villages were taken on that day, Rouvroy having been the final prize and thus was the locale where Battalion H.Q. was eventually established. It was also where the 3rd Battalion was to spend the following day, August 10, while troops of the British 32nd Division moved towards the forward area. Not that this was an entirely comfortable pause for the personnel of the Battalion as it was shelled for most of the day, on occasion even by its own guns.

Orders which had been received to advance were countermanded soon after having been issued and, at six o'clock that same evening, the unit began to retire to the proximity of the community of Beaufort.

(continued)

It was now time to re-organize and to re-enforce: at nine o'clock on the morning of August 10 the unit could count only nineteen officers and three-hundred eighty other ranks fit for duty. The next six days spent at Beaufort would see several officers and one-hundred thirty-eight other ranks report *to duty*, during which time the personnel cleaned equipment and themselves, repaired clothing and boots - some even succumbing to a hair-cut.

On the afternoon of August 16 the Battalion was put on *ten minutes notice* to move to a new location. They did so, the War Diary entry of the day recording...*Battalion arrived in FOLIES at 6.00 P.M. Men living in Bivouacs. The Band played from 7.00 P.M. to 8.15 P.M. WEATHER – Fine & Warm.*

Folies was a village still behind the forward area, thus there was little to remind the unit of fighting – apart from being shelled from time to time by a high-velocity, long-range German gun. For most, the day comprised lectures - plus a bath at nearby Le Quesnel.

The Battalion remained in Folies until August 19 on which day...*Warning Order received that the Canadian Corps would be relieved in the Line by the French tonight; this Battalion to be relieved by a Battalion of the 55th Regiment of the 126th French Division. The Battalion will be moving to a bivouac area...* It moved out at ten minutes to one o'clock on that night of August 19-20.

(Right below: *French dead in the communal cemetery at Caix, just to the north-west of Rouvroy: Caix also hosts a British Commonwealth cemetery as well as a German burial ground.* – photograph from 2017)

The 3rd Battalion remained bivouacked until August 22 when it retired in the evening to the Bois de Gentelles (*Gentelles Wood*). During the evening of the 23rd it marched further west, to Dury, a community to the south of Amiens. Then on August 25 it continued south to Prouzel to board a train; the overnight journey saw the unit arrive at Tinques at half-past eleven in the morning of the following day.



During the days just prior to, and also during the fourth week in August, the Canadian Corps in its entirety was to retire in much the same manner and using the same itineraries by which it had arrived in front of Amiens – and this move was to be kept as secret as had been the first.

The place of the 3rd Battalion and the places of many of the other Canadian units now being withdrawn were to be taken by French forces – and the advance towards St-Quentin was to continue.

(Right: *British, Australian and French forces were not withdrawn as were the Canadians from in front of Amiens in August of 1918. In tandem with French troops they continued the offensive, as shown here in the attack against St-Quentin.* – from *Le Miroir*)



(continued)

Just to the east of Arras, the Canadian Corps had been ordered to be prepared for offensive operations to commence on August 26. These were to be undertaken in tandem with British forces astride the axis of the main road leading from Arras to Cambrai. By the second day of the advance, more Canadian battalions would have joined the fray and, two days later again, August 29, units of all the Canadian Divisions were to have seen action on this new front.



And once again the subterfuge masking that huge transfer of some twenty-thousand personnel and all the accompanying material had worked: it appears that the Germans were once more unprepared for the appearance of the Canadian Corps on another front.



(Right above: *The city of Arras endured four years of bombardment during the Great War; the Grand'Place (Grande Place) (to compare with the earlier picture of Arras in 1916) looked like this by March of 1917. – from Le Miroir*)

(Right above: *Some of the ground on which fighting took place at the end of August and beginning of September of 1918: The Arras to Cambrai road – looking in the direction of Cambrai – may be perceived just left of centre on the horizon. – photograph from 2015*)

As already related, Lieutenant Slattery's Battalion detrained on August 26 at Tinques, a community in the Pas-de-Calais region just off the main road from Arras to St-Pol.

Little time was to be wasted. By that evening the 3rd Battalion had been taken by bus to Dainville, just west of Arras. There it received orders that it was to proceed to an assembly area close to *Telegraph Hill* on the next afternoon, August 27, in order to...*be ready to relieve the 2nd Canadian Division in the Line at night.*

On that August 27 the War Diary documents that...*Officers from all Companies were sent forward to reconnoitre the forward Area.* Given the subsequent history of the attack, it is likely that Lieutenant Slattery was one of those, replacing one of the two junior officers who had been wounded during the attack of August 8 in front of Amiens*.

**He is not recorded as having served in any Company of the 3rd Battalion during the fighting of the 3rd Battle of the Somme. Until a fellow officer was to become a casualty there was likely no place for him.*

The attack planned for August 28 was postponed twice but there appears to have been no official reason forthcoming for this alteration to the schedule. The following excerpts are drawn from the 3rd Battalion War Diary entry for August 29, 1918: *The 1st Brigade will attack tomorrow at dawn...*



(Preceding page: Douglas Haig, C.-in-C. of British and Commonwealth Forces on the Western Front inspects Canadian troops after their successful operation of August-September against the German Drocourt-Quéant Line – from Le Miroir)

This Brigade will attack the line now held by the enemy and establish a jumping-off position East of UPTON WOOD, as close to the DROCOURT-QUÉANT Line as possible, for the 2nd and 3rd Brigades to jump off from. The 2nd and 3rd Brigades will attack...through the 1st Brigade...

...Battalion commenced moving forward at 7.45 P.M. The order for the attack tomorrow by this Battalion will be:-

“A” Company - Left Front

“C” Company - Right Front

“B” Company - Support

“D” Company - Battalion Reserve

“A” and “C” Companies will attack, and “B” Company will pass through them. “D” Company will be held in Battalion Reserve.

Excerpts from Appendix B from 3rd Battalion War Diary Appendices for September, 1918, and also for August 29-30, 1918:

August 29, 1918

7.30 P.M. Battalion left position in front of WANCOURT and moved into valley South of VIS-EN-ARTOIS at 11. P.M...

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

August 30, 1918

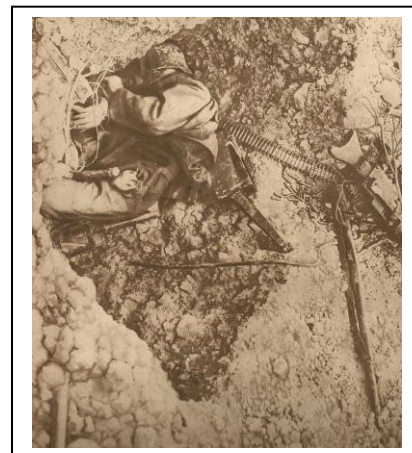
4.40 A.M. ZERO HOUR. Quite dark. Our guns opened fire. Companies started moving forward and met with little resistance until near a line roughly along OX and UNION TRENCHES. This line was heavily manned with Machine Guns the garrison having apparently remained in dugouts until our barrage passed over.

8.00 A.M. Our men reported to have occupied OX and UNION TRENCHES after severe fighting:- heavy casualties from Machine Gun fire and bombs.

1.10 P.M. “A” and “C” Companies ordered to attack OCEAN WORKS and OLIVE TRENCH at 2.00 P.M. Artillery support to be arranged.

2.00 P.M. Attack on OCEAN WORK and OLIVE TRENCH postponed until 3.00 P.M. as Artillery could not be arranged in time.

(Right above: The Canadian Memorial to those who fought at the Drocourt-Quéant Line in late August and early September of 1918: It stands to the side of the main Arras-Cambrai road in the vicinity of the village of Dury and of Mount Dury. – photograph from 2016)



3.00 P.M. Attack on OCEAN WORK and OLIVE TRENCH was attempted by 1 platoon of "A" Company and 1 platoon of "C" Company under cover of Lewis Gun fire. The positions were too strongly held, however, by Machine Guns, to be taken without Artillery and after suffering heavy casualties, the parties returned to OX TRENCH.

7.30 P.M. "A" Company, "C" Company, and two platoons of "B" Company holding OX and ORIX TRENCHES...

The above is the final report of Lieutenant Slattery's "A" Company for that August 30...

The son of Patrick Slattery, miner, and of Elizabeth (known as *Lizzie*) Slattery (née *Barker*) – to whom as of September 1, 1915, he had allotted a monthly twenty dollars from his pay – formerly of Tilt Cove – and perhaps, cited but unconfirmed, also of Harbour Grace – Newfoundland, then later of Montreal, Québec, he was also brother at least to Mary-Margaret, to Michael*, Patrick, William, Francis, James and Gerald.

***Private Michael Slattery MM, Number 458270 of the 87th Battalion (Canadian Grenadiers), Canadian Expeditionary Force, was reported as having been killed in action, likely due to enemy artillery fire, on August 14, 1917, while serving in the Lens Sector.**

His remains were subsequently buried in Villers Station Cemetery, Villers-au-Bois, France.

(Right: The photograph of Private Michael Slattery's headstone is from 2017.)

Lieutenant Slattery was reported as having been *killed in action* while fighting with "A" Company of the 3rd Battalion of Canadian Infantry in the fighting of August 30, 1918.

Edward Slattery had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-one years and six months: date of birth in Tilt Cove, Newfoundland, December 14, 1894*.

***On his attestation papers Edward Slattery has cited Montreal as his place of birth and the date as December 15, 1893. A further source has the year as 1895. However, the date in Tilt Cove is from Newfoundland Vital Statistics which also corrects the year 1895 to 1894.**

His brother Michael cited Harbour Grace as his, Michael's, birthplace, but once again the Vital Statistics have Tilt Cove.

(Right: The photograph of Lieutenant Edward Slattery DCM, MM & 2 Bars is from the canadianexpeditionaryforce1914-1919blogspot.com/2016/03)

(continued)



Lieutenant Edward Slattery 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.