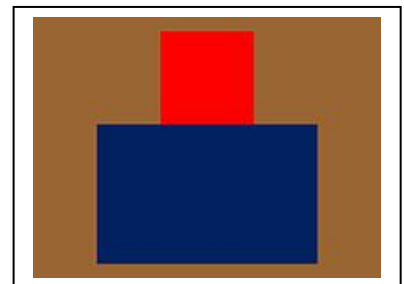




Private Frederick Jacob Snelgrove (Number 69937) of the 26th Battalion (*New Brunswick*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Seaford Cemetery in the English county of Sussex: Grave reference A. 3012.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder-patch of the 26th Battalion (New Brunswick) is from the Wikipedia Web-site.*)

(continued)



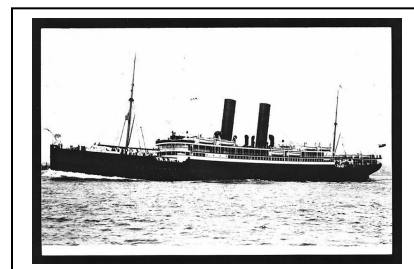
His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *sailor*, Frederick Jacob Snelgrove appears to have left behind him no information a propos his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of New Brunswick*. All that may be said with any certainty is that by November of 1914, he had made his way to the city of Saint John, for that was when and where he enlisted.

**His father. Peter Snelgrove, is recorded on the ship's passenger list as having traversed the Cabot Strait from Port aux Basques to North Sydney, Cape Breton, on board the SS Ivermore on September 16, 1911, on his way to Hillsboro, New Brunswick, but he was apparently travelling alone.*

His earliest medical report shows that it was in Saint John on November 28 of 1914 that Frederick Jacob Snelgrove presented himself for an examination – which found him...*fit for the Canadian Over Seas Expeditionary Force*. On the morrow, according to his pay records, he underwent enlistment and attestation; and on that same November 29 he found himself *taken on strength* by the 26th Battalion (*New Brunswick*) of the Canadian Infantry.

Even the *official* conclusion to the formalities of Private Snelgrove's enlistment was brought about on that same day when the Officer Commanding the 26th Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel J.L. McAvity declared – on paper – that...*F.G. (sic) Snelgrove...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

The 26th Battalion had been authorized earlier in the month of Private Snelgrove's enlistment. The unit had then commenced training almost immediately in Saint John – at Barrack Green Armouries - and continued to do so – with a week off during the Christmas period – until the time arrived for its embarkation for passage overseas. The ship that Private Snelgrove was to board was the requisitioned *Anchor Line* passenger vessel *Caledonia*.



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

A number of sources cite June 15 of 1915 as the date of Private Snelgrove's embarkation but this was apparently not so: the ship is documented as having sailed from Montreal on June 9 with "A" Squadron of the 7th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles and the 2nd Divisional Remount Depot on board. Her next stop was St. John, New Brunswick, on June 13, where she welcomed not only the 26th Battalion, but also Section 1 and the Headquarters Company of the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column, and a part of the 2nd Divisional Cyclists Company.

Caledonia sailed from Saint John to put into Halifax for the 1st Draft of the 40th Battalion and the No. 2 Heavy Battery, Canadian Garrison Artillery. She finally set out to cross the Atlantic on June 15 to drop anchor in the English south-coast harbour of Portsmouth-Devonport nine days later, on June 24. From there it was a train ride to the coastal area of the county of Kent – in the vicinity of the Channel ports of Dover and Folkestone – where the Canadians were busy establishing *Shorncliffe*, a large military complex.

(Right below: *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*)

The 26th Battalion was to be encamped at East Sandling, one of several subsidiary camps, just down the Dover Straits from Folkestone.

At *Shorncliffe* there was to be a relatively short wait for Private Snelgrove and his comrades-in-arms before they were called to *active service* on the Continent. In the latter part of August he contracted tonsillitis and was sent to the *Temporary Hospital*, a tented affair, on September 2, before being forwarded to the *Moore Barracks Hospital* three days later. On or about September 13, he was discharged back to his unit.



The following entry is found on Private Snelgrove's Pay Records, entered between the dates of October 1-15, 1915, and October 15-31, 1916: *This man proceeded to France with 26th Batt'n instead of being transferred to 12th Batt'n & being struck off as deserter. All previous entries in consequence thereof now cancelled & man carried on continuously with 26th. Batt'n. Assignment stopped by 12th Batt'n 1/11/15. Now renewed from 1/11/15*.*

**Private Snelgrove, upon release from hospital, had apparently been attached to the 12th (Reserve) Battalion, but had instead had re-joined the 26th Battalion and had thereupon found himself on his way across the English Channel. In the meantime, the 12th Battalion, not finding him among its ranks, presumed that he had deserted. Presumably, when pay parade came around, the 26th Battalion found it had a soldier too many; thus the adjustments were made and Private Snelgrove stayed in Belgium.*

On and about September 15 the Canadian 2nd Division took ship to France, the 26th Battalion making the crossing as one of the components of the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade. Private Snelgrove and his unit - following an inspection by the King on September 2 - sailed on that September 15 from Folkestone to the French port-town of Boulogne on the coast opposite, some two hours' sailing-time away.

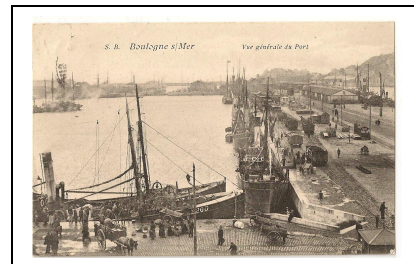
On the afternoon of the next day the Battalion boarded a train which, after some six hours, eventually was to make its way some fifty kilometres eastward to the community of Wizernes. The War Diary then recounts that the men were obliged to march... *all night to Bivouac about three miles from Arque* (War Diary). By the evening of the 17th the unit had marched to the larger centre of Hazebrouck and, a week later again, it finally reached permanent billets near Scherpenberg, a small rise – there are no *big ones* - in Belgian West Flanders.



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

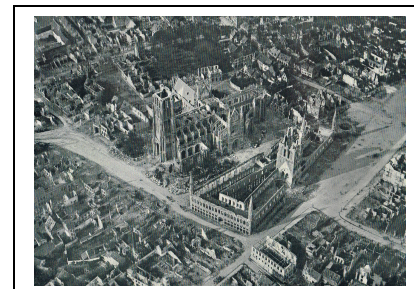
(continued)

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



Thus the 26th Battalion arrived in Belgium, in a sector to the south of the already-shattered medieval city of Ypres, an area which it would come to know well as it was to remain there for the best part of a year. It was there that Private Snelgrove was to become familiar with life in the trenches*.

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



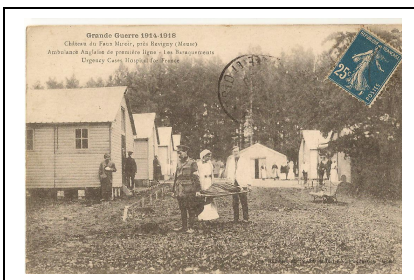
**During the Great War, British and Empire (later Commonwealth) battalions had their time more or less equally divided into three postings: in theory a week was to be spent in the front lines, at times little more than a few metres separating them from the enemy forward positions; a second week was then served in support positions, perhaps a hundred metres or so behind the front; the unit was then withdrawn into reserve – either Brigade, Divisional or Corps Reserve, the former nearest to the forward area, the latter the furthest away.*



Of course, things were never as neat and tidy as set out in the preceding format and troops could find themselves in a certain position at times for weeks on end.

(Right above: *A photograph of Canadian troops in support positions somewhere on the Somme in the autumn of 1916, a year later, having by that time been equipped with those steel helmets and, less visible, British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III Rifles – from Illustration*)

Five months after his arrival in Belgium, on February 26 of 1916, Private Snelgrove was admitted into the 5th Canadian Field Ambulance to receive attention for a case of *intercostal neuralgia*. The complaint was quickly treated and he was discharged from care to duty with his unit on February 29 – 1916 was a leap year.



(Right: *A British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some – from a vintage post-card*)

In early April, 1916, the 2nd Canadian Division underwent its baptism of fire in a major infantry operation. It was at a place called St-Éloi where, on the 27th day of March, the British had detonated a series of mines under the German lines and then followed up with an infantry attack. The role of the newly-arrived Canadian formation was to later pursue the presumed British success, to hold and consolidate the newly-won territory.

However, the damage done to the terrain by the explosions, the often putrid weather which turned the newly-created craters into ponds and the earth into a quagmire, and then a resolute German defence, greeted the newcomers who took over from the by-then exhausted British on April 3-4. Two weeks later the Germans had won back the lost territory and had inflicted severe losses on the Canadians.

(Right: *An attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – from Illustration*)



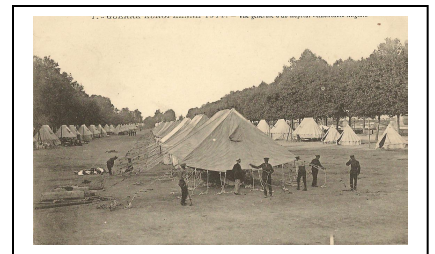
However, the 26th Battalion, albeit a part of the 2nd Canadian Division, had found itself playing only a peripheral role: while other units had at times been fighting up to their waists in water and mud, the Battalion War Diarist could find time to comment on the weather for twenty-two days in a row.

On the twelfth day of that fine weather, May 4, on a day when the 26th Battalion was to be relieved at the end of a tour in the trenches at St-Éloi, Private Snelgrove was wounded – reported on a later medical report as a result of machine-gun fire, although no infantry action is mentioned in the brief War Diary entry of the day.

The later records of the *Proceedings of a Medical Board* held in Hasting on January 16, 1917, cite the following: *On May 4/16 he was hit by bullet in Rt. Chest...this passing through liver... He was operated on in No 17 Clearing S*, Poperinghe. He expectorated (coughed) Blood for 3 days... He was 1 month in Hosp in France and 1 month in Bristol...*

**It must have been the 17th Casualty Clearing Station, although the original source documents it to be, impossibly, the 7th CCS.*

The operation was apparently undertaken on the day of his wounding, and his admission into the 3rd Canadian General Hospital, established by that time in Boulogne, was on May 10, six days later. His records variously document that he had incurred injuries to his right side and arm and internal damage to a lung and to his liver.

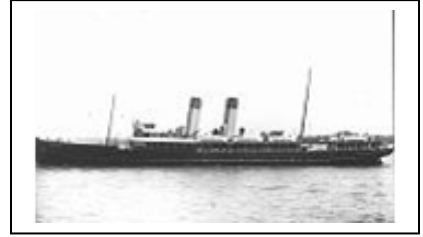


(Right above: *A British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War: Other such medical establishments were of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card*)

Private Snelgrove was apparently to remain in hospital at Boulogne until June 15-16. His was then transferred to hospital in the United Kingdom.

It was His Majesty's Hospital Ship *St. Denis* on which he was transported back to England, the date recorded as June 16, 1916. His files also show that it was on the same June 16* that Private Snelgrove was admitted into the 2nd Southern General Hospital in the port-city of Bristol where his operational scars were reported as being...*healthy*. A further three weeks afterwards he was forwarded from there, on July 7-8, to *Bear Wood*, the Canadian Convalescent Hospital facility in Wokingham.

**On the same day he was transferred bureaucratically – on paper – from the 26th Battalion to the Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre (Folkestone Office).*



(Right: The image of the cross-Channel steamer St. Denis, here shown in peace-time livery, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

On August 29, having been discharged on that day from Bear Wood Convalescent Hospital – *Wound healed. Still some soreness. Has been on light duty one month* - Private Snelgrove disappeared for nine days*. This may well have been the customary period of leave granted to military personnel after release from hospital – if so, it is unclear where he spent his time although he is recorded as having a sister residing in the county of Sussex.

**A second source appears not to have him discharged from Bear Wood until September 5, after having spent a total of sixty-one days there.*

On September 7 he is recorded as having been posted on *Command** to the Canadian Base Depot at *Shorncliffe*, the suggestion being that there he was to undergo four weeks of physical training and rehabilitation.



(Right: The old camp gymnasium at Shorncliffe, its future uncertain at the time that the picture was taken – photograph from 2016)

**A period during which the soldier was assessed as to what future use, if any, he might be to the Armed Forces, or if he was a candidate for discharge.*

Towards the end of that October of 1916 Private Snelgrove had more medical problems, these of a venereal nature. Having spent the day of October 30 at the Military Hospital at *Shorncliffe*, he was then transferred on the next day to Etchinghill Hospital in the not-distant village of Lyminge.

There he was to receive treatment until he was released back *to duty*, one presumes at the Base Depot at *Shorncliffe*, on the final day of November of that 1916*. Private Snelgrove was, however, to continue as an out-patient, having been ordered to report back to Etchinghill on December 13 and December 20. His fitness in that month was categorized as C.III...*Sedentary Service at Home Camps.*

**Private Snelgrove was subsequently to be a victim of the inconsistent British and Commonwealth policy of requiring venereal patients to pay for their treatment. To that end for thirty days he forfeited his ten-cents-per-day Field Allowance and a further fifty cents per day from his pay. Not all soldiers were treated in this manner, particularly as the War progressed, particularly officers whose diagnosis was often recorded as a non-committal NYD – Not Yet Determined.*

On January 17 of the New Year, 1917, Private Snelgrove was sent, once again on *Command*, on this occasion to the Canadian Garrison Duty Depot established on the south coast near to the coastal town of Hastings.

Some two months later, on March 10, the authorities apparently decided that Private Snelgrove should remain not only in the Army but also in his 26th Battalion. Thus to that end he was transferred to the New Brunswick Regimental Depot, at *Camp Bramshott* in the nearby county of Hampshire, ostensibly with his return to the Continent in mind.

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

Five weeks later, on April 18, there followed a bureaucratic mistake and Private Snelgrove was transferred to the Nova Scotia Regimental Depot, although he did not have far to go, the Nova Scotia formation at that time also being stationed at Bramshott. Twenty-five days later – or forty-two, depending on the source (*both* numbers recorded on the same page) - the transfer was reversed and he was back at the New Brunswick Depot and posted to the Depot Company.



On June 9, although on the nominal roll of the New Brunswick Regiment, he was on the move once more, to Shoreham – almost half-way between Bramshott and Hastings, to the Canadian Garrison Duty Depot, and attached - once again *on Command* – to the Assistant Provost Marshal (*Military Police*).

This posting was to last some two months, after which time Private Snelgrove was back in hospital.

The diagnosis was pronounced as a return of his venereal problems – the first symptoms having appeared on June 28 - and his posting to the Assistant Provost Marshal's Office was likely cut short because of them. On August 20 he ceased his attachment to the APM; on the very next day he was admitted into Cherryhinton Hospital, Cambridge, where he was now to remain until the middle of November*.

**He was also once again to forfeit monies for his treatment: eighty-six days of it.*

It would seem that he was to continue a...*mercury treatment*...after his release from Cherryhinton, but whether this had to be supervised or if it was simply to be applied by the patient himself is not clear. During the month of December of 1917 and up until the time of his final hospitalization, Private Snelgrove was stationed with the New Brunswick Regimental Depot which had been transferred in October, two months earlier, to Seaford.

Excerpt from Medical Case Sheet first dated 19/1/18: *Pre-illness:- Hasn't felt well for about a month. Had headaches (and) pains in rt. side below costal margin. Has been doing hut orderly work till sent to hosp. 18/1/18*.*

On January 18 of 1918, Private Snelgrove was admitted into the 14th Canadian General Hospital in the sea-side resort town of Eastbourne. He was immediately deemed to be...*seriously ill...much nausea and icterus (jaundice) on admission.*

On the following day, January 19 and still...*seriously ill*...he was at first reported as being...*delirious*...and then, later in the day, as...*comatose*.

The son of Peter Snelgrove, fisherman and labourer – to whom as of June 1, 1915, he had allotted a monthly ten dollars from his pay - and of Jessie Susannah Snelgrove (née *Harris*) of Caplin Cove, Conception Bay, Newfoundland – at least *he* later of Hillsboro, New Brunswick - he was also brother to Ephraim-Freeman, Jennie-Louise, Jessie (his sister in England?), Mary-Beatrice, John-Harris and to Willie*.

**In the 1911 Census for Hillsborough, New Brunswick, Peter's wife is named as Bella. There appears to be no further reference to Bella Snelgrove elsewhere.*

Private Snelgrove was reported as having *died of sickness (of malignant jaundice)* at a quarter past two o'clock in the afternoon of January 20, 1918, by the 14th Canadian General Hospital Authorities at Eastbourne in the English county of Sussex.

Frederick Jacob Snelgrove had enlisted at the apparent age of nineteen years: date of birth at Caplin Cove, Newfoundland, June 15, 1895 (from attestation papers); a second source (*Puddester Family History*) cites January 18, 1896, as the date of birth.

Private Frederick Jacob Snelgrove 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 25, 2023.