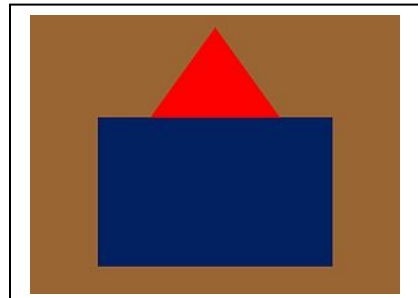




Private Samuel Snow, Number 67495, of the 25th Battalion (Nova Scotia Rifles), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Bailleul Community Cemetery Extension Nord: Grave reference I.E.15..

(Right: *The image of the 25th Battalion (Nova Scotia Rifles) shoulder flash is from the Wikipedia Web-site.*)



His occupations prior to military service recorded as those of both *fisherman* and *labourer*, Samuel Snow appears to have no information behind him of his early years in the community of Harbour Grace in the Dominion of Newfoundland, or of his subsequent movement to the capital city of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. All that may be said with any certainty is that he was present in Halifax late in the year 1914, for that was where and when he enlisted.

It was on November 19, according to his first pay record, that the Canadian Army began to remunerate Private Snow for his services to the 25th Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*), a unit newly-authorized for overseas service*, by which he had immediately been *taken on strength* on that same day – but the venue of the proceedings of this first day, while likely having been Halifax, is not noted.

**Canada already possessed a number of Canadian Militia regiments, but these, by law, were unable to operate outside the borders of the country. Thus upon the outbreak of the Great War, new overseas battalions – for whom the militia regiments could recruit, and from which many soldiers transferred – were formed, more than two-hundred fifty by the end of the conflict.*

A single day afterwards it *is* confirmed by his personal papers that Private Snow was in the provincial capital city of Halifax, there for further formalities and processing. Having on that November 20 thereupon presented himself to undergo a medical examination, a procedure which found him to be...*fit for the Canadian Over Seas Expeditionary Force*, he then underwent attestation on the same day, his oath witnessed by the Commanding Officer of the 25th Battalion.

The formalities of enlistment were to be brought to a conclusion eight days later again, on January 2, 1915, by the same Officer Commanding the 25th Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel G.A. LeCain, when he declared – on paper - that...*Samuel Snow...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

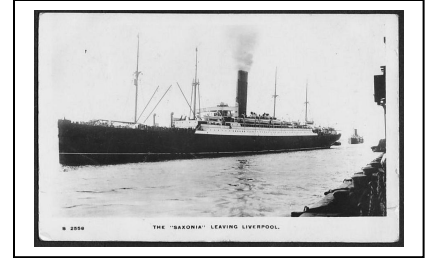
It was to be yet a further five months after his enlistment that Private Snow and his 25th Battalion embarked for overseas, the unit having trained at the Halifax Armouries and on the nearby Common, during that period – although the exercises were to be interrupted by an outbreak of diphtheria. In the case of ‘D’ Company to which Private Snow had been attached – and also of ‘B’ and ‘C’ Companies – much of that time would also be spent under canvas, there being room for only ‘A’ Company to billet in the Armoury itself*.

**Although wooden huts were being constructed at the time some personnel were never to inhabit them.*

Two unexplained incidents appear to have occurred – at least, they are recorded on that first pay record: in the month of March he was admitted into hospital for a six-day period – there are no accompanying details; then in April, apparently as of the fifth day of the month, he was awarded twenty-eight days’ detention – again no details have been provided.

(continued)

Private Snow and his unit embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Saxonia* in the harbour at Halifax on May 20 of 1915 for passage to the United Kingdom. The 25th Battalion was to travel in the company of the 22nd Battalion from Québec, and also with a contingent of the 2nd Division Ammunition Park, for a total of some two-thousand three hundred military personnel all told.



Saxonia sailed on the same May 20, to dock in the English south-coast harbour and naval facility of Plymouth-Devonport at ten minutes past four in the morning of May 29.

(Right above: *The image of the Royal Mail Ship Saxonia leaving the port of Liverpool is from the Wikipedia web-site. Requisitioned by the British for government service she was deployed for use early in the conflict as a floating prisoner-of-war camp before seeing use as a troop transport as of 1915.*)



(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*)

The new arrivals apparently soon were on board trains which then sped them across southern England to the county of Kent.

Once there, Private Snow's Battalion proceeded to the large and newly-forming Canadian military establishment of *Shorncliffe* on the Dover Straits and in the vicinity of the sea-side town and harbour of Folkestone.



(Right: *Little remains of Shorncliffe Military Camp today apart from a barracks occupied by Gurkha troops. The Military Cemetery almost alone serves as a reminder of the events of a century ago. – photograph from 2016*)

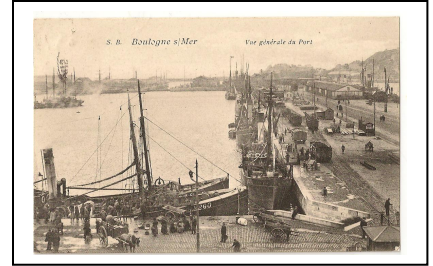
The 25th Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*) was a component of the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself an element of the 2nd Canadian Division. The 1st Canadian Division had been serving on the Continent since February of that same 1915, having been deployed in northern France and subsequently in the *Kingdom of Belgium* during that time, and had distinguished itself during the *2nd Battle of Ypres* in the spring of that same year. By the late summer of 1915 it was now the turn of the 2nd Canadian Division to take a place in the line.



(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)

But before he was to depart from *East Sandling*, a subsidiary camp of the *Shorncliffe* complex, Private Slaney was to run afoul of the Battalion authorities: on August 3 he was fined one day's pay for having been *Absent Without Leave*, likely having been arrested as he returned to his quarters – but there appear to be no further details of the incident in his record.



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

On September 15, 1915, the 25th Battalion marched out of *East Sandling* and *Shorncliffe Camp* in the late afternoon en route for Folkestone where the unit boarded a troop transport for the short crossing to the Continent. Sailing at ten o'clock that same evening, the troops disembarked in the French port of Boulogne some two hours later, at one o'clock in the morning*.



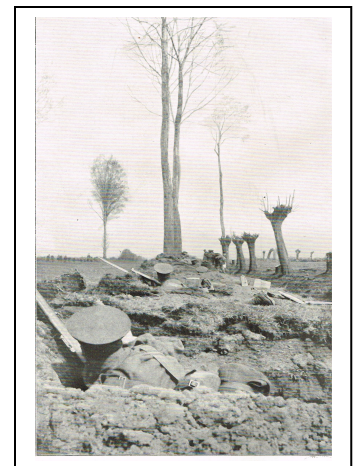
**There is a one-hour time difference between the United Kingdom and France.*

(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 surely early in the war as there is no sign of a steel helmet. – from a vintage post-card*)

Later, on that same September 16 and after several hours rest, the Battalion marched to meet the station at Pont de Briques for the train which was to take them into northern France, not far from the frontier with Belgium which it was soon to cross, and not far distant from the large centre of Hazebrouk.

By September 23, the Nova Scotia Unit, by the 19th of the month based in the area of Locre (today *Loker*) and having had a first experience of the trenches, was relieving the 2nd Battalion, *the King's Own*, in positions to the north of the Franco-Belgian border in the area of the Kemmel-Ypres Road.

(Right: *Troops – in this instance British, the King's Regiment (Liverpool) – in hastily-dug trenches in the Ypres Sector. These are still the early days of the year as witnessed by the lack of steel helmets which came into use only in the spring and summer of 1916. – from Illustration*)



The following months were to be a relatively quiet period for all the troops of both sides in the trenches in Belgium; there was, of course, a steady trickle of casualties, usually due to enemy artillery fire and to his snipers, but until the spring of 1916 there was only the daily grind of the infantryman's life in – and out of – the trenches*.

(continued)

****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 the same year, 1916, but by that time equipped with steel helmets and also the less-evident British-made Short Lee-Enfield Mark III rifles – from Illustration)

The 25th Battalion's first two casualties on active service were in fact to be self-inflicted wounds. However, on September 25...Had one man killed in action. #67563 L/Cpl McLean J.A. was sniping and succeeded in hitting two Germans. He was in the act of taking a third shot when he was hit in the head, almost the whole top being shot off. He lived two hours unconscious... Excerpt from 25th Battalion War Diary entry for September 25, 1915.



The 25th Battalion (Nova Scotia Rifles) had incurred its first fatality. More were to come, of course, in the months to follow but, relatively speaking, that autumn and winter period of 1915-1916 was to be a period of calm.

(Right above: La Laiterie Military Cemetery, within the bounds of which is buried Lance Corporal John Archibald McLean – photograph from 2014)

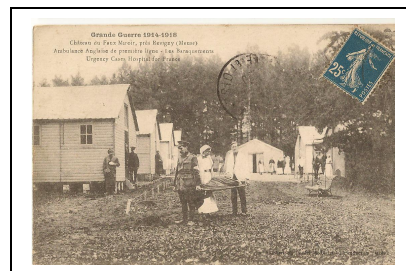
November 28 of 1915, two months hence, was also calm, the 25th Battalion having relieved the 24th in the trenches only the day before. The brief 25th Battalion War Diary entry for the day reads as follows: *Fine day Very cold Roads frozen up hard.*

During the period of the Great War the Canadian Military often provides a report on the Circumstances of Casualty. In the case of Private Snow this is either not so or it has not yet been digitized. However, the following entry is to be found on his Active Service Form: *Bullet wound through sacrum (lower back) into abdomen and thigh.*

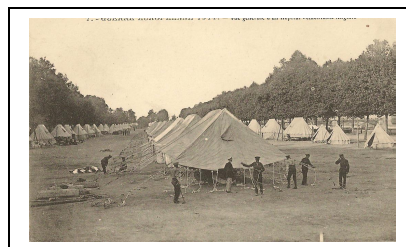
It is likely that Private Snow was shot by a sniper.

He was at first evacuated to the 4th Canadian Field Hospital based at Westoutre – although he was likely treated at an Advanced Dressing Station – before then being transferred on the same day to the Number 3 Casualty Clearing Station the vicinity of the northern French town of Bailleul.

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



(Right: 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)



The son of Robert Charles Snow, fisherman and labourer (deceased from tuberculosis in 1919), and of Margaret Snow (née Parsons) to whom as of June 1, 1915, he had allocated a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay – the family from Harbour Grace, Newfoundland – he was also brother to Shannon, Stephen, John-Swayne (also found as Swaine)*, to (Robert?)-Charles, Lillian, Ellen, Frederick and perhaps to Nellie and to Alice.

Private Snow was reported by the Commanding Officer of the 3rd Casualty Clearing Station as having died of wounds on December 5, 1915. He was buried by a Reverend J.W. Griffiths.

**His brother John Swayne (this spelling from birth records, Swain from his military records) Snow, Number 1923 of the Newfoundland Regiment, was to be later killed in action on July 1, 1916, during the fighting at Beaumont-Hamel. His file may be found elsewhere in this dossier, Died in Service.*

(Right: The grave of Private John Swain Snow seen here is to be found in Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2, Auchonvillers. – photograph from 2010)



Private Samuel Snow 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.