

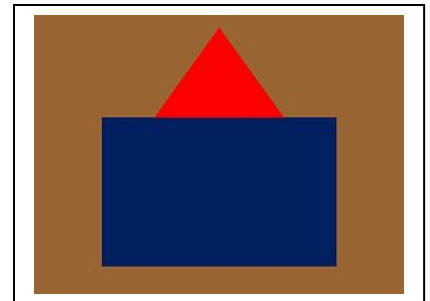


Corporal Gregory Squires, Number 68448 of the 25th Battalion (Nova Scotia Rifles), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in La Targette British Cemetery*: Grave reference I.B.6..

****Originally known as Aux-Reitz Military Cemetery***

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

(continued)



NOTE: Gregory Squires is recorded among his papers – except on his attestation forms - as simply G. Squires, born July 14, 1888, the name Gregory having been filled in on a later date. His father, also according to those same files, was Henry Thomas Squires, his mother Mary Ann, both resident at the time of Pool's (also Poole's) Cove.

However, Henry Thomas Squires and Mary Ann Squires of Pool's (Poole's) Cove appear to have had no son Gregory. A son George is documented as having been baptized on October 28, 1888, but there is no birth date registered. Was Gregory, born July 17, also 1888, according to his attestation papers, in fact George?

The following file should be read with this in mind.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as being that of a *painter*, Gregory Squires appears to have left behind him little information of his early life prior to departure from the Dominion of Newfoundland or of his emigration to the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. All that may be said with any certainty is that he was present in the area of the Cape Breton communities of North Sydney and Sydney Mines by early 1915 for that was where and when he enlisted.

His first pay records document that it was on February 9, 1915, at North Sydney, that the Canadian Army began to remunerate Private Squires for his services and it was also on that date that he was *taken on strength* by the newly-authorized – but not yet mobilized – 40th Canadian Infantry Battalion (*Nova Scotia*).

Six weeks less a day were now to pass before Private Squires underwent a medical examination at Sydney Mines, a procedure which was to find him...*fit for the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force*, and again a further nine days before the formalities of his enlistment brought to a conclusion.

March 31 was the date on which, once again at Sydney Mines, Private Squires was attested. Present for this occasion were a Major Wood of the 40th Battalion and also Lieutenant-Colonel G.A. LeCain of the 25th Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*), the presence of the latter a little extraordinary as Private Squires was – not yet – a soldier of his unit.

It was Major Wood who witnessed the swearing of the Oath, and then a Lieutenant Beaton, acting in lieu of the Commanding Officer of the 40th Battalion, who then declared – on paper – that...*Gregory Squires...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

While he was apparently paid commencing on the day of enlistment on February 9, there appears to be no record of where Private Squires spent the time between then and May 11 when the 40th Battalion was mobilized at *Camp Aldershot* in Kings County. It may well be that he was to remain in the area of Sydney where a detachment had been raised, to train locally; but that is only the author's speculation.

It is also unlikely that he ever reported to *Camp Aldershot*, and if he did, the posting was to be of very short duration as, on May 15-16, only four days after mobilization, he was transferred to Lieutenant-Colonel LeCain's 25th Battalion.

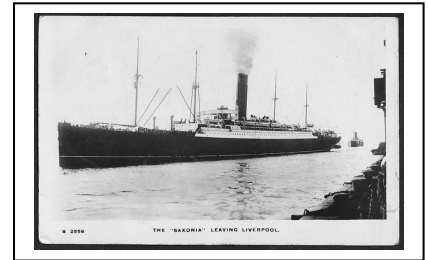
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Now he had only four more days during which to prepare for his departure to overseas service – and, on May 19, to pass a second medical examination.

If he had not already done so, Private Squires was now to move to Halifax, to the Halifax Armouries and the adjacent Common where the 25th Battalion had been stationed during that past winter. Much of the time had been spent by the majority of the Battalion under canvas, there having been room for only ‘A’ Company to billet in the Armoury itself*. Where Private Squires was to spend the next few nights has not been recorded.

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

Private Squires 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 Squire’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)

(continued)

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 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*)

(Right below: *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 and Private Squires marched out of *East Sandling* and *Shorncliffe Camp* in the late afternoon en route for Folkestone where he and his 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.*

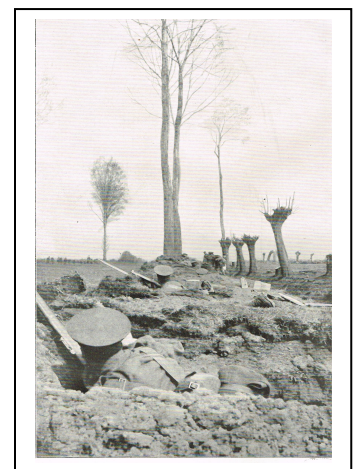
(Right: *While the caption reads that these troops are 'English', this could mean any unit in British uniform – including Empire (Commonwealth) units. This is surely early in the war as there is no sign of a steel helmet. – from a vintage post-card*)



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*.

**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 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)

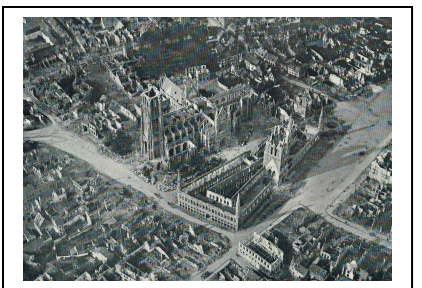
The 25th Battalion's first two casualties on active service were in fact to be self-inflicted wounds. However, on September 25...*Had one man killed in action. #67563 L/Cpl McLean J.A. was sniping and succeeded in hitting two Germans. He was in the act of taking a third shot when he was hit in the head, 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)

It was not to be until early April of 1916, the following year, that the 2nd Canadian Division was to undergo its baptism of fire in a major infantry action. The confrontation occurred at a place to the south of Ypres, St-Éloi, where, at the end of March, on the 27th, the British detonated a series of mines under the German lines and then followed that with an infantry assault. The newly-arrived Canadian formation had been ordered to capitalize on the presumed British success, to later hold and to consolidate the newly-won territory.



(Preceding page: *An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the Second Battle of Ypres - which shows the empty shell of the medieval city, an image entitled Ypres-la-Morte (Ypres the Dead) – By the end of the conflict there was to be little left standing. – from Illustration*)

However, the damage done to the terrain by the explosions, the putrid weather which turned the just-created craters into ponds and the earth into a quagmire, plus a resolute German defence, greeted the newcomers who took over from the by-then exhausted British on April 5-6. Two weeks later the Germans had won back the lost territory and had inflicted severe losses on the Canadians.

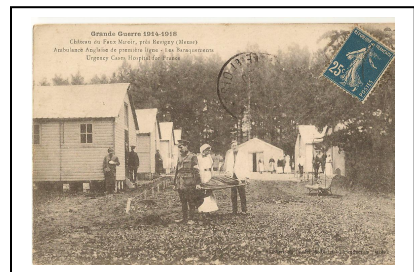
Towards the end of the engagement at St-Éloi the 25th Battalion relieved another battalion and subsequently had incurred a total of some eighty-five casualties, a greater toll than the unit had known on any single occasion up until that date. The *Action of the St. Eloi Craters* was over quickly for Private Squires' unit.



(Right: *The occupation of a crater in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – perhaps in the St-Éloi Sector – from Illustration*)

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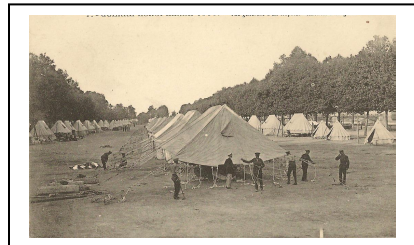
It was at this point that Private Squires was to fall ill. On April 24 of that 1916 he was sent to the Division Rest Station at Mont des Cats run by the 4th Canadian Field Ambulance from where he was evacuated later that day to the main 4th Field Ambulance facility, established at the time at Boeschepe.



The diagnosis at the time was PUO – a Pain of Undetermined Origin – but later amended to that of bronchitis.

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

For further treatment Private Squires was then transferred to the North Midland – 53rd – Casualty Clearing Station back at Mont des Cats. There he was to remain under medical case for a further six days, until May 7 when he was discharged *to duty* with his unit.



(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*)

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(continued)

Six weeks after *the Action of the St. Eloi Craters*, in early June, the 25th Battalion was to be involved in the fighting in the area of *Hooge, Mount Sorrel, Sanctuary Wood, Hill 60, Railway Dugouts* and *Maple Copse*, all in a sector just to the south-east of the city of Ypres. This was to be the *Battle of Mount Sorrel*.

(Right: *The Canadian memorial which stands atop Mount Sorrel just to the south-west of the city of Ypres (today Ieper) whose spires and towers may be perceived in the distance.* – photograph from 1914)



The Canadians had apparently 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 which fortunately they never exploited.

(Right: *Remnants of Canadian trenches dating from 1915-1916 at Sanctuary Wood* – photograph from 2010)



The British Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, thereupon reacted – perhaps a bit impulsively - by organizing a counter-attack on the following day, an assault intended to, at a minimum, recapture the lost ground.

Badly organized, the operation was to prove a dismal experience: many of the intended attacks never went in – those that did 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.

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



Nine days later, on the night of June 12-13, the Canadian Corps made a second effort to recapture the lost ground. On this occasion the attack was better co-ordinated, had a well-planned artillery program to support it, and was successful. By the morning of June 13 the infantry action was over – although the German artillery was to fight it out for two more days – and both sides for the most part were back where they had been at the beginning of the affair.

(Right: *Hill 60 as it remains a century after the events of 1916 – and 1917 when its summit was blown off - in the area of Mount Sorrel, the village of Hooge, Sanctuary Wood and Maple Copse: It is kept in a preserved state – subject to the whims of Mother Nature* – by the Belgian Government. – photograph from 2014)



The newly-arrived 3rd Canadian Division* was to be the main recipient of the enemy's offensive thrust which had begun on June 2, but the 25th Battalion of the 2nd Canadian Division then apparently played a role sufficiently important – manning defensive positions - for the name *Mount Sorrel* to become the first battle honour won by the unit during the Great War.

**The 3rd Canadian Division came into being officially at midnight of December 31, 1915 and January 1, 1916. However, some of its forces did not arrive on the Continent until later, and it was not until March of that 1916 that the Division was able to assume responsibility for the south-east sector of the Ypres Salient.*



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

From the middle of June up until August 20 of 1916, the 25th Battalion remained in reserve well to the rear, so well to the rear, in fact, that it had been deemed safe enough for His Majesty the King and his son the Prince of Wales to pay a visit on August 14.

Some two weeks after the royal visit, on August 27, the unit was then to be withdrawn into northern France, to the vicinity of Steenvoorde and to the village of Moulle.

The following week at Moulle would be spent in becoming familiar with the British Lee-Enfield Mark III rifle which was replacing the Canadian-made Ross rifle*, and also in training for a Canadian role in the British summer campaign of 1916, an offensive which to that date had not been proceeding exactly according to plan.

(Right below: Canadian troops likely in trenches built for training purposes – they are too prim and proper to be the real thing when compared to the photograph on the preceding page – and here equipped 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 would jam, 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.

At this point in the proceedings, on August 31, Private Squires was attached to the 5th Field Company of the Canadian Engineers*.

**Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the War Diary of this unit – if such there is – has not been made available in digitized form by Library & Archives Canada. There appears to be no information a propos the activities of Private Squires during this five-week period.*

Meanwhile, in the absence of Private Squires, on the evening of September 4, the 25th Battalion was to march to the railway station at Arcques where it entrained and then travelled overnight, to the south and to Conteville where it arrived at half-past six on the following morning. From there it marched to its billets and rested in anticipation of the final stage of its transfer to *the Somme*.

During the recent period of training in the vicinity of Mouille, route marches had been a frequent activity. This was to stand the Battalion in good stead, for marching was what it was now to do for five successive days as it covered the ninety or so kilometres on its way towards the sound of the guns and the chaos of the battlefields.

On September 10, the 25th Battalion arrived to report to the large military camp which had been established at the *Brickfields (La Briqueterie)* in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert.

Three days afterwards, on September 14, the Battalion had been ordered forward into dug-outs in assembly areas. On the next morning again, September 15, the Canadians were to be going to the attack.

Excerpt from the 25th Battalion War Diary entry for September 15, 1916: *5th Brigade attacked and captured the Town of Courcelette... the 25th Battalion moved forward as though on General Inspection the young soldiers behaving like veterans, going through very heavy artillery barrage without a quiver...*

But of the six-hundred ninety personnel who had gone over *the top* on the day of the assault, the 25th Battalion War Diarist was to record thirty-six dead, one-hundred ninety-one wounded and seventy-seven as *missing in action**.

**It seems that some of the missing may have soon returned to duty as a later War Diary entry records two-hundred fifty-eight casualties all told.*



(Right above: *The village of Courcelette just over a century after the events of the First Battle of the Somme – photograph from 12017*)

On October 1 the 25th Battalion – its operational strength by then apparently reduced to two-hundred (sic) *all ranks* and twelve machine-guns – *received orders to attack and capture “at all costs” enemy trenches known as KENORA and REGINA... “B”, “C” and “D” Companies... were to proceed over KENORA up to REGINA, which they did, but by the time they had got to the wire the casualties had been so heavy that only one officer was left... and about thirty men...*



(Preceding page: *From Courcellette British Cemetery, within its bounds almost two-thousand dead, more than half of them unidentified, may be perceived the nearby Adanac Military Cemetery with its more than three-thousand graves, again half of whose dead remain unknown. – photograph from 1917*)



The attack on *Regina Trench* was to fail in the face of German counter-attacks and the survivors obliged to fall back to *Kenora Trench*. Total casualties during the action had been a further one-hundred twelve.

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



(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*)

On the night of October 1-2 the 25th Battalion retired from *the Battle* - and from the area of - *the Somme* and made its way westwards – as far west as Berteaucourt-les-Dames where it was to train for a week - and then northwards. It was subsequently to pass to the west of the battered city of Arras and beyond, to the region of the mining centre of Lens. There the unit was to remain for the following six months, in the area and in the trenches of places such as Bully-Grenay, Angres and Bruay.

(Right: *This is what was to become of Lens before the Great War ended – from a vintage post-card*)

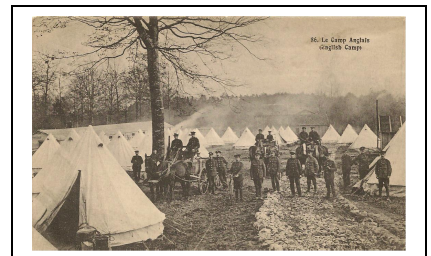


On October 7 Private Squires re-joined his unit during that training period at Berteaucourt-les-Dames: only by this time, since a promotion on October 1, he had risen to the status of Corporal Squires.

That winter of 1916-1917 was to be one of relative calm, allowing the 25th Battalion – and many others - to return to the everyday rigours and routines of trench warfare; after *the Somme* it had perhaps been a welcome respite.

When it was not in the forward area, in was in reserve, encamped in such places as Villers-au-Bois or Bois des Alleux from where Private Squires' Battalion supplied working-parties and carrying-parties for a variety of tasks.

(Right: *A British encampment in the field – during the winter months one would surmise – somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card*)



(continued)

On Christmas Eve of 1916, Corporal Squires began a ten-day period of leave, a furlough which extended until January 8. Since there were no repercussions because of the extra time taken it may well be that this was time allowed for travel – or perhaps he had in fact been granted a two-week period – and that the leave was to be spent back in the United Kingdom. Once again, the author is speculating as there are no documented details.



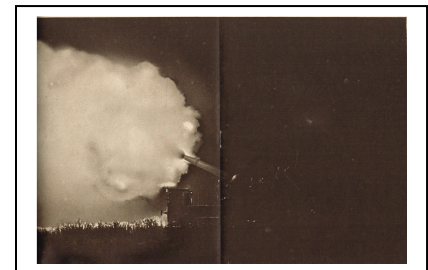
(Right above: *London – in fact the City of Westminster – in the area of Marble Arch, in or about the year 1913, just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

(Right below: *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 to facilitate carrying had by that time been adopted from the indigenous peoples of North America – from Le Miroir*)

Towards the end of the month of March, on the 23rd, the 25th Battalion had been ordered withdrawn well to the rear, to Maisnil-Bouche, where it was to undergo intensive training. The exercises had then lasted until, and including, April 7, only two days before the training was to become the real thing. During the final five days, April 2-7, the unit had been sent to become familiar with ground that had been re-arranged so as to resemble the terrain to be attacked.



And as those final days had passed, the artillery barrage had grown progressively heavier; on April 6, Good Friday, the War Diarist of another battalion was to describe it simply as...*drums*. By this time, of course, the Germans were aware that something was in the offing and their guns in their turn were to throw retaliatory fire onto the Canadian positions - and their aircraft were very busy.



(Right above: *A heavy British artillery piece continues its deadly work during a night before the attack on Vimy Ridge. – from Illustration*)

**It must be said that a great deal of the artillery used in the assault on Vimy Ridge was British and that a British Division – only a single Brigade employed on April 9 – 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 to happen.*

On April 8... *Battalion less 1 platoon per company moved from MAISNIL BOUCHE to concentration area at BOIS DES ALLEUX. In the evening the Battalion moved up to its position...via cross country route...* (Excerpt from 25th Battalion War Diary). Corporal Squires' unit apparently was not to pass via those well-documented tunnels, kilometres of which had been excavated for reasons of both surprise and safety.

On April 9, Easter Monday, in that spring of 1917, the British Army had 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 very few positive episodes having been the assault by the Canadian Corps of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the advance.



While the British campaign proved an overall disappointment, that French offensive of *le Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

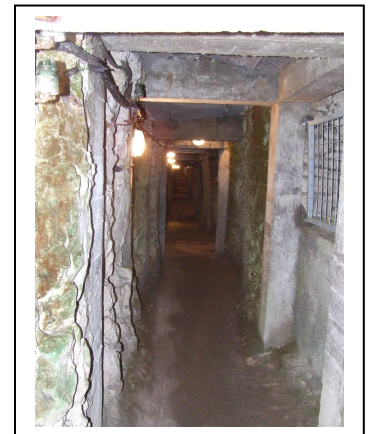
(Right above: *The Canadian National Memorial which, since 1936, has stood on Vimy Ridge* – photograph from 2010)

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

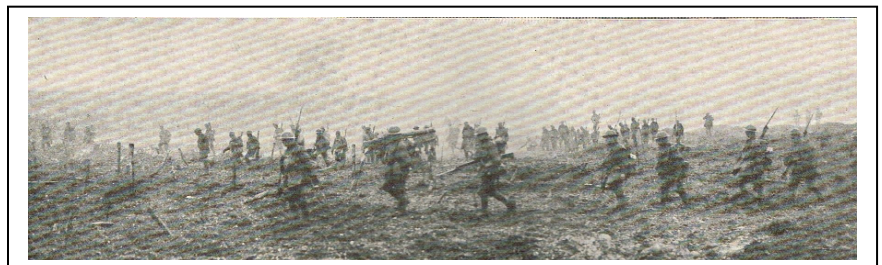
On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions, for the first time acting as a single, autonomous entity, had stormed the slope of *Vimy Ridge*, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.

The 2nd Canadian Division – with a British brigade under its command - had not been responsible for the taking of *Vimy Ridge* itself, but for the clearing of the community of Thélus, further down the southern slope and therefore on the right-hand side of the attack.

The Battalion's objectives were apparently soon to be captured and much of the remainder of that first day had been spent in consolidating these newly-won positions.



(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*)



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



(continued)

The Germans, having lost *Vimy Ridge* and the advantages of the high ground, had retreated some three kilometres into prepared positions in front of the Canadians whose further offensives were to be less successful than that of Easter Monday; while some progress at times would be made – at Arleux-en-Gohelle, for example - German counter-attacks were also to reclaim ground from the British and Canadian troops – as at Fresnoy-en-Gohelle in early May.



(Right above: *German prisoners being escorted to the rear by Canadian troops during the attack on Vimy Ridge – from Illustration*)

There had been, on those first days of April 9 and 10, the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted, but highly-unlikely, *breakthrough* – however, such a follow-up of the previous day's success had proved to be logistically impossible, the weather – and the order to consolidate rather to advance - having prevented any swift movement of guns and material.

Thus the Germans had been gifted the time to close the breach and the conflict once more was to revert to one of inertia.

Inertia, maybe, but that the lines of the opposing sides remained very much *in situ* was not because no-one made an effort to shift them. By April 23, even though Corporal Squires' unit was behind the lines, its War Diarist reported that it was on that day...*making a dummy Attack on ACHEVILLE.*

On April 26 the 25th Battalion moved up once more to the forward area and on the morrow...*in the early morning B Company moved in advance of the line and staked off jumping off trench for coming operations... Usual preparations for the attack were completed... Practice barrage.* (Excerpt from 25th Battalion War Diary entry for April 27, 1917)

(Excerpts from 25th Battalion War Diary entry for April 28, 1917) *At zero hour 4.25 am, C & D Coys attacked enemy objective. Owing to wire and stiff opposition on part of opposing troops considerable time elapsed before situation could be cleared up and our new front line definitely located. Eventually it was ascertained that both companies were holding their objective, having however suffered fairly heavy casualties.*

Many German dead were found in new positions. D Company were engaged in heavy bayonet fighting with enemy in first stage. As soon as objective was satisfactorily cleared the advance posts were pushed forward and several hundred yards more of enemy ground was secured and our position protected.

...100 O.R. killed and wounded.

(continued)



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



Corporal Squires and his Battalion were not relieved until four o'clock in the morning of May 1 and the period spent behind the lines was to be of short duration; three nights later, May 3-4, the unit found its way forward again, into the area of Vimy station and village, several kilometres to the east of the Ridge.

(Right above: *After four years of bombardment – by both sides – this was what was left of the community of Vimy at the conclusion of the Great War. It has since risen from its ashes. – from a vintage post-card*)

By this time the Battalion was badly in need of re-enforcements as its trench strength – that of the four fighting companies – was four-hundred forty-one *all ranks*, less that fifty per cent establishment strength. Relieved on May 6 for four days, the unit was joined during that time by a draft eighty-eight new-comers.

Even so, Corporal Squires' unit was hardly in any condition to return to the offensive – although *depleted forces* had not necessarily prevailed as a reason for not having done so in the past. However, on this occasion the 25th Battalion was moved forward to support and then the to the front lines but with little in the way of objective other than the strengthening of the existing defences.

May 15 was a typical day and the War Diary entry for the day is brief: *Work continued on Front Line and Support. New trenches dug in front system to connect with Battalion on our right. Enemy quiet. Casualties 1 O.R. killed, 2 O.R's wounded.*

Corporal Squires had been one of those unfortunates. He was immediately evacuated from the field to the 4th Canadian Field Ambulance, on this occasion likely an Advanced Dressing Station. A medical report describes his injuries: *SW - shrapnel wound – Buttock Abdomed Thigh L Leg ankle pen (penetrating).*

The son of Henry Thomas Squires - clerk, shop-keeper and general dealer originally from Harbour Grace – and of Mary Ann Squires (née *Bambury*), the couple resident in Pool's (Poole's) Cove, Fortune bay, Newfoundland, he was also possibly brother to Joseph and to Herbert-Wesley (both born in Blackhead, Bay de Verde) and to Cyril, born later back in Pool's Cove.

He was also the friend of Margaret Hayward of North Sydney to whom, as of June 1, 1916, he had allotted a monthly twenty dollars from his pay.

Private Squires was reported by the Commanding Officer of the 4th Canadian Field Ambulance as having *died of wounds* on May 15, 1917.

He had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-six years and eight months: date of birth in the District of Fortune Bay, Newfoundland, July 14, 1888 (from attestation papers only).

(continued)

Private G. Squires was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 24, 2023.

