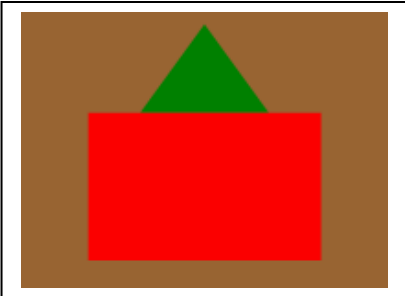




**Private Frederick Charles Stickley, Number 404213 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery: Grave reference IV.BB.8..**

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

**(continued)**



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *bridgeman*, Frederick Charles Stickley appears to have left behind him little information *a propos* his early years in the Dominion of Newfoundland. Whereas all of his nine siblings – older and younger – are documented as having been born in the community of Catalina, St. John's – according to his attestation papers - was the birth-place of Frederick Charles\*.

*\*His is the only birth of the ten Stickley children which seems not to appear in parish or Newfoundland birth records.*

The 1921 Census shows that the parents and at least two, the youngest, of their offspring emigrated from Newfoundland to the city of Toronto in the year 1912. However, there is of course no information on that 1921 document pertaining to Frederick Charles although it may be surmised that he had made the journey of 1912 with them. All that is certain is that he was in Toronto during the first month of 1915, for that is where and when he enlisted.

A first medical record cites January 8 of that 1915 as the date of which he presented himself for service in the Canadian Army at which time he was *taken on strength* by the 35<sup>th</sup> Overseas Battalion. Having recruited in the area of Toronto, Barrie and Aurora, the 35<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to mobilize in the city itself, likely at the *Exhibition Grounds*, although this has yet to be confirmed.

It was not until March 31 that Fred Charles Stickley underwent the aforementioned medical examination – thus, where he was in-between January 8 and March 31 remains unclear. The medical officer having found him to be...*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*, he was now to be attested.

This final formality of his enlistment came about five days later, on April 5, his oath witnessed by a local justice of the peace. The entire procedure was then brought to a conclusion on that same day by the Commanding Officer of the 35<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Frank Case McCordick, when he declared, on paper, that...*Fred Chas Stickley...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 only two months later again that Private Stickley was to be on his way to *overseas service*. It would not be the entire Battalion which was to travel at this time but a 1<sup>st</sup> Reinforcement Draft of five officers and two-hundred fifty *other ranks* destined to be *taken on strength* by Canadian units already training in the United Kingdom or serving on the Western Front\*.

*\*A second reinforcement draft was subsequently despatched and then the parent unit of the Battalion crossed the Atlantic in October of that year. The 35<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to become the 35<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalion before being absorbed by the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reserve Battalion in January of 1917. The 35<sup>th</sup> Battalion was officially disbanded in 1918, never to have seen service on the Continent.*

*Before the end of the Great War, Canada was to have despatched overseas just over 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 aspirations 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.***

Having travelled by train to Montreal, Private Stickley's detachment embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Metagama* on June 4 and sailed later on the same day. The 1<sup>st</sup> Reinforcement Draft of the 35<sup>th</sup> Battalion was not to travel alone: apart from civilian passengers (see below), taking passage to the United Kingdom on the vessel were the 49<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion and also the Eaton's Motorized Machine-Gun Brigade.



***(Right above: Metagama was an ocean-liner of the Canadian Pacific fleet, at times employed to carry Canadian forces personnel but as part of her commercial ocean crossings. Her sister ship, Missanabie, was requisitioned by the British government to serve as a troop transport; Missanabie was eventually torpedoed and sunk on September 9, 1918.***

***The image is from the Great Ships web-site.)***

***(Right above: The harbour of Plymouth-Devonport as it was almost a century after the Great War: it is a lot less busy nowadays. - photograph from 2013)***



*Metagama* docked in the English south-coast naval port and facility of Plymouth-Devonport on June 13. The Draft was then immediately transported from there to the Canadian complex of *Shorncliffe*, on the Dover Straits and in the county of Kent. On the following day Private Stickley and his comrades-in-arms were absorbed by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Reserve Battalion which was also at that time stationed at *Shorncliffe*.



***(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)***

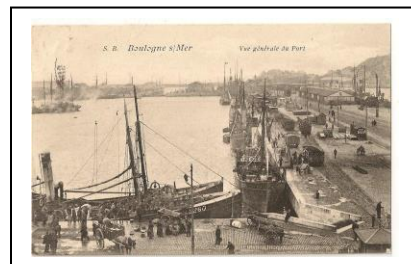
***(Right above: A view of the coastal town of Folkestone almost a century later as seen from the white cliffs of nearby Dover – photograph from 2009)***



One month after Private Stickley had set foot on English soil, on July 16 of that 1915, he was on his way to France via the sea-side harbour and town of Folkestone and the port of Boulogne on the other side of the English Channel. On the morrow, July 17, he joined his new unit, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*) in the *Kingdom of Belgium*.

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

\* \* \* \* \*



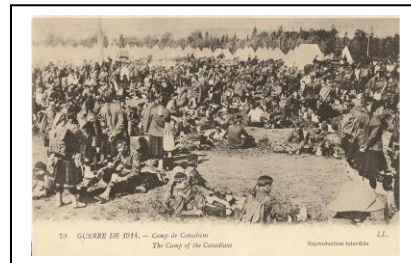
The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*) of Canadian Infantry had, by the time of Private Stickley's arrival *to duty*, been serving on the Continent for some nine months. After a stormy passage from the west coast of England, it had disembarked in the French port of St-Nazaire on February 11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

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

By February 17 the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade – was to traverse the Franco-Belgian frontier and pass into the *Kingdom of Belgium*.



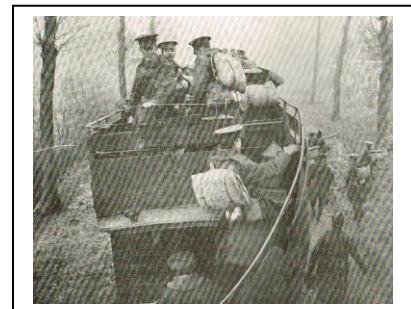
(Right above: While the caption reads that these troops are 'English', this could mean any unit in British uniform – including Empire (Commonwealth) units. This is early in the war as there is no sign of a steel helmet. – from a vintage post-card)



(Right above: 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 Brigade had crossed the frontier to the west of the Belgian town of Poperinghe where it was then to remain for two days before advancing eastwards to Vlamertinghe for two more. It was at that moment that the Germans had decided to launch an attack in an effort to take the nearby city of Ypres.

The other units of the Canadian Division had also only been serving in the *Ypres Salient* for a very short space of time – in some cases they also had still been on the march. During the few early days of Canadian tenure *the Salient* had proved to be relatively quiet. Then the dam had broken - although it would be gas rather than water which, for a while, was to threaten to sweep all before it. The date was April 22, 1915.



(continued)

**(Preceding page: *Troops being carried to their destination in busses requisitioned from the area of London: A number of units of the (1<sup>st</sup>) Canadian Division were transported in this manner in April of 1915. – from Illustration*)**

**(Right below: *An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ypres - which shows the shell of the medieval city, an image entitled Ypres-la-Morte (Ypres the Dead) – By the end of the conflict there was to be little left standing. – from Illustration*)**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> *Battle of Ypres* was to see the first use of chlorine gas by the Germans during the *Great War*. It, gas, was later to become an everyday event and, with the introduction of protective measures such as advanced gas-masks, the new weapon 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.

**(Right: *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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade were to be moved forward to support the efforts of the French and of the Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade to hold the line.



**(Right: *Entitled: Bombardement d'Ypres, le 5 juillet 1915 – from Illustration*)**

By the second day, the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the situation had become relatively stable – at least temporarily - and the positions in the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan would hold until the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> when a further retirement was to become necessary.

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

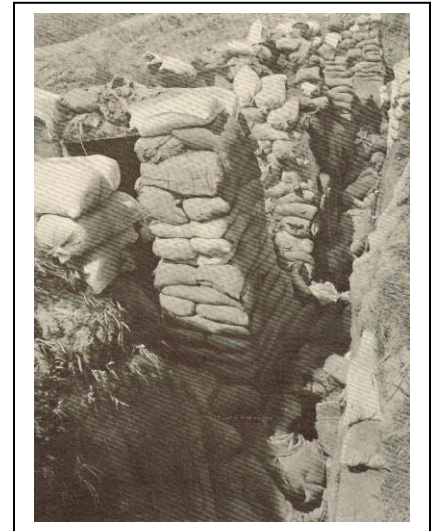
(continued)

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had remained attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade to the north-east of the Salient until April 26 when it had been withdrawn to Vlamertinghe and had re-joined – at least on paper - the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade. Having remained in the area of the above-named village, there to repose on the following day, the unit had next been ordered forward to the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan to dig trenches. By that evening of April 28, some twelve-hundred yards had been excavated whereupon the Battalion had returned to Vlamertinghe.



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

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

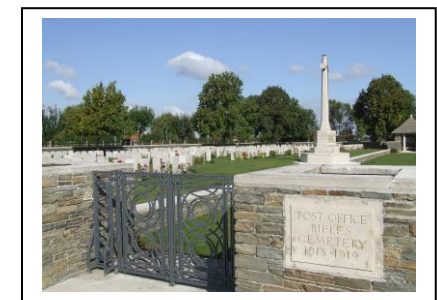


(Right above: *The Memorial to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division – the Brooding Soldier – stands just to the south of the village of Langemark (at the time Langemarck) at the Vancouver Crossroads where the Canadians withstood the German attack – abetted by gas – at Ypres (today Ieper) in April of 1915. – photograph from 2010*)

On May 15 the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 operation just further south again and had asked for British support.

(Right above: *A French photograph of some 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 during which the British High Command would manage to gain three kilometres of ground but also contrive to destroy, by the use of the unimaginative tactic of the frontal assault, what had been left of the British pre-War professional Army after *Second Ypres*.



The Canadian Division was also to contribute to the campaign but its fewer numbers meant, of course, that it was not to participate in the operation to the same extent.

(continued)

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

It had nonetheless suffered heavily. It and the Indian troops - the 7<sup>th</sup> (*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 had drawn to a close.

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

*\*The Indian troops also served – and lost heavily – in other battles in this area in 1915 before 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had been relieved from its posting at Festubert; in a few days' time, 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 had begun to retire from the area.

*\*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-les-la-Bassée, the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 then to move towards and back into Belgium, to *the Ploegsteert Sector*, just across the frontier.

Having reached the area of Ploegsteert, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had there remained – as had the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division. In the next months it would come to be 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.



(continued)

**(Preceding page: 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. And it had been there, during that month of July, 1915, that Private Stickley had reported *to duty* with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*) in the field.

\* \* \* \* \*

While his *Active Service Form* apparently records Private Stickley as having joined his unit in the field in the area of the *Ploegsteert Wood* on July 17, 1915, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for July 22 reads as follows: *A draft of 223 N.C.O. and men under Major EDEN SMITH arrived at 8 p.m. from SHORNCLIFFE – 35<sup>th</sup> BN – as reinforcement. The part was inspected at Transport Lines by C.O. and after being supplied with rations and ammunition was marched to the trenches. One platoon was attached to “D” Coy and one platoon to “C” Coy. The remaining two platoons under Major Smith occupied the Support Trench... No casualties... Situation in trenches very quiet.*

On this occasion the exact date is likely of little importance: by the end of that July of 1917, Private Stickley was on *active service*.

It was now to be a further nine months before the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 ensured a constant flow of casualties. But by far the greatest part of that period was to be spent submitting to the monotony of the routines, the rigours and 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.*

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

(continued)



For Private Stickley, and likely for some of his fellows, there was to be a twelve-day change in that routine from October 14 to 26 when he was ordered attached to a bombing course – the use of hand-grenades (*bombs*) – run by the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade. A weapon which had fallen into disfavour since its inception over a century before, the grenade had now become recognized as a useful addition to the infantry unit's arsenal for trench warfare. Battalions were now to train *bombing companies* – to which Private Stickley was now posted upon his return to his unit.

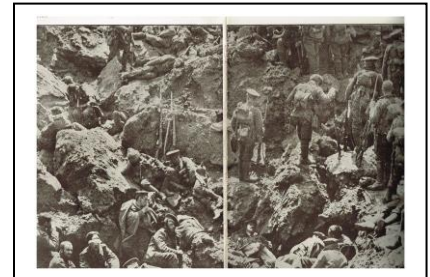
In the meantime, in September of 1915, it had been the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division to land on the Continent and to also immediately be posted north into Belgium.

It was not to be stationed in the *Ypres Salient* as had been in April of 1915 - or on the frontier itself, as were now - the units of the now-1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was stationed between these two areas, down the line south of Ypres in the area of St-Éloi.

It was there, after some seven months of that morose winter-life in and about the trenches, that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division was to fight its first major action of the *Great War*.

For the personnel of the above-mentioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, the first weeks of April, 1916, were not to be as tranquil as those being experienced during the same period by Private Stickley and the other personnel of his 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 a small village some five kilometres to the south of the Belgian city of Ypres and it was here that the British had excavated a series of galleries under the German lines, there to place explosives which they detonated on that March 27. That detonation was then 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division affair and the personnel of the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

It was on April 1 that Private Stickley's 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 the abandoned remnants of Dickebusch, a once-village just to the south-west of the city.

(continued)

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

(Right: *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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion passed in early April of 1916. – photograph from 2017)*



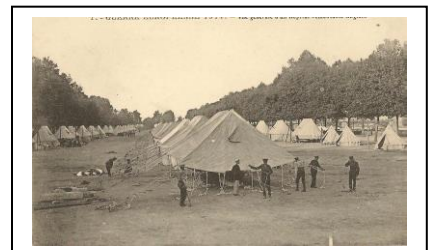
(Right: *Bedford House Cemetery on a misty autumn morning: there are just fewer than twenty-two hundred graves within its bounds, some two hundred of them Canadian. – photograph from 2014)*



During the last days of March, on the 27<sup>th</sup>, Private Stickley was granted a nine-day period of leave back to the British Isles – in his case the time was to be spent in Ireland, apparently in or close to Dublin. Also apparently, the return ferry-boat between there and Holyhead, Wales, was delayed and the nine days leave evolved into fourteen.

Less than a month following his return, Private Stickley was to be on the move again, only this time it was to receive medical attention. Excerpts from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for May 8, 1916 read as follows: *4 O.R. wounded... Strafed heavily again with rifle grenades...*

One of the four wounded was Private Stickley who incurred a slight contusion of the left eye. For this he was evacuated from the field to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Field Ambulance, likely to an Advanced Dressing Station, before being transferred to the 17<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at the *Rémy Siding* just southward of Poperinghe.



(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 more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card)*

From there he was again transferred, on this occasion on board the 29<sup>th</sup> Ambulance train, to be admitted on May 10 into the Number 13 Stationary Hospital, established by that time in the coastal port-town of Boulogne. Two days later again, on May 12, Private Stickley was discharged from there to the 1<sup>st</sup> Convalescent Depot, also in the area of Boulogne.

Yet a further four days and on May 16 he was released to the Canadian Base Depot at *Rouelles Camp*, adjacent to the industrial port-city of Le Havre situated on the estuary of the *River Seine*. At the Depot he was posted to work with Base Details until on or about May 29, the day on which Private Stickley is recorded as having re-joined his unit.

On that particular date the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was once more serving in the trenches where it was to be for the next two days, on the final day of the month then to be relieved to withdraw to the *Dickebusch Huts*. The two following days were to be as restful as the Battalion would know it for a number of days. But then, by the evening of June 2, the unit was *standing to* in anticipation of a move to counter the German offensive at *Mount Sorrel*.

From June 2 of 1916 until June 13, eleven days following, was to be fought the battle for *Mount Sorrel* and for the area of *Hooge, Sanctuary Wood, Maple Copse, Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* between the Army of the Kaiser and the Canadian Corps.

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



The Canadians had been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions dominating the Canadian trenches when the Germans delivered their offensive, overrunning the forward areas and, in fact, rupturing the Canadian lines, an opportunity of which, fortunately, they never took advantage.

(Right below: *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)

The British Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, reacted – perhaps 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 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 pieces - the enemy remained in the captured positions and the Canadians were left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.



Ten days later the Canadians again counter-attacked; on this occasion they were better prepared and 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 and also numerous.



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

During this period, at the outset of the battle, on June 2, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had been ordered to *stand to* and at three o'clock the next morning had been ordered forward from the *Dickebusch Huts* into the support area.

(continued)

By mid-day of June 3 the unit was to be found 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had supplied working-parties and burial-parties for the remainder of the day.

The unit remained at *Railway Dugouts* until the early morning of June 9 when it was relieved by the Canadian 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Not having been directly involved in any infantry activity while at *Railway Dugouts*, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had nonetheless continued to provide working-parties for the area of *Hill 60* and had been almost constantly subjected to bombardment by a very active German artillery during this period. On that June 9 it withdrew.



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

This relief was to last for just two days. On June 11, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was ordered back into the same area, in the vicinity of the village of Zillebeke. On the following day the unit was ordered moved up towards the forward area: the *Battle of Mount Sorrel* was about to come to its violent conclusion.

In the jumping-off trenches since ten o'clock on the evening of June 12, the personnel of the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion was to be witness to the intense forty-five-minute barrage undertaken by the Canadian artillery just after midnight.



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 Canadian infantry. The succeeding German lines were attacked and carried, again using the same co-operative tactics between the artillery and infantry.

(Right above: *Hill 60 as it remains a century after the events of 1916 and 1917 – when a British mine reduced its summit into very small pieces - 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 once more, Private Stickley had been wounded.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Excerpt from a medical report: *June 13/16 – Shell destroyed trench and some sand-bags fell on him... Shell hit close to him & he was thrown 10 feet... Received severe contusion to left elbow & shell shock... buried & unconscious...***

Reported as injured and shell-shocked, there appears to be no further information among his papers of where any first aid or treatment may have been applied although, once again, it may well have been at an Advanced Dressing Station. But by the morrow, June 14, Private Stickley had been taken to the Number 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital at Outreau, in close proximity to Boulogne. He was one of ninety-seven wounded to be transported in four convoys and admitted into hospital on that day.

He was not to remain there for long. On June 16 he was placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Cambria* for the short trans-Channel journey back to the United Kingdom. On that same day he was to pass through the Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre at Folkestone – either physically or bureaucratically or both – and transported to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Western General Hospital in Levenshulme, a District of Manchester.



**(Right above: *Cambria* in her peace-time livery, the colours of the London & North-western Railway Company, before being requisitioned to serve as an armed boarding steamer then hospital ship – from the *Old Ship Picture Galleries* web-site)**

There now followed a series of hospitalizations for Private Stickley\*. Two weeks after having entered the 2<sup>nd</sup> Western General, he was on his way to the Canadian Red Cross Hospital at Woodlawn, West Didsbury; on July 18 he was transferred to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital at *Bear Wood*, Wokingham; next on the list was the Canadian Red Cross Special Hospital at Buxton in the county of Derbyshire which he entered on July 30 but was not to leave until September 23.

**\*Shell-shock was at the time a new medical phenomenon – and one of which many were at first sceptical, some otherwise reputable persons - including doctors and high-ranking officers - at the time calling it nothing but...‘a lack of moral fibre’ – and the search was on for a remedy to the myriad symptoms manifested by it.**

The final stop before Private Stickley's discharge from medical care was to be at the Canadian Convalescent Hospital at *Woodcote Park*, in the county of Surrey town of Epsom, in pre-War days best-known for its horse-racing. Having entered there directly from Buxton on September 23, he was to remain there for thirty-two days before his release on October 25.

It was to the Canadian Reinforcing Depot, newly established at *Shoreham Army Camp* on the south coast of England and which the Canadian Expeditionary Force was now taking over, that Private Stickley was to be posted from October 25 until December 4 of that 1916. Until this time, since having returned wounded from Belgium to England, he had been the bureaucratic responsibility of the *Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre* based at Folkestone.

(continued)

Now he was to become the ward of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Corps Training Battalion stationed not far along the coast from Shoreham-on-Sea, at Hastings. He remained there in the vicinity of the historic town, where William the Conqueror had set foot in 1066 to overthrow Harold in battle and to claim the throne of England, until January 24 of the New Year, 1917.

On that date he was transferred to *East Sandling Camp*, a subsidiary of *Shorncliffe Camp* with which he was already familiar. There, *struck off strength* by the 1<sup>st</sup> CCT Battalion at Hastings, he was *taken on strength* at *East Sandling* by the 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reserve Battalion which was now to prepare him for a return to the Continent.

This return came about on February 14. Once more crossing through Folkestone and Boulogne, Private Stickley then reported to the Canadian Base Depot at *Rouelles Camp*, le Havre, on following day. He was to stay there for but two days before, on February 17, being despatched to his former unit, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*).



He reported back *to duty* with his unit two days later again, on February 19, 1917.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

As for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion during the eight months of Private Stickley's absence, the remainder of the month of June, that of July and the first days of August of 1916 had been a reversion to the routines of trench warfare, the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 remainder of unoccupied Belgium, and had crossed the frontier to finish the day in the vicinity of the northern French town of Steenvoorde. From this moment it was to be a further fourteen months before the unit would return to fight once more in the *Kingdom of Belgium*.

Two days later again, after a further march of some fifty kilometres still towards the west, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had reached its destination and its billets – *...very comfortably settled...*notes the officer War Diarist - at Tournehem. The unit was to remain there for the following two weeks, time that would be occupied by training and by route marches. It was then to be ordered transferred by train 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*)

(continued)

***\*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 to be ten o'clock in the evening of August 27 that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had 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 arrived at the station at one-thirty in the morning, the Battalion was then to be obliged to wait a further ninety-five minutes before the train departed.**



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

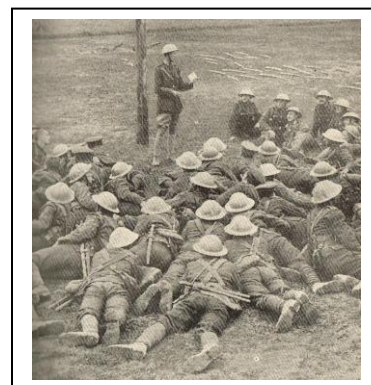
**Having travelled at first through what had remained of that night by train, then by bus, and finally on foot, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had arrived in the provincial town of Albert in the French *Département de la Somme* on the penultimate day of August.**

**By that September of 1916, the *First Battle of the Somme* had been ongoing for two months. It was to begin with the disastrous attack of July 1, an assault which would cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the short span of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.**

**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 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.**

**(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**)**

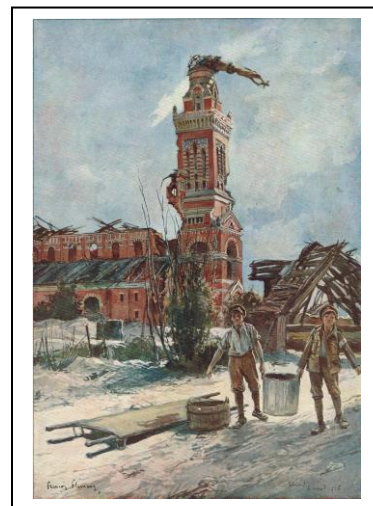


Meanwhile, on August 30, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had marched into the large military encampment which had been designated as *Brickfields Camp (La Briqueterie)* in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert. A few hours later the unit had been allotted billets in the town itself, accommodations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

By the end of the following day, August 31, the Canadian newcomers were to find themselves in likely less luxurious quarters as they had moved up to the forward area in order to relieve an Australian unit in 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 had subsequently seen the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion move forward again, on this occasion into the front-line trenches in the area of *Mouquet Farm*. There appears to have been no co-ordinated infantry action during this period but enemy planes had put in an appearance and the unit had been shelled almost incessantly for the duration of the six-day tour.



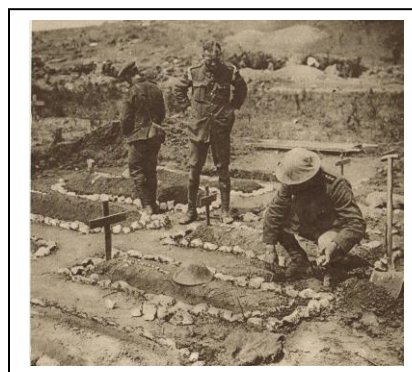
Even without there having been any infantry action, by the end of that period the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had incurred a casualty count of twenty-two *killed in action* and a further one-hundred forty-five wounded.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had withdrawn to the *Brickfields Camp* on September 8, but apparently not too far away from the front for *one* of the Battalion's Companies to have been ordered to mount a reportedly successful raid on enemy positions in the early morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>.

(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 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade had begun a five-day circular march around the region, a trek which had seen it eventually 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\*.

The assault by the Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division on Courcelette had been perhaps the only successful venture on a day when most of the news from the other attacks had once more been, at best, disappointing.



*\*As troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade had already been serving in the forward area, the march was likely conceived to allow them to rest during this period while, at the same time, freeing up billets for the fresh battalions now arriving in the area of Albert in order to be a part of the offensive to begin on September 15.*



It had been on the evening of September 17 that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was to be ordered to move forward into the trenches in front of Courcelette, there to relieve the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

It, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, had in turn been withdrawn from that forward area again on September 20, the three-day tour having cost a total of ninety-four casualties, many of them, according to the War Diarist, unfortunately having been caused by *friendly* artillery fire falling short.

(Right: Seen from fields to the north, this is the village of Courcelette just over a century after the events of the First Battle of the Somme. – photograph from 2017)



Some of the first tanks ever to be used in battle had apparently been a positive element at Courcelette during the fighting of September 15.

(Right: One of the tanks – originally called land-ships – employed during the First 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 in the trenches once again, although on this occasion for but a single day, on September 24 the unit had had to contend with three local counter-attacks by the Germans. These had been beaten off but, of course, at a price: eight *killed* and sixty-five *wounded* all told. Relief had come, not too soon, at midnight.

Then there was to be another march undertaken - for the same reasons as the first some two weeks previously - by the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade. It was to be of eight days' duration on this occasion – having commenced on September 26. Upon its return to Albert the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had received re-enforcements and had begun to prepare for an upcoming operation. On October 7 it was then to move from the town and to proceed to its assembly points in the appropriately-named *Death Valley*.

According to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion War Diarist, the numbers of the attacking party from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion – to be compared to the casualty list (see below) – and even having included a newly-arrived draft of ninety re-enforcements, had amounted to just fourteen officers and four-hundred eighty-one *other ranks*, less than half the regular establishment strength of a British (or *Commonwealth*) Battalion.



(Right above: *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)

(continued)

The same officer War Diarist for the unit has dedicated over three pages of his journal to the happenings of October 8 during the attack by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion on the enemy *Regina Trench* system. The following is a resume of the same events based upon excerpts from another War Diary, that of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade:

*Zero hour (4.50 a.m.) – The 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion to) enter the German trenches. Some congestion was caused by mixing with the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Battalion remained in the left of the German trenches but these men were withdrawn at dark...*

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



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

Thus, out of the four-hundred ninety-five personnel of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (*Toronto*) who had attacked on that morning of October 8, 1916, one-hundred fifty-six were to remain on duty to be counted at muster. The Battalion War Diary entry differs, citing that...*1 officer and about 85 O.R. were left*: there is a discrepancy to be sure between the two sets of numbers, certainly, but terrible nonetheless, whichever is the version that one chooses to believe.



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

(continued)

Only days after the encounter at *Regina Trench*, on October 13, a draft of fifty reinforcements had subsequently arrived in Albert to bolster the strength of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. They were to be just in time to turn around and to march from there with the remnants of the unit...away from *the Somme*.

In fact it had been the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade which was to pass the starting point at eight o'clock on that morning of what was apparently to prove...*a fine day* - from the point of view of the weather as well.

The itinerary of the march was to take the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade at first well to the west before it then had 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, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had come to the end of its trek in the vicinity of Camblain l'Abbé – fifteen kilometres to the north-west of Arras – there 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 to the north of Arras to Béthune to the northwards again - in which all the Canadian units withdrawing from *the Somme* would sooner or later find themselves and where they would now remain – even during the time of the *Battle of Arras* the following spring - until October of 1917.

The winter of 1916-1917, as was to be the case during all the winters of the *Great War*, would be 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 had been encouraged by the High Command who felt it to be a morale booster which also served to keep the troops in the right offensive frame of mind – the troops who had been ordered to carry them out in general apparently grew to loathe these operations.

There had of course been 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 to be forgotten, the daily count of those sick - plus a surprising number in need of dental work – which had also helped to keep the field ambulances and the casualty clearing stations busy.



(continued)

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

On February 19 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had taken up residence behind the lines at the *Bouvigny Huts* encampment. This, it should be remembered, was the day on which, according to his personal files, Private Stickley would return *to duty* with his former unit\*.

*\*The Battalion War Diarist, on the other hand, during the month has noted the return to duty of several officers and of two contingents of other ranks who had been on leave; but of any other arrivals or returns there appears no mention – except that it was the unit's C.O., on April 24, who reported that he had arrived by that date.*

\* \* \* \* \*

On March 9 Private Stickley'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 of *special training* that was to be the eventual lot on the majority, if not all, of the battalions of the Canadian Corps.

Something, this becoming obvious to all, was in the offing and the Canadian troops were 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* and elsewhere, 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 back up to the area of Écoivres and Mont St-Éloi in order, from there, to relieve another battalion in the forward area; it was to remain there until April 1, on that date moving back into support. After a further four days, Private Stickley and his comrades-in-arms were back at Cambligneul.



(Right above and right: *The village of Mont 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*)

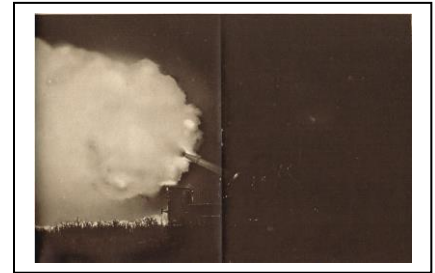
*\*Not to be confused with St. Eloy (St-Éloi) in southern Belgium where Canadian forces also served: Mont St-Éloi is to be found to the north-west of the city of Arras in northern France and was, at the time, well behind the lines.*



(continued)

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 above: *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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was ordered 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 given by 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...*

On April 9 of 1917 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was to be 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, the *Battle of Arras* was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, one of the few positive episodes to be 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.

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

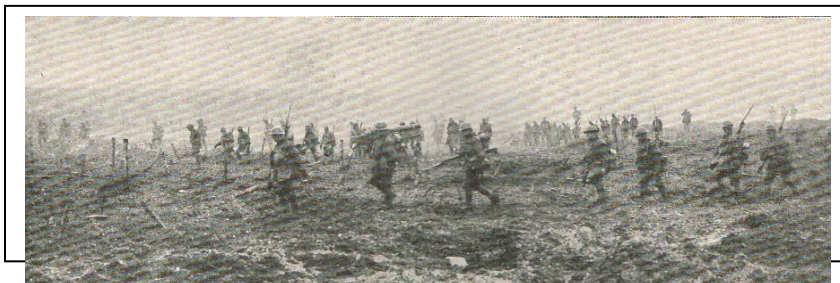
On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions, for the first time acting as a single, autonomous entity – and with a British brigade operating under 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division command - stormed the slope of *Vimy Ridge*, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.



(Preceding page: *The monument to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division which stands just outside the village of Thélus was erected during the Christmas period of 1917 – photograph from 2017*)

The Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions had been issued the responsibility for the *Ridge* itself; to their immediate right was to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, attacking in the area of the village of Thélus on the southern slope; and to the right again the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division had been ordered to clear the area lower down the slope again towards the village of Roclincourt.

(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> 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*)

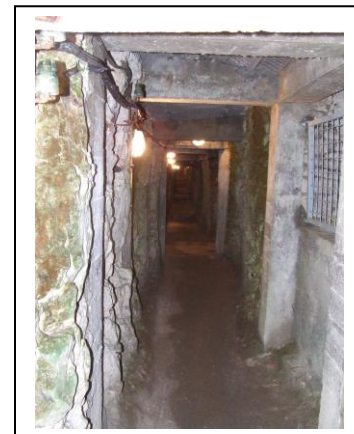


On April 10 the Canadians finished clearing the area of *Vimy Ridge* of the few remaining pockets of resistance and began to consolidate the area in anticipation of German counter-attacks – attacks which in fact really never amounted to much.

There had on that day 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 to those orders...*to consolidate*. Thus the Germans closed the breach and the conflict once more reverted to one of inertia.

The Germans, having lost *Vimy Ridge* and the *supposed* advantages of the high ground, 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: *Grange Tunnel - one of the few remaining galleries still open to the public at Vimy one hundred years later. – photograph from 2008(?)*)



As for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, by mid-day of April 11 the cost to Private Stickley's unit for those first two days, April 9-10, had been counted: they amounted to thirty *killed in action*; seventy-three *wounded*; and fifteen *missing in action*.

There were more casualties to be incurred before the end of the month: seven *killed*, forty-one *wounded* and three *missing*\*. But long before that time, Private Stickley was to be receiving treatment in hospital in England.

(continued)

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



**(Right: Canadians under shell-fire occupy the third line of trenches on Vimy Ridge with anonymous dead in the foreground: the fighting of the next few days was fought under the same terrible conditions. – from Illustration)**

\* \* \* \* \*

**A4213 Pte, Stickley, F.C. Wounded April 9<sup>th</sup> – from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Casualty Appendix for April, 1917**

**There are few records of the wounding of Private Stickley, the one above from the War Diary appears to be the only one to document the date; otherwise one is left with the impression that his injury possibly occurred on either April 12 or 13. This is likely so because the next report on him – and the first among his own papers - is dated April 13 and reads: *Adm. Number 14 General Hospital, Wimereux, GSW (gun-shot wound) Abdomen Severe***



**To where and when it had been that Private Stickley was at first to be evacuated for preliminary treatment does not appear among his papers.**

**(Right above: *In contrast to the hand-carts of the Somme, by the time of the Battle of Arras, 1917, the military railway networks were evolving at a torrid rate. Employed to bring the supplies of war to the forward areas, they were also used to ferry the some of the carnage of it to the medical facilities established in the rear.* – from Illustration)**

**(Right below: *The sea-side resort town of Wimereux at a time before the Great War and, before that war-time period when it became a major British and Commonwealth medical complex – from a vintage post-card)***

**On the following day, April 14, he was for a second time placed on board a hospital ship, HMHS *St. Denis*, to be ferried back to the United Kingdom. Bureaucratically he now became the responsibility of the Central Ontario Regimental Depot at *Shorncliffe*, but physically, by April 15, he had been admitted into the *Brooke War Hospital*, Woolwich, in the eastern outskirts of London on the southern bank of the River Thames.**



**Private Stickley was to remain at Woolwich for forty-six days, his condition at the time of his admission further elaborated by the following excerpt from this first medical report from the Brooke War Hospital: *15/4/17 – GSW of abdominal wall – Bullet went in at lower border of ribs and came out...about 8 inches back after following course of ribs.***



**(Preceding page: *His Majesty's Hospital Ship St. Denis, here before donning in its war-time white with a red cross – from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site*)**

It should be remembered by the reader that the *Great War* was fought in an era before the advent of anti-biotics; even during the Second World War they were only then being developed and were prohibitively expensive\*.

*\*The first of them, penicillin, was discovered in 1028 by Alexander Fleming, but for a decade he was apparently unaware of its full potential. Even later on, in 1940, it was to be two other scientists who realized its use as a general agent against bacteria.*

During the *Great War* the medical battle was as much, if not more, of a fight against infection as it was against the damage of the wound itself, not to forget the struggle against the infections of everyday sicknesses and latterly, the *Spanish 'Flu*.

Private Stickley's is a case in point where the infection appears to have caused the majority of his problems. The following excerpts are from his Medical Case Sheet, a resume of Private Stickley's time of healing and of convalescence – it also refers to him as *Corporal Stickley*, a rank not found elsewhere among his records:

- 18 (April) – *slight discharge of pus from both entry and exit – discharge tube*
- 22 (April) – *Wound gradually closing still some pus discharging*
- 24 (April) – *Patient complains of abdominal pain particularly in left line region Hot foment\* Abdomen slightly prominent No hardness felt on palpation Ride of temp.*
- \*These are hot poultices applied to encourage the pus to exit the infected area(s).*
- 27 (April) – *Temp still up – Pain lessened*
- 30 (April) – *Temp normal. No pain in abdomen. Wound healing. Gen improvement.*
- 12 (May) – *Rise in temp every 3 or 4 days with twinges of pain. Patient to get up in chair.*
- 21 (May) - *...occasional rise in temperature*
- 4 (June) – *Slight discharge of pus from one opening...*

It was to be a long process: from April 15 until June 31 he appears to have remained in hospital at Woolwich after which he was transferred to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital at *Woodcote Park*, Epsom, where he had spent time during the autumn of 1916. He was not to be released from there until the first day of August of that 1917.

Now it had to be decided what, if any, future there was for Private Stickley in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. To that end, immediately upon his discharge from medical care on August 1, he was posted to *West Sandling, Shorncliffe*, to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Command Depot. The function of the Command Depot was to take charge of personnel unattached to any particular unit – often those released from hospitalization – and to form an appraisal of what duties the individual might be fit for – or not - in order to attach him to the appropriate unit, or to repatriate him home to Canada.



Private Stickley remained *on Command* until mid-October when the hierarchy apparently decided that he would eventually be suitable to return to the fighting on the Continent. Thus on October 16 of that 1917 he was posted to the 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reserve Battalion (*Central Ontario*) at nearby *East Sandling*.

(Right below: *The gymnasium which served the military complex at Shorncliffe a century ago, but which may, since the taking of this photograph, have fallen victim to progress – photograph from 2016*)

The 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reserve Battalion (*Central Ontario*) had come into being on January 4, 1917, as a result of organizational changes within the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The unit was to remain at *East Sandling, Shorncliffe*, until it – and with it Private Stickley – was transferred to the Canadian complex of *Witley Camp* in the southern extreme of the inland county of Surrey on March 2 of 1918.



Some four weeks later, on March 28 or 29, Private Stickley was on his way from *Witley* to *overseas service* on the Continent where he reported on that second date to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Base Depot\*. On April 2 he was on his way again, now to the *Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp* at Calonne-Ricouart some eighty kilometres to the east.

*\*The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Base Depot has documented no 'other ranks' as having arrived on this date from England, but nine-hundred seventy-six as having done so on the next, March 30.*

Once more there is a contradiction in dates: his own records have Private Stickley as having arrived at the *Reinforcement Camp* on April 2; the *Camp War Diary* has one-hundred thirty-one men having reported from the Base Depot on the next day, April 3, and these destined to serve with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. Destined or otherwise, a further three and a-half months were to go by before the call was to come for Private Stickley - by which time the *Reinforcement Camp* had been relocated to Aubin St-Vaast.

In his own files, Private Stickley has been recorded as having joined his former unit on July 23 – and indeed, the *Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp War Diary* has recorded a draft of either sixty-nine or eighty-nine – the file is barely legible - *other ranks* as having left Aubin St-Vaast on July 22 to report to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. However, the *Battalion War Diarist* once again makes no mention of arrivals at that time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, fifteen months prior to July of 1918, and with Private Stickley hospitalized, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had continued to play its role during the *Battle of Arras*. The Canadian success at *Vimy Ridge* had been almost the sole exception to the rule\*, the rule having been costly engagements more often than not accomplishing very little. Arleux-en-Gohelle on April 28 was to gain some ground for the Canadian attackers but at great sacrifice.

(continued)

The confrontation at Fresnoy on May 8, in which the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion – and the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade – was to play a role, had been otherwise; the losses to the Battalion were to be *greater* – almost twice as many - than those at *Vimy Ridge*: *forty-four killed*; *one-hundred sixty wounded*; and *twelve missing* – *and* the Germans had retained the village.

*\*This was so not only for the Canadians. The British, Australians, New Zealanders 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.*

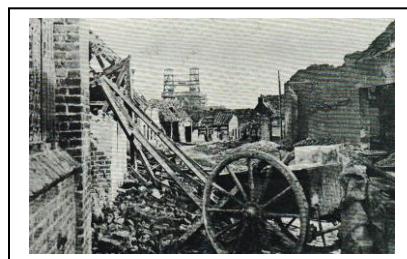
*Although sources differ somewhat, the Newfoundland unit incurred losses of some four-hundred sixty on that day – killed in action, wounded, missing in action and taken prisoner – a count second only to that on the field at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916.*

(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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had retired to the area of Petit Servins where it was to remain until the first days of June. It had then been transferred to another vicinity, identified only as F.11, for training which was to last for a week during which period the unit would receive the attention of some German aircraft which had dropped a number of bombs on its positions.

The remainder of the month of June and then all of July had 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 were to be relatively light: *five killed* and *fourteen wounded*.



(Right above: *The remnants of the mining village of Loos (see below) as it was already in early 1915, the pit-heads known as Tower Bridge in the background – from Le Miroir*)

The first nine days of August had again been quiet, seven of them having been spent in billets in the mining community of Nœux-les-Mines. On August 10 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was ordered forward into the Left Sub-Sector at the pit-head known as Le Bis 14 and near to the larger mining village of Loos.

(continued)

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and the other battalions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade were to be relieved four days later, on August 14, and the unit had withdrawn to Noeux-les-Mines whence it had marched only days before. The relieving troops had been from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division.

(Right above: *Noeux-les-Mines Communal Cemetery and its Extension are the last resting-places of almost thirteen-hundred dead of the Great War, including several Newfoundlanders. Many of them had died of wounds in the nearby medical facilities. – photograph from 1914*)



On the morrow, it would be *they* and those of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, in conjunction with units of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, who were to launch an attack on German positions at *Hill 70* to the north of the city and mining-centre of Lens.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, meanwhile, was to remain in reserve until the afternoon of August 16: it was then to relieve elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade which had incurred severe casualties during not only the attack of the 15<sup>th</sup>, but also during the night of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> 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 in 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*)

The Canadians were to be a major contributor to this effort and the attack by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisions at *Hill 70* on August 15 had been a part of this subsidiary campaign.



(Right above: *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 had been 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 that of the city of Lens itself.

(Preceding page: *This gentle slope rising to the left is, in fact, Hill 70. A monument to the 15<sup>th</sup> 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 had been limited and for the most part had been achieved by the end of that August 15. Due to the dominance of *Hill 70* over the entire area, it had been expected that the Germans would endeavour to retrieve it and so it was to prove; on the morrow, the 16<sup>th</sup>, several strong counter-attacks were to be launched against the Canadian positions, positions that by that time had been transformed into defensive strong-points.



These defences had held and the Canadian artillery, which had been employing newly-developed procedures, was to inflict massive losses on the enemy. *Hill 70* had remained in Canadian hands.

As has already been recorded in a previous paragraph, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had moved up to the forward area to relieve troops of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade and to take over support positions.

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

From those positions, at just after midnight of the night of August 17-18, the unit had begun to supply carrying-parties. The troops of the nearby 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, already short of small-arms ammunition and bombs (*hand-grenades*) had already been counter-attacked and heavily shelled earlier that night and the situation had been critical: rations and water by that time had been non-existent and casualties numerous.



The morning was to bring no amelioration to the situation and the Germans had once more been massing and threatening. The carrying-parties of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had therefore been 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 without any casualties appears miraculous.

On the next day, August 19, it had been the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion's turn to move into the front line, to relieve the hard-pressed 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion which had thereupon retired to the support area. By this time, even in reserve, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had already 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 would be any safer.

On the night of August 20-21 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had been relieved by a battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles and had retired to the area of the mining village of Mazingarbe for a change of underclothing, outer clothing – even some new uniforms were to be provided, as had been a bath.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>...*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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 had been anticipated – poorly enough for the generals to call a temporary four-week halt - and the High Command was looking for reinforcements to make good the exorbitant losses.

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

*\*The South African Brigade, serving in a British Division, as was the Newfoundland Battalion, had both been in 3<sup>rd</sup> Ypres very much from the outset, July 31.*



(Right above: *A Canadian 220 mm siege gun, hidden from aerial observation under camouflage nets in the Lens Sector, being prepared for action by personnel of the Canadian Garrison Artillery – 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 had still been the rule. On most days, according to the Battalion War Diary, it would be the artillery of both sides which was active – but, of course, the infantry was usually the target.



However, there were to be several occasions on which the unit had been withdrawn to areas behind the lines, particularly for training; the War Diaries of different battalions also show that sports were at this time being considered more and more to be a morale booster among the troops. For its part, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion football – the *round* ball - team had won the Brigade championship and its officers had defeated their counterparts of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in indoor baseball by the score of 20 – 4.

(continued)

On September 3 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was to begin to move forward from the rear area of Monchy-Breton and by September 5 had been 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 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, had 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 were to range 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 was to lose...to a *real-war* German-instigated raid on September 19 which the Battalion team was reported to have won.

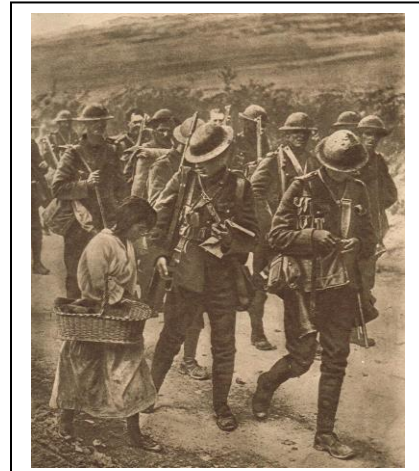
Apart from the afore-mentioned patrolling there was to be little offensive action reported during this time and, as usual, the majority of casualties had been victims of enemy artillery activity\*.

*\*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: 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*)



The unit having retired from the area of Cité St-Pierre on September 22 to the vicinity of Fosse 10\*, relieved by a British (*Imperial*) unit, on September 25 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had then moved further to the rear again, to the area of Bruay, where it was to remain until October 7 when it had been ordered forward to *Noulette Huts* in the vicinity of Aix-Noulette. On both occasions, training – well-laced, nonetheless, with sports - was to be the primary activity. Then five days later, on October 12, the unit had been withdrawn to rest billets – *pretty fair*...recorded the War Diarist – at Haillicourt.

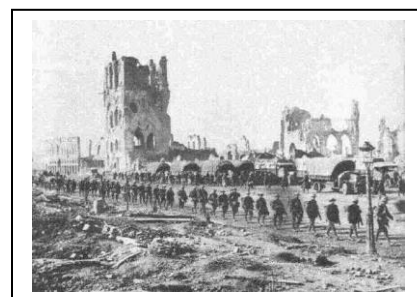


*\*Fosse, apart from meaning ‘ditch’ in French, also signifies the pit-head or shaft of a mine.*

(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*)

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

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



It had not been, however, until the final weeks of October of 1917 that the Canadians were to become embroiled in the British-led offensive to the north-east of Ypres. Officially labelled as 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 had been – at least *ostensibly* - one of the British Army's objectives.

From the time that the Canadians were to enter the fray, it had been they who were to shoulder a great deal of the burden. From the week of October 26 until November 3 it had been the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions which were to spearhead the assault, with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions in reserve. From November 5 until the official end of the affair the reverse had been true with troops of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division finally having entered 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 of October 20 – see immediately above - was to continue for the following two days before the Battalion had 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 a further 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 October 26 by the Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions in conjunction with British and other Commonwealth forces.



(Right above: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1916, after two years of war – from Illustration*)

(continued)

On October 27, the day following that first Canadian assault, there had been a visit to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade – and thus to the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion – by the Divisional Commander accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur W. Currie...



(Right above: *When trenches were destroyed, as often occurred, troops sought whatever shelter could be found, often in shell-holes or as here, in a mine-crater. – from Le Miroir*)

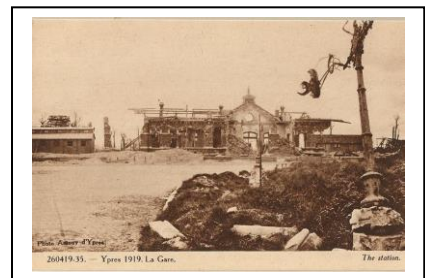
*After a short inspection the Brigade was formed into a hollow square, when the Corps Commander gave the Brigade a talk, he told how the Canadian Corps had been brought North for the express purpose of taking PASSCHENDAELE RIDGE, and how the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions had started the attack yesterday by gaining all their objectives on BELLEVUE SPUR, after tough fighting, and that the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 further below). – photograph from 2010*)



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

At twenty minutes to seven on the morning of November 2, a train had pulled out of Bavinchove station. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was to be on board – as also was to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion - having earlier that morning marched from Cassel, and both were now to be on their way to what had been left standing 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 to be a long journey, perhaps some twenty-five kilometres – the line no longer exists today – which had then taken two hours and ten minutes to complete. From the railway station on the southern outskirts of the city the Battalion had marched – perhaps as per the photograph on an above page – in a north-easterly direction past the ruins of the Cloth Hall to its bivouacs in the vicinity of Wieltje.



(Right: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1917, after the battle of that name – from Illustration*)

Then having settled down in the mud for the night, on the next morning the unit had drawn its battle equipment. 'C' and 'D' Companies had then been ordered to the forward area, as were 'A' and 'B' on the following day, November 4, to follow in their predecessors' footsteps.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion's four Companies had moved into their allotted positions during the night of November 4-5.

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

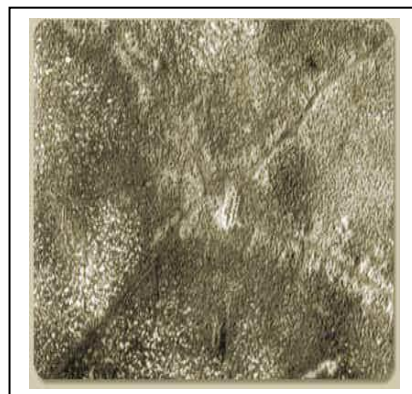
The next day had been spent mostly *in situ* and in sheltering from the German artillery which was to be responsible for a number of casualties. At dusk the infantry units had begun to move forward into their assembly positions and at...7.10 p.m...ZERO hour received from Brigade. Watches had later been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

(Right: *Just a few hundred metres 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 were to begin laying down their barrage right on time. An appendix in the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 to be reporting having reached and having taken their objectives. Numbers of enemy prisoners had also been documented as captured and as having been shepherded to the rear.

Nevertheless, as the morning had progressed there were soon to be 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 had begun 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 to be reported simply as...*very quiet.*



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

By the following evening the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had been in the process of being relieved and by two o'clock in the morning of November 8, this was to be reported as completed. Some two hours later the unit had returned to the encampment at Wieltje; in the afternoon it had marched to Ypres railway station; and by six o'clock on 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion the *Passchendaele* campaign had been short – although at times it surely must have seemed very *long* - a day over a week in all. On November 10 the unit had left *Derby Camp* to be 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 overnighting in Robecq, Annezin, Fosse 10 and finally in billets in the town of Liévin, just to the west of the city of Lens.

On the next day again, November 14, the Battalion's four Companies had moved into positions - reserve, support and front - in the *Lens Sector* in front of the *Souchez River*, there relieving British units. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was now back whence it had marched towards Belgium less than a month before, and mired once more in the everyday grind of existence in and about 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion were to be ordered elsewhere. In the meantime, the current tour was to prove relatively calm – one *killed in action*, two *died of wounds* and twenty-three *wounded*. This compared to *Passchendaele...*

The unit thereupon had 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 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 had been reported that ninety per cent and more were to cast their ballot\*.

*\*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 to be held behind the lines which perhaps had 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, 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. And there was the new mustard-gas.

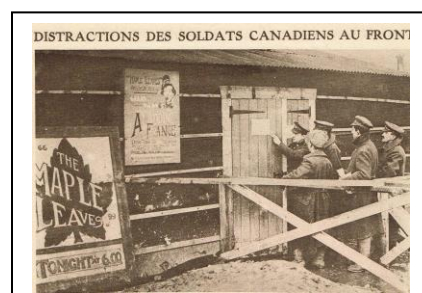
(Right above: *Canadian soldiers stand in front of a temporary theatre and peruse the attractions of an upcoming concert. – from Le Miroir*)

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

(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*)

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 47<sup>th</sup> 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 then 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 Fifth Army troops stationed there – particularly where they were adjacent to French forces - but this was well to the south of the Canadian sectors.

(Right below: *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 having 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 with the British 29<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion War Diary entry of March 26, 1918) Nothing further had transpired on that day.*

On the following morning, the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

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 almost twenty-four hours before.

The Battalion's travails were, however, to prove yet far from being finished. Excerpt from 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 to have been 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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, had been becoming stable enough – the British 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 had come on April 9, does it appear that the German offensive to the north had 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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)*



(continued)

For the remainder of April and into May the unit was to be 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 against the British 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.

*\*The Germans were also busy elsewhere on the Western Front; the offensives launched against British and Commonwealth forces were not the only battles to be fought. During this period Ludendorff, up until late spring, also attacked the French.*

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. 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.

*\*The arrival of those troops from the Russian Front was to represent the final substantial reserves available to the German High Command. On the other hand, as seen above, their adversaries would soon see not only a superiority but a supremacy in numbers. It was to be only a matter of time.*

(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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was to be a little less sedentary than it had been in June.

During the first two weeks of that month it had been posted to the vicinity of Agnez-les-Duisans; this was to be followed by four days in the forward area, once more in the *Fampoux Sector*; three days had then been subsequently passed at *Stirling Camp* where the unit had provided 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.

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 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion moved on July 23 – and where it had been re-joined, this according to his own dossier, on the same date, by Private Stickley.

\* \* \* \* \*

After a week at Neuville-Vitasse, on the night of July 31, a day during which a minor German raid had been countered, the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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, to the west of Arras, 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, Private Stickley's Battalion was to move further 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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: *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 would take 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 personnel of the Battalion became aware of the operation that it was about to undertake. As part of the overall secrecy of the offensive, orders containing this information to all units had remained sealed until this moment.

Excerpt from the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion War Diary entry of August 4, 1918: *...the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division would make an attack in a few days; the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade will attack, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade will go through them; and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade will go through the 1<sup>st</sup>. The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Battalions of this Brigade will be the attacking Battalions for this Brigade, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion being in Reserve.*

There had been 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (*Toronto Regiment*) was not to be moving alone during this period: a large number of other Canadian units – indeed, the entire Canadian Corps – had by that time already begun to move, mostly 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, mostly at first by train and mechanized transport before then on foot - and all of the latter stages during the hours of darkness.

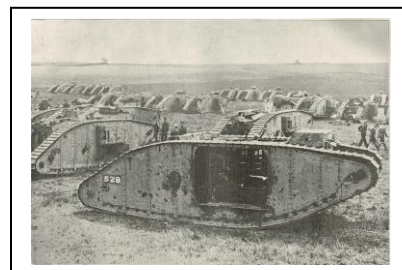
It was intended to surprise the enemy – and it did.

On August 6, upon its arrival there, the Battalion encamped in the Bois de Boves (*Boves Wood*) and, during the late evening and night of the same day, was to move into the Bois de Gentelles (*Gentelles Wood*).

It there stayed until the night of August 7-8 when it had moved once more, now into its jumping-off positions, to be in place 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 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, being in support, was to be the second such unit of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division to move forward into the attack.

Excerpts from the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade commenced to advance.*

*4.50 a.m. Wounded 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.



(continued)



**(Preceding page: Canadian soldiers consolidate newly-won positions while others cross a river – the Luce? - on an improvised bridge. – from Le Miroir)**

**7.10 a.m. As the enemy are not retiring...and there do not appear to be any 3<sup>rd</sup> 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:**

**“3<sup>rd</sup> 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 touch with 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division on the Left, but are not in touch with the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> Canadian Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade began to pass through according to plan.**

**The fighting by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was now over for the remainder of the day and the personnel began to consolidate the captured positions and, in particular, to secure the hard-won high ground.**

**(Right: 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Battalions.



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

Despite a 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 to be established. It was also where the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was to spend the following day, August 10, while troops of the British 32<sup>nd</sup> Division moved towards the forward area.

Not so Private Stickley: for the fourth time during the War he had been wounded, having incurred a shrapnel wound to his right thigh. Upon his evacuation from the field he was despatched to the 48<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Asylum in the outskirts of Amiens.

The son of Robert William Stickley, fisherman and carpenter, and of Elizabeth Rachel Stickley (née *Drake*) – to whom as of May 1, 1918, he had allotted a monthly twenty dollars from his pay – of Catalina, Newfoundland\*, later of 1001, Assington\*\* Avenue, and later again of 914, Davenport Road – these two last addresses in Toronto - he was also brother to Hannah, Thomas, Horatio-John, Robert, Herbert, Sarah-Myrtle-Joy (known as *Sadie*), William, Norman and to Rothwell.

*\*The couple married January 6, 1879.*

*\*\*Likely not Ossington as recorded elsewhere*

Private Stickley was reported by the Officer Commanding the 48<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station as having *died of wounds* on August 10, 1918. He was buried in Asylum Cemetery, Amiens on the following day, August 11. His remains were to be later exhumed and re-interred on two occasions: in the Hospital Cemetery at Dury, south-east of Amiens; and then in Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery where he lies today\*.

*\*No dates for the two last burials appear on the Burial Report.*

Frederick Charles Stickley had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-two years and four months: date of birth in either St. John's or Catalina, Newfoundland, November 23, 1893 (St. John's from his attestation papers)\*.

*\*This requires confirmation.*

Private Frederick Charles Stickley 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 23, 2023.**