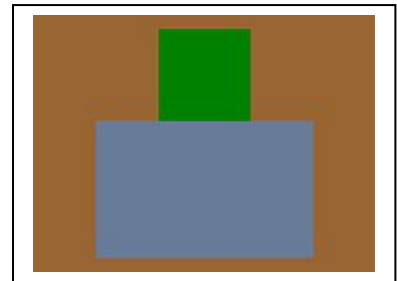




Private David Edward Walsh, Number 432420, of the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Edmonton Regiment*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Kimmel Château Military Cemetery: Grave reference K.58.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder-patch of the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Edmonton Regiment) is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *hotel clerk*, David Walsh has left little information behind him *a propos* his early years in and about the area of the city of St. John's, Newfoundland, or of his travels to the Canadian province of Alberta\*. All that apparently may be said with any certainty is that he was in the city of Edmonton during the first month of the year 1915, for that was both where and when he enlisted.

*\*Except that on his Attestation papers he recorded himself as having been a member of the para-military Catholic Cadet Corps in St. John's for a four-year period.*

His first pay records show that it was on January 6 that the Canadian Army\* began to remunerate Private Walsh for his services to the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Edmonton Regiment*) by which he had been *taken on strength* on that same day.

*\*Although it was to be frequently used, the term 'Canadian Army' apparently did not become official until 1940.*

January 6, 1915, was also the date in Edmonton on which David Walsh underwent a medical examination which pronounced him as being...*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*. He then was attested, his oath witnessed by a local justice of the peace, and the formalities of his enlistment brought to a close by the Officer Commanding the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel William Antrobus Griesback, a former cavalry officer, when he declared, on paper, that...*David Edward Walsh...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of the Attestation.*

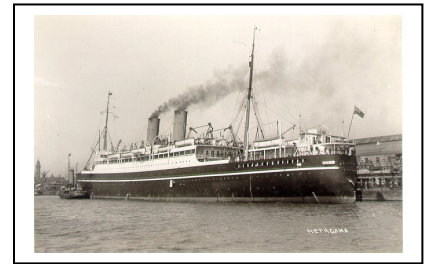
In November of 1914, two Overseas Battalions, the 49<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup>, had been authorized in the city of Edmonton, at the time a community of some fifty-thousand people, and recruiting was to begin immediately – if it had not already done so beforehand. Two months later, by January 21, the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion was at full strength and its training was now to begin at the Exhibition Grounds which were in the process of being prepared for this purpose by personnel from both of the new Battalions.

Apparently the C.O. of the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion was not lacking in energy and such was the high level of the training that his unit received, that by mid-April it was to undertake a Drill Display during the city's Spring Horse Show. Perhaps it was because of this exhibition of preparedness that the decision was taken – on the day following the presentation of Colours to both units by the Lieutenant-Governor - to send the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion to overseas service while transferring the 51<sup>st</sup> to Calgary for further training.

On May 29 the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion boarded two trains for the journey eastward. On June 3 the Battalion was halted in Ottawa for an inspection by the Governor General and the Prime Minister before continuing its journey to Montreal. It arrived there later on that same day whereupon it embarked upon the vessel which would carry it to the United Kingdom.

The Canadian Pacific's SS *Metagama* was not to be requisitioned during the *Great War* as was her sister-ship *Missanabie* – torpedoed and sunk in September of 1918 – but would continue her commercial services between Canada and Great Britain. She would, on occasion however, carry military personnel if the necessity arose and if space allowed – as it usually did.

On June 4, 1915, the ship sailed from Montreal with not only her civilian passengers on board but also with Private Walsh's 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the 1<sup>st</sup> Draft of the 35<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion and the Eaton's Motorized Machine Gun Brigade taking passage.



(Right: *The image of the trans-Atlantic liner Metagama is from the Metagama – Great Ships web-site.*)

Some nine days later, after an apparently uneventful Atlantic crossing, *Metagama* arrived in the English south-coast port and naval facility of Portsmouth-Devonport where on the next day, June 14, the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion disembarked. The unit then again boarded trains, on this occasion for a shorter journey than Edmonton to Montreal, and was transported to the large Canadian military complex of *Shorncliffe*, by that time established on the Dover Straits in the county of Kent.



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

In June of 1915, *Shorncliffe* was a busy place: the infantry battalions which were to serve in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division had congregated there and were in training. Three months later, in mid-September, they would embark in the nearby harbour and sea-side town of Folkestone and sail to the French port of Boulogne on the coast opposite.



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

In the meantime, as these units trained, so did Private Walsh and the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion. The departure of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division was to leave *Shorncliffe* somewhat empty; however, the next wave of Canadian infantry – of which the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion was one of the first – was soon taking its place. These battalions were subsequently to comprise the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, to come into official being at midnight on the last day of that year.

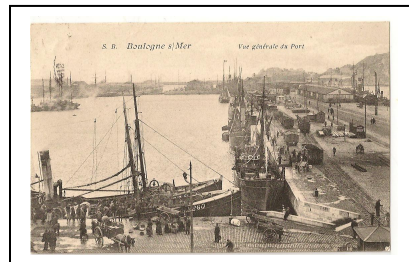
On September 8 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion Transport left *Shorncliffe* for the south-coast port of Southampton. The remaining thirty officers and eight-hundred ninety *other ranks* of the unit marched on the morrow to the nearby harbour at Folkestone where it then boarded the small paddle-steamer requisitioned as a troop-transport, the *Golden Eagle*.



(Right: *The image of Golden Eagle, here serving in a later war, is from the Wildfire III, Sheerness, web-site.*)

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

The 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Edmonton Regiment*) disembarked in France in the port of Boulogne later on the same October 9 of 1915 whereupon it marched to the not-distant *Ostrohove Camp*. There it was to remain until October 12 when it proceeded by train to the area of Cæstre, a community in the vicinity of the Franco-Belgian frontier.



Days later again, on October 16, Private Walsh and his unit entered the trenches of the *Western Front* for the first time, on the southern end of the line in the *Kingdom of Belgium*, in a region that English-speakers call Flanders.

For the following five months the personnel of the 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to remain in the same area. During that period the Battalion War Diary entries for each day were to be remarkably alike – documenting the everyday rigours, routines and perils of life in the trenches\*. On October 17, 1915, a Private Hudson was wounded, the unit's first casualty while on *active service*.

*\*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, a hundred metres or so behind the front; the unit was then withdrawn into reserve – either Brigade, Divisional or Corps Reserve, the former nearest the forward area, the latter 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*)

Excerpt from 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for November 11, 1915: *LOCRE – 7 A.M....LT. D.D. MacLEOD & 75 O.R. "A"\*\*\*...in trenches revetting...until 4.40 P.M.*

**432420 PTE. D.E. WALSH "A" Coy KILLED**

He had been struck by a piece of flying shrapnel.

The son of Thomas A. Walsh, grocer – to whom in a Will dated October 3, 1915, he had bequeathed his all - and of Mary Agnes Walsh (also née *Walsh*, deceased January 17, 1917) of St. John's before nearby Kilbride, Newfoundland, he was also brother to Samuel-Mary, Gertrude, Mary and to Ellen-Mary.

Private Walsh was reported as having been *killed in action* while serving in the trenches in Belgium on November 11, 1915.

David Edward Walsh had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-four years: date of birth (from attestation papers) in St. John's, Newfoundland, November 11, 1890, exactly twenty-five years before his death; the *original* Newfoundland Birth Register cites November 12 of the same year.

Private David Edward Walsh 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 23, 2023.