



Gunner William Augustine Winsor, Number 1262021*, of the 2nd Brigade, Canadian Garrison Artillery, is buried in Ligny St.-Flochel British Cemetery, Averdoint: Grave reference II.A.20..

****In several cases – including by the CWGC - his number is incorrectly recorded as 126201. This latter number was that of a Private James Fred Robertson of the 87th Canadian Infantry Battalion who was killed in action at the Battle of the Somme during October of 1916.***



(Preceding page: *The image of the cap badge of an officer of the Canadian Garrison Artillery is from the Google web-site.*)

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *student*, William Augustine Winsor has left behind him little history of his early years spent in the community of Wesleyville in the Dominion of Newfoundland. However, it would appear that he left home to journey to the Canadian province of New Brunswick in September of 1914.

The passenger list of the vessel *Lintrose*, the ship traversing the Cabot Strait from Port aux Basques to North Sydney on the fifteenth day of that month, documents the eighteen-year old W.A. Winsor, a student, as having been on board and, once having landed, to be travelling onward by train to the New Brunswick community of Sackville. Given that Sackville is where Mount Allison University is located, this is surely where he was to pursue his studies.

He is next recorded as having presented himself in Sackville for a first medical examination on April 29 of 1916. From there within the next few days William Augustine Winsor journeyed to the city of Saint John where he enlisted and was attested on May 3, his oath witnessed by a local justice of the peace.

He underwent a second medical on that May 3 – a procedure which was to pronounce him...*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*. The formalities of his enlistment were thereupon brought to a conclusion by the Commanding Officer of the 7th Siege Battery, Acting-Major Laurance (sic) Temple Allen when he declared – on paper – that...*W.A. Winsor...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify the I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

The now-Gunner Winsor was to spend only a single day as a soldier of the 3rd Canadian Garrison Artillery Composite Regiment, this unit apparently at the time stationed at the military encampment of Partridge Island guarding the entrance to the harbour at St. John. On May 4 he was transferred to Major Allen's 7th Siege Battery which was in training on the Island and still recruiting. But this posting to Partridge Island was not to last long, as towards the end of that month of May the unit was to be on its way to Halifax, there to embark upon the troop-transport awaiting in the harbour.

His Majesty's Transport *Olympic* was the vessel on which Gunner Winsor and his unit were to travel to *overseas service*. One of the largest passenger liners of her time, the ship had been requisitioned for wartime service and was to spend the latter years of the *Great War*, and afterwards, on trans-Atlantic service.

(Right: *Sister-ship to Britannic – that vessel to be sunk by a mine in the eastern Mediterranean a month later, in November of 1916 – and also to the ill-fated Titanic, HMT Olympic on the right lies at anchor in the company of HM Hospital Ship Aquitania, centre, at Mudros Bay, Island of Lemnos, in the autumn of 1915. – from a photograph from the Imperial War Museum, London*)



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The 7th Siege Battery* embarked onto *Olympic* on May 31 of 1916, there to await some two days before the vessel was to sail. Gunner Winsor's unit was not, of course, the only Canadian military contingent taking passage to the United Kingdom at the time: Also on board were to be the 88th, 89th, 90th and 99th Canadian Infantry Battalions and a draft of the 57th Battalion.

**In some sources the designation of the unit as the 6th Siege Battery (see below) was already in use by this time.*

Olympic sailed at eight-thirty in the morning of June 2 from Halifax to arrive in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool six days later, on June 8. By the late morning of that day all the disembarking units had boarded trains and were on the way to their various destinations. That of the 7th Siege Battery was to be the area of the community of Horsham in West Sussex on the south coast of England where the Canadian Artillery had already established training grounds and a Siege Artillery Depot.

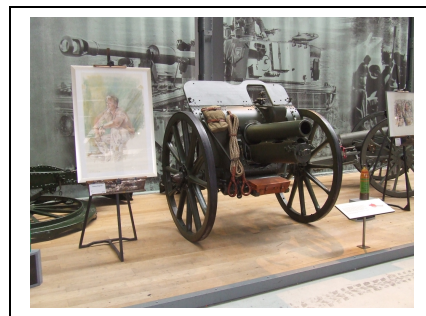
By July 11 the 7th Siege Battery had been re-numbered to become the 167th Siege Battery, a designation which was to last exactly six months, until January 11 of 1917 when it was to be re-numbered once again, to become the 6th Siege Battery*.

**Canadian Siege Batteries were armed during the Great War with howitzers of 4.5-inch, 6-inch, 8-inch and 9.2-inch calibre, and also with the 60-lbr (5-inch) gun – using either a shorter or longer barrel.*

(Right: The prototype of the BL 9.2-inch British Howitzer – ‘Mother’ – used on the Western Front in 1914, to be followed by others of the type in 1915: ‘Mother’ is shown on display at the Imperial War Museum, London. – photograph from 1910)

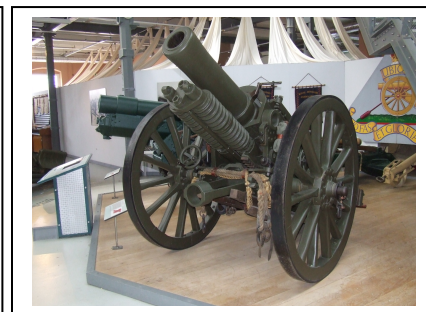


(Right: A British-made 4.5-inch howitzer which equipped some twenty-five per cent of British and Commonwealth artillery during the Great War. It is seen here in the Royal Artillery Museum – today unfortunately closed - at the Woolwich Arsenal. – photograph from 20012(?))



(Right below: Two types of six-inch calibre howitzers used by British and Commonwealth artillery during the Great War.

On the left is a BL-26cwt, a gun introduced in 1915 but here using a World War II carriage ; to the right is an older six-inch 30 cwt howitzer, first used in 1902 then throughout the Great War, although it was not a particularly successful weapon. – taken at the Royal Artillery Museum at Woolwich Arsenal in 1912(?))



Gunner Winsor was to spend seventeen weeks in training at Horsham before the call came for his services again overseas, although on this occasion the overseas in question was just on the continental side of the English Channel. He took ship in the English west-coast port of Bristol on September 26, 1916, disembarking in France on the following day.

While Gunner Winsor was now a soldier of the 167th Canadian Siege Battery there appears to be no War Diary – or indeed any other records – of this unit’s activities from the time of its arrival in France until January of 1917 when it was re-designated as the 6th Canadian Siege Battery. It may be that the Brigade personnel, having arrived from England on September 27, 1916, were to remain at *Rouelles Camp*, the Canadian Base Depot at Le Havre, for the next four months or so – perhaps until their weaponry became available.

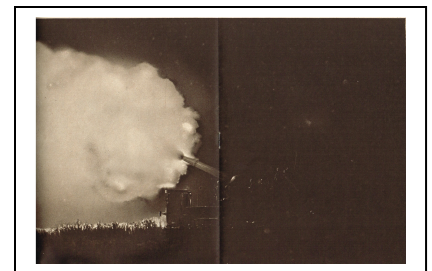


(Right above: *The French port-city of Le Havre at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Gunner Winsor is documented as having been still *on strength* of the 167th Brigade when it became the 6th Canadian Siege Battery on that January 11, 1917, yet it was to be a further eleven weeks and two days before this latter unit appears to have initiated a War Diary, the writing thereof commencing on April 1, 1917. At the time the Battery was serving in the area of the once-village of Thélus, the sector which in a few days’ time was to be attacked by the 2nd Canadian Division.

The 6th Canadian Siege Battery was surely at the time new to the area for it was now to spend until April 8, the eve of the attack, registering its guns. It would appear to be have been one of the last batteries to do so as the preparatory bombardment of the enemy positions had already started – officially – on April 2.

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



(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 – of which only a single Brigade to be employed on April 9 – also participated. Almost fifty per cent of the personnel who had been employed for that day were British, not to mention the men whose contribution – such as those who dug the tunnels - allowed for it to happen.*



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

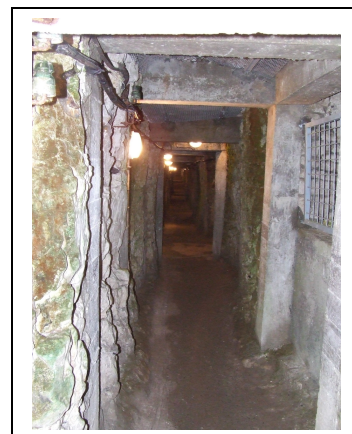
On April 9, Easter Monday, in that spring of 1917, the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was to be the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a French effort elsewhere.

In terms of the count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it would be the most expensive operation of the entire *Great War* for the British, one of the very few positive episodes to be the assault by the Canadian Corps of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the advance.

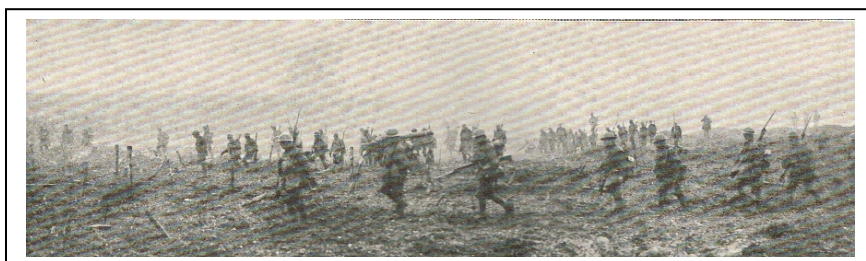
The British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, but that French offensive of *le Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

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

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



(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4th or 3rd Division, burdened with all the paraphernalia of war, on the advance across No-Man's-Land during the attack at Vimy Ridge on either April 9 or 10 of 1917 - from Illustration*)



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

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



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As for Gunner Winsor's newly-arrived Canadian unit, temporarily an element of the British XIII Corps and 18th Heavy Artillery Group, the 6th Siege Battery was a four-gun unit – later to become a six-gun outfit – but the type of ordnance with which it was equipped at this time is not clear*. As has been seen in a previous paragraph, Gunner Winsor's Battery was ready to play its role just before *Zero Hour* on April 9.

**However, given the rate of ammunition expenditure, at the time one round per minute per gun, it may well have comprised four of the smaller-calibre weapons.*

Excerpts from the 6th Siege Battery, Canadian Garrison Artillery, entry for April 9, 1917: *This is the "Z" day, zero being 5.30 P.M. (sic – in fact, it was A.M).*

By 1.30, all objectives in the battle had been taken, and at least from artillery point of view everything was successful. We finished with all guns in action. The personnel while tired were still fit, and could have carried on much further. Supply of am'n (ammunition) was sufficient owing to having 2800 rounds when starting...

The next three complete days were spent in the same area with the four guns all having been out of action, although at different times. On April 13-14 the Battery moved to new locations prepared by the unit personnel on those same days. Only five days later again it was to move once more, on this occasion a little to the north, to the *Arleux Sector*.



(Right: *The re-built village of Arleux-en-Gohelle a century after the events of April and May, 1917 – photograph from 1915*)

For the subsequent few days the unit undertook the routine firing that was the greater part of the artillery's tasks during the *Great War*: night-firing, harassment, counter-battery work, supply-disruption – roads, cross-roads, railways, dumps - all of this at times in co-operation with spotters operating in aeroplanes, plus the eternal destruction of enemy wire, his defensive positions and trench systems.

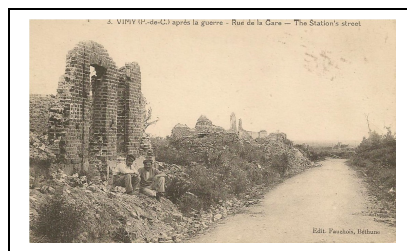
Two major attacks – as noted in a previous paragraph – were now to come about, at the end of April and beginning of May. The 6th Canadian Siege Battery was to provide part of the preparatory barrage for the infantry attack on the village of Arleux during the days preceding the infantry advance and then the supporting barrage from positions in *Fresnoy Wood* – before the subsequent preventive barrage - as of twenty-five minutes past four on the morning of April 28, the date of the assault, and for much of the remainder of the day.

Barrages in support of the infantry were then to be the major undertakings during the days which were to follow what had been the attack in the area of Arleux, an operation that had gained ground for the Canadians and the British, although the cost had been high. The advance would continue during the first ten days of May at a place called *Fresnoy** where an attack on the 3rd of the month also gained ground, terrain later recaptured by the German counter-attacks of May 8.

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These operations were again to be costly, the infantry battalions involved during this period having incurred many more casualties – as many as six times - than had been the case four weeks before, at *Vimy Ridge*.

(Right: *The village of Vimy, at some three or four kilometres from Vimy Ridge, as it was at the end of the conflict – from a vintage post-card*)



**This was Fresnoy-en-Gohelle, in close proximity to the area of Vimy and Vimy Ridge, not to be confused with the two communities of Fresnoy and Fresnoy-Andainville, both westward of the city of Arras.*

As of May 15, the 6th Siege Battery with Gunner Winsor was again transferred to a further Heavy Artillery Group, the 50th. Whatever the practical changes were for the unit personnel is not sure, except that the Battery was again to prepare new positions, from May 16 to 19 inclusive, in forward areas for two of its guns while the other two were moved rearwards*.

**It should be remembered that although the official end to the Battle of Arras was decided by the High Command to have come about on May 15, the front was still active and fighting continued. While the infantry battalions were somewhat regularly rotated from front to support to rear positions - sometimes for extended periods - and back up to front again, the artillery tended to remain for longer periods 'in situ' with their guns: fair enough, given the much higher casualty rate and general stress incurred by the infantry.*

At times it was the personnel which withdrew from serving the guns, to be replaced by soldiers of another artillery unit; the same guns were therefore used by several groups. Given that the 'front' was to change very little during almost four years of war, leaving the weapons in place made sense, saving a great deal of unnecessary work.

Long before the summer of 1917 the British High Command had decided to undertake a further offensive, this in the *Ypres Salient*, Belgium. Thus, in order to divert German attention – and also his reserves - from this area, it had ordered that other operations take place in the sectors of the front running north-south from Béthune down to Lens.



The Canadians were to be a major contributor to this effort and one of their primary objectives was to be *Hill 70* in the northern outskirts of the mining centre of Lens; to the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions had been entrusted the responsibility for the capture of the aforementioned position.

(Right above: *An 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*)

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The War Diary of the 6th Siege Battery for the months of June, July and the first weeks of August are nothing but a litany of the firing schedules of the unit during that time – it must have spent all those weeks in its firing positions without any withdrawal to the rear area. And there is little information forth-coming from Gunner Winsor’s personal papers.



(Right above: *Canadian troops advancing across No-Man’s Land in the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)

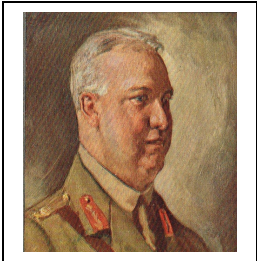
Meanwhile, preparations for the attack continued.

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.



(Right above: *This gentle slope rising to the left is, in fact, Hill 70. A monument to the 15th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry stands nearby in tribute. – photograph from 1914*)

Yet *Hill 70* was high enough to have been considered - by no-one less than the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie – as the key feature in the area, its capture more important than that of the city of Lens itself.



(Right above: *The portrait of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie is from Illustration.*)

Objectives were limited and had for the most part been achieved by the end of August 15. Due to the dominance of *Hill 70* over the entire area, it was to be expected that the Germans would endeavour to retrieve it and so it proved; on the 16th 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 now held firm and the Canadian artillery, by then employing newly-developed procedures, was to inflict heavy losses on the enemy. *Hill 70* would thus remain in Canadian hands.



(Right above: *Canadian troops in the vicinity of Hill 70 a short time after its capture by the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions – from Le Miroir*)

(Right above: *A Canadian 220 mm siege gun, here in the summer of 1917 under camouflage nets in the Lens Sector, being prepared for action by personnel of the Canadian Garrison Artillery – from Le Miroir*)

(Right below: *The spoils of war: Canadian officers and men on some of the terrain on which they had recently fought – and captured – from Le Miroir*)

The 6th Battery War Diary informs us that during this period the unit was still serving in the *Thelus Sector* but yet, on the day of the attack, August 15, it was to participate in a barrage as well as the daily tasks listed on a previous page of this document. However, that this barrage was in *direct* support of the troops assaulting *Hill 70* is doubtful as Thélus is some ten kilometres distant.



Nevertheless, the amount of ammunition expended by the unit during those days suggests that it had been very busy: other operations were to take place on that day. On August 14, the day prior to the assault by infantry of the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions, two-hundred seventy rounds were shot by the Battery in the direction of the enemy; on August 15, the number was four-hundred sixty-four followed by three-hundred forty-seven and two-hundred twenty-eight on the days following.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Gunner Winsor's role in the affair has not been recorded. Even that he was to serve in the attack on that day may not be sure because, on August 19, he was temporarily transferred to one of the Canadian Corps Ordnance Workshops – of which there appear to have been three - which repaired and maintained the guns and their carriage. But then only five days later he was back again with the 6th Canadian Siege Battery.

* * * * *

Not too long after this episode, Gunner Winsor was granted a period of leave to the French capital. He was still there on September 26 when he was *taken on strength* – on paper - by the Canadian General Base Depot which by that time had been re-established from the Le Havre area to the vicinity of the town of Étapes, further up the coast.



(Right above: *Notre-Dame Cathedral on the Île de la Cité in the centre of Paris at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card sent in 1923*)

But Gunner Winsor was not to report to the Base Depot at Étapes* from Paris but, on September 27, would instead be admitted into the 51st General Hospital in the same area. This medical facility specialized in venereal problems and Gunner Winsor had been diagnosed as suffering from a mild case of gonorrhoea.

**The Depot struck him off strength immediately on the day of his admission into hospital.*

His condition, however, was not to prevent Gunner Winsor seeking distraction elsewhere other than in hospital: On November 14 he was...*Sentenced to 7 days F.P. #1* (Field Punishment Number 1) *for W.O.A.S.* Breaking out of Hospital, 13.11.17.* When and where he was to serve his sentence is not altogether clear.

****‘While On Active Service’ – which rendered his offence much more serious: Field Punishment entailed the offender being attached to an immovable object for several hours during the day, and also being obliged to undertake heavy labour. At the same time, as a Gunner, he lost both his daily pay of one dollar and his field allowance of ten cents.***

His condition *mild* or otherwise, Gunner Winsor, once returned to hospital, was to remain receiving treatment until December 4, 1917, ten weeks after his admission, when he was discharged and was once again *taken on strength* by the nearby Canadian General Base Depot, on this occasion to report to *duty* there on the same December 4. However, his problems were not yet over: from medical they were now to become financial*.

****The Canadian Army, at this time following the British example, did not take kindly to its personnel contracting a venereal disease – for both moral and pragmatic reasons. It thus obliged the delinquent personnel to contribute towards the cost of the treatment undergone in hospital.***

Quite often, however, as in other areas, officers and other ranks were treated differently, with the diagnosis of an officer often being recorded simply as NYD (Not Yet Determined), an arrangement which avoided any financial penalty or social stigma.

Gunner Winsor’s records contain the following entry: *Forfeits Fd All (Field Allowance) & placed under stoppage of pay at the rate of 50c for period whilst in Hosp 27/9/17 – 4/12/17*

A week after having reported to the Base Depot, on December 11 Gunner Winsor was despatched to the *Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp* at Calonne-Ricouart before then returning to service with the 6th Canadian Siege Battery five days later again, on December 16. This was a time when his unit, having just withdrawn from *Passchendaele* back into northern France, was beginning a ten-day rest-period in the area of Manqueville, some twenty kilometres to the south-west of the larger centre of Hazebrouck.



(Right above: *The town of Hazebrouck – a scene from between the two World Wars - not significantly damaged during the War although it would be one of the objectives of the German offensive yet to come in the spring of 1918 since it was an important rail-head and thus supply-centre for the British. – from a vintage post-card*)

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The 6th Siege Battery had not been inactive during the weeks and months of Gunner Winsor’s absence. After the action at *Hill 70* the Canadian offensive campaign of the summer had apparently been planned so as to continue into September and even longer, but the ongoing British offensive in Belgium had been proving to be a disappointment compared to what had been anticipated – unsatisfactory enough for the generals to call a temporary four-week halt - and the High Command had begun to look for reinforcements to make good the exorbitant losses.

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

**The Anzac Forces (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) of the early years of the War were now serving as two separate entities: the Australian Imperial Force and the New Zealand Division.*

There were to be no further major Canadian-inspired actions in the *Lens-Béthune Sectors* and the infantry yet again was to settle back into that monotonous but at times precarious existence of life in – and behind – the forward area.

On the other hand the 6th Siege Battery would remain stationed in the *Thélus Sector*, there to continue its routine work until the fourth week of October. On the 23rd day of that month the unit had been transferred to the Canadian Corps in Belgium and had been ordered out of its positions and to leave its guns to the battery which was now to relieve it. Two days later, on October 25, the Battery had reported *to duty* at Ypres.

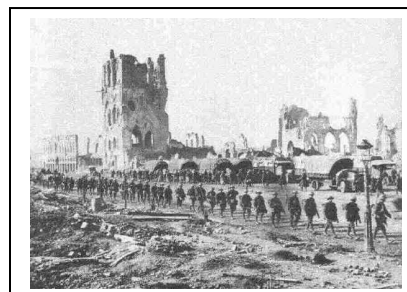


On that same day it had taken possession of its new guns, already sited. While it has been difficult to ascertain exactly with what weaponry the unit had been armed prior to this, the 6th Battery War Diary records that the new weapons were to be four 8-inch BL Howitzers, older but reportedly very reliable equipment.



(Right above and right above: *Canadian Garrison Artillery personnel in the process of siting their howitzers during the Third Battle of Ypres: Passchendaele – from Le Miroir*)

The action in which the 6th Canadian Siege Battery was now to participate was the *Third Battle of Ypres: Passchendaele*, history having adopted that name from a small village on a ridge that had been – at least *ostensibly* - one of the British Army's objectives.



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

From the time that the Canadians had entered the fray, it was to be they who would shoulder a great deal of the burden. From the week of October 26 until November 3 it would be the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions which were to spearhead the assault, with the 1st and 2nd Divisions in reserve.



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Then from November 5 until the official end of the affair the reverse was to be true, troops of the 2nd Canadian Division having finally entered the remnants of the village of Passchendaele itself.

(Preceding page: *An unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield during the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

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

(Right below: *The remnants of the railway station just outside the ramparts of Ypres through which many Canadian battalions passed during Passchendaele: the image is post-War, from 1919. – from a vintage post-card*)



By seven-thirty in the evening of that October 25, the day of its arrival at Ypres, the Battery had been range-finding and had engaged with the German artillery. Then, by six o'clock of the following morning, October 26, following a short period of harassing fire, it was to participate in...*'O' day offensive operations...* The infantry of the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions was soon to be passing to the attack up the slope, from the ruins around Zonnebeke towards those of Passchendaele.



(Right: *Whenever trenches were destroyed, as often occurred, often due to opposing artillery action, the troops sought whatever shelter could be found. They often took advantage of shell-holes or, as here, a large mine-crater. – from Le Miroir*)



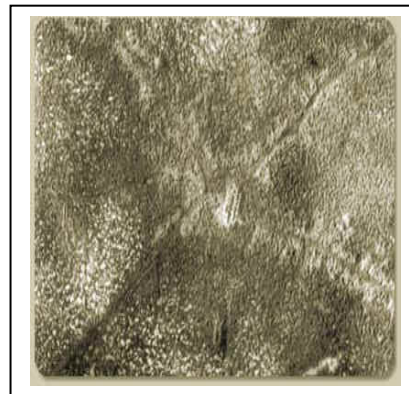
(Right: *Just several hundred metres to the south-west of Passchendaele – and looking in the opposite direction from the site of the monument pictured further below – the sloping terrain shown here lies in the direction of the community of Zonnebeke – a kilometre or so distant – and is where the four Divisions of Canadian infantry were to be fighting at the end of October and beginning of November, 1917. – photograph from 2010*)



Subsequent to the efforts of the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions and as recounted above, these units had been withdrawn, to be replaced during the first days of November by the 1st and 2nd Divisions which were to continue the offensive with a first attack on November 5. The same, however, was not to be true for the artillery which, once having arrived in October, were to remain to serve the infantry until – and beyond – the official date, November 10, 1917, of the conclusion of the battle.

This, of course, was to be true for the 6th Canadian Siege Battery.

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



The only deviation from what had passed before, as documented in the unit's War Diary, is that since the massive British and Canadian infantry presence was now to be reduced, it appears that the artillery of both sides would now be concentrating its activity on its opposite numbers. The entries for the early days of December are comprised almost exclusively of reports of *shoots* against hostile batteries.

(Right: *Ypres by the conclusion of hostilities was to look like this. The ruins are those of a school which had been used in earlier days to billet troops, and of the meeting-hall for retired firemen. – from a vintage post-card*)



The last two of these entries by the War Diarist at *Passchendaele* had been penned on December 9 and 10: 9/12/17...*Battery went out of action at 4 pm. Orders to move; 10/12/17...Moved off from Ypres. Halted at Hazebrouck on night of 14th & 15th arrived at Manqueville 10 am 15th. Stayed here for ten days' rest.*



(Right: *In the stone of the Menin Gate at Ypres (today leper) 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 right and below). – photograph from 2010*)



(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*)



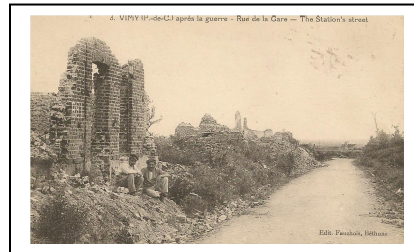
(Right: *The Canadian Memorial which today stands on Passchendaele Ridge – photograph from 2015*)

It had been, of course, here at Manqueville during this period of rest, on December 16, that Gunner Winsor was to report back to his unit.

* * * * *

On December 14, two days prior to Gunner Winsor's arrival from the *Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp*, the 6th Siege Battery had been relieved of its four 8-inch BL Howitzers, these to be replaced by 6-inch ordnance, four BL 26 cwt Howitzers (see photograph further above).

Presumably Christmas of 1917 was spent in an appropriate manner at Manqueville – although the Diary is quiet on the subject – before Gunner Winsor's Battery was moved on Boxing Day to *Villers Camp* at Villers-au-Bois and three days later, back into the *Thélus Sector* from which it had departed to serve in Belgium just more than two months before. There, posted in the area of the village of Vimy, on that December 29 the unit went back into action*.



(Right above: *The village of Vimy – several kilometres distant from the Ridge of the same name – as it was by the conclusion of the conflict – from a vintage post-card*)

**Not only did the War Diarist neglect to mention Christmas but he also overlooked mentioning the Canadian National Election for which the polling by Canadian military personnel had been undertaken from December 1 to 17.*



(Right above: *The opposition: A captured German field-piece, here receiving the attention of a Canadian officer – from Le Miroir*)

It was at this juncture that the 2nd Canadian Heavy Artillery Group, of which Gunner Winsor's 6th Canadian Siege Battery was a component, was re-designated as the 2nd Brigade Canadian Garrison Artillery – although other sources cite other dates, this is the one documented in the Brigade's War Diary.

In the second week of January the personnel – without guns - of the 6th Siege Battery and within days, of the entire 2nd Brigade, Canadian Garrison Artillery, was withdrawn to *Villers Camp* where it was now to rest and undergo three weeks of training not only in procedures with which it was familiar, but now in something which, for an artillery unit, was novel: machine-gun drill. Artillery units were from now on to be more responsible for their own protection, particularly against enemy aircraft which were becoming more and more frequent and aggressive.

If withdrawals from their fighting positions were less frequent than those granted to the infantry, the tasks and duties imposed upon both groups were comparable. Each, of course, trained on his own equipment – and sometimes that of the enemy; and of course, weaponry and other equipment was constantly evolving.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *While resting in the rear area during the summer of 1917, Canadian troops peruse the program of an upcoming concert on the door of a temporary theatre. – from Illustration*)

There were also myriad parades and inspections: for church, uniform, the aforementioned weapons and equipment, animals, medical and hygiene, awards and decorations, visiting officers and other dignitaries, baths and clothing and pay; teams of officers and other ranks were required as salvage-parties, working-parties, carrying-parties, cleaning-parties and wiring-parties; physical training, musketry, lectures, special courses and route marches were regular undertakings; and by this stage of the War, sports and concerts were coming into their own as morale boosters.

The 6th Battery and the 2nd Brigade were ordered to return into forward positions on or about February 4, the posting being a little further to the north than before, but it was only a matter of kilometres – Souchez, where the Brigade established its headquarters, Loos, Lens, Liévin, Avion and the *Hill 70* found on a previous page are among the place-names to be found in the Brigade's War Diary entries of the time.



(Right above: *The mining village of Loos just to the north of Lens, its pit-head towers visible in the background – and known to British troops as 'Tower Bridge' – as it was already by the end of the year 1917 – from Le Miroir*)

Thus the winter of 1917-1918 was to pass, quietly, in much the same manner as had the three previous winters of the conflict. Actions were few – the Brigade apparently helped to repel a major enemy raid on March 4 - and therefore so, usually, were casualties, the majority of which were – as were some two-thirds of all casualties on the *Western Front* during those fifty-two months of war – due to the opposing artilleries*.

**During the winter periods, however, the medical facilities were usually more busy treating sickness and, perhaps surprisingly, dental problems rather than injuries inflicted by those on the other side of the line.*

The following, the Brigade War Diary entry for March 12, 1918, allows an idea of what a typical day entailed for the unit: *Fair, warm – visibility fair*
Supported 1st Div. raid at 9 p.m. – reported successful.
450 SB (Siege Battery) engage balloon – out of range.
Enemy dugouts engaged by 2nd CSB successfully.
5th CSB destroy enemy M.G. Emplacement.
1st CHB, 2nd CSB, 5th CSB, 6th CSB and 450 Siege calibrated – checked.
2nd Siege, 5th Siege and D/21 successfully carry out shoots on hostile batteries.
4 N.F. Targets engaged.
16 Hostile Batteries neutralized.

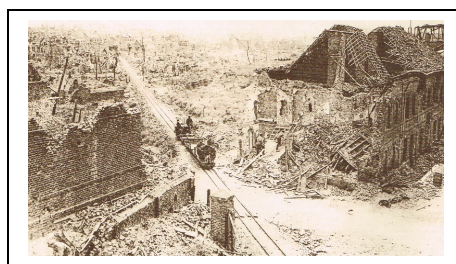
And then, it was the first day of that spring of 1918.

(continued)

Perhaps not many people realize how close the Germans were to come to victory in the spring of 1918. Having transferred the Divisions no longer necessary on the *Eastern Front* because of the Russian withdrawal from the war, the enemy launched a massive attack, Operation '*Michael*', on March 21 – the first day of spring.

The main force of the attack was to fall at *the Somme* in the area of, and also just to the south of, the old battlefields of 1916, and it was to descend for the greater part on the British Fifth Army stationed there, particularly where its forces were serving adjacent to French units.

(Right: *While the Germans did not attack Lens – some sources say that this is neighbouring Liévin - in the spring of 1918, they bombarded it very heavily during the time of their offensive in order to keep the British uncertain about their intentions and thus to oblige them to retain troops in the area. – from Le Miroir*)



The German advance continued for some two weeks, petering out just in front of the city of Amiens. The ultimate failure of the offensive was a result of a combination of factors: British and Commonwealth resistance, fatigue, logistical problems and a great deal of French co-operation with the British were the most significant.

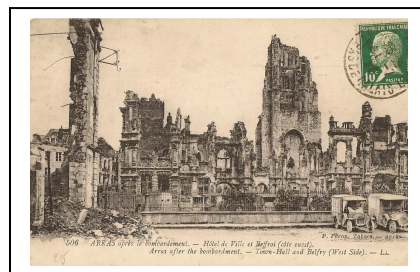
**A second but lesser such offensive, 'Georgette', would fall in northern France and in Belgium on April 9, in the area where the Royal Newfoundland Regiment was serving with the British 29th Division. It also was to be successful for a while, but petered out at the end of the month.*

(Right: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918 – from Illustration*)



The multiple German attacks created an atmosphere of crisis in the Allied ranks and at the High Command. Even so, the War Diarist – an officer – does not appear to mention the critical situation anywhere in his journal and if he in fact he eventually did, it was to be long after the different fronts had stabilized.

The 6th Siege Battery War Diarist makes no mention of the events at *the Somme* in his entry of March 21, nor do reports of the German offensive appear in any of the pages which follow – only that the enemy artillery-fire was perhaps heavier for a while than usual. The unit remained in its location in and about the city and mining-centre of Lens, not to be transferred south-westward* as was to be a goodly number of the 2nd Canadian Division infantry battalions.



(Right above: *The City Hall of Arras and its clock-tower in 1919 after some four years of bombardment by German artillery – from a vintage post-card*)

(continued)

****The area just to the south and west of Arras was at the northern extreme of the German offensive. Unsure as to what the enemy's intentions were, the High Command moved the 2nd Canadian Division into the area to forestall any attack if and when it occurred to protect the avenue to the Channel ports and also the coal-fields in the area of Béthune.***

In the event, the offensive in that direction was stopped cold by the British Third Army before it reached Arras, but during the period of the crisis the Germans had stayed active enough to keep the British and Canadians wondering.

As for the situation to the north, it apparently was never deemed serious enough to warrant any Canadian movement in that direction*.

By the end of April a relative calm had been beginning to descend as the German threat had faded – the enemy had won a great deal of ground, but had gained nothing of any military significance on either of the southern fronts. The same had later to be true of the offensive of April 9, further to the north.

Nor was the calm particularly surprising: both sides were exhausted and needed time to once more re-organize and – less and less feasible in these later years of the war – to re-enforce.

****And 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.***

The Allies from this point of view were a lot better off than their German adversaries – they had two empires to draw from and the Americans were belatedly arriving on the scene*.



****The arrival of those aforementioned 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.***

An overall Allied Commander-in-Chief had been appointed, Foch, and he was setting about organizing a counter-offensive. Thus the front was to remain quiet – until the second week in August – when the first of a number of offensives by British and Commonwealth forces was to be launched, a series which would culminate in the Armistice of that November 11.

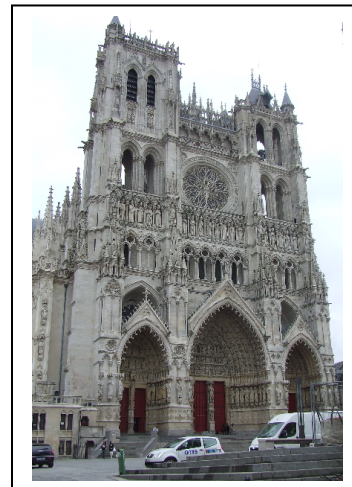
(Right above: *Le Maréchal Ferdinand Jean-Marie Foch, this photograph from 1921, became Generalissimo of the Allied Armies on March 26, 1918. – photograph from the Wikipedia web-site*)

Days before August 8, the intended date of the start of the Allied offensive in front of Amiens, a large number of other Canadian units – indeed almost the entire *Canadian Corps* – had moved in a semi-circular itinerary to the west of Amiens, then south, then east again to finish in front – to the east - of the city.

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This immense – and complicated - movement was to be effected in only a matter of days, all of the latter stages of it on foot and these also during the hours of darkness.

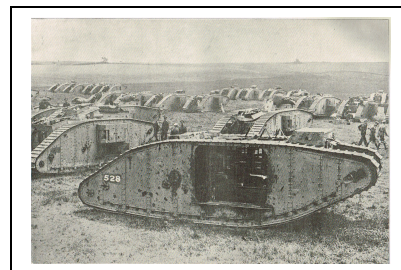
(Right: *The venerable gothic cathedral in the city of Amiens which the leading German troops had apparently been able see on the western skyline in the spring of 1918 – photograph from 2007(?)*)



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

At 4.30 in the morning on that August 8, the advance began – *the Hundred Days* as it became known – one, as seen above, of the multiple offensives which were to bring the *Great War* to a close on November 11, 1918. The Canadians, supported by tanks, were to move forward some twenty kilometres in the first three days of the attack, a feat unheard of since the autumn of 1914 after which the opposing forces had settled into four years of trench stalemate*.

(Right: *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*)



**The only exceptions to this rule having been the opening day of the First Battle of Cambrai, November 20, 1917, and the German advance in that March of 1918.*

Yet a small number of Canadian units was not to march towards this new front and to the battle which was to ensue. Two infantry battalions had been despatched northwards into Belgium to create the impression that the Canadians were about to attack the Germans once again from the *Ypres Salient*. And artillery forces had remained in the sectors from Arras to Béthune to hold the area and to await the return of the Canadian Corps just three weeks after its departure to Amiens.

The 2nd Brigade, Canadian Garrison Artillery, was to be one of those.

By the beginning of August while the majority of the Canadian forces was on the march to the area of *the Somme*, the 6th Canadian Siege Battery was serving in or in the vicinity of the *Arleux Sector* just to the south of Lens.

(Right: *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*)



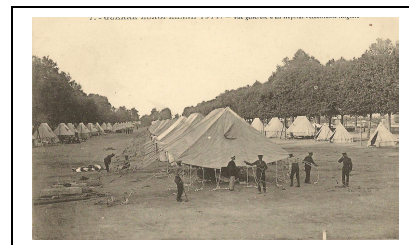
The unit's War Diary entry for August 5 reads as follows: *Visibility very poor, rain and high wind. At 3 pm. 30 rounds were fired on enemy battery D.Y. 51 observer reporting 3 O.K.s also fire and explosion.*

(continued)

On Brigade orders 5 gun salvo was fired on Hostile Battery IC 40 at 6-15 pm and at 6-20 pm 5 gun salvo was fired on Hostile Battery IC 41. Enemy Artillery still continues fairly Active, during the day the bathing position and just east thereof was subjected to periodical bursts of shell fire from 10.5 cm and 15 cm Howitzers over 70 rounds being counted.

Having been wounded by an exploding gas-shell, Gunner Winsor was evacuated from the field to the 7th Casualty Clearing Station at Ligny St-Flochel where his condition was considered by the medical staff to be *dangerous*.

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



The son of Jesse Thomas Winsor, sea-captain and master-mariner - to whom as of June 1, 1916, he had allocated a monthly twenty dollars from his pay - and of Martha Jane Winsor (née Lacey) of Wesleyville, Newfoundland, he was brother to a younger Allan-Roy.

(Right: A plinth in the United Church Cemetery in Wesleyville commemorates the life and death of William Augustine Winsor. – photograph from 2012(?))



Gunner Winsor was reported by the Commanding Officer of the 7th Casualty Clearing Station as having *died of wounds* on August 6, 1918.

William Augustine Winsor had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty years and six months: date of birth in Wesleyville, Newfoundland, October 29, 1895 (from attestation papers and from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

Gunner William Augustine Winsor was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 23, 2023.

