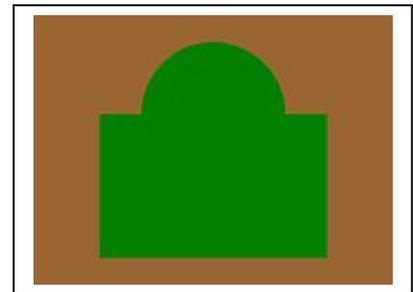




Private Allan (also *Allen*) Tasker Bishop (Number 781336) of the 46th Canadian Infantry Battalion (*South Saskatchewan*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated in the stone of the Menin Gate, Ypres (today *Ieper*): Panel reference, 18-26-28.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, neither Allan Tasker Bishop's personal records nor other sources appear to disclose the details of his travels from his birthplace, Heart's Delight, Newfoundland, to the Canadian province of Saskatchewan where he enlisted.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder-flash of the 46th Canadian Infantry Battalion (East Ontario Regiment) is from the Wikipedia Web-site.*)



What is recorded is that the enlistment took place in the community of Outlook on December 4 of 1915, and that he underwent a medical examination as well as his attestation on that same day.

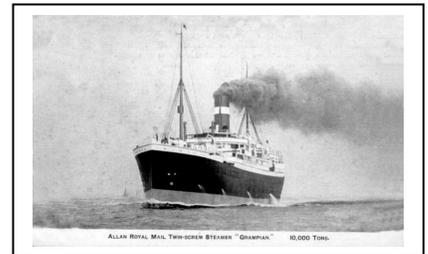
(continued)

He was *taken on strength* – at the same time – by the 128th (*Moose Jaw*) Overseas Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, based at Moose Jaw itself. The attachment was made official on that day by the Battalion's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel F. Pawlett, who declared – on paper – that... *having finally been approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

It was to be more than eight months hence, on August 10, 1916, that Private Bishop's Battalion began the long journey by train to the east-coast port of Halifax, there to take ship for trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom.

Where Private Bishop's 128th Battalion had trained in the meantime is not clear, but it may have been that at least some of the time was spent at Camp Hughes in Manitoba where some thirty-thousand young men from Manitoba and Saskatchewan underwent instruction during the war-years – but this is yet to be confirmed.

The thirty-six officers and eleven-hundred fifteen *other ranks* of the 128th (*Moose Jaw*) Overseas Battalion embarked on August 15 onto His Majesty's Transport *Grampian* for passage to the United Kingdom, the vessel sailing later on that same day. *Grampian* docked in the English port of Liverpool some nine days following, on August 24*.



**There were likely other units taking passage on Grampian, but they appear not to be documented on available files.*

(Right above: *The photograph of RMS – Royal Mail Ship - Grampian is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries Web-site.*)

Upon the unit's arrival in England it was likely – but not recorded - to have been transported to Witley Camp on the border area of the English counties of Hampshire and Surrey. There a further nine months were to pass before Private Bishop, as a soldier of the re-enforcement draft of May 23, 1917, made his way across the English Channel from Witley – this *is* documented -to the Continent and to *active service*.

Two days following, on the 25th, he is recorded as by then having been transferred to the 46th (*South Saskatchewan*) Canadian Infantry Battalion – another source shows *on* the 28th - although he was to spend the next two weeks at the Canadian Infantry Base Depot at Le Havre undergoing final training and organization. He was then despatched to seek out the parent unit of the 46th Battalion.



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

Private Bishop left the Depot at Le Havre on June 10, 1917, and reported *to duty* with the 46th Battalion on the morrow. The Battalion War Diary records that he was one of the one-hundred twenty-five *other ranks* to arrive from the 128th Battalion on that June 11th.

(continued)

At the time, the parent unit of the 46th Battalion was in billets at Canada Camp, Chateau de la Haie, to the north-west of the city of Arras.

* * * * *

The 46th (*South Saskatchewan*) Battalion was a unit of the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself a component of the 4th Canadian Division. It had been on August 11 of 1916 that the Battalion had disembarked in Le Havre; three days later it had crossed the Franco-Belgian border and on that day and the next, had despatched its first detachments into the reserve and front-line trenches.

By eight o'clock in the evening of August 17 it could already count seven wounded and its first fatality: *No. 437026. Pte. Harrison, W. "D" Co., shot through head by rifle bullet while on listening-post* (Battalion War Diary).

For the following thirty-four days the Battalion remained in the vicinity of the Vierstraat – about half-way between the remnants of the city of Ypres and the border of Belgium and France. As the days passed, its personnel were assuredly rapidly becoming acquainted with the routines and rigours of life 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, 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-made Short Lee-Enfield Mark III Rifles – from Illustration)

All that was about to change on September 21 when the unit undertook a ten-hour march south into France to the area of Hazebrouck. On the 22nd it was more of the same as the already-tired troops spent a further nine hours on foot in order to arrive in the larger centre of St-Omer. The end of a perfect transfer came on the next day again: a seven-and-a-half hour march to its training area with few or no billets awaiting them at the end of the day.

A reprieve was forthcoming on the 24th... *This day has been passed in getting the Battalion into new billets Otherwise this day has been passed in resting and cleaning up* (Battalion War Diary).

(continued)

The drills and the exercises began on the following morning at six o'clock. A week was spent in this manner, but perhaps the monotony was interrupted on the occasion that the unit practised, according to the War Diary entry of the day... *attack formations with aeroplane co-operations.*

October 3 saw what must have been another long march as the 46th Battalion returned to the railway station at St-Omer. There it boarded a train which at three-thirty in the afternoon began to bear the unit south towards the area of *the Somme*. It apparently needed just under twelve hours to cover the eighty or so kilometres to the town of Doullens - and a further three hours were then spent de-training.



(Right above: *The venerable – but nowadays much-dilapidated - railway station at St-Omer, likely a considerably busier place during the time of the Great War and the passage of the 46th Battalion – photograph from 2015*)

Thus it was that it was six o'clock in the morning when the unit began a final five-kilometre march to its billets – at least it was secure in the knowledge that the remainder of the day was to be devoted to rest.



(Right: *The small country town of Doullens at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Three days of the following four were at least partially spent on foot as the 46th Battalion marched toward the sound of the guns. The final destination was the large British military camp at Brickfields (*la Briqueterie*), in very close proximity of the provincial town of Albert which the unit reached at eleven forty-five on the morning of October 8.

Meanwhile, by September 1, some six weeks before the arrival of the 46th Battalion on the scene, the *First Battle of the Somme* had *already* been ongoing for two months. It had begun with the disastrous attack of July 1, an assault which had 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, all but two small units of the attacking divisions had been from the British Isles, the exceptions being the two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and the eight-hundred personnel of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment which lost so heavily on that day at Beaumont-Hamel.

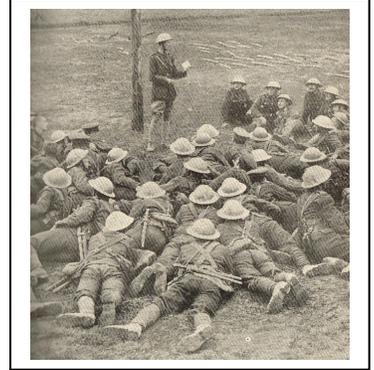


(Right above: *The Canadian Memorial which stands to the side of the Albert-Bapaume Road near the village of Courcelette – photograph from 2015*)

(continued)

As the battle had progressed, other troops, from the Empire (*Commonwealth*), were brought in; at first it had been the South African Brigade (July 15), the Australians and New Zealanders (July 23) before the Canadians entered the fray on August 30 to become part of a third general offensive. Their first major collective contribution 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 before the attack at Flers-Courcellette, September 1916. – from The War Illustrated*)



Three days after its arrival at the Brickfields the 46th Battalion had moved up to the forward area and on the following day again had set about sending a large working-party up to the front line itself. In the meantime a... *reconnaissance of the enemy trenches and REGINA TRENCH was carried out this morning (October 13) by O.C. in preparation for a possible attack on those trenches (Battalion War Diary).*

The unit was then pulled back into Brigade Reserve on October 16, having incurred some thirty-eight casualties during that first tour, of which three had been fatal*.

**Whether others subsequently had died of wounds is obviously not recorded in the entries of the day.*

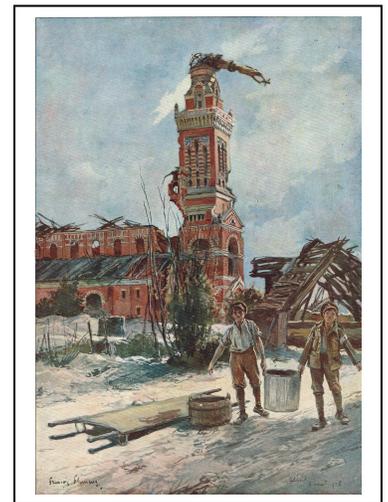


(Right above: *Wounded troops being evacuated in hand-carts from the forward area during the 1st Battle of the Somme – from Le Miroir or Illustration*)

Those in charge of operations had not forgotten *Regina Trench*; the 46th Battalion was to be involved in an attack on the night of November 10-11, but already during the period preceding this date the unit had been back and forth to the front-line area on several occasions. On October 25 it had co-operated in an unsuccessful minor operation with the 44th Battalion which had cost fifty-two casualties. More were still to come.

Regina Trench, a German strong-point in the enemy defensive system, had by November been attacked several times; in October it had even been temporarily captured. However, counter-attacks had re-taken the position and it was still in enemy hands in the early part of November.

Just before midnight on the evening of November 10, the 46th and 47th Battalions advanced over No-Man's-Land and into the German trench system. For once the enemy appears to have been taken by surprise and by four o'clock in the morning the captured positions were being consolidated by the attackers. Even then it was not to be given up without a fight and it was much later that day before the situation had been stabilized and the captured positions consolidated.



(Preceding page: *Canadian soldiers at work in Albert, the already-damaged basilica in the background – from Illustration*)

(Right: *Regina Trench Cemetery and some of the area surrounding it, ground which was finally wrested from the Germans by Canadian troops in November of 1916 – photograph from 2014*)



According to the 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary entry of November 11... *The operation was most successful and our objective was fully gained & maintained without undue losses.*

In the case of the 46th Battalion, the *undue losses* amounted to a total of eighty-one of which (by November 12) eight had been reported as *killed in action or died of wounds.*

Having retired on that November 12, the unit was then ordered back to the forward area on the 18th and to prepare to make an attack on a German strong-point. It failed completely –the War Diarist blames...*a lack of preparation* – and a further thirty losses ensued.



(Right: *Burying Canadian dead on the Somme, likely at a casualty clearing station or a field ambulance – from Illustration or Le Miroir*)

It was not until November 26, some two weeks after the *official* conclusion of 1st Somme – although it is doubtful that anyone in the trenches on either side *noticed* it – that the 46th Battalion began its trek away, westward, from the area.

There now followed an eight-day march which, after its westward overture, turned to the north. Passing to the western side of the city of Arras and then beyond, the 46th Battalion was to halt in the vicinity of the coal-mining commune of Bruay, twenty kilometres to the north-west of the larger centre and city of Lens. There, in the rear area, the unit was to spend two weeks to re-enforce, to re-organize and to re-commence training.



(Right above: *Canadian troops making their way to the front during the winter of 1916-1917 – from Illustration*)

The winter months of 1917 were spent by the Battalion in the sectors just north-west and south-west of Lens where the personnel were now to settle back into the daily grind of trench warfare. For the most part casualties were few and due almost entirely to the enemy's artillery and to his snipers.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The village of Souchez – in the Lens area - even before the arrival of the Canadians in the sector, the photograph taken in 1915 – from Le Miroir*)

There was the habitual patrolling but little concerted infantry action, although it appears that the 46th Battalion undertook several raids – the High Command thought they kept the troops on their toes and that they were good for morale and their *offensive spirit*, but apparently the lowly soldier whose duty it was to undertake them, was not of the same enthusiastic opinion. Some of these ventures proved costly such as the one of February 13 for which the casualty toll was over forty and that of five days later for which the casualty count was yet a further fifteen.

Thus continued the 46th Battalion's war until the third week of the month of March. On the 20th the Battalion was withdrawn for a week of special training before being returned to the front. On April 2 it moved into Coupigny Huts for more of the same training, for lectures and drills - all lessons that had to be instilled for the upcoming British offensive to become known as the *1st Battle of Arras*.

On April 9 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it was to be the most expensive operation of the War for the British, one of the few positive episodes being the Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.

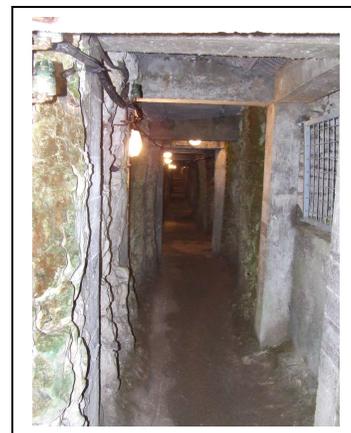


The French offensive was to be a disaster.

(Above right: *the Canadian National Memorial which, since 1936, stands atop 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, stormed the slope of Vimy Ridge, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.

The 46th Battalion had not been one of the units selected to attack in the first waves: it had been designated as a support formation. Whereas the attack commenced at twenty minutes past five in the morning it was not to be until two o'clock on that afternoon that the unit moved forward... *“A” and “B” Companies in old Front Line... “C” and “D” Companies in BLUE BULL and VINCENT TUNNELS.*



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

(continued)

In accordance with instructions... "A" and "B" Companies advanced without a barrage, taking up a position as shown on Map... Little resistance was met with, and casualties were not numerous... Positions were consolidated for defence. (Excerpt from 46th Battalion War Diary entry for April 9, 1917)

On April 10, the advance continued but at a much slower rhythm. As the German positions were reached and captured, the attackers had been ordered to stop in order to consolidate them in anticipation of German counter-attacks.

(Right: Canadian troops of either the 4th or 3rd Division, and equipped 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 – official Canadian photograph from *Illustration*)



Having lost the *Ridge* and the attendant advantages of the high ground, the Germans retreated some three kilometres in front of the Canadians whose further offensives were less successful than that of Easter Monday; while some progress at times was made – at Arleux-en-Gohelle, for example - German counter-attacks often re-claimed ground from the British and Canadian troops – as at Fresnoy in early May. And *all* came at a price.



The *Battle of Arras* lasted for some five weeks, a shorter duration than typical of most of the offensives of the Great War. The War itself, however, continued, and life in and out the trenches changed not one iota from one day to the next.

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

After the official conclusion of the *Battle of Arras*, on or about May 15, some of the Canadians were posted not far to the north, to the mining area of the city of Lens and other communities. Others remained *in situ*. During a part of May and then again at the beginning of June, the 46th Battalion was once more undergoing training, at Canada Camp, Chateau de la Haie.

* * * * *

Chateau de la Haie on June 11 was where and when Private Bishop reported *to duty* with the parent unit of the 46th Battalion (*South Saskatchewan*), on a day when physical training, bayonet-fighting and musketry, along with specialist training, had all been on the unit's agenda, according to the Battalion War Diarist. However, the weather gods apparently had had other ideas and Private Bishop and his comrades-in-arms may well have enjoyed a day of rest instead.

(continued)

The British High Command had by this time decided to undertake a summer offensive in the *Ypres Salient*, Belgium. Thus, in order to divert German attention from this area – and also his reserves - it had also ordered operations to take place at the sector of the front running north-south from Béthune to Lens.

The Canadians were to be a major contributor to this effort.

(Right below: 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)

July was to be quiet, the entire month spent withdrawn behind the forward area. This apparently carried over into August until August 15 when Hill 70, just to the north of Lens, became the primary objective of a Canadian attack. However, this action had been made the responsibility of the Canadian 2nd Division and life for the 46th Battalion* continued in its routine manner.



**In fact, the Battalion had been standing by, ready if necessary, to support the attack, but its services were not called upon.*

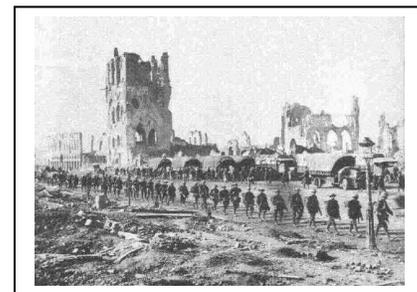
After that early summer of relatively little infantry activity, this attack on August 15 in the area of *Hill 70* and the city of Lens had been intended to be the precursor of weeks of an entire campaign. However, the British offensive further north was proceeding less well than had been intended and the Canadians were to be needed there.



Thus offensive activities in the Lens Sector had been suspended by early September and the Canadians began training for service once more in Belgium.

(Right above: Canadian troops in the area of Lens at some time during the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir)

It was not until the final weeks of October, 1917, that the Canadians became embroiled in the British offensive to the north-east of Ypres. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was – ostensibly - one of the British Army's prime objectives.



(Right above: Troops file 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 entered the fray, it was they who shouldered a great deal of the burden. From the week of October 26 until November 3 it was the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions who spearheaded the assault, with the 1st and 2nd Divisions in reserve.

From November 5 until the official end of the affair the reverse was true with the 2nd Division finally entering the remnants of Passchendaele itself.

(Right below: *An unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

At five-forty on the morning of October 26, the 46th Battalion went *over the top*. The Battalion War Diary reports that by seven-thirty, some two hours later, it had reached and taken its objectives and was busy consolidating. The Diary also reports very heavy casualties, seventy-five percent of which it attributes, unfortunately, to the supporting Canadian artillery: apparently there was no enemy barrage recorded at the time of the attack.



(Right: *A Canadian 220 mm gun under camouflage somewhere on the Continent – from Le Miroir*)

The casualties for ‘C’ and ‘D’ Companies combined were documented as follows: *They began the day with eight officers and two-hundred fifty-five other ranks; they finished the day with a single officer and fifty-six (or fifty-three) other ranks.*



The son of Corbet (elsewhere *Carbot*) Bishop, fisherman, and of Lea Bishop (née *Waterman*) – to whom he had willed his all - of Heart’s Delight, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, he may have had at least one sibling, a much younger sister, Lona (sic), born in 1913.

Private Bishop was reported as having been *killed in action* on October 26 of 1917, during 3rd Ypres: *Passchendaele*.

Allan Bishop had enlisted at the *apparent age* of twenty-eight years: the date of his birth in Hearts Delight, Newfoundland, as recorded on his attestation papers, was February 16, 1886; the year, according to *copied* parish records, was 1887.

Private Allan Tasker Bishop 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 27, 2023.

