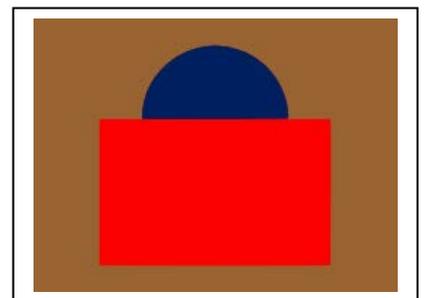


Lance Corporal Elihu James Clark (also found as *Clarke*) (Number 444236\* and A44236) of the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*), Canadian Infantry, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated in the stone of the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder patch of the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Royal Montreal Regiment) is from the Wikipedia Website.*

*\*Library and Archives Canada does not recognize this number – use A44236.*

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *labourer*, Elihu James Clark(e) appears to have left no records pertaining to either his early life in Victoria Village, Newfoundland, or his passage from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of New Brunswick. It was there in Saint John – likely at the local Armoury - that he presented himself on April 22 of 1915 for medical examination, a procedure which was to find him...*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*...before he apparently both enlisted and attested – his oath witnessed by a local justice of the peace - on the same day.

It was likely on this occasion that the now-Private Clark (this spelling on all his military papers) was *taken on strength* by the 55<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*New Brunswick & Prince Edward Island*) as it was a Major Weyman of that unit who provisionally certified the attestation.

Then it was to be some three weeks later, on May 13, that the formalities of his enlistment were brought to a conclusion by the Officer Commanding the 55<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel J. Renfrew Kirkpatrick, when he declared – on paper – that...*Elihu James Clark...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

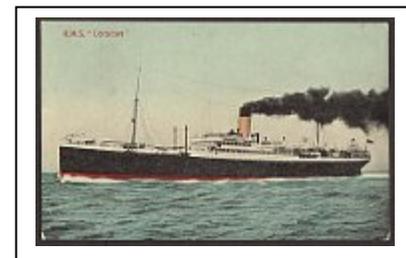
On June 15, only a single month subsequent, the unit was ordered transferred to the recently-established *Valcartier Mobilization Camp* in Québec. The unit's training during the months preceding this move had likely been undertaken at Camp Sussex in New Brunswick for that was where the 55<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been mobilized.

(Right: *Canadian artillery being put through its paces at the Camp at Valcartier. In 1914, the main Army Camp in Canada was at Petawawa. However, its location in Ontario – and away from the Great Lakes – made it impractical for the despatch of troops overseas. Valcartier was apparently built within weeks after the Declaration of War. – photograph (from a later date in the war) from *The War Illustrated*)*



Private Clark's stay at *Camp Valcartier* – if he were to be there ever at all – would be brief; on June 19, 1915, a 1<sup>st</sup> Reinforcement Draft from the 55<sup>th</sup> Battalion embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* accompanied for passage to the United Kingdom by First Drafts from the 34<sup>th</sup> and the 36<sup>th</sup> Battalions of Canadian Infantry\*.

By the time that the parent body of the 55<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to leave Canada at the end of October, Private Clark would have been already serving *on the Continent* for just over two months.



(Right above: *The image of RMS (Royal Mail Ship) Corsican of the Allan Line is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

\**While the Canadian Expeditionary Force Study Group has Corsican sailing from Montreal on June 19, Private Clark's own documents have the ship sailing from Lévis, on the St. Lawrence River opposite Quebec City – and much closer to Camp Valcartier than was*

**Montreal. A further single source among his papers has the sailing date as June 11 – no further details appear to be recorded about any such sailings.**

**After an uneventful trans-Atlantic passage, Corsican docked in the English south-coast naval harbour and facility of Plymouth-Devonport on June 28. From there Private Clark's contingent was transported by train to the fledgling Canadian military complex of *Shorncliffe*, adjacent to the English-Channel town of Folkestone in the county of Kent.**

**(Right: *The harbour of Plymouth-Devonport as it was almost a century after the Great War, and a lot less busy than at that time - photograph from 2013*)**

**(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*)**

**Upon its arrival at *Shorncliffe* on June 29, Private Clark and his draft were *taken on strength* by the 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Training (Reserve) Battalion. They remained with this unit for the following two months as they prepared for *active service* on the Continent.**

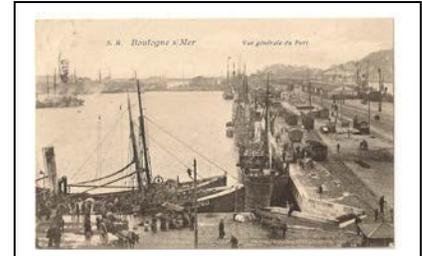
**(Right: *A view of the coastal town of Folkestone almost a century later as seen from the white cliffs of nearby Dover – photograph from 2009*)**

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

**This further move came about on August 28-29, 1915, when, during that night, Private Clark crossed the English Channel to France. Given that he had been stationed at *Shorncliffe*, it is very likely that he traversed from the nearby harbour at Folkestone to land in the French port of Boulogne some two hours sailing-time distant.**

**Private Clark passed the following days at the new Canadian Base depot, *Rouelles Camp*, only recently in service in close proximity to the French industrial city of Le Havre on the estuary of the River Seine. From there he is variously reported as having joined the parent unit of the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the field on September 6 and also on September 19 at a time when the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion was serving in the *Ploegsteert Sector*, in the *Kingdom of Belgium*.**

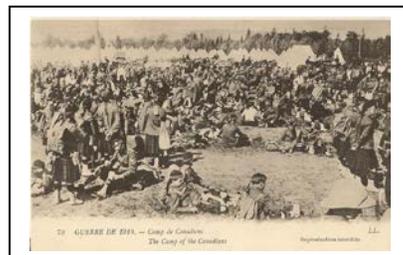
**(continued)**



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

*\*There any mention of arriving re-enforcement draft to the Battalion on either the 6<sup>th</sup> or the 19<sup>th</sup> of September at Kortepyp on the Franco-Belgian frontier where it is recorded as being encamped on both those dates.*

(Right: *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*)



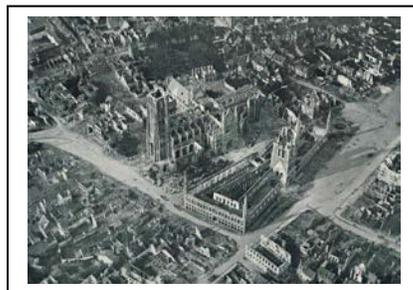
On both of these occasions, the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion was out of the forward area and was in reserve, posted to the area of the community of Kortepyp.

\* \* \* \* \*

The 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*) had by that time been serving on the Continent since February of that 1915 as an element of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself a component of the (1<sup>st</sup>) Canadian Division\*. After its arrival from Canada via England, it had at first served in northern France in the *Fleurbaix Sector* just south of Armentières, before subsequently having been ordered into the *Ypres Salient* in April of that same 1915.

*\*Before the advent of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division it was often simply designated, logically enough, as the Canadian Division.*

(Right: *An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle - showing the shell of the medieval city of Ypres, an image entitled Ypres-la-Morte (Ypres the Dead) – By the end of the conflict there was little left standing. – from Illustration*)



Only a bare two months after its arrival on the Continent, and only days after it had moved into a north-eastern sector of the *Salient\**, the Canadian Division had distinguished itself during the *Second Battle of Ypres* in the spring of 1915.

*\*In fact, certain units were still not in position on the day of the first German attacks.*

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



(continued)

On April 22 of that year 1915, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the Germans had released chlorine gas in front of French colonial troops at the northern end of the *Ypres Salient*. The gas had then reportedly caused some six-thousand casualties in a very short space of time and had provoked a rout of the stricken defenders.

The Canadians, in the line just to the right, not having been affected to the same degree, had been ordered to fill the void left by the retreating French troops and to forestall a German break-through.

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

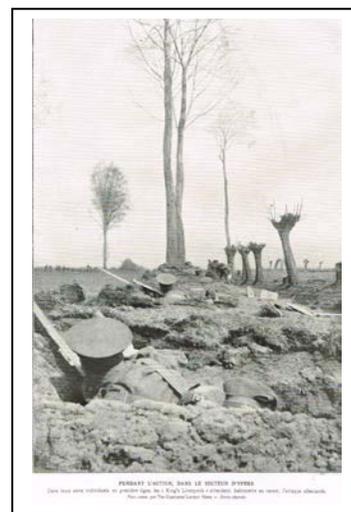


For its part, the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to be called into action on April 22, the first day of the German attack, and had thereupon taken up defensive positions to the north-east of the city in the vicinity of Wieltje\*.

*\*Up until this date the Battalion War Diary had been a neat, detailed, type-written journal; as of April 22 it is a hastily-scribbled effort scratched in pencil, promising that the details will be appended at a later date. But, if nothing else, it shows the desperate situation of the next few days.*

Companies of the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion then had made a stand with the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion at St-Julien (*Sin-Juliaan*) for the next two days before having been obliged to retire by the force of the German artillery activity. On several more occasions on the following days the Battalion – and the Canadians in general, with some British forces – were to retire to a series of reserve trenches.

(Right: *Troops, in this case the Liverpool Regiment, in trenches in the Ypres Salient. These are still the early days of the year as witnessed by the lack of steel helmets which came into use only in the spring and summer of 1916. – from Illustration*)

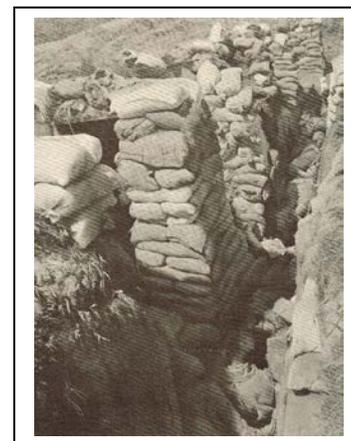


However, as history has recorded, the front had eventually been consolidated and the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to be able to retire on the night of May 4-5 – a second document in the same source has 3-4. Only two weeks later it was to be in action once again.

At the beginning of May the British had responded to a French request for support during their operations in the Artois region, and the Canadians had been ordered further southwards\* in mid-month to the area of Festubert and, in June, to that of Givenchy-les-la-Bassée.

*\*Most of the Canadian units had already been in northern France in the area of Bailleul – resting, re-organizing and re-enforcing after Second Ypres - when the orders had arrived.*

(continued)



**(Preceding page: German trenches nick-named the Labyrinth – complete with corpses - captured by the French during their Pyrrhic victory at Notre-Dame de Lorette – Over one-hundred thousand French troops became casualties during this campaign in the Artois. – from Illustration)**

**At Festubert the British gains were to be negligible, an advance of some three kilometres, and in the ten days during which the action had lasted, the British High Command was to contrive to divest itself of what had remained after the *Second Battle of Ypres* of its small, professional Army.**

**There had also been a lot of good will lost between that British High Command and the Indians and Canadian forces who had also incurred heavy casualties\* – the Canadians particularly so after their losses during the aforementioned *Second Ypres*.**

**\*The Meerut Division losses totalled twenty-five hundred and those of the Canadian Division some twenty-two hundred. Those of the 14<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion had been reasonably light, however, sixty-seven all told.**

**After Festubert some of the Canadian forces had moved north almost immediately, into positions in the *Ploegsteert Sector* on the Belgian side of the frontier. There they were to remain until September and October of the following year when once again their services were to be required in France.**

**(Right: A one-time officer in the Indian Army pays his respects to the fallen at the Indian Memorial at Neuve-Chapelle. – photograph from 2010(?))**



**The 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion, however, was to be posted in June to the area of Givenchy-les-la-Bassée\*, a small village not far distant south of Festubert.**

**Having been ordered into the forward trenches on two occasions during that month to support British efforts – and having endured the same sort of losses, although lesser in number, from having repeated the same mistakes - by July 1 the unit was then to be back north in billets in the area of the Franco-Belgian border with the other battalions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division in the *Ploegsteert Sector*.**

**\*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.**



**(Right: Some of the farmland in the area of Messines, Ploegsteert Sector, a mine crater from the time of the 1917 British offensive in the foreground – photograph from 2014)**

**(continued)**

It was to be some ten weeks into this posting which was to last until the following April that Private Clark reported from the Canadian Base Depot to his new unit.

\* \* \* \* \*

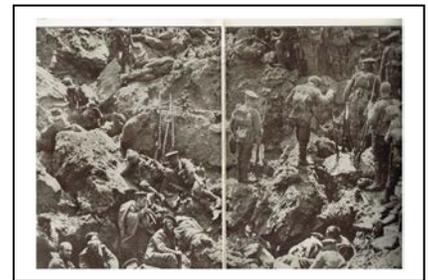
The Canadian Division was to remain in the *Ploegsteert Sector* until the spring of 1916. In the meantime, in mid-September of 1915, at the time of Private Clark's arrival, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division also disembarked in France and, within days, was on its way to Belgium, to serve in the sector just to the north of the Canadian Division, now designated as the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Division.

The autumn of 1915 and the winter of 1915-1916 were to be a relatively quiet time with a minimum of infantry activity undertaken by either side.

Then, some ten months after the fighting at Festubert, in early April of 1916 the newly-arrived 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division had undergone its baptism of fire on a large scale. It was in the area of a place called St-Éloi where, at the end of March, the British had detonated a number of mines under the German lines and then attacked. The newly-arrived Canadian formation was to follow up on the presumed British success, to hold and consolidate the newly-won territory.

*\*It had dis-embarked in France in September of 1915.*

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



(Right above: *An attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – from Illustration*)

However, the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Division - and thus Private Clark's 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion – was not called upon to serve in this engagement and was thus to spend that year-long period – June of 1915 until June of 1916 - enduring 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, 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.*



(continued)

***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.***

***(Preceding page: 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)***

**During the entire period from September of 1915 until May of 1916, only two mentions of Private Clark appear in the files: on January 8, 1916, he was awarded seven days of *Field Punishment Number 1* for disobedience, an offence committed on the previous December 11; then, in a happier vein, he was allowed an eight-day leave of absence on May 24 back to the United Kingdom.**



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

**How much – if anything - Private Clark thus missed of what was about to happen appears not to have been documented.**

**From June 2 to 14 was to be fought the battle for *Mount Sorrel* and also for the area of *Sanctuary Wood, Maple Copse, Hooge, Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* between the German Army and the Canadian Corps\*.**

**The Canadians had apparently been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions dominating the Canadian trenches when the Germans had delivered an offensive which was to overrun the forward areas and, in fact, to rupture the Canadian lines, an opportunity which fortunately they had not exploited.**



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

***\*This was an area of the Ypres Salient, and recently having become the responsibility of the newly-arrived 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division – officially in existence since New Year's Day, 1916, but not entirely operational until March of that year - that the Germans attacked. However, the situation was soon to become serious enough for units of the other Canadian Divisions to become involved.***



***(Right above: 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)***

**(continued)**

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

The British Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, had reacted – perhaps a little 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 had been a more than sobering experience: many of the intended attacks had not gone in – those that *had* done so, had gone in piecemeal and the assaulting troops had been cut to shreds - the enemy had remained *in situ* and the Canadians had been left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.



As for the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion, on the day of the German attack, June 2, the unit had been serving in Divisional Reserve. However it had soon been called forward to the area of Zillebeke to where, during the night of June 2-3, it had advanced in individual companies and details. Having then advanced again on the following day the unit had recorded very heavy casualties – three-hundred seventy-nine *all ranks*.

On June 4 the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been relieved and had retired, leaving behind two officers and fifty *other ranks* – all volunteers – to bury the dead. For the week that had followed the unit was to remain in the rear area.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diarist also recorded the following: *A large reinforcement of 150 men arrived on June 6<sup>th</sup>, and these were largely drawn upon to make up working parties of 150 sent out the following day. The part of the parties was to assist-in consolidation after the assault then pending. Before the assault took place the Regiment received a further 300 reinforcements and was again called upon to furnish large parties for difficult and dangerous jobs...*



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

On the evening and night of June 12, Canadian attackers had moved forward into assembly positions and had gone over the top hours later, before dawn of the 13<sup>th</sup>. The 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion had not been a component of the attacking force but it was to accompany the attackers during the assault.

Its tasks had been many and varied: carrying small arms ammunition and bombs; stretcher-bearing and evacuation of wounded to dressing-stations; supplying rations and water; wiring and carrying wire; and providing entrenching material – all of this to be accomplished while under fire.

The casualties are recorded in the War Diary: nineteen *killed in action*; twenty-two *wounded*; twenty-eight *missing in action*.

**(Right: A century later, reminders of a violent past close to the site of Hill 60 – it had even resembled a hill until a British mine reduced the summit to extremely small pieces in the first week of June, 1917 - to the south-east of Ypres, an area today protected by the Belgian Government against everything except the whims of nature – photograph from 2014)**



Then the drudgery of trench warfare was now to once again become the soldier's everyday lot – but perhaps after *Mount Sorrel*, for many it would have been a welcome respite.

Back in the trenches on June 25 for a five-day tour, the Battalion War Diarist recorded little infantry activity – one small bombing attack against enemy positions, one day-time patrol and nightly patrols; one German bombing patrol repulsed - the majority of the fifty-six casualties sustained during that period apparently due to enemy artillery action.

Only days after this episode, on June 20, Private Clark received a promotion in the field, to the rank of lance corporal.

The month of July and the first half of August were spent following the routine of life in and out of the trenches. Then on August 11 the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion began to march from the area of the *Ypres Salient* to the Second Army Training Area which had been established near the large northern French centre of St-Omer. At a quarter to ten on the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> the destination was reached with the majority of the unit being billeted in the area of the not-all-that-nearby town of Hazebrouck.



**(Right above: A view of Hazebrouck, likely taken some time between the wars – from a vintage post-card)**

The following two weeks comprised a number of different activities: sports including football, cricket and baseball; inspections; church parades; lectures; musketry; drills; physical training; working- and carrying-party duties... the list undoubtedly continues.

**(Right below: Canadian troops likely in trenches built for training purposes – they are too prim and proper to be the real thing when compared to the photographs of the real thing – and here equipped with Short Lee-Enfield Mark III rifles\*, during the late summer or early autumn of 1916 – from *The War Illustrated*)**

**\*The Canadian-produced Ross rifle was an excellently-manufactured weapon; its accuracy and range were superior to that of many of its rivals, but on the battlefield it had not proved its worth. In the dirty conditions and when the necessity arose for its repeated use - and using mass-produced ammunition which at times was less than perfect - it 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.**

**On the afternoon of August 27 all of this came to an abrupt end as the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion marched to St-Omer railway station.**

**(Right: *The once-splendid railway station in St-Omer, today in need of some overdue attention* – photograph from 2015)**

**Private Clarke’s unit travelled overnight from there to Conteville where it de-trained at a quarter to six in the morning. Thereupon began a six-day march: Coulonvillers; Pernois; Vicogne; Vadencourt; la Briqueterie (*Brickfields*); and finally, on September 2, the provincial town of Albert where the troops were to be billeted.**



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

**On the first day of *First Somme*, all but two small units 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.**

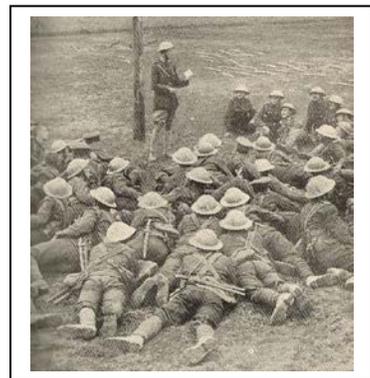
**As the battle had progressed, other troops, from the Empire (*Commonwealth*), were to be brought in; at first it had been the South African Brigade (July 15), the Australians and New Zealanders (July 23) before the Canadians had entered the fray on and about August 30 to become part of a third general offensive.**



**Their first major collective contribution was to be in the area of the two villages of Flers and Courcellette.**

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

**It was to be five days after having left St-Omer, the date September 1, before the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion would march – as it had done for the last four of those five days - into the large British military camp at *the Brickfields (la Briqueterie)*, in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert – and also within range of the German artillery. Bivouacking there for a single night, on the morrow the unit had again marched, to billets in Albert itself.**



**(Preceding page: An image purporting to be that of a Canadian officer giving instructions to those under his command prior to the attack at Flers-Courcelette, mid-September 1916 – from *The War Illustrated*)**

The following afternoon, September 3, had seen the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion move into reserve positions at la Boisselle and on the following day again, into the front-line trenches of *the Somme*.

The unit had been ordered to relieve troops of other units in the proximity of *Mouquet Farm* on September 6 and to physically improve the positions then occupied, a task undertaken with a greater or lesser degree of success. The relievers had incurred heavy hostile shell-fire and infantry attacks, and had suffered considerable losses before having been relieved in turn on September 7. The casualty count – *all ranks* - for the two days had amounted to: forty-five *killed in action*; one-hundred twenty-one *wounded in action*; and thirty-three *missing in action*.

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

The Battalion War Diary entry of the day notes the following: *The town was deserted, as regards its civil population, with the exception of a few who had ventured back to cater to the troops who chanced to be billeted there. The Church, a pleasing structure of pressed red brick and fine building stone, very badly battered by the enemy heavy guns. Surmounting the lofty spire is the figure of the Virgin with the Child in Her arms.*

*This at some time, had received a direct hit at its Base and is now leaning over at an angle of 120 degrees, as if to take a headlong dive to earth.*

On September 9 the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to begin a fifteen-day period during which it was not to be involved in any infantry action: the afore-mentioned offensive of September 15 was to be undertaken by units other than the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion. It, and a goodly number of other troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, were to go on a multi-day march.

It was to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Divisions, serving in the British Reserve Army, which would play a major role at Flers-Courcelette on September 15 and the days following.

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

**(Right below: One of the tanks 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*)**



***\*Some of the first tanks ever to be used in battle had apparently been a positive element during the fighting of mid-September on the Canadians' Front.***

It was likely to free up billeting space for the new formations now arriving in the immediate area of Albert and Brickfields, that the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion would march as far afield as Warloy, Hérissart, Montrelet – where four days of training was to take place – La Vicogne, Vadencourt – for two more days of training – before returning into reserve at *Brickfields Camp* where it was to remain until September 24-25.



Since the offensive of September 15-17 there was by now, alas, much more billeting space available for the returnees of the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

***(Right: Some of the wounded being evacuated in hand-carts from the forward area during the First Battle of the Somme – from Le Miroir or Illustration)***

Over the course of the three days of September 26, 27 and 28, the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to storm the position of *Kenora Trench*. This was to be an operation conducted by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, a part of the so-called *Battle of Thiepval Ridge* and still a part of *First Somme*. The battle would involve both British and Canadian forces, the role of the Canadian Corps being to advance to the right of the British, thus protecting that flank from any German counter-attack.



The objective of the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion was a German-held trench system known to the Canadians as the above-mentioned *Kenora Trench*. The attack by the infantry began at half-past twelve on September 26 aided by – the War Diary suggests possibly *hindered* by – a *friendly* machine-gun and artillery barrage.

The first objective was taken in thirty minutes and the main German trench was occupied some fifty minutes later again. The remainder of the afternoon was spent in consolidating the captured positions.



***(Right: Regina Trench Cemetery – Regina Trench was adjacent to Kenora Trench – and some of the ground on which the Canadian battalions fought in the autumn of 1916 – photograph from 2015)***

As was their practice, the Germans delivered several counter-attacks to re-take *Kenora Trench*. The Canadians repelled three of these on that afternoon but the enemy persisted with artillery fire and, after dark, with bombing (grenade) attacks and with enfilading machine-gun fire from a weapon which had been installed on the right-hand flank of the newly-won Canadian trenches. It was decided to retire from this untenable position.



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

In the hours that followed, the Canadians re-captured *Kenora Trench* but were once more driven out of it. A third attempt was ordered but on this last occasion the attacking force was unable even to reach the position. It thus retired.

In the War Diary Appendix to this operation it is noted that the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion had incurred a total of three-hundred seventy-four casualties: *killed in action, wounded in action, died of wounds, gassed, shell-shocked and missing in action.*

The son of Isaac Clarke and Jessie Clarke\* (also née Clarke, deceased of broncho-pneumonia on January 23, 1917) of Victoria Village, Carbonear, Newfoundland, he was also brother to Elizabeth, to Isaac, to Eleazer and to Selina.



*\*The couple married May 25, 1893.*

Lance Corporal Clark was reported as having been *killed in action* on September 26, 1916, fighting during the *Battle of Thiepval Ridge*. He was buried in Bapaume Post Military Cemetery, but either the location of the grave was later forgotten or lost, or subsequent fighting resulted in its destruction.

Elihu James Clark(e) had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-two years and six months: date of birth on his attestation papers, October 6, 1892. However, the monument to him (right above) records his *death* at age twenty-two, and the original Newfoundland Birth Register confirms the year of his birth as 1894.

(Right above: *A family memorial to the sacrifice of Private Elihu Clarke stands in the United Church Cemetery in the community of Victoria, Newfoundland.*)

Private Elihu James Clark 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).

