



**Private Herbert Henderson Diamond (Number 414979) of the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion (*Quebec Regiment*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Dud Corner Cemetery, Loos: Grave reference II.A.15.**

**(Right: *The image of a cap badge of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, is from the Wikipedia Web-site.*)**

**(continued)**



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a miner, Herbert Henderson Diamond appears to have left no trace behind him of his departure from the Dominion of Newfoundland to Cape Breton in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. All that may be said with any certainty is that he was in the city of Sydney in the month of August, 1915.

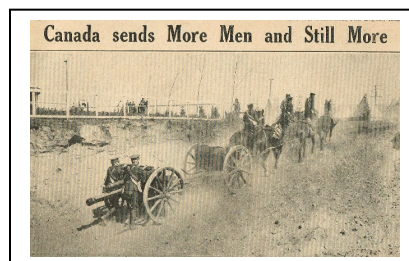
Sydney was where Herbert Diamond presented himself for medical examination on August 12, 1915, and where he then both enlisted and attested on the following day\*. Private Diamond's first pay records (see below) also document that he was then *taken on strength* on August 13 by the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Three days later, on August 16, the Officer Commanding the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel A.G. Vincent, concluded the enlistment formalities when he 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.*

Private Diamond was thereupon attached to “B” Company of the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Nova Scotia) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and despatched to join his unit, by then in training at the newly-established Camp Valcartier in Québec\*\*.

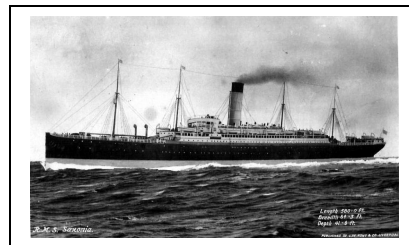
*\*It is a minor detail that his first pay records show August 13 to be the date on which the Canadian Army began to remunerate him for his services.*

*\*\*The 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been mobilized on May 11 of 1915 at Camp Aldershot in Nova Scotia and had undergone its early training there but it had then been relocated to Valcartier on June 21.*

(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 – but also at some distance 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*)



Two drafts from the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion had already sailed before the parent unit itself crossed the Atlantic, but they were seemingly used upon arrival in England as re-enforcements for other units already serving on the Continent. It was on October 18, 1915, that Private Diamond and the main body of the Battalion took ship in the port of Québec – in the company of the 41<sup>st</sup> Battalion of Canadian Infantry - boarding His Majesty's Transport *Saxonia*\*.



*\*For some six months during the early days of the Great War, the vessel had served to accommodate German prisoners of war. In March of 1915 she then had reverted to service as a troop transport.*

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



The vessel sailed on the same date, to dock in the English south-coast naval port of Plymouth-Devonport ten days later. Private Diamond's 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion was then transported by train to the fledgling Canadian military camp then being established in the vicinity of the villages of Liphook and Bramshott – to which community the camp owed its name - in the southern English county of Hampshire. The 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion was apparently the first Canadian unit to be stationed there.



(Right above: *Royal Canadian Legion flags amongst others adorn the interior of St. Mary's Church in the English village of Bramshott.* – photograph from 2016)

But for how long the unit *remained* posted at Camp Bramshott is not clear: the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion apparently at some time soon afterwards became designated as a reserve battalion and was then transferred to the Kentish coast, to East Sandling. When exactly this transfer came about is not clear, but it was surely by February of 1916, as evidenced by the following information from Private Diamond's personal documentation:

Some four months after his arrival in England, on February 23-24, Private Diamond was reported by the Commanding Officer of the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion as having been admitted into the Moore Barracks Hospital at Shorncliffe; he was showing symptoms of tonsillitis.

The important Canadian military establishment of Shorncliffe was on the coast of the county of Kent, down the coast just to the south of the Channel town of Folkestone and about one-hundred eighty kilometres distant from Bramshott. It would have been a long way for a private soldier to be transferred from Bramshott for a case of – not tonsillitis, as it transpired – but of rubella: German measles.

When he was discharged as *fit for duty* from the Moore Barracks Hospital sixteen days later on March 11, the papers addressed to the same Commanding Officer of the same 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion at East Sandling\* note that Private Diamond... *will be reporting to duty at eleven o'clock in the morning* of that same March 11 – hardly very far away.

*\*East Sandling was one of several subsidiary camps of the Canadian military complex seemingly collectively designated as Shorncliffe.*

(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)



Private Diamond was apparently by then not only *fit for duty* but was also fit for transfer overseas. On April 23 he was... *taken on strength* – at least on paper - by the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles\*, for an imminent departure across the English Channel and to *active service* on the Continent..

*\*By then there were no more horses, the CMR Battalions were serving as regular infantry.*

Three days later, he was reporting *to duty* at the Canadian General Base Depot which had been established in the proximity of the French port-city of Le Havre, situated at the estuary of the River Seine. Given that the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion was stationed at the time at East Sandling, it is likely – but not confirmed – that Private Diamond’s draft crossed over to the Continent via the port of Folkestone in England and that of Boulogne on the French coast almost opposite.



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

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

Private Diamond was to spend seventeen days awaiting orders at Le Havre before being despatched on May 13 to join the parent unit of the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifles *in the field*. His papers document him as having done so on the following day, May 14, 1916.



He was one of a reinforcement draft of thirty-nine *other ranks* from Le Havre to report *to duty* on that day to Camp “F”, in the vicinity of the town of Poperinghe, the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR having been withdrawn to there from the forward area for some two weeks by that time.



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

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The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles, originally recruited in the area of the Eastern Townships of Québec, was a component of the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade\*, itself an element of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division. The Division had begun to form in France in December of 1915 – officially coming into being at mid-night of December 31, 1915, and January 1, 1916. By that time, the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR had been on the Continent for some two months, since October 24, 1915.

*\*All of the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade’s four infantry battalions, as of January 1, 1916, were dis-mounted Canadian Mounted Rifles, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Battalions. Prior to that, the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment, CMR, had been a unit of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Rifle Brigade and the troopers had, as the name implies, horses. In order to become an infantry battalion, not only were the Regiment’s horses sent elsewhere – often to officers serving behind the lines – but the Regiment, not being of regular infantry battalion strength, had to absorb personnel from other Mounted Regiments, units which, while not immediately disbanded, were thereafter no longer active. Thus on January 1 the CMR Regiments became CMR Battalions.*

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From that end of October, 1915, until the time of the arrival of Private Diamond's draft in May of 1916, the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR had been stationed in Belgium; at first it had served at the southern end of the front there, just before the trenches crossed over the frontier into France – Messines and Kortepyp, right on the border, in the forward area and Meteren to the rear are three place-names which often appear in the Battalion War Diary; then, latterly\*, it had been transferred to the vicinity of *Maple Copse* in the *Ypres Salient*, in a sector just south-east of Ypres (today *Ieper*) itself (see also below).

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

*\*The 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division was transferred to the Salient at the end of March of 1916, the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion marching through Ypres to its positions on March 24.*

In the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion, personnel were to learn about the rigours and the routines of life in – and out of – 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 being the nearest to the forward area, the latter the furthest away.*

*Of course, things were never as neat and tidy as set out in the preceding format and troops could find themselves in a certain posting at times for weeks on end.*

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

The first months of 1916 had been relatively peaceful for the newly-arrived Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. Then, as of the final weeks of March, it was to serve in the *Ypres Salient*, a lethal place at the best of times, in an area to the south-east and in the vicinity of such places as the village of *Hooge*, and those that now went by English names such as *Sanctuary Wood*, *Hill 60*, *Railway Dugouts*, *Maple Copse* and *Mount Sorrel*.

In April it had been the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, in a sector to the south of Ypres and towards the Franco-Belgian frontier, which was to receive the attention of the German Army for a few days. This period was not to be as tranquil as that being experienced during the same time by the personnel of the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion and the other units of the Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> Division.



The *Action at the St. Eloi Craters* officially took place from March 27 until April 17 of that spring of 1916. St-Éloi was a small village some five kilometres to the south of the Belgian city of Ypres and it was here that the British had excavated series of galleries under the German lines, there to place a series of explosives which they detonated on that March 27 and followed up with an infantry assault.

After a brief initial success the attack had soon bogged down and by April 4 the Canadians were replacing the by-then exhausted British troops. They were to have no more success than had the British, and by the 17<sup>th</sup> of the month, when the battle was called off, both sides were back where they had been some three weeks previously – and the Canadians had incurred some fifteen-hundred casualties.



(Above right: *A purported attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – from Illustration*)

However, as previously noted, this confrontation was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Division affair and the personnel of the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion during that period would likely have been disturbed by only the noise of the German artillery some kilometres away.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was to be only some seven weeks after this action and just three after Private Diamond's arrival *to duty* with the parent unit of the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR that the relative calm of the trenches was to be shattered by the German attack at *Mount Sorrel*.

It was from June 2 to 13-14 that the confrontation at *Mount Sorrel* - and in the area of *Sanctuary Wood, Maple Copse, Hooze, Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* - between the German Army and the Canadian Corps was played out.

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



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

The Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, reacted by organizing a counter-attack on the following day, an assault intended to, at a minimum, recapture the lost ground. Badly organized, the operation was a dismal failure, many of the intended attacks never went in – those that did went in piecemeal and the assaulting troops were cut to pieces - the enemy remained where he was and the Canadians were left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.

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*(Right: The Canadian memorial which stands atop Mount Sorrel just to the south-west of the city of Ypres (today Ieper) whose spires and towers may be perceived in the distance. – photograph from 1914)*



On that June 2, the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR was serving in Brigade Support at Maple Copse, having been posted there since the night of May 31-June 1.

The following are excerpts taken from the War Diary of the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Mounted Rifle Battalion entry of June 2, 1916: *A red letter day in the history of the Battalion, ever to be remembered by those who lived through it. In the early morning, enemy sprung a mine in part of line held by 4<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion and began a bombardment of the Brigade area... and all the ground in MAPLE COPSE and vicinity. The men were kept under cover as much as possible...*



*...Several attempts were made to get in touch with the front line but without success. Runners sent out by us... were killed or returned wounded, with news that the communications trenches had been blown in, and that it was impossible to get through enemy barrage fire...*

*(Right above: Maple Copse Cemetery, adjacent to Hill 60, in which lie many Canadians killed during the days of the confrontation at Mount Sorrel – photograph from 2014)*

A new defensive front line was organized later that day, to be consolidated as much as possible before being used as a jumping-off position for the counter-attack which began at ten minutes past seven on the following morning, June 3. It is not clear exactly what role the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR played: it held *Maple Copse* all day during a bombardment so intense that apparently no-one could ascertain exactly what was happening elsewhere; attempts were also made to communicate with the survivors of the 4<sup>th</sup> CMR which had been holding the front-line at the time of the attack but which had been isolated ever since that time.

Later that evening, when the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR had been relieved and was ordered to retire, it had suffered a total of three-hundred ninety-three casualties. The 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian infantry Brigade during those same two days, June 2 and 3, had incurred a total one-thousand nine-hundred fifty – an almost fifty per cent casualty rate.

*(Right: Hill 60 as it remains a century after the events of 1916 in the area of Mount Sorrel, the village of Hooze, Sanctuary Wood and Maple Copse: It is kept in a preserved state – subject to the whims of Mother Nature – by the Belgian Government – photograph from 2014)*



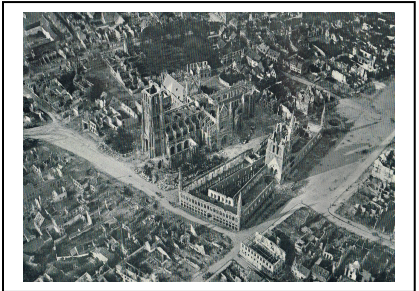
So severe had the losses been that neither the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade – and thus nor the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR attached to it – played any further role in the action at Mount Sorrel.

From June 5 when the unit withdrew, until July 16, the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion had stayed in the area of Steenvoorde, a French community well to the rear, there to reinforce and also to re-organize. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup>, having at first travelled by train before marching through the south-eastern outskirts of Ypres itself, that it once more took its place in the forward area close to Zillebeke, just down the line to the west of the area of *Maple Copse*.



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

There for four days, with little or no infantry action reported, the unit still lost ten *killed*, twelve *wounded* and eight *shell-shocked*. Thus the routine of trench warfare re-commenced with the Battalion closer to Ypres itself during this cycle than it had been previously.



(Right: *An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915, which shows 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*)

On August 22 the War Diarist had noticed – and noted – an influx of British and Irish troops in the sector, units which had been transferred from a place called *the Somme*. These troops were soon relieving the Canadians who were being withdrawn from Belgium. On August 23 it was to be the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR and, as if to mark a special occasion... *Baths at POPERINGHE allotted to Battalion from 7.30 am until 12 noon, accommodation 150 per hour.*

The 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion was withdrawn to the area of North Steenvoorde in north-western France where it was to remain until September 7. The area had been transformed into a training-zone for what was optimistically termed by its planners as *open warfare* and myriad drills were performed, from the section and platoon level up to - and including - that of both battalion and brigade.

On that September 7 the thirty-seven officers and eight-hundred ninety *other ranks* of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, were taken by bus to board a train at Bavinghove for the journey south.



(Right: *A number of the public London busses were requisitioned as troop transport during the Great War. Here one is being used by some lucky troops while others, to the right, are obliged to continue on foot.* – from *Illustration*)

(continued)



The train pulled out of Bavinghove Station at nine minutes to ten on that evening and pulled *into* the station at Candas at eight o'clock the next morning. After breakfast in a field there began a march which was to last some five days and which would end on September 12 in Brigade Reserve at La Boisselle\*, the remnants of a village just to the east of the provincial town and centre of Albert.

*\*Today the village of La Boisselle is known for the huge crater which remains there a century after the detonation of the largest of the nineteen mines exploded just prior to the attack of July 1. At the time it was perhaps history's largest man-made explosion. The crater, now more than a hundred years old, is still impressive, even today.*

(Right: *The aforementioned Lochnagar Crater caused by the mine – apparently the largest man-made explosion in history up until that date – detonated at La Boisselle – photograph from 2011(?)*)



By that 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, the assault having cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the space of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

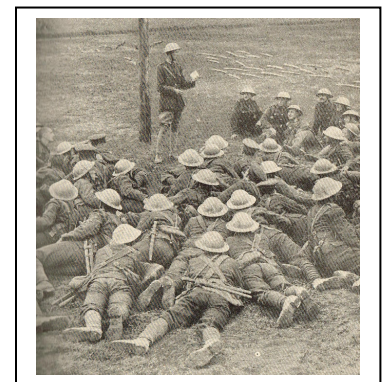
(Right: *Canadian soldiers at work in Albert, the already-damaged basilica in the background – from Illustration*)

On that first day of *1<sup>st</sup> Somme*, all but two small units of the attacking divisions had been troops from the British Isles, those exceptions being 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 day at Beaumont-Hamel.



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), then the Australians and New Zealanders (July 23) before the Canadians had 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 Courcelette.

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



(continued)

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

It was early on the morning of September 14 that the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion finished relieving the 4<sup>th</sup> CMR whose place it took in the lines and from where it had been ordered to advance on the next morning.

The Battalion had been... *ordered to attack and consolidate, with two companies, the German trenches...and to bomb down...the trenches and establish blocks. These trenches to be held by Infantry Posts as they were cleared by the bombers* (8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary).



During the time of the relief and the remainder of that September 14, the Germans had reacted violently to the movement and to the obvious preparations ongoing on the Canadian side of No Man's Land. The unit incurred a number of casualties during the day.

*By 4.00 a.m. all assaulting troops were in positions, and all details in regard to the attack completed... 6.20 a.m. As soon as the barrage lifted the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR BATTALION attacked in two waves and two full Sections of Battalion bombers...*

*Objective was reached with few casualties. The trenches were found to have been well manned. Twenty prisoners and three machine guns were taken, about 250 Germans were bayonnetted and a large number retreated overland to FABECK GRABEN and were caught by our Machine gun fire* (8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary)...

This somewhat optimistic appraisal of events by the War Diarist notwithstanding, the *few casualties* that the Battalion had incurred totalled two-hundred seventy-seven *killed, wounded and missing* during the day. The 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion remained in its newly-won positions until the following evening when it was relieved under cover of darkness and was able to retire to the large military camp at the *Brickfields* (La Briqueterie) in the outskirts of Albert.



(Right above: *Wounded at the Somme being transported in hand-carts from the forward area for further medical attention – from Le Miroir*)

From then until the end of the month Private Diamond's unit was kept in reserve, largely in the area of Bouzincourt. Nevertheless, while out of range of most German ordnance, there was little rest and the personnel was kept busy, much of the time in road construction; even while the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions were once more on the offensive and the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade was in reserve, its services were not called upon.

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It was finally on September 27 that the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion was ordered up to the forward area once more, whereupon it moved its way to relieve the 1<sup>st</sup> CMR Battalion in the front line on September 30.

Further orders were awaiting the unit: *Tomorrow afternoon at about 3 pm we are to attack, capture and consolidate a line of German trench known as REGINA TRENCH. As the front of our objective is well wired the artillery have been heavily engaged today endeavouring to cut the wire. Patrols are to be pushed out as far as possible after dark and report on the cutting. All ranks keyed up and in fine spirits, very eager to attack* (5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion War Diary – excerpt from entry of September 30).

On October 1 the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion attacked as planned and initially achieved some success, certain German positions being overrun and captured. However, much of the wire that the artillery had been engaged the day before in destroying still remained uncut; *this* and several enemy counter-attacks put increasing pressure on those in the captured German positions.



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

Much of the newly-won terrain was re-taken by the enemy, the Canadian survivors obliged to retreat to their former positions... and *Regina Trench* itself was to remain – apart from a few hours later during that month, on October 27 – in German hands until November 11.



At about ten o'clock on that evening of October 1, the Battalion was relieved by the Royal Canadian Regiment and fell back to Albert where it was billeted. The efforts of the day had cost another two-hundred twenty-four casualties.

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

Private Diamond was among the number of those reported as wounded on October 1. To where he was taken for preliminary treatment appears not to be recorded, no mention having been noted of an advanced dressing station, a field ambulance or of a casualty clearing station – this being the fairly normal chain of events of a wounded soldier.

On October 3 he was reported as having been admitted into the 10<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Rouen before being forwarded on the following day to the 11<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital, also at Rouen. It was then a further three days again before, on October 7, Private Diamond was taken on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Carisbrook Castle* for the short Channel crossing back to the United Kingdom.

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Private Diamond had suffered injuries due to gun-fire to the... *muscles on outer side of (left) thigh, no bone injury... septic wound of thigh muscles...* This same paper also cites his age at the time as eighteen and a half years. Another, in reference to the same wound, records eighteen years, as does a third.



(Right: *The image of HMHS Carisbrook Castle is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

Where he was disembarked in England is not documented but on that same October 7 the files show him to have been... *taken on strength* by the CCAC (*Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre*) at Shoreham in the county of (West) Sussex\*.

*\*It may be that this attachment was only bureaucratic in nature.*

By the next day Private Diamond had been transferred to the Cheltenham Area V.A. (*Voluntary Aid*) Hospital (Naunton Park)\* where he was to spend the subsequent one-hundred seventeen days. In the meantime he had *bureaucratically* – that is to say, *on paper* - been transferred from the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion, on October 18, to be taken on strength by the CCAC office at Folkestone.

*\*Apparently there were eight such hospitals in the Cheltenham area.*

Although there had been no injury to any bone structure, Private Diamond was to undergo an operation to clean his wounds, an often-essential procedure at times in those days before anti-biotics. The operation – although this is not *precisely* documented – most likely took place at Naunton Park.

He was discharged from the Cheltenham Area Hospital on February 1 of 1917 and was transferred to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital (*Bear Wood*), in or close to the town of Wokingham\*; on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of that same month, Private Diamond was sent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Convalescent Depot at St. Leonard's-on-Sea for physical rehabilitation. Before long he was once more *officially* moved, *struck off strength* from the CCAC and *taken on strength* by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Québec Regiment at Shoreham on March 10: while papers and files likely moved, Private Diamond himself remained at St. Leonard's.

*\*A single second source records the 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern General Hospital at Bristol.*

Released from the 3<sup>rd</sup> CC Depot there at St. Leonard's on March 29, Private Diamond was despatched to join the 22<sup>nd</sup> Canadian (*Reserve*) Battalion (*Québec*) at Shoreham in preparation for a second departure to the Continent. The crossing took place on April 20-21, 1917 - Private Diamond apparently included among a reinforcement draft destined for the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Canadian Grenadier Guards*) - and he reported to the Canadian General Base Depot at Le Havre upon arrival.

On April 23, only two days after having arrived at the Base Depot, Private Diamond was despatched back to the parent unit of the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion – but apparently joined them on paper as... *taken on strength*, belatedly, only on the 24<sup>th</sup>. He eventually reported *to duty* to Villers-au-Bois on April 26, the Battalion having retired to there only two days earlier.

Just seventeen days prior to Private Diamond's arrival at Villers-au-Bois, the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR had played its role at Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the still-ongoing *Battle of Arras*. In fact, it had been the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions which had stormed the Ridge itself on that snowy Easter Monday of 1917.

On April 9 of 1917 the British Army had 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.

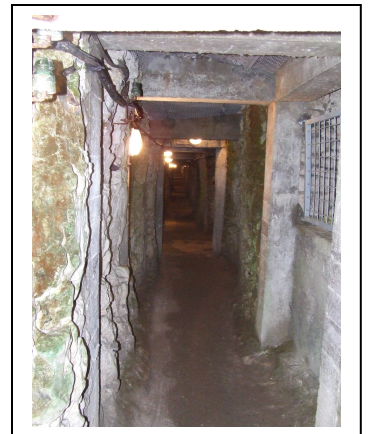


While the British campaign proved to be an overall disappointment, the French offensive was a disaster.

(Above right: *The Canadian National Memorial which, since 1936, stands on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

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

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



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



(Extract from 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary, Appendix D): *5<sup>th</sup> CMR Bn. in Reserve with two Companies in GOODMAN TUNNEL, and two Companies in PYLONES DUGOUTS. H.Q. with Bde. H.Q...*

*5.48 a.m. A Coy. 5<sup>th</sup> C.M.R., detailed to support 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.R. reported to have deployed clear of the Tunnel and be advancing in rear of the 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.R...*

*6.10 a.m. A Coy...bayoneted or captured about 40 Germans who emerged from PRINZ ARNOLF TUNNEL and attempted to shoot our troops in the rear.*

(continued)



**7.05 a.m. A Coy...reported to have reached SWISCHEN STELLUNG in support of 1<sup>st</sup> C.M.R.  
9.05 a.m. D. Coy., subsequently followed by B. Coy...ordered to move forward to SWISCHEN STELLUNG in support of our front line troops, and H.Q. and C. Coy...ordered to move forward to head of GOODMAN TUNNEL...**

**April 10<sup>th</sup> Noon The 5<sup>th</sup> C.M.R., less one Coy...were held in readiness to push through VIMY to the line of the railway running through VIMY Station, in the event of their not being held...**

**The 5<sup>th</sup> C.M.R. ordered to stand down...**

**The four Battalions of the Bge. were relieved...during the night April 11/12<sup>th</sup>**

**April 12<sup>th</sup>. 12 noon Casualties sustained during the above operations were:- ...5<sup>th</sup> C.M.R. Battalion 2 Officers 90 O.Rs.**



**(Right above: German prisoners being escorted to the rear by Canadian troops during the attack on Vimy Ridge – from Illustration)**

There had been, on and just after April 9 and 10, the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted breakthrough – but such a follow-up on those days' successes proved logistically impossible. Thus the Germans closed the breach and the conflict once more reverted to one of inertia.

The remainder of the relatively short, five-week long, *Battle of Arras* was not to be fought in the manner of the first two days and by the end of those five weeks little else had changed – apart from the return arrival of Private Diamond - and the Germans had recovered from the initial Canadian success.

After *Arras* the situation had slowly reverted again to that of everyday trench warfare. Until the end of June the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion when in reserve was withdrawn to Villers-au-Bois; then, when on support and front-line duty, Private Diamond and his comrades-in-arms were to find themselves in an area designated *Vimy Defences*. With the advent of the month of July, the unit was withdrawn from the forward line for almost the entire month to prepare for upcoming events.

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 – and his reserves - from that area, 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 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*)**

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

On August 15, a major attack was launched by Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division troops in the suburbs of Lens and just to the north, in the area of a small rise known as *Hill 70*. The 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade was not a part of this offensive, but at the same time was moving forward from the rear area to take advantage of any retreat by the Germans.



It was on August 18 that the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade took over billets from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade at Les Brebis, just to the south of Mazingarbe. On the night of August 19-20 the 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion moved forward into support positions and, on the 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, into the front line.

The 5<sup>th</sup> CMR Battalion War Diary entry for August 24, 1917, reads partially as follows: *...Our right front and communication trenches were shelled at intervals during the day. The enemy subjected our front line...to a short bombardment at about 2.00 am...*

Then on August 27<sup>th</sup>: *The total casualties for the tour are as follows – Killed 11 other ranks, Died of Wounds 3 other ranks, Wounded 3 officers 25 other ranks*

**(Right: Canadian troops in the Lens Sector in the summer of 1917 working under shell-fire in the trenches – from *Le Miroir*)**

The son of Arthur George Diamond, clerk – later recorded as living in New Aberdeen, Cape Breton - and Mary Diamond of 86 Queen's Road\*, St. John's, Newfoundland – her later place of residence cited as Summerside, Bay of Islands - he was reported as having been *killed in action* on August 24, 1917.



*\*In the 1913 Business Directory, this address is recorded as being the residence of Alexander L. Diamond, employee of L. Diamond (Tinsmith & Stoves, 270, Water Street).*

*An Arthur Diamond is recorded as having a telephone (Number 2971M) at this address in the year 1938.*

Herbert Henderson Diamond had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-one years\*: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, August 7, 1894.

**(Right: The photograph of Private Herbert Henderson Diamond from the December 24, 1917, edition of the Western Star has been made available to the public by Memorial University.**



(continued)

***\*Two medical case sheets cite his age at the time of his wounding – October, 1916 – as being just eighteen and eighteen years and a half (see above). His headstone records him as dying aged nineteen (see above also).***

**Private Herbert Henderson Diamond 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 22, 2023.**