

Private James Morris Dooley (Number 877800) of the Royal Canadian Regiment, Canadian Expeditionary Force, 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 cap badge of the Royal Canadian Regiment is from Wikipedia.)

(continued)



His occupations prior to military service recorded as those of a miner and also a fireman*, James Morris (also *Maurice*) Dooley had left the Dominion of Newfoundland – according to *Ancestry.ca* records - with his parents William-Joseph and Hellena (see below) and – at the time - four(?) siblings in 1903 to cross the Cabot Strait to Cape Breton, there to build a new family-life at Glace Bay.

**In those days a fireman not only put out fires but he was also the man who fired the boilers on steam-ships and also steam locomotives. To which species Morris Dooley belonged appears not to be recorded.*

It was at Glace Bay that Morris Dooley presented himself for enlistment on March 3 of 1916 – his records show this to be the date on which the Canadian Army began paying him for his services – and twelve days later, on March 15, he underwent a medical examination as well as his attestation. On that first pay statement he is also recorded as having been *taken on strength* on the same March 3 by the 185th Battalion.

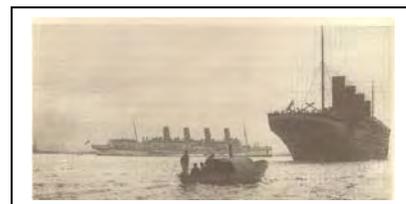
It was not, however, to be until April 28, some seven weeks later, that the formalities of Private Dooley’s enlistment and attestation were brought to a conclusion. On that date the Officer Commanding the 185th Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Frank Parker-Day, declared – on paper – that... *having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.* This procedure almost certainly took place in the town of Broughton, some twenty kilometres distant to the south of the Cape Breton industrial centre of Sydney*.

**Broughton had been a ‘company town’, developed towards the end on the nineteenth century by the Cape Breton Coal, Iron & Railway Company. Apparently too much money had been spent as the company went bankrupt in 1907 and the town was soon abandoned. At the outset of the Great War it was taken over by the Canadian Army and, more particularly, by the 185th Battalion (Cape Breton Highlanders).*

However, this posting to Broughton was to last only another four weeks: By that time, the authorities had decided to create a Nova Scotia Highland Brigade to comprise the 185th, the 85th, the 193rd and the 219th Battalions. On May 23 of 1915 these four formations were assembled* to train together at Camp Aldershot, Nova Scotia, where the Brigade then spent all summer before receiving its colours on September 28, two weeks before its departure for overseas service.

**The 185th Battalion apparently travelled by train to Camp Aldershot on May 26.*

The 185th Battalion embarked for overseas service at seven o’clock in the evening of October 11, 1916, in the harbour at Halifax. The ship was His Majesty’s Transport *Olympic*, sister-ship of *Britannic*, to be sunk by a mine in the Mediterranean a month later, and also of the ill-starred *Titanic*.



Olympic was to carry not only the one-thousand thirty-eight personnel of the 185th Battalion to the United Kingdom, but also the 85th, the 188th, the 219th and the 193rd Battalions, plus one-half of the 166th Battalion, of Canadian Infantry.

(Preceding page: *HMT Olympic on the right lies at anchor along with HM Hospital Ship Aquitania, centre, at Mudros Bay on the Greek island of Mudros in the autumn of 1915. – from a photograph from the Imperial War Museum, London*)

With the addition of some three hundred miscellaneous others who also took passage on her, the vessel was to provide passage to the United Kingdom for about six-thousand five-hundred souls. *Olympic* eventually cleared the port of Halifax at eleven o'clock on the morning of that October 13. Six days later, on October 19 - a second source has the 18th - the ship docked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool.

From Liverpool, Private Dooley's Battalion was transported by train to the Canadian Camp by then established at Witley in the county of Surrey.

There he underwent further training during the next seven months before he was *struck off strength* by the 185th Battalion and transferred to the Royal Canadian Regiment. This was on May 25, 1917, and Private Dooley could now expect his imminent transfer overseas, on this occasion across the English Channel to the Continent, possibly via Southampton to disembark in France at the port-city of Le Havre on the estuary of the River Seine.



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

According to the records it was two days later, on May 27, that Private Dooley and his reinforcement draft of thirty men destined for the Royal Canadian Regiment reported *to duty* to the very-recently-established 3rd Canadian Infantry Base Depot at Étaples. There he was apparently to languish for almost a month before eventually being forwarded to the 3rd Entrenching Battalion on June 21.

Entrenching Battalions were exactly what the name implies: earlier in the war, all soldiers – both those in the front lines and those elsewhere - were given the task of the construction of trenches, dug-outs and emplacements. That still applied when necessary but, otherwise, it had soon been realized by officialdom that it was more efficient to have special battalions of physically-apt men, and also those with some experience in construction, to do such work. These specialist battalions were thus kept behind the lines, to be despatched wherever and whenever the need for their services arose.

It also soon became the practice to send the reinforcements arriving from England to these units to await the appropriate moment to join the battalion to which they had been attached. Thus the entrenching battalions also served as reinforcement pools to be convenient temporary postings for soldiers such as Private Dooley – and as a place where as well these men could be gainfully employed.



(Preceding page: *The caption, translated, reads: 'A detachment of sappers constructing a road in liberated territory' – the type of work that Canadian Entrenching Battalions would be ordered to undertake from time to time. – from Illustration)*

Private Dooley seems to have enjoyed the hospitality of the 3rd Entrenching Battalion for longer than would usually have been the case. In fact, he remained with that unit – and thus did *not* report to the Royal Canadian Regiment – from the day of his reported arrival on June 23 until August 11 when he was evacuated to the 5th Canadian Field Ambulance, at the time situated at Hersin-Coupigny.

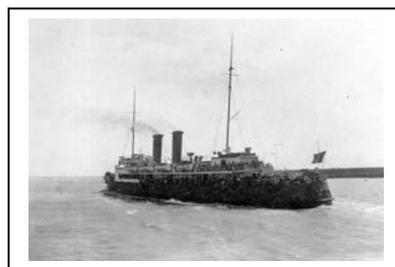
The only diagnosis of the time was the ubiquitous P.U.O. (*Pain – or pyrexia (fever) – of an Unknown – or Uncertain - Origin*).

From the 5th C.F.A. he was forwarded on the following day, the 12th, to the 10th Canadian Field Ambulance at the Canadian Corps Rest Station at Frésnicourt, thence on August 26 to the 22nd Casualty Clearing Station at Bruay before, on the morrow again, travelling by the 6th Ambulance Train to the 7th Canadian General Hospital at Étapes.



(Right above: *a British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War – from a vintage post-card*)

By September 4 Private Dooley had been admitted into the Military Hospital at Lewisham, a southern suburb of London, having made the cross-Channel passage on board the Belgian hospital ship *Stad Antwerpen**. It appears to have been there on board ship that the diagnosis of his complaint became somewhat more precise: *trench fever*.



(Right above: *The photograph of Stad Antwerpen is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

**It was also on September 4 that he was transferred on paper, from the Royal Canadian Regiment to the Nova Scotia Regimental Depot at the Canadian Camp, Bramshott. It was to be a further twenty-four days before he was there in person.*

Some three weeks had already passed after his admission into hospital at Lewisham before Private Dooley was considered to be well enough to be discharged. On September 26 he was conveyed to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital at Bromley to be subsequently released from there to the Canadian Camp and Depot at Bramshott (see * above) in the southern English county of Hampshire.



(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*)

(continued)

On November 9 Private Dooley became attached to the 17th Canadian (*Reserve*) Battalion at Bramshott for further training before once more being despatched to serve on the *Western Front*. It was on March 28 of 1918 that this occurred and that he found himself at the Canadian Infantry Base Depot* at Étaples awaiting the order to join his new unit, again the Royal Canadian Regiment. He left the Depot on April 3, reported to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp on that same day and eventually reported *to duty* with the RCR on the final day of that month of April.

**In May of 1917 there had been created four Canadian Infantry Base Depots at Étaples to replace the single one already established there. In March and April of 1918, this system reverted to a single Canadian Infantry Base Depot which remained at Étaples.*

When Private Dooley reported to the RCR on April 30, he would not have been greeted by a large reception committee. The parent unit of the Regiment was at the time serving in the forward area of the Lens Sector and was not to be withdrawn from there to the rear area, at Cambligneul, until May 2. Private Dooley would surely not have been sent immediately to the front upon his arrival to the RCR Battalion, thus Cambligneul was likely the place to which he reported *to duty*.

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The Royal Canadian Regiment, although having been the senior regiment in the Canadian Army at the outbreak of *the Great War*, had not been among the first units to be despatched overseas to the United Kingdom in October of 1914. In fact, it *had* been sent overseas, but in a different direction, to languish for a year on the British island possession of Bermuda.

After that posting, the RCR had been brought home to Canada in the summer of 1915 and had then likely taken the same ship onward to the United Kingdom where it had then been attached to the 7th Infantry Brigade of the newly-forming 3rd Canadian Division. The RCR had then been transferred to service with the 3rd Division on the Continent on November 1 of 1915, before being immediately sent to the Franco-Belgian frontier area and then, at the end of March of 1916, to the *Ypres Salient*.



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

The first months of 1916 had been relatively peaceful for the newly-arrived Canadian 3rd Division, also in the frontier area. It was in March, 1916, that the entire Division was transferred to 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*.

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In April it was the Canadian 2nd Division, in a neighbouring sector to the south of Ypres, 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 period by the personnel of the Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion and the other units of the Canadian 3rd Division.



(Right above: *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)*

The *Action at the St. Eloi Craters* had officially taken 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 a series of galleries under the German lines, there to place explosives which they detonated on that March 27, having then 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 exhausted British troops. They were to have no more success than had the British, and by the 17th 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 2nd Division affair and the personnel of the Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion during that period would likely have been disturbed by only the noise of the artillery duels some kilometres away.

Its *own* first major action, some seven weeks later, was to be the confrontation with the Germans at *Mount Sorrel*, in the south-east area of the *Ypres Salient*.

On June 2 the Germans had attacked the only high ground in the *Salient* which remained under Canadian (and thus also British) control. This was just to the south-east of the city of Ypres itself, in the areas of the village of *Hooge* and those other places of English-sounding names as listed in a closely-previous paragraph. They are still referred to by the local people as such today.



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

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The enemy, preceded by an intense barrage, overran the forward Canadian positions and for a while had breached the Canadian lines. However, the Germans were unable to exploit their success and the Canadians were able to patch up their defences. The hurriedly-contrived counter-strike of the following day, delivered piece-meal and poorly co-ordinated, was a costly disaster for the Canadians.



(Right above: *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)



Ten days later the Canadians again counter-attacked, on this occasion better informed, better prepared and better supported. The lost ground for the most part was recovered, both sides were back where they had started eleven days before – and the cemeteries were a little fuller.

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

The Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion had been caught in the maelstrom of June 2 and had remained in the forward area until the night of June 5-6 when it had been relieved and had retired to Camp “B” well to the rear. The unit was not to serve again during the action at *Mount Sorrel* where it had by then incurred some one-hundred forty-five casualties.

Thus it was back to the everyday routines of trench warfare for some two months after which time the unit – as was to be the case of most of the other Canadian Battalions – was once more withdrawn, on this occasion for training in ‘*open warfare*’. The Canadians were about to travel south into France to play a role in the British summer offensive of 1916.

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 had cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the short span of just four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

On that first day of *1st Somme*, 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 Newfoundland Regiment which was to lose so heavily on that day at *Beaumont-Hamel*.

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



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As the battle 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 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 prior to the attack at Flers-Courcellette, September 1916. – from The War Illustrated*)

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



The RCR arrived in the area of the provincial town of Albert in the late evening of September 13 and just two days later, on September 15, was ordered to move forward in order to attack a German strong-point, the *Zollern Graben*, on the following day. By four o'clock in the morning of September 17, when it withdrew, the RCR had incurred some two-hundred eighty casualties and the *Zollern Graben* was still in German hands.



Another major action was to follow: the attack of October 8-9 on the *Regina Trench* system was not a success but, on the contrary, an expensive failure; the German positions would not be definitively taken until November 11. By that latter date the RCR was to be in the Lens sector, some fifty kilometres to the north. In fact, the unit was to be moving in that direction within days of having fought at *Regina Trench*.



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

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



During the five weeks of its sojourn at *the Somme* the Battalion had lost, *killed* and *wounded*, about four-hundred fifty all ranks. Over two hundred more had been reported as *missing in action*, the War Diarist optimistically predicting that most of them would be later found in field ambulances and casualty clearing stations. The accuracy of that prediction does not appear to be documented.

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

The RCR Battalion began to withdraw from *the Somme* on October 10. The Battalion War Diarist makes no mention of any motor transport or train being employed so it may be assumed that the unit, as did many others, retired from there on foot. The route took it westward at first, then to turn northward so as to pass to the west of the by-now shattered city of Arras and beyond.

It was on the 24th of that October of 1916 that the unit arrived in the Neuville St-Vaast Sector to the north-west of Arras. The War Diarist on that date reported Battalion strength as being three-hundred eighty-six all ranks, less than forty per cent of regulation battalion numbers. *The Somme* had taken its toll.

The RCR, in its new quarters in the Neuville St-Vaast Sector, once more began the daily pattern of life in and out of the trenches*, a routine which lasted until the middle of February of the following year, 1917.



(Right: *Canadian soldiers while off-duty perusing the program of an upcoming concert ‘somewhere on the Continent’ – from Le Miroir*)

**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.*



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

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

Thus the winter of 1916-1917 was to pass in that manner for the Royal Canadian Regiment. The Battalion War Diary is fairly repetitive in its entries: little in the way of infantry action except patrols and the occasional raid – by both sides: all local activity; and most casualties were due to German artillery and snipers.



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(Preceding page: *A detachment of Canadian troops going forward during the winter of 1916-1917 – from Illustration*)

Then in February the unit was ordered into Divisional Reserve at Bruay where it began five weeks of training for the upcoming British offensive; not that it was all work: the War Diary reports sports events and concerts among the litany of parades, lectures, marches, drills, work-parties and visits from military and political persons.



(Right above: *A Canadian carrying-party loading up before moving up to the forward area, one of the many duties of troops when in support or reserve – from Le Miroir*)

On March 21 the RCR moved forward into the trenches once again; after five weeks in reserve perhaps the change was a bit of a shock to the Battalion's collective system: the War Diarist notes that the new quarters... *LA MOTTE Camp, is composed of Bivouacs, with nine tents for officers. We are its first occupants. It can be greatly improved.*

But he also notes that... *"C" Company relieved the right Company of the 58th Battn. taking over the exact frontage from which we are expected to jump off.* Such an observation illustrates the recent policy of informing junior officers and senior NCOs of the plans of intended actions, knowledge that these personnel were to pass down to the men under their command.

And it must have been clear to the men of the RCR that there *were* intended actions; the forward and rear areas in the Neuville St-Vaast were hives of ongoing activity for which the unit supplied working-parties and carrying-parties each day: dumping areas were being cleared, bivouacs were being sand-bagged, stone laid for walks, new trenches dug and old ones deepened, troops familiarized with the newly-excavated tunnels and other positions, water-pipes and communication lines buried, artillery and machine-guns sited...

On April 1 the RCR Battalion retired to Villers-au-Bois for a week, there to organize for the first day of the offensive. On April 7, the first of the Companies moved into one of those tunnels which had been hewn out of the chalk; it was hoped that these galleries would reduce the number of casualties with the men sheltering there until the last possible moment, and that it would also nurture the element of surprise.

The men of the RCR were to remain underground for well over twenty-four hours.

On April 9 of 1917 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.



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

(Preceding page: *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, 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 after the attack. – photograph from 2008(?)*)

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



For no reason other than that it is one of the more legible entries to follow, an extract of the experience of “A” Company during the opening of the attack of April 9 is here included as being representative of the events of the assault as undertaken by the Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion.

(Excerpts from the Battalion War Diary of April 9, 1917) 3.12 a.m. “A” Company under Captain Munn reports Co. in Assembly trenches.

5.30 a.m. Raining. Barrage opens.



While the other three Companies were in communication with Headquarters at a relatively early hour, apparently not so “A” Company, not until... 1.40 p.m. Message from “A” Co. delivered by wounded runner stated that they had captured four machine guns, were in touch with Units on both flanks... and that they had sent a patrol over the Ridge.

2.15 p.m. “A” Co. (left Co.) is in its objective. Strength 1 Officer and approximately 50 other ranks with no N.C.O.’s. It is in touch with “C” Co (right) who’s (sic) approximate strength is 1 Officer and sixty other ranks... “A” Co. has sent a patrol over the ridge from which as yet no report has been sent. There is a small gap between “A” Co. and the P.P.C.C.L.I. owing to the shortage of men. We command the whole situation at present, but unless reinforcements and supplies of every sort, more especially S.A.A. (small arms ammunition) available, machine Guns, shovels etc., are sent up at first opportunity, it will be difficult to withstand another counter attack.

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It was the 3rd Division – of which the Royal Canadian Regiment was an element - and also the 4th Division whose objective had been Vimy Ridge itself, the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions having objectives on the right-hand side of the main slope*.

**This was the first occasion on which the four Canadian Divisions were to act in concert as an autonomous Canadian Army Corps rather than as a constituent of a British formation. In fact, on this occasion, British forces had been placed under Canadian command.*

Of the ten thousand Canadian casualties of the day, the Royal Canadian Regiment incurred fifty-six *killed in action*, one-hundred sixty-five *wounded*, and sixty-five *missing in action*.

The five-week *Battle of Arras* having terminated, the Royal Canadian Regiment was once again to face a long period of trench warfare. This was not to be the case for many of the other units of the Canadian 1st and 2nd Divisions which were serving in sectors from Vimy in the south to Béthune to the north: the Canadian Corps High Command had some offensive work planned for them.



(Right above: The village of Souchez, just to the north of Vimy, already looked like this in 1915 when the French passed control of the area over to the British. – from Le Miroir)

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



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

**It should be remembered that during the Great War the British High Command was in control of not only its own troops but also those from all the British Dominions, colonies and territories.*

(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)



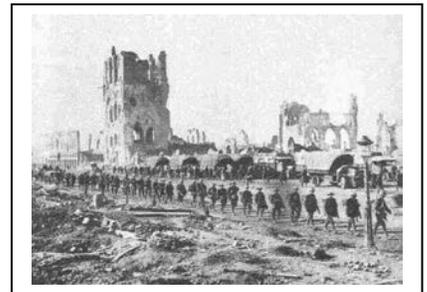
(Right above: Canadian troops under fire advancing across No-Man's Land in the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir)

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On August 15, a major attack* was launched by Canadian troops in the suburbs of the city of Lens and just to the north, in the area of a small rise known as *Hill 70*. The Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion, however, was not a part of this particular offensive and on that day was in fact busy in training at LaPugnoy. As far as anything of military importance on that day was concerned, the Battalion War Diarist was sparing with his ink: *Nil*.

**The Canadian efforts had been expected to continue into September and even longer, but the ongoing British summer offensive in Belgium was proceeding less well than expected and the High Command was looking for reinforcements to make good the exorbitant losses. The Australians and then the Canadians were ordered to prepare to move north; thus the Canadians were obliged to abandon their plans.*

It was just over seven weeks after the capture of *Hill 70*, on October 6, that the Royal Canadian Regiment began to make its way on foot and by train, to the area of the Franco-Belgian border. Later that day the unit was being billeted in the northern French town of Bailleul.



But it was not to be until October 23, having travelled in a circuitous route on foot and by train that the RCR was to find itself in the war zone of the *Ypres Salient*.

(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*)



Officially designated the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign into which the Canadians were about to be thrust – already ongoing since the last day of that July of 1917 - 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 objectives.

(Right above: *Somewhere, perhaps anywhere or everywhere, on the battlefield of Passchendaele during the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)



From the time that the Canadians entered the fray, it was they who shouldered a great deal of the burden. For the week of October 26 until November 3 it was the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions which spearheaded the assault, with the 1st and 2nd Divisions in reserve.

From November 5 until the official end of the affair – November 10 - the reverse was true with the 2nd Division finally entering the remnants of Passchendaele itself.

(Right above: *The monument to the sacrifice of the Canadians standing in the outskirts of the re-constructed village of Passchendaele (today Passendale) – photograph from 2010*)

From October 23 until the end of the month the RCR was in reserve in the area of Sin Jaan contributing to carrying-parties, working-parties and stretcher-parties. On October 30 it was ordered forward and was involved peripherally in an attack by the 3rd Division. The unit then remained in the lines until relieved on November 4 – all of this at a cost of two-hundred fifty-eight casualties.



(Right above: *Just a few hundred to the south-west of Passchendaele – and looking in the opposite direction from the site of the above monument. – photograph from 2010*)

It was not until November 14 that the Royal Canadian Regiment was back in the trenches where they intersected what in peace-time had been the road leading north from Passchendaele (today *Passendale*) to the community of Westroosebeke*.

There it was almost continually shelled for three days, incurring fifty casualties, before withdrawing from its positions – and from the 3rd *Battle of Ypres: Passchendaele* – on the morning of November 18.

**The Battalion's positions were also atop the Passchendaele Ridge.*

Two days later again, on November 20, the unit was back in northern France, at Rely, a community some eighteen kilometres to the west of Béthune. There it was to remain, both resting and training, for a month, until December 21 when it was bussed back to the Lens sector. That daily grind of life in the trenches began once more.

The month of December, even though the Battalion War Diarist appears to have neglected it, had nevertheless offered something a little different – and a reminder of home - to all the Canadian formations which were serving overseas at the time: the Canadian General Election. Polls for the Army were open during that month and participation, in at least *some* units, was in the ninety per cent range*.

**Apparently, at the same time, the troops were given the opportunity to subscribe to Canada's Victory War Loan. Thus the soldier fighting the war was also encouraged to pay for it as well.*

After that, the winter of 1917-1918 had been a quiet period; however, the first day of spring of 1918, the Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion still stationed in the area of the city and mining centre of Lens, was to bring to a close this relative calm.

Perhaps not many people realize how close the Germans came to victory in the spring of 1918. Having transferred the divisions no longer necessary on the Eastern Front because of the Russian withdrawal from the War, they launched a massive attack, Operation '*Michael*', on March 21. The main blow fell at *the Somme* in the area of, and also just to the south of, the battlefields of 1916, and it fell for the most part on the British and Commonwealth troops stationed there*.

(continued)

(Right below: While the Germans did not attack the city of Lens in the spring of 1918, they bombarded it heavily during the time of their spring offensive in order to keep the British uncertain about their intentions and thus to oblige them to retain troops in the area. – from *Le Miroir*)

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



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

(Right: The City Hall of Arras and its bell-tower looked like this by the spring of 1918 after nearly four years of bombardment by German artillery. – from a vintage post-card)



However, despite, at times, the critical situations in the areas of both *the Somme* and *Flanders*, the services of the Royal Canadian Regiment were apparently not required during *Operation Michael*.

That entire period was spent by the unit in the sector of Lens, in the southern suburb of Avion and then, latterly, withdrawn to the vicinity of the commune of Cambigneul, sixteen kilometres north-west of Arras, which was where Private Dooley reported to *duty* on or about May 30, 1918.

* * * * *

Private Dooley’s introduction to existence in the war zone were likely as docile as any soldier was to experience during the entire *Great War*. His first two months were spent well to the rear, in an area where games, parades and concerts were also a part of the routine of army life, although maybe not quite as frequent as the seemingly-everyday working-parties and carrying-parties.



(Right above: A Canadian carrying-party delivering the trappings of war somewhere on the Western Front: Apparently the use of the head-band had been adopted in the Canadian forces from its use by the indigenous peoples at home. – from *Le Miroir*)

(Right: Cited as being an Official Canadian Photograph of a... ‘violinist playing traditional music near Lens’ - from *Le Miroir*)



It was to be the end of July before the Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion was to see action at the front again – and Private Dooley for the first time - except on certain occasions when training exercises were held in areas, activities that were necessarily made to be as realistic as possible.

It may well have been that Private Dooley and his comrades-in-arms at times asked themselves not only why there was this very welcome and quiet period, but also what the purpose could be of all the drills, marches, exercises, study and use of German weapons, familiarization with new tactics, lectures, bayonetting, grenade-throwing, gas evasion and manoeuvres.

(Right: A photograph, from 1917, of a Canadian soldier during training in the use of his 'gas-helmet': As may be imagined, it was difficult for the wearer to perform the duties of a soldier, particularly in the event of an attack. – from Le Miroir)



The period of relative quiet after the efforts of the German spring offensives, *Michael* and *Georgette*, was due of course – certainly in the earlier stages - to the exhaustion of both sides by the end of that April of 1918.

But then it was to continue that way as the Allies and the newly-arriving Americans began in their turn to prepare for an offensive campaign – and therefore also as the German forces began to gird themselves for the inevitable retribution which was soon to burst upon them.

The newly-appointed Generalissimo of the Allied and Associate forces on the Western Front was Ferdinand Foch. His plan was to strike not only hard, but to strike often and ubiquitously, thus eventually overwhelming an already stretched enemy defence. Any retirement by the enemy was to be closely followed up, the pressure to be unrelenting.

The month of July was quiet as well, although Private Dooley was soon aware of the dangers of the forward area: that he could be shelled and shot at. But there also appeared to be the same continuous preparations for something grand in the offing. On July 30 the Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion was ordered to parade in battle order.

Then: on foot to LeSouich; by train to Doullens; from there to the cathedral city of Amiens by train on the first day of August; on the evening of the 2nd to billets in Sains en Amienois some four kilometres distant - and within enemy artillery range as several casualties, including fatalities, were to prove.

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



At Sains en Amienois Private Dooley likely spent three days in cleaning-up and in drying clothes, in training, in meeting French comrades-in-arms and also, on two of the three evenings given unto him, attending a concert given by an unidentified – at least to the War Diary reader – band.

On August 6 the RCR Battalion was ordered to move: **GENTELLES WOOD full of troops. Whole Division and tanks** – recorded the War Diarist. From there three days later, on the 9th, it moved forward yet again, to LeQuessel Wood on the Roye Road, expecting to attack on the next day*.



(Right: *In 1917 the British formed the Tank Corps, a force which was to become ever stronger in 1918 as evidenced by this photograph of a tank park, once again 'somewhere in France' – from Illustration*)

**The first attack had already been delivered by then, in the early – and foggy – morning on August 8. But as the offensive had been planned as a continuous advance, it was necessary to have troops which were fresh and ready to continue the operation, allowing the previous units the time to regroup, refresh, re-enforce and to prepare for a yet further assault a few days hence.*



(Right above: *Canadian and German wounded from the first days of the battle – some cases more serious than others - waiting to be evacuated to the rear – from Le Miroir*)

Things, however, apparently went somewhat awry on this occasion as the Battalion sat awaiting orders all the following day and, in fact, it was not until the early morning of the 14th that Private Dooley moved into the positions at Brigade Reserve recently vacated by the PPLCI* Battalion which had moved to deliver its assault from another quarter. The RCR then left the shelter of the trenches.

**Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry was named for the daughter of the Duke of Connaught, Governor General of Canada at the time.*

Circumstances of Casualty (from Canadian Military Records):- *During an attack along the Amiens-Roye Road and on Parvillers*, he was in action with a Lewis Gun Crew when he was hit by a piece of shrapnel from an enemy shell, at about 10 o'clock on the morning of August 14th, 1918, being instantly killed.*

**At the time, "C" Company was apparently supporting the attack on Parvillers by the PPCLI – although there appears to be contrary documentation - the other companies of the Battalion being in reserve – once again the RCR Battalion War Diary appears to contradict that of the 7th Brigade. The 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary, moreover, seems to report no infantry activity on that August 14 apart from patrols.*

(continued)

The son of William Joseph Dooley, farmer, and of Hellena (also found as *Ellen, Ellener, Elenor* and *Eleanor*) Dooley (née *Jones* or *Janes*, deceased in July, 1916), formerly of Logy Bay Road, St. John's, Newfoundland, and later of Dominion Number 3, Glace Bay, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, he was also brother to Mary-Gertrude, to Alexander, Isabel, Eleanor, Patrick-Edward, Margaret-Eulalie, Louise, to Lillian-May (died in infancy), to Violet, Mary-Theresa-Horwood, D.-Gus and to Olive (died aged two in 1916)*.



**To one of his sisters, identified only as Mrs. May (Mary?) E. Warren of Dominion Number 4, Glace Bay, he had allotted a monthly twenty dollars from his pay (\$1.10 per diem) and also willed his everything.*

(Right above: *The photograph of Private Dooley is from the Ancestry.ca web-site.*)

James Morris (*Maurice*) Dooley had enlisted at the *apparent* age of eighteen years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, December 28, 1897.

Private Morris Dooley was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



Obituary from the September 28, 1918, edition of the St. John's, Newfoundland, Evening Telegram: Newfoundland Boy Killed – *A casualty telegram addressed Mrs. Eleanor Dooley, Dom. No. 3, came to Glace Bay, C.B., stating that Pte. Morris Dooley, Infantry, had been killed in action August 25*. Mrs. Dooley died some time ago and the casualty telegram announcing the death of her son was received by the brothers and sisters of the deceased soldier.*

*Pte. Dooley enlisted in the 185th Battalion and in England transferred to a draft of reinforcements for another Nova Scotia Battalion at the front. His father and one brother are now at the front in France**. Beside these, he is survived by several young brothers and sisters. Deceased was a son of Mr. William Dooley, and a nephew of Mr and Mrs. Noseworthy, all of this city, and general sympathy is extended the relatives in their sad bereavement. - September 27, 1918, Evening Telegram, St. John's, Newfoundland*

**August 25 was, in fact, the date on which his death was officially recorded.*

***William Joseph Dooley (Number 877830) apparently – according to his pay record – enlisted on March 6, 1916, three days after his son Morris. At the time he was a declared forty-four years of age. Up until the summer of the following year when Private Morris Dooley was hospitalized, their military careers had been otherwise identical: medical examination, attestation, sailing date and ship, transfer to RCR, sailing date to Europe and service with the 3rd Entrenching Battalion.*

(continued)

Private William Dooley survived the Great War, sailing from Liverpool on May 7, 1919, home to Canada on board the repatriation ship SS Orduna.

Sapper Alexander Dooley (Number 469465) had enlisted on August 13, 1915, some eight months before his father and younger brother, before presenting himself for medical examination and attestation in Sydney, Cape Breton, on August 25. Originally attached to the 64th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force he was later to serve on the Continent with the 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company. Promoted as high as to the rank of Company Quarter Master Sergeant on July 12, 1918, he was demoted to that of Sapper on January 14 of 1919, two months after the cessation of hostilities.

Apparently Sapper Dooley married in England before returning back to Canada on board SS Metagama which docked in Québec on June 2, 1919. He was demobilized and discharged in Halifax on June 5, 1919, three days later.