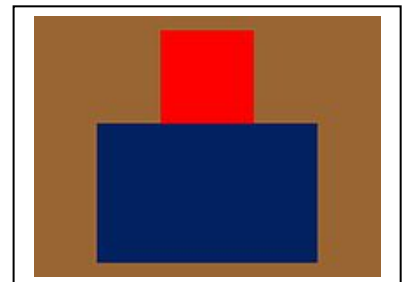




Private George Dunn (Number 70260) of the 26th Battalion (New Brunswick) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, Grave Reference: I.E.54..

(Right: The image of the shoulder-patch of the 26th Battalion (New Brunswick) is from the Wikipedia Web-site.)

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *farmer*, George Dunn appears to have left behind him no information a propos his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Prince Edward Island. All that may be said with any certainty is that by May of 1915, he had been living on the Island for at least a year (see below), and had made his way – if perhaps for only the day - to the capital city of Charlottetown, for that was when and where he enlisted*.

**He may well have also been staying with his brother at the time, James, his declared next-of-kin, who was residing in the community of Rustico.*

His earliest pay records shows that it was on May 1, 1915, that George Dunn began to receive remuneration for his services to the Canadian Army, at or about the same time undergoing a medical examination – which found him...*fit for the Canadian Over Seas Expeditionary Force* – but the date of which has been omitted.

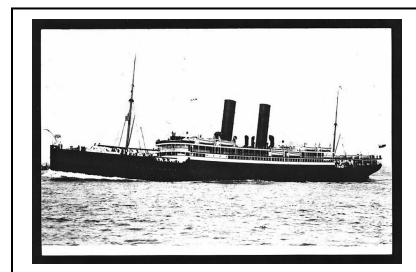
At the time, he was already a soldier of the 36th Prince Edward Island Light Horse of the Canadian Militia*, and had been so for a year.

**As soldiers of a unit of the Canadian Militia whose reason for being was solely the defence of Canada, the personnel of the 36th PEILH was by law forbidden to undertake any military activities outside the borders of the country. However, Overseas Battalions were by this time being mobilized and the Militia was to recruit on behalf of them. In fact the majority of the first waves of recruits were men who transferred from Militia formations.*

The *official* conclusion to the formalities of Private Dunn's enlistment was brought about on May 12 when the Officer Commanding the 55th Battalion – by which unit Private Dunn had been temporarily *taken on strength* - Lieutenant-Colonel J. Renfrew Kirkpatrick declared – on paper – that...*George Dunn...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

It was during the same month of May that Private Dunn was transferred from the pay-roll – and presumably the nominal roll – of the 55th Battalion to that of the 26th Battalion (*New Brunswick*) with which unit his war was to end.

The 26th Battalion had been authorized earlier in December of 1914, five months before George Dunn's enlistment. The unit had thereupon commenced training almost immediately in Saint John – at the *Barrack Green Armouries* - and continued to do so – with a week off during the Christmas period – until the time arrived for its embarkation for passage overseas. The ship that it and Private Dunn were to board was the requisitioned *Anchor Line* passenger vessel *Caledonia*.



(Right above: *The photograph of the Anchor Line vessel Caledonia is from the Old Ship Photo Galleries web-site.*)

(continued)

A number of sources cite June 15 of 1915 as the date of the 26th Battalion's embarkation but this was apparently not so: the ship is documented as having sailed from Montreal on

June 9 with “A” Squadron of the 7th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles and the 2nd Divisional Remount Depot on board. Her next stop was St. John, New Brunswick, on June 13, where she welcomed not only the 26th Battalion, but also Section 1 and the Headquarters Company of the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column, and a part of the 2nd Divisional Cyclists Company.

Caledonia then sailed from Saint John to put into Halifax for the 1st Draft of the 40th Battalion and the No. 2 Heavy Battery, Canadian Garrison Artillery. It was from here that she finally set out to cross the Atlantic - on June 15 - to drop anchor in the English south-coast harbour of Portsmouth-Devonport nine days later, on June 24. From there it was a train ride to the coastal area of the county of Kent and to the vicinity of the Channel harbour and town of Folkestone where the Canadians were by that time busy establishing *Shorncliffe*, a large military complex.

(Right below: *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*)

The 26th Battalion was to be encamped at *East Sandling*, one of several subsidiary camps, just down the Dover Straits from Folkestone.



Once at *Shorncliffe* there was to be a relatively short wait for the majority of Private Dunn’s comrades-in-arms before they were called to *active service* on the Continent. But for Private Dunn, because he had not undergone sufficient training – a minimum of fourteen weeks was required – this moment was not to come until the month of November.

* * * * *

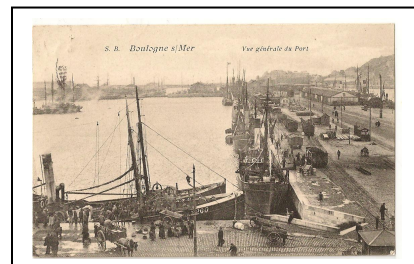
On and about September 15 almost the entire Canadian 2nd Division took ship to France, the 26th Battalion making the crossing as one of the components of the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade. His Battalion - following an inspection by the King on September 2 - sailed without Private Dunn on that September 15 from Folkestone to the French port-town of Boulogne on the coast opposite, some two hours’ sailing-time away.

On the afternoon of the next day, the Battalion boarded a train which, after some six hours, eventually was to make its way some fifty kilometres eastward to the community of Wizernes. The War Diary then recounts that the men were obliged to march... *all night to Bivouac about three miles from Arque* (War Diary). By the evening of the 17th the unit had marched to the larger centre of Hazebrouck and, a week later again, it finally reached permanent billets near Scherpenberg, a small rise – there are no *big* ones - in Belgian West Flanders.



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



Thus the 26th Battalion arrived in Belgium, in a sector to the south of the already-shattered medieval city of Ypres, an area which it would come to know well as it was to remain there for the best part of a year. It was there that the Battalion personnel was to become familiar with life in the trenches*.

(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*)



**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, a year later, having by that time been equipped with those steel helmets and, less visible, British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III Rifles – from Illustration*)

* * * * *

Shornecliffe must have seemed a very empty place to Private Dunn after the departure of the 2nd Canadian Division, some twenty-thousand strong, with all its animals, transport, artillery, equipment and medical units. But he was soon to be kept occupied as on September 23 of that 1915 he was *taken on strength* by the 12th Battalion which was now being employed as a reserve unit. He was to serve with it for just over five weeks.

During that interim, Private Dunn contrived to attract the attention of the Battalion authorities as on or about October 11 he was charged with...*not complying with orders*. The authorities responded by awarding him seven days of *Field Punishment Number 2*.

(continued)

On the first day of the month of November, 1915, Private Dunn was *struck off strength* by the 12th Battalion, in bureaucratic preparation for his transfer to the Continent. This came about later that day and during that night and, on the following day, he – and four-hundred forty-nine others from *Shorncliffe* - reported *to duty* at the new Canadian Base Depot at Ruelles, in the vicinity of the French industrial port-city of Le Havre, situated 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)

He was thereupon *taken on strength* – on paper - by his former unit, the 26th Battalion which had left him behind in England, and four days later, on November 6 - on a day on which the Depot reported sending seven-hundred nine re-enforcements to forty-seven different units - was despatched from Le Havre to join his unit in Belgium.

This Private Dunn did two days later again, on November 8, 1915, on a day when the fighting Companies of the 26th Battalion were relieved in the front-line trenches by troops of the 22nd Battalion, and retired to their billets at Scherpenberg.

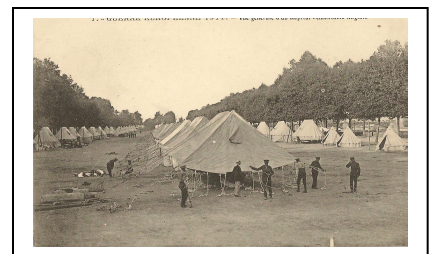
* * * * *

The Battalion now remained withdrawn until November 14 when it once more moved forward and in its turn relieved the 22nd Battalion in front-line and support positions. The tour was to last four days; there was little infantry action to be reported apart from the inevitable patrolling which explored a German crater and some trenches and found nothing in them except water.

There were to be, however, seven casualties during this, Private Dunn's personal baptism of fire: all incurred on November 17 - two dead and five wounded – and all victims of a German artillery barrage.

Having retired once more to Scherpenberg for a further four days, Private Dunn's unit ventured forward to the relief of the 22nd Battalion during a period of fog on the evening of November 22, thus avoiding the attention of the enemy guns. No casualties were reported.

The 26th Battalion War Diary entry for November 23, 1915, then suggests that there were no casualties for that day either. Thus perhaps it was as early as that September 17 that he was wounded – one of the five of that day (see above) - incurring...*gun-shot wounds to the abdomen*. There is no documentation of the first medical treatment that he received, only that he was eventually evacuated from the field to the 8th Casualty Clearing Station at Bailleul.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *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. Other such medical establishments were of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card)

The son of Michael Dunn and of Catherine Dunn (née *Murphy?*) of St. John's, Newfoundland, he was brother to at least James.

Private Dunn was reported by the commanding officer of the 8th Casualty Clearing Station as having *died of wounds* at twenty minutes past four on the afternoon of November 23, 1915. He was buried later on that same day.

George Dunn had enlisted at the *apparent* age of thirty-five years and one month: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, April 3, 1880 (from attestation papers).

Private George Dunn 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).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 25, 2023.