



Private Samuel Fiander (Number 878230) of the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Cape Breton Highlanders), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Lakeside General Protestant Cemetery, North Sydney, Nova Scotia: Grave reference L.103.G.B..

(Right: *The image of the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion cap badge is from the 'Shoulder to Shoulder Collectibles' web-site.*)

(continued)



His occupations prior to military service recorded as both those of *sailor* and *painter*, Samuel Fiander spent only some four years of his early childhood in the Dominion of Newfoundland before emigrating with his parents and three siblings born by that time, to the port and mining-town of North Sydney in the year 1901 (a second source has 1900). There the family was to welcome at least two more children.

His first pay records show that it was in North Sydney – Catherine Street, there in the town having been his address at the time - on March 13 of 1916 that Samuel Fiander enlisted, that being the date on which he was first remunerated for his services to the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Cape Breton Highlanders*), by which unit he had been *taken on strength*, thereupon to be attached to ‘C’ Company.

By April 12 Private Fiander had made his way to the town of Broughton\*, only some twenty kilometres distant to the south of the industrial city of Sydney and the site of the training centre and headquarters for the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion. On that same date underwent a medical examination, a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*. He was then to be attested, his oath being witnessed by a local Justice of the Peace.

*\*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 on it as the company went bankrupt in 1907 and the town was to soon be abandoned. At the outset of the Great War it was taken over by the Canadian Army and, more particularly, by the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Cape Breton Highlanders).*



(Right above: *The image of recruits of the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion on the march in the town of Broughton – the event cited as perhaps taking place in the year 1915 – is from the Cape Breton University Archives.*)

It was then to be only a matter of a further two weeks April 26, before the formalities of his enlistment were officially concluded: it was on that date that the commanding officer of the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Parker-Day declared – on paper – that...*878230 Pte. Samuel Fiander...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

By this time, Private Fiander had already spent those two intervening weeks since his attestation on April 12, undergoing some basic training in the town of Broughton.

However, this posting was not to last much longer than another six weeks. By that time, the authorities had decided to create a *Nova Scotia Highland Brigade*, this to comprise the 185<sup>th</sup>, the 85<sup>th</sup>, the 193<sup>rd</sup> and the 219<sup>th</sup> Battalions of Canadian Infantry. On May 23 of 1915 these four formations were assembled to train together at *Camp Aldershot*, Nova Scotia, where the *Brigade* then spent the entire summer before receiving its colours on September 28, two weeks before its departure for *overseas service*.

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Apart from that summer of 1916 having been a time of training, the period spent at *Aldershot* had also been the occasion for Private Fiander to pen a Will on August 23, a document in which he was to bequeath his all to his mother, Ellen. Some five weeks later again, as of the first day of October, 1916, and just prior to his crossing of the Atlantic, Private Fiander was to allocate a monthly twenty dollars from his pay, also to his mother.

At seven o'clock in the evening of October 11, 1916, the one-thousand thirty-eight officers and *other ranks* of the 185<sup>th</sup> Overseas Battalion embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Olympic* in the harbour at Halifax. Earlier that day the 85<sup>th</sup> and the 188<sup>th</sup> Battalions had gone on board, to be followed on the morrow by the 219<sup>th</sup> and the 193<sup>rd</sup>.

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

On October 13<sup>th</sup> - at about eleven o'clock in the morning - it was the turn of the half-battalion of the 166<sup>th</sup> – five-hundred three *all ranks* - the final unit, to march up the gangways before *Olympic* cast her lines and sailed towards the open sea. For the trans-Atlantic passage she was carrying some six-thousand military personnel.



The vessel arrived in the English west-coast port of Liverpool on October 18, some five days later, and the troops disembarked on the following day. The 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion was thereupon transported by train south-eastwards to *Witley Camp* in the southern reaches of the county of Surrey.

The 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Cape Breton Highlanders*) from then on is documented as having provided re-enforcements for Canadian forces already on the Continent. This was to last until February of 1918 when the remaining personnel of the unit was absorbed into the Canadian 17<sup>th</sup> (*Reserve*) Battalion.

The Cape Breton Battalion's organizers had originally anticipated that it would be sent – in the company of the other three units of the *Nova Scotia Highland Brigade* – into *active service* on the Continent, but this was not to be\*.

*\*Before the end of the Great War, Canada was to have despatched overseas more than two-hundred fifty battalions – although it is true that a number of these units, particularly as the conflict progressed, were below full strength. At the outset, these Overseas Battalions all had presumptions of seeing active service in a theatre of war.*

*However, as it transpired, only some fifty of these formations were ever to be sent across the English Channel to the Western Front. By far the majority remained in the United Kingdom to be used as re-enforcement pools and they were gradually absorbed, particularly after January of 1917, by units that had by then been designated as Canadian Reserve Battalions.*

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By the time of Private Fiander's arrival in England, the Canadian Corps had been involved in the *First Battle of the Somme* for two months during which time it had suffered terrible losses. It was to fill the depleted ranks of those depleted units that three-quarters of the newly-arrived *Nova Scotia Highland Brigade* were to be deployed.



(Right: *Purportedly dead of the Somme awaiting burial – an unidentified photograph*)

This distribution of re-enforcements was, however, to take some time – up until the aforementioned February of 1918, even though a number had already crossed the English Channel by the end of the year, 1916. In the case of Private Fiander, of course, it was never to come about at all.

On March 31 – April 1, 1917, he was admitted into the Military Hospital, *Camp Bramshott*.

Excerpt from Case History dated 1/4/17: *Arrived October 18<sup>th</sup> 1916 – Carried on full duty until the week before Xmas when he was given light duty for a short time – returned to full duty on January 17<sup>th</sup> but was put in quarantine as a mumps contact – and while in quarantine he began to get sick...on April 1<sup>st</sup> was sent to hospital.*

He was promptly diagnosed as suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis, the disease developing with such rapidity that on April 10, only ten days after his admission, a Medical Board categorized him as...*Class 'F': To be invalided to Canada*

He was struck off strength almost immediately by his 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion, on April 12 - to be transferred to the responsibility of the Nova Scotia Regimental Depot also at *Camp Bramshott*. He was to remain, however, receiving care in hospital until May 11 when he was transferred to a hospital ship for transport to Canada.

The ship was His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Letitia* which sailed on the same May 11, 1917, from Liverpool with her complement of returning wounded. She entered the port of Halifax ten days later, on May 21.

(Right: *The image of Letitia is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. The ship was later to run aground in fog on August 1, 1917, at Portuguese Cove in Halifax Harbour. It was to prove impossible to re-float her and she eventually split in two. There was a single fatality, a stoker who drowned while attempting to swim ashore.*)



On the following day again, May 22 – having been once more transferred bureaucratically, on this occasion to the Military Hospital in Halifax - Private Fiander was to be admitted into the Nova Scotia Sanatorium in Kentville. It was there, nine months later, that he was to end his days.

*18/2/18 – reporting on the death of #878230 Pte. Samuel Fiander*

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***This patient was admitted to the Nova Scotia Sanatorium, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1917. His condition was far advanced with extensive cavitation in both lungs. He improved for a time but two weeks ago he began to decline, and in spite of the best medical care he passed away at 10.15 p.m. Feb. 17<sup>th</sup> – 1918.***

**The son of Francis Stephen Fiander, master mariner, and of Ellen (also found as *Helen*) Jane Fiander (née *Harris*) - originally of Coombe's Cove, Fortune Bay, Newfoundland, before North Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia - he was also brother to Winnifred, Kenneth-George, Harold-J., - these born in Newfoundland – and to Cecil-George and Muriel-Florence, born in Nova Scotia\*.**

***\*One of his brothers was to die, as did he, of consumption, and he is also recorded as having a third sister.***

**Samuel Fiander had enlisted at the *apparent* age of nineteen years: date of birth at Coombe's Cove, District of Fortune Bay, Newfoundland, November 24, 1898 (from attestation papers). The Newfoundland Birth Register, however, has the year as 1897.**

**Private Samuel Fiander was eligible for the British War Medal for his overseas service. (He was eligible for it once he left Canada.)**

