

Private Hubert Norman Galpin (Number 878281) of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated in the stone of the Menin Gate, Ypres (today *Ieper*): Panel reference 26-30.

(Right above: *The image of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Nova Scotia Rifles) shoulder flash is from the Wikipedia Web-site.*)

(continued)

His occupations prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman* before that of a *clerk*, Hubert Norman Galpin appears to have left very little information behind him pertaining to his departure from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. All that may be said with any certainty is that: firstly, he was in Sydney Mines, Cape Breton, in March of 1916; and secondly, that he had a post-box number, 348 – the same as that of his mother - in the community of North Sydney by the following month since he recorded it as his address on the day – April 14 – on which he attested in the by-then military town of Broughton\*.

He was also to undergo a medical examination on that same April 14, a check-up which found him...*fit for the Canadian Over Seas Expeditionary Force*. That same report also confirms that he had enlisted (see below) a month earlier.

*\*Broughton had been a 'company town', developed towards the end of 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 soon 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).*

His enlistment had taken place in the community of Sydney Mines in mid-March of 1916 and his first pay records indicate that it was on March 13 that the Canadian Army had begun to remunerate the by-then Private Galpin for his services. The unit by which he had then been *taken on strength* on that same day had been the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Cape Breton Highlanders*) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

April 28 of 1916 was to be the moment on which the formalities of his enlistment were officially concluded. On that date the commanding officer of the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Parker-Day, declared – on paper – that...*878281 Pte Hubert Galpin...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

This final act had also taken place in the community of Broughton where it is likely that Private Galpin had remained since April 14 – or perhaps even since March 13 - to commence his military training.

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

By that time Private Galpin had already brought himself to the attention of the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion authorities by having been *absent without leave*. There appear to be no further details other than that he was to forfeit twenty-two days' pay during the month of September for his troubles .

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Those troubles also included some of a medical nature. From September 22 until October 7, having contracted a venereal problem, he was admitted into the Rockhead Hospital for Infectious Diseases in Halifax. But his release on October 7 still allowed him the time to prepare for departure overseas.

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: *Sister-ship to Britannic – that vessel to be sunk by a mine in the eastern Mediterranean a month later, in November of 1916 – and also to the ill-fated Titanic, HMT Olympic on the right lies at anchor in the company of HM Hospital Ship Aquitania, centre, at Mudros Bay, Island of Lemnos, 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 again. The 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion was thereupon transported south-eastwards to *Witley Camp* in the English county of Surrey.

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

The Battalion's organizers had originally anticipated that the *Cape Breton Highlanders* would be sent – with 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 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 specifically designated as Canadian Reserve Battalions.*

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By the time of Private Galpin'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 horrific losses. It was to fill the depleted ranks of those battered units that three-quarters of newly-arrived *Nova Scotia Highland Brigade* were to be deployed.



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

This distribution of re-enforcements was, however, to take some time, even though a number had already crossed the English Channel by the end of the year, 1916. In the case of Private Galpin, the spring of the following year, 1917, had already arrived before he was ordered to proceed to the Continent.

It was on May 27 that he was *struck off strength* by the 185<sup>th</sup> Battalion to be *taken on strength* on the following day by his new unit, the 25<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*).

At that same time, Private Galpin was to travel to France - likely travelling on the night of May 27-28 via the English south-coast port of Southampton and the French industrial city of Le Havre on the estuary of the River Seine. He is then documented as having reported on that May 28 to a Canadian Infantry Base Depot - surely the 2<sup>nd</sup> as his unit was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division - in the vicinity of the coastal town of Étapes\*. There he was to remain for the next eighteen days.



*\*However, the date of arrival of nine-hundred fifty-four re-enforcements from England, according to the Base Diary, was May 29. There were none recorded for the previous day.*

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

When exactly Private Galpin was despatched to join the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion is not documented on his *active service* files – at that time several hundred men were being despatched for days on end. However, they *do* record that he reported *to duty* with his new unit on June 16, 1917. On the other hand, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diarist instead cites the arrival of a draft of one-hundred forty-seven re-enforcements as having occurred on June 15, the day before, at a time when the unit was serving in the rear area, in the vicinity of the community of Gouy-Servins.

\* \* \* \* \*

The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force had already been serving in France and Belgium for some twenty-one months by the time of Private Mansfield's appearance, since mid-September of the year 1915.

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The Battalion was a component of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, itself an element of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, and it had been in service on the Continent continuously since its arrival there.

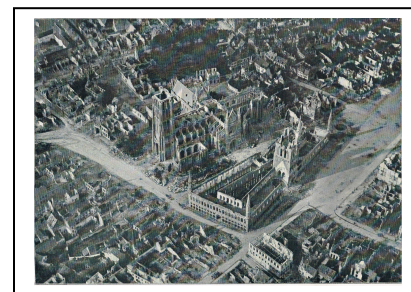
Only days after having passed through the port of Folkestone and its French counterpart, Boulogne, on September 22, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was taking over trenches from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of *The King's Own* in the *Kingdom of Belgium*.

(Right: *While the caption reads that these troops moving towards the forward area are 'English', this could be any unit in British uniform – including Empire (Commonwealth) units. This is early in the war as there is no sign of a steel helmet. – from a vintage post-card*)



This was in the areas forward from the communities of Locre and Kemmel, in that small part of the country which had not by then been occupied by the Germans, and to the south and south-west of the already-battered medieval city of Ypres.

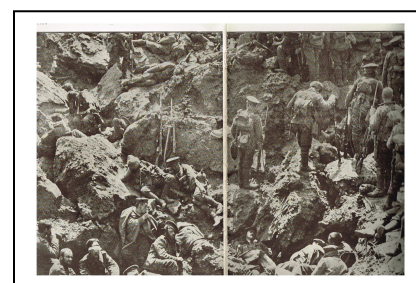
(Right: *A Belgian aerial photograph showing the devastation of Ypres as early as 1915 – the city is described as 'morte' (dead) – from Illustration*)



The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to remain in these sectors until August of the following year, 1916.

In early April of 1916, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division had undergone its baptism of fire in a major infantry action. It was at a place named St-Éloi where, at the end of March, on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the British had detonated a series of mines beneath the German lines and then had followed up with an infantry attack. The newly-arrived Canadian formation had been ordered to follow up on the presumed British success, to hold and consolidate the newly-won territory.

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



Towards the end of that confrontation, on April 13-14, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had relieved another Canadian unit in craters and in new trenches, and subsequently had incurred a total of some eighty-five casualties, a greater toll than the unit had known on any single occasion up until that date.

(Right above: *The occupation of a crater in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – perhaps in the St-Éloi Sector – from Illustration*)

(continued)

Six weeks later, in early June, the Battalion had then been involved in the fighting in the area the village of Hooge, of *Mount Sorrel*, *Sanctuary Wood*, *Hill 60*, *Railway Dugouts* and *Maple Copse*, in the so-called *Ypres Salient* and just to the south-east of the city of Ypres.



(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*)

The Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> Division had been the main recipient of the enemy's offensive thrust but the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division had played a role sufficiently important for the name *Mount Sorrel* to become the first battle-honour won by the Nova Scotia unit during the Great War.

(Right: *Hill 60 as it remains a century after the events of 1916 and 1917 in the area of Mount Sorrel, the village of Hooge, Sanctuary Wood, Railway Dugouts and Maple Copse: It is kept in a preserved state – subject to the whims of Mother Nature – by the Belgian Government. – photograph from 2014*)



(Right below: *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*)



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

From the middle of June up until August of 1916, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been in reserve well to the rear, so well to the rear, in fact, that it had been deemed safe enough for His Majesty the King and his son the Prince of Wales to pay a visit on August 14.

Some two weeks later, on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the unit was withdrawn into northern France to the vicinity of Steenvoorde and to the village of Moule.

The following week at Moule had been spent in becoming familiar with the British Lee-Enfield Mark III rifle which was replacing the Canadian-made Ross rifle, and also in training for a Canadian role in the British summer campaign of that 1916, an offensive which up until then had not been proceeding exactly according to plan.



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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, an assault which was to cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the short span of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

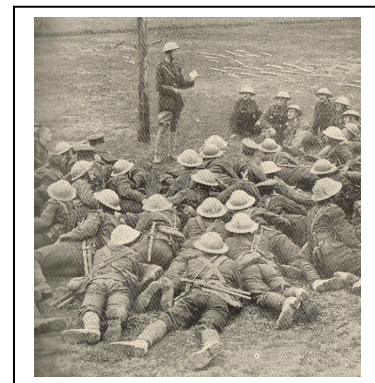
On that first day of *First Somme*, all but two small units of the attacking divisions had been troops from the British Isles, those exceptions being the two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and the eight-hundred personnel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment which was to lose so heavily on that July 1 at a place called 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 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 above: *The Canadian Memorial which stands to the side of the Albert-Bapaume Road near the village of Courcelette – photograph from 2015*)

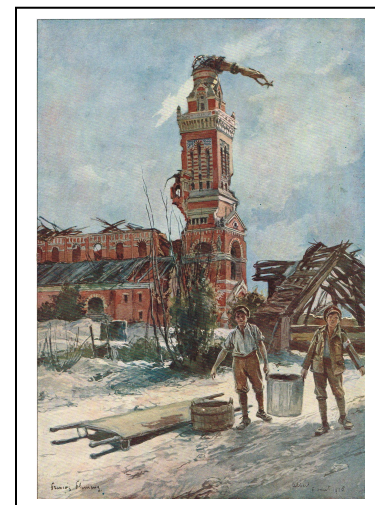
(Right: *An image purporting to be that of a Canadian officer giving instructions to those under his command prior to the attack at Flers-Courcelette (see below), September 1916 – from *The War Illustrated**)



Meanwhile, on the evening of September 10, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had arrived at the large military camp which had been established at the *Brickfields (La Briqueterie)* in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert.

On September 14 the Battalion had been ordered forward into dug-outs in assembly areas. On the next morning again, September 15, the Canadians were to be going to the attack.

(Right: *Canadian soldiers working, carrying water in the centre of Albert, the town's already-damaged basilica prominent in the background – from *Illustration**)



Excerpt from the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for September 15, 1916: *5<sup>th</sup> Brigade attacked and captured the Town of Courcelette... the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved forward as though on General Inspection the young soldiers behaving like veterans, going through very heavy artillery barrage without a quiver...*

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Of the six-hundred ninety personnel which went over *the top* on the day of the assault, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diarist was to record thirty-six dead, one-hundred ninety-one wounded and seventy-seven as *missing in action*\*.

*\*It seems that some of the missing may have soon returned to duty since a later War Diary entry records two-hundred fifty-eight casualties all told.*

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



On October 1 the Battalion – its operational strength by then apparently reduced to two-hundred (sic) all ranks and twelve machine-guns – *received orders to attack and capture “at all costs” enemy trenched known as KENORA and REGINA... “B”, “C” and “D” Companies... were to proceed over KENORA up to REGINA, which they did, but by the time they had got to the wire the casualties had been so heavy that only one officer was left... and about thirty men...*



The attack was a failure and the survivors had been obliged to fall back to *Kenora Trench*. Total casualties during the action had been a further one-hundred twelve.

(Right: *Ninety-eight years later on, the land on which the action was fought, as seen from Regina Trench Cemetery – photograph from 2014*)

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

On the night of October 1-2 the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had retired from the battle - and from the area of - *the Somme* and made its way westwards and then northwards. It had subsequently passed to the west of the battered city of Arras and beyond, to the region of the mining centre of Lens. There the unit was to remain for the following six months, in the area and in the trenches of places such as Bully-Grenay, Angres and Bruay.



(Right: *The remnants of the Grande Place (Grand’Place) in Arras which had already been steadily bombarded for two years by the end of the year 1916 – from Illustration*)



That winter of 1916-1917 was to be one of relative calm, allowing the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion – and many others - to return to the everyday rigours and routines of trench warfare\*; after *the Somme* it had perhaps been a welcome respite.

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There was to be little if any concerted infantry activity apart from the constant patrolling and the occasional raids by both sides but a constant flow of casualties would be ensured due mostly to the enemy's guns and to his snipers.

The medical facilities during this period were kept much more busy by cases of sickness and particularly dental problems than by the numbers of wounded in need of treatment.

(Right: A detachment of Canadian troops going up to the forward area during the winter of 1916-1917 – 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 the year 1916, by that time equipped with steel helmets and the less visible, British-made Lee-Enfield rifles – from Illustration)

Towards the end of the month of March, on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been withdrawn well to the rear, to Maisnil-Bouche, there to undergo intensive training. The exercises were to last until, and also to include, April 7, only two days following which that training was to become the real thing. On the final five days, April 2-7, the unit had been sent to become familiar with ground that had been re-arranged so as to resemble the terrain which was to be attacked.

On April 8... *Battalion less 1 platoon per company moved from MAISNIL BOUCHE to concentration area at BOIS DES ALLEUX. In the evening the Battalion moved up to its position...via cross country route...* (25<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary). It apparently was not to pass via those well-documented tunnels, kilometres of which had been excavated for reasons of both surprise and safety.

On April 9 in that spring 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.

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In terms of the count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, one of the few positive episodes having been the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.



While the British campaign had proved an overall disappointment, the French offensive of *le Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

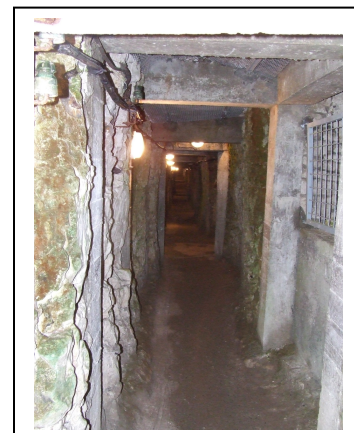
(Right above: *The Canadian National Memorial which, since 1936, has stood on Vimy Ridge* – photograph from 2010)

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

The Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division had not been responsible for the taking of *Vimy Ridge* itself, but for the clearing of the community of *Thélus*, further down the southern slope and therefore on the right-hand side of the attack.

The Battalion's objectives were apparently soon to be captured and much of the remainder of the day had been spent in consolidating these newly-won positions.

(Right: *One of the few remaining galleries – Grange Tunnel - 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*)



The Germans, having lost *Vimy Ridge* and the advantages of the high ground, had retreated some three kilometres to prepared positions in front of the Canadians whose further offensives were to be less successful than that of Easter Monday; while some progress at times was to be made – at *Arleux-en-Gohelle*, for example - German counter-attacks had also re-claimed ground from the British and Canadian troops – as at *Fresnoy* in early May.

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(Right: *Canadians under shell-fire occupying the third line of trenches on Vimy Ridge: the fighting of the next few days was to be fought under the same conditions. – from Illustration*)



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



There had been, on those first days of April 9 and 10, the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted, and highly unlikely, *breakthrough* – but such a follow-up of the previous day’s success had proved to be logistically impossible, the weather having prevented any swift movement of guns and material.

Thus the Germans had been gifted the time to close the breach and the conflict once more had reverted to one of inertia.

Nor was the remainder of the relatively short, five-week long, *Battle of Arras* to be fought in the manner of the first two days and, by the end of those five weeks, little else had changed and the Germans had recovered from the initial Canadian success. At the time that the *Battle of Arras* had officially drawn to its conclusion, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been in reserve, resting and training – if that is not a contradiction – in the vicinity of the community of Gouy-Servins, to the west of the city of Lens.

And it was to be a month later, on June 15-16, while the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been serving in the area of Gouy-Servins, that the re-enforcement draft of Private Mansfield from Étaples would report *to duty*.

(Right: *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: the head-bands - called ‘tumps’ - was an idea which had been adopted from the North American aboriginal peoples – from Le Miroir*)



It was then to be a further seventeen or so days before the newcomers were to experience the realities of the forward area and front line.

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Excerpts from 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion War diaries of July 2 and 3, 1917: *Battalion at BOUVIGNY HUTS. Preparations to relieve 46<sup>th</sup> British Division, 138<sup>th</sup>. and 137<sup>th</sup>. British Brigades, 1/5 Battalion Leicesters and 1/4 Battalion Leicesters. Casualties, 1 Other Rank killed, 9 Other Ranks wounded.*

*Relief completed about 2 a.m. – No further casualties were to be documented for the remainder of the day. Thus began Private Galpin’s first visit to the sharp end of the stick.*

The British High Command had by that time had long before decided to undertake a summer offensive in the *Ypres Salient*, Belgium. Thus, in order to divert German attention – and also his reserves - from this area, it had ordered other operations as well to take place in the sectors of the front running north-south down 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*)

One of the primary objectives was to be *Hill 70* in the outskirts of the mining centre of Lens.

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



Those expecting *Hill 70* to be a precipitous and ominous elevation are to be surprised. It is hardly prominent in a countryside that is already flat, the highest points being the summits of slag heaps which date from the mining era of yesteryear. Yet *Hill 70* was high enough to be considered - by the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie – to be the key feature in the area, its capture more important than the city of Lens itself.

(Right: *This gentle slope rising to the left is, in fact, Hill 70. A monument to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Infantry stands nearby in tribute. – photograph from 1914*)



Objectives had been limited and had for the most part been achieved by the end of the day of the attack, August 15. Due to the dominance of *Hill 70* over the entire area, it had been expected that the Germans would endeavour to retrieve it and so it had proved; on the 16<sup>th</sup> several strong counter-attacks had been launched against the Canadian positions, positions which by this time had been transformed into defensive strong-points.

These defences had held and the Canadian artillery, by then employing newly-developed procedures, had inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. *Hill 70* remained in Canadian hands.



(Right above: *Canadian troops in the vicinity of Hill 70 a short time after its capture by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisions – from Le Miroir*)

Of course, the Germans were not the only ones to have incurred casualties: by the time that the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion retired on August 17, the unit had recorded some one-hundred fifty *killed, wounded and missing in action*, of which an estimated fifty-three of the deaths had apparently been incurred on the first day of the operation, August 15.



(Right above: *The spoils of war: Canadian officers and men on some of the terrain on which they had recently fought – and had captured – from Le Miroir*)

(Right: A Canadian 220 mm siege gun, here under camouflage nets in the Lens Sector, being prepared for action – from *Le Miroir*)

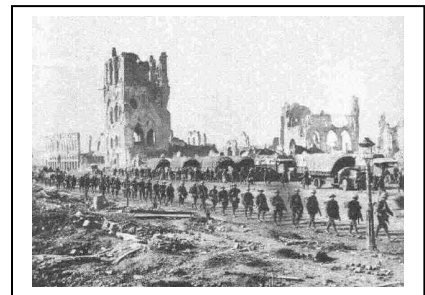


The Battalion was nevertheless soon back in the forward area, to be relieved on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month by which time a further fifty *killed, wounded and missing* had been added to the preceding numbers.

After weeks of relatively little infantry activity during the early period of that summer of 1917, this attack on August 15 in the area of *Hill 70* and the city of *Lens* had been intended to be the precursor of weeks of an entire campaign spear-headed by the Canadians.

However, the British offensive further to the north was proceeding less well than intended and the Canadians were to be needed there. Activities in the *Lens Sector* were suspended in early September and for a short period, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to revert to the daily grind of life in the trenches.

It was not until the final weeks of October that the Canadians were to become embroiled in the offensive to the north-east of Ypres. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign has come to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was – at least ostensibly - one of the British Army's objectives.



(Right: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres in front of the Cloth Hall on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

From the time that the Canadians entered the fray, it was they who were to shoulder a great deal of the burden. From the week of October 26 until November 3 it was to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions which spearheaded the assault, with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions in reserve. From November 5 until the official end of the affair the reverse was true with troops of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division finally entering the remnants of the village of *Passchendaele* itself.



*(Preceding page: An unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield during the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration)*

The strength of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion on that November 5 was reported as being twenty-one officers and five-hundred seventy-six other ranks, once again just over fifty per cent of regulation battalion numbers.

*(Right above: Canadian troops performing their ablutions in the water collecting in a shell hole at some time during the last month of Passchendaele – from Le Miroir)*

*(Right: The Canadian Memorial which today stands on Passchendaele Ridge in the outskirts of the re-constructed village – photograph from 2015)*

During the three days that they were to spend in the forward area during this period, the casualties sustained by the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion were to be, by comparison to those of other units, fairly light. November 6 and 7 had seen an attack undertaken by the 26<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Canadian Battalions but Private Galpin's unit had remained in reserve and had suffered mainly from the attentions of the enemy guns – until the late afternoon of November 8.

*(Right: The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1916, after two years of war – from Illustration)*

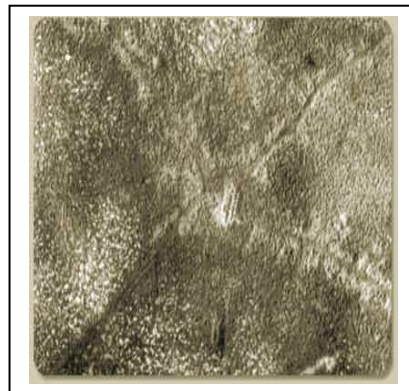
Excerpt from the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for November 7 and 8 of 1917: *At 5.30 p.m. the Battalion had moved up to the Front Line...relieving 26<sup>th</sup> Bn. in Front Line and one Company of 24<sup>th</sup> Bn. in support...Relief was complete by 1.06 a.m...*

*(Right: The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1917, after the battle of that name – from Illustration)*

*November 8<sup>th</sup>. Casualties very slight. R(egimental) S(ergeant) M(ajor)...killed. 3 O.R. killed – 2 wounded and 1 missing. Enemy shelled supports very heavily, and also in front and in rear of Front Line but...his shelling did not do a great deal of damage. "C" Company in support suffered heavily. Line taken over was simply a series of disconnected posts in shell holes, but men worked steadily, and by night the whole line was pretty well connected up...*

In the late evening of November 8 the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was withdrawn from the area of the front line, to the westward of Ypres itself. The toll for that final action had been seventeen *killed in action*, sixty-seven *wounded* and six *missing in action*.

(continued)



The son of William Galpin (former fisherman, deceased in North Sydney, Cape Breton, on June 11, 1914) and of Sarah Jane Galpin\* (née *Collier*) – to whom as of February 1, 1917, he had allotted a monthly twenty dollars from his pay, and to whom on April 19, 1917, he had also willed his all - of Codroy, District of St. George, Newfoundland, he was also brother to Elizabeth-Anne, Florence-Janet, George, Aaron, James-Albert, William-Morgan, Thomas Israel, Ernest-Walter – as well as to Joseph, John and Manuel, all three of whom having died at birth.

*\*By 1920 her address was documented as 336, 21<sup>st</sup> Street, North Vancouver, British Columbia.*

Private Galpin was reported as having been *killed in action* at *Passchendaele* during the fighting of November 8, 1917.

Hubert Norman Galpin had enlisted at the apparent age of nineteen years: date of birth at Codroy, Newfoundland, October 21, 1896\*.

*\*Much of the above family information is to be found on the 'Find a Grave Memorial Page' web-site.*

Private Hubert Norman Galpin 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 – January 25, 2023.