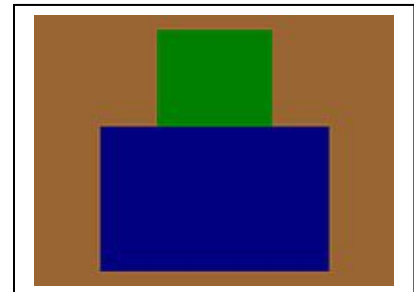




Private James Gould (Number 471002) of the 21st Battalion (Eastern Ontario), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Ridge Wood Cemetery: Grave reference 1.Q.1..

(Right: The image of the shoulder-flash of the 21st Battalion (Eastern Ontario) is from the Wikipedia Web-site.)

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *sailor*, James Gould appears to have left little information behind him *a propos* his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. There was a young man corresponding to his description who was registered on the passenger list of the SS *Bruce* for the crossing of April 27, 1913, from Port aux Basques to North Sydney, but that is hardly sufficient for a positive identification.

Although the paper does not record the venue of the service rendered, a pay record shows a Sergeant J. Gould with an Army Detaining Force (prison-keeper?) during the entire month of August, 1915, and for twenty-seven of the thirty days of September whereupon he was then transferred to the 64th Battalion. This paper is to be found in Private Gould's file; however, the identification number used is '18' which appears nowhere else among his personal records.

All that may be said with any certainty is that James Gould was present in the capital city of Halifax, during a part of the month of January of 1916, for that was where and when he enlisted according to a pay-record, to a medical report and to his attestation papers.

It is his first pay-sheet – this showing Regimental Number 471002 - that documents January 28 of 1916 as the first day on which the Canadian Army began to remunerate him for his services. His first medical record then cites Halifax as the venue of his enlistment on the same day. It also proclaims him as being...*fit for the Canadian Over Seas Expeditionary Force*.

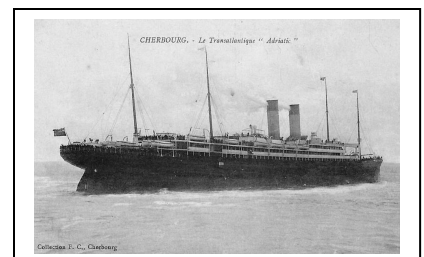
It was also on that January 28 that Private Gould was attested and that the formalities of his enlistment were brought to a conclusion by the Commanding Officer of the 64th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel H. Montgomery Campbell, when he declared - on paper – that...*James Gould...Having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation*.

Although Private Gould had stated on his attestation papers that he was not married, it was not to be long after that January 28, 1916, that this matter was rectified. Ten days later, on February 7, he was joined in matrimony to Mademoiselle Évangeline Fougère in Halifax.

The Headquarters of the 64th Battalion were located in the New Brunswick town of Sussex and it was there that Private Gould's Battalion was apparently to *complete* his training with the 64th Battalion, at the military complex of *Camp Sussex*. However it would appear that for a number of the recruits – Private Gould perhaps among them - Halifax was where some of that preparation prior to departure for overseas was to be undertaken.

After Private Gould's enlistment only two months were then to pass before he and his unit embarked on March 31 of 1916 onto the requisitioned *White Star* liner *Adriatic* in the harbour at Halifax - for passage overseas to the United Kingdom.

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



(continued)

The officers and *other ranks* of the 64th Battalion were not the only military passengers on the vessel: the 73rd Battalion of Canadian Infantry, an unidentified Draft of the Coburg Heavy Battery and the 8th Canadian Field Ambulance – this latter undertaking the ship’s medical services during the crossing – were to be Private Gould’s fellow travellers, almost twenty-five hundred souls all told.

Adriatic sailed on April 1, one of a convoy of three troop transports – the others also ocean-liners by that time in the service of the King: *Baltic* and *Empress of Britain* – and escorted by the elderly cruiser *Carnarvon*.

The vessel docked in the English west-coast port of Liverpool at three o’clock in the afternoon of April 9. While some of *Adriatic*’s passenger-personnel – likely the artillery and medical units - were sent elsewhere, the 64th Battalion immediately left by train for the Canadian military establishment of *Camp Bramshott* – named for a nearby village - in the southern county of Hampshire.

It was now not to be long before the 64th Battalion ceased to exist. Despite the presumed aspirations of its personnel, it was not to proceed to the Continent to *active service*, but was instead to act as a reserve pool for other units already there. Nor, apparently, was *this* role to last for long as, by mid-July, most of its soldiery had been transferred elsewhere. The Battalion continued to function in a different capacity in the United Kingdom but only for another single year before it was disbanded*.

**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 aspirations 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.

On July 6 of 1916, Private Gould was transferred to the 40th Canadian (Reserve) Battalion based at, *Cæsar’s Camp, Shorncliffe* – just south of the Dover Straits and in the vicinity of the harbour and town of Folkestone in the county of Kent. There he was to prepare for a posting to *active service* on the Continent in the near future.



In fact, that *near future* was to be only seven days away.

(Right above: *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*)

(continued)

On the night of July 13-14, having been *taken on strength* – on paper – by the 21st Battalion (*Eastern Ontario*), Private Gould crossed the English Channel, likely from nearby Folkestone to Boulogne – although this is not confirmed - on the French coast, some two hours' sailing-time away.



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



From the ship on which he had taken passage, Private Gould was transported to the Canadian General Base Depot in the vicinity of the French industrial port-city of Le Havre on the estuary of the River Seine. Having arrived there on the same July 14 – one of seventy-six *other ranks* to report from England on that date - he was then to remain at the Base Depot for some two weeks awaiting further orders.

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



On July 30, one-hundred seventy-four re-enforcements – Private Gould among that number - were despatched from the Depot to various units. Three days later – although the 21st Battalion War Diary appears to make no mention of the event – he reported *to duty* to his new unit at a time when the Battalion had withdrawn to *Chippewa Camp*, Belgium, in the vicinity of the community of La Clytte.

* * * * *

The 21st Battalion (*Eastern Ontario*) had been on the Continent since September 15 of 1915, as a component of the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself an element of the 2nd Canadian Division. Having passed through Folkestone and the French port of Boulogne, the Battalion had immediately been posted to Flanders, southern Belgium, where it had served in a sector to the south of the city of Ypres (today Ieper).

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



During the succeeding months the 21st Battalion followed the routine of life in the trenches, an existence which was divided into tours in the front lines followed by - or preceded by – time in the support lines just behind the front, and postings to the various reserve camps.

The latter occasions were opportunities for training, lectures, inspections by the upper echelons – usually the further away from the front, the more important the visitor – route marches, sports, with perhaps the odd entertainment organized by the troops themselves.

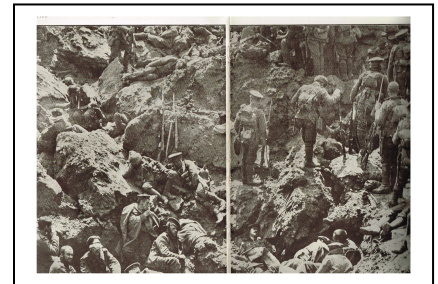
Of course, things were never quite as neat and tidy as set out in the preceding format and troops could find themselves in a certain position at times for weeks on end.

(Right: 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 the less-obvious British-made Lee-Enfield rifles – from Illustration)



In the forward areas life was monotonous, if at times inevitably dangerous: there were parties of the construction, wiring and carrying variety. Patrolling and raids on a local scale were often the norm, as were rat-catching and lice hunts. Most casualties – discounting those due to disease - were caused by enemy artillery - occasionally one's own – although snipers were also a constant danger.

Thus were spent the months of the late autumn and winter of 1915-1916. On March 27, however, the British attacked the German positions near the village of St-Éloi after having detonated a series of a half-a-dozen mines under the enemy positions. The craters created by the explosions rendered the terrain unrecognizable and impassable – the British attackers struggled with the ground, the weather and the Germans for six days before being relieved by the Canadian 2nd Division.



(Right above: A mine crater purportedly in the British sector in the area of St-Éloi: they proved in many cases to be obstacles to the operations which they were intended to facilitate. – from Illustration)

The Canadian newcomers fared no better than had the British: for three days they stood in cold water and fought, all the time raked by the German artillery. On April 6 the enemy attacked and re-took most of the little ground that had been captured. The fighting continued in the same manner for the next eleven days – the German artillery growing ever stronger all the time – until it was decided that further attacks would only result in more of the same. The action came to an official end on April 17, by which time the Canadian 2nd Division had incurred some fifteen-hundred casualties.

During this confrontation, on April 8, the 21st Battalion had moved into the area of Crater Number 2 and the old German front line and had attempted to bomb (*grenade*) the then-current enemy positions: the effort had been futile. A bayonet party had been no more successful and the casualty count was thirty-six *killed* and *wounded*. Trying to establish a post in Number 2 Crater on the next day only added a further twenty-nine to the total.

(continued)

After a further day the unit had been relieved and had retired behind the lines; for the personnel of the 21st Battalion, the *Action at the St-Éloi Craters* was over. Nine days later again, at four o'clock in the morning of April 20, it relieved the 31st Battalion in the line near Voormezele.

Only some six weeks later, from June 2 to 14, it was to be the turn of the Canadians of the Canadian 3rd Division* - it having been posted to the lethal *Ypres Salient* – to be engaged in the desperate fighting at, and in the vicinity of, *Mount Sorrel*. Units other than those of the 3rd Division were also to play a role also as the situation became at times critical; however, judging from the entries of that period drawn from the 21st Battalion War Diary, this unit would not be one of them.

**The Canadian 3rd Division had officially come into being at mid-night of December 31, 1915, and January 1 of 1916. However, unlike its two predecessors, it had been formed on the Continent, some of its units having already been on active service there for months. Others were not to arrive until the early weeks of 1916, thus it was not until March of that year that the Division had been capable of assuming responsibility for any sector. When this moment had eventually arrived, the Division had been thrust into the south-eastern area of the Ypres Salient.*



(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*)



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

After the altercation at Mount Sorrel the days subsequent saw the gradual diminishing of infantry action in the Canadian sectors*. The War Diary reports written at the end of June and during the month of July document mainly two things: training and the German artillery. The latter is perhaps hardly surprising as historians tend to agree that by far the majority of *Great War* casualties were due to gun-fire – mostly that of the enemy.

**By the time of the Mount Sorrel episode, the Canadian Corps was holding three adjacent sectors, two in the Salient itself – the Salient being the semi-circular bulge surrounding the eastern half of the city of Ypres – and the third being that part of the line held by the 2nd Canadian Division, one of the sectors leading south towards the Franco-Belgian frontier.*

It was during this reportedly quiet period – everything is relative, of course – that Private Gould reported with his re-enforcement draft to duty with the 21st Battalion (Eastern Ontario) to *Chippewa Camp* on August 2, 1916.

* * * * *

(continued)

(Right below: *Chippewa Camp* was established in the vicinity of the community of La Clytte some eight kilometres to the south-west of Ypres. Almost eleven-hundred dead of the Great War today lie within its bounds, two-hundred thirty-eight of whom remain unidentified. – photograph from 2017)

The first three days of Private Gould's *active service* with the 21st Battalion began with six days of training, with route marches and with inspections. It was not until the evening of August 8 that the unit moved forward to relieve the 26th Battalion in the trenches at the front. From then until August 12, activity was minimal – artillery fire and patrols – but little else; also minimal was the number of casualties: seven *wounded* and two *shell-shocked* recorded by the War Diarist.



The War Diary entry for that August 12 differs little from the days preceding: *Our Artillery carried out a demonstration of Barrage firing on the Enemy Trenches opposite...* Other than that, it refers to Appendices which are not available.

A Casualty Report simply documents: *“Killed in Action” – Trenches in vicinity of St. Eloi*

The son of William Gould, fisherman, and of Mary Gould, of Flower's Cove, Newfoundland, he was also husband to Évangeline* (see further above) to whom on April 1, 1916, he had allocated a monthly twenty dollars from his pay before, one month later, amending the sum to twenty-four dollars. On April 26, having arrived in England, he penned his Will in which he left his everything also to his wife.

**She later re-married, on January 1, 1920, on this second occasion to John Walter Harding, and went to reside at Arichat in the county of Richmond, Nova Scotia.*

James Gould had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-two years: date of birth in Flower's Cove, Newfoundland, June 3, 1893 (from attestation papers).

Private James Gould 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. Last updated – January 25, 2023.