



Private Walter Greeley (Number 3080612) of the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Canadian Grenadier Guards), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Dury Mill Cemetery: Grave reference II.C.28.

(Right: The image of the Canadian Grenadier Guards cap badge – and of its British counterpart – is from the Regimental Rogue website.)

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a labourer, Walter Greeley\* was not to *volunteer* for the Canadian Army, although it must be said that it is not known whether he would have done so or not if the Canadian Military Act – in other words, conscription - had not been passed in August of 1917.

*\*It may be that he was the young man, a W. Greeley, recorded in the ship's passenger list of March 25, 1916, the date on which the SS Kyle crossed the Cabot Strait from Port aux Basques in the Dominion of Newfoundland to North Sydney in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. He was from there apparently to travel by train to Montreal, there likely to seek work as a labourer. However, to date, no confirmation of this has been found.*

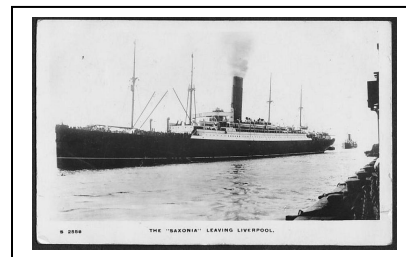
Walter Greeley, Military Service Act No. 40860 DR, presented himself in Montreal for a medical examination on January 3 of 1918. He was immediately passed as *fit for service* and was attested on the same day. He was subsequently posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Depot Battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Quebec Regiment.

Since the task of the Depot Battalions was to instil only a minimum of training and discipline in its incoming recruits before despatching them to the Canadian Reserve Battalions in the United Kingdom to complete the job, it is not surprising that Private Greeley was to spend only some seven weeks in uniform in Canada before being ordered overseas.

A few moments of that time were employed, on January 9, in writing a will in which he was to bequeath his all to his mother, Martha. She and Private Greeley's father, Thomas, were living at the time at 1206 Gertrude Street, Verdun, Québec, the same address that Walter Greeley in his attestation papers had recorded as being *his* place of residence.

Then on February 6, for some undocumented reason – perhaps the threat of the Spanish 'flu epidemic had something to do with it, or maybe it was simply for vaccinations – he was once more examined medically. The results, if any, were presumably negative as, two weeks later, he was to be departing from Canada.

His documents show that Private Greeley was to travel for *overseas service* to the United Kingdom on board His Majesty's Transport *Saxonia*. Although the vessel did not sail until February 21, Private Greeley's 1<sup>st</sup> Quebec Regiment Draft – perhaps the 5<sup>th</sup> – having travelled from Montreal to Halifax\*, boarded the ship on the 18<sup>th</sup> along with a number of other units, the only one identifiable being *Part 1* of the 249<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion\*\*.



*\*At that time of year the St. Lawrence was, of course, un-navigable.*

*\*\*So numerous were the units to travel on that February 21, 1918, that several ships were surely involved and, given that the voyage took almost two weeks, they perhaps travelled in convoy.*

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(Preceding page: *The photograph of 'the Saxonia leaving Liverpool' is from the Old Ship Photo Galleries web-site.*)

*Saxonia* docked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool on March 3, 1918. Upon disembarkation, the 1<sup>st</sup> Quebec Regiment Draft was transported to the southern county of Hampshire, to the large Canadian military establishment in the vicinity of the villages of Bramshott and Liphook. There, it is to be supposed, the new arrivals were to undergo the short, regulation period of quarantine – but not before they had been transferred to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Canadian (Reserve) Battalion on March 5.



(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*)

With the 23<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion, Private Greeley finished the minimum fourteen weeks of basic training which then found him suitable for *active service* on the Continent. On June 20-21 he was one among a draft transferred on paper to the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Canadian Grenadier Guards*) already serving on the Western Front.

At the same time he was transferred by ship – likely through the English port of Southampton and Le Havre, France, from where the draft was transported to the Canadian Infantry Base Depot, by that time established in the vicinity of the coastal town of Étapes. This came to pass on June 22, Private Greeley being one of the two-hundred twenty-seven arrivals to report there on that day.



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

There he was to remain for a further three weeks in the encampment, one of - at the time - approximately two-thousand five-hundred troops, all awaiting their eventual despatch. Private Greeley's turn came on July 14 when eleven-hundred fifty-one were sent on their way to the nearby Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp where the waiting was to begin once more. He was not to move from there for another twenty-three days, not until August 6, when a detachment of seventy *other ranks* was despatched to the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

It seems likely that at least some of the route was travelled on foot as it was not for another six days – seven, according to the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary – that Private Greeley and his comrades-in-arms reported *to duty*. The new arrivals were immediately attached to the Battalion's four fighting companies to bring them up to equal strength. Since the beginning of the *Battle of Amiens* on August 8 the unit had been on the offensive; for the moment it was resting - but on August 15 the advance was expected to resume.

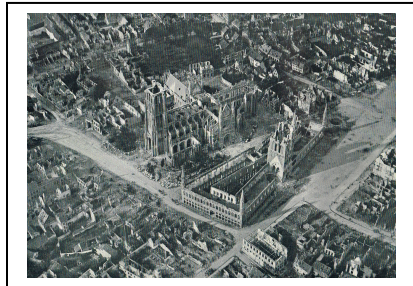
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The 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Canadian Grenadier Guards*) was an element of the 11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself a component of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division, the last such Canadian formation to be despatched to *active service* on the Western Front during the Great War\*.

*\*There was also a Canadian 5<sup>th</sup> Division but, once having been formed, it remained in the United Kingdom for the duration of the Great War.*

The 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion had arrived in France some twenty-three months before Private Greeley, on September 12 of 1916, landing in the French port-city of Le Havre. Three days later it had been on its way north, to the area of the Franco-Belgian frontier and then beyond, to serve for not quite three weeks in a sector between that border and the remnants of the medieval city of Ypres (today *Ieper*) itself.



(Right above: *An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ypres - which shows the shell of the medieval city, an image entitled Ypres-la-Morte (Ypres the Dead) – By the end of the conflict there was little left standing. – from Illustration*)

On October 3, 1916, after days of training in the rear area, the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been ordered by the British High Command to move south, to the area of *the Somme*, where the wretched British summer offensive had by now become a campaign of the autumn as well. The unit arrived in the area of the provincial town of Albert a week later.



Meanwhile, by September of 1916, at the beginning of which the first Canadian troops had made their appearance in that theatre of the War, 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 space of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

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

On that first day of *1<sup>st</sup> 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 day at Beaumont-Hamel.



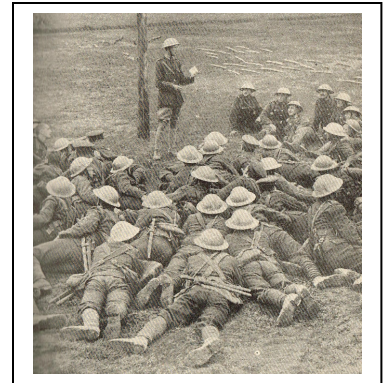
(Right above: *The Canadian Memorial which stands to the side of the Albert-Bapaume Road near the village of Courcelette – photograph from 2015*)

(continued)

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 had entered the fray on August 30 to become part of a third general offensive.

The Canadians' first major collective contribution was to be in the area of the two villages of Flers and Courcellette, a confrontation which was to occur some seven weeks before the arrival of the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion on the scene.

(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 (see below), September 1916. – from The War Illustrated*)



The *Canadian Grenadiers* began their service in the trenches on October 17, but it was not until six minutes past mid-day on October 21 that the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion put it an attack and assisted in the capture of the *Regina Trench* strong-point, an objective up to then which had previously proved to be impregnable\*.

*\*Regina Trench* was subsequently re-taken by the Germans and held for a further three weeks (see below).

When it was subsequently withdrawn, the Battalion apparently remained in the area of Pozières until October 30 when it moved into billets, further to the rear and in the town of Albert itself.



In November the unit had moved back into the vicinity of *Regina Trench* on two further occasions: the first was with little incident; but during the second tour, on November 18, the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been part of a further attack. *Regina Trench* having by that time been definitively captured, the objective on this date was to occupy a number of adjacent German positions. The operation was only partially successful and the casualties numerous: the unit had incurred a total of two-hundred thirty-two either *killed in action*, *wounded* or *missing in action*.



(Right above and centre right: *Some of the remnants of the village of Pozières as it was after the Great War, in 1919. The Australian War Memorial may be seen in both images. – colour photograph from 2016*)

(Right: *Regina Trench Cemetery and some of the ground surrounding it which was finally wrested from the Germans by Canadian troops during the second week of November of 1916 – photograph from 2014*)



Relieved on the day following the attack, on November 22 the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion had begun to march away from *the Somme*. By December 4 the unit had marched in a semi-circle – to the west and then to the north – as far as the area of Fréwillers, a community twenty-five kilometres to the north-west of the already-battered city of Arras.

From that time until the last week in March of the following year, 1917, the unit – as with most other Canadian units at that time – was to remain posted in the sectors of the line between Béthune in the north and Arras in the south. There, during that winter of 1916-1917, they had settled into the daily routines and rigours of life in the trenches\*.



*(Right above: A detachment of Canadian troops going forward 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 1916, only months earlier having been equipped with those steel helmets and, less visible, British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III Rifles – from Illustration)*

On March 26 the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been relieved from its then-current tour in the front-line positions and withdrawn to a rest area at Chateau de la Haie. From the next day until April 2 all battalion personnel had undergone extensive training for the upcoming British offensive, so whether there was much rest to be enjoyed is to be speculated – but then again, no-one had been shot at.

On April 3, the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion had moved to the front area.

On April 4, 5 and 6 it had supplied working parties and dug trenches.

On April 7, the final elements of the Battalion had moved forward to the front area.

By ten o'clock on the evening of April 8, the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion had reported itself to be in its battle positions.

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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.



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

(Right above: *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 – there was even a British brigade under its Canadian command - stormed the slope of Vimy Ridge, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.

(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*)



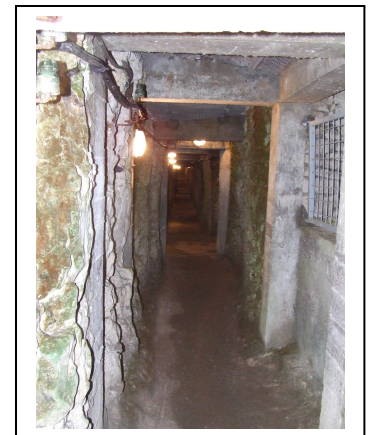
Excerpt from the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary of April 9, 1917: *Easter Monday, zero hour 5.30 A.M. The Battalion, 520 strong all ranks, went “over the top” supported by a strong artillery barrage.*

Excerpts from 11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary entry for April 9, 1917:

*12.25 p.m. - 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion report that a party of 75<sup>th</sup> Battalion who were out in front of BASSO (Trench) were counter attacked by the enemy, and believe that some of our men were taken prisoners.*

*12.55 p.m. – The 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion advise that they are sending out a Lewis Gun Officer, with 4 guns, and 20 men to clean up the situation around the Old German Front Line & proceed on to BASSO after this is accomplished.*

*2.00 p.m. – O.C., 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion reports one Machine Gun of the 11<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Coy. operating sixty yards left of crater where LIEUT. Hannaford and his party are established.*



(Right above: *Grange Tunnel - one of the few remaining galleries still open to the public at Vimy one hundred years later on: They were hewn out of the limestone to ensure secrecy and, at the same time, the security of the attacking troops – photograph from 2008(?)*)

The Battalion assault had enjoyed only mixed results at first, even some of the *successful* attackers being forced to retire because their flanks had become vulnerably exposed. Eventually, however, the advance continued, one of the last actions going in at a quarter to seven in the evening to clear two more trenches of the enemy.

By the late evening of April 10 the Canadian Corps had cleared the area of Vimy Ridge of the few remaining pockets of resistance and had begun to consolidate the area in preparation for the anticipated German counter-attacks – which for once, for the most part, failed to materialize.

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

There had been, during that second day, the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – it had been perhaps that highly-touted breakthrough – but such a follow-up on the previous day’s success proved logistically impossible. Thus the Germans closed the breach and the conflict once more reverted to one of inertia.



The remainder of the relatively short, five-week long, *Battle of Arras* was not 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 success of the Canadians, even inflicting a reverse on them and the British at Fresnoy on May 3.

The 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion had thereupon reverted to that routine of life in the trenches in the *Lens Sector*. June was fairly active, particularly on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> when three battalions had relatively successfully raided the enemy lines. On the debit side of *relatively successfully* had been a count of one-hundred thirty-nine casualties.

In contrast to June, much of July was to be spent in reserve in the area of Chateau de la Haie. Parades, lectures, drills, inspections, visits from Brigade and Divisional Commanders as well as from the High Command, sports and working-parties were all the order of the day. The Battalion had even lined the sides of the road on one particular date while His Majesty King George V passed by.



(Right above: *A Canadian working-party carrying supplies of all kinds to the troops in forward positions: The head-bands were adapted from a practice employed by Canada’s indigenous peoples. - from Le Miroir*)

The British High Command had by this time decided to undertake a summer offensive in the *Ypres Salient*, Belgium.

Thus, in order to divert German attention – and also his reserve troops - from that northern area, it had also ordered operations to take place in those sectors of the front running north-south from Béthune to Lens.



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

(Right: *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 below: *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 it was high enough to have been considered - by the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie - the key feature in the area, its capture more important than the city of Lens itself.

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



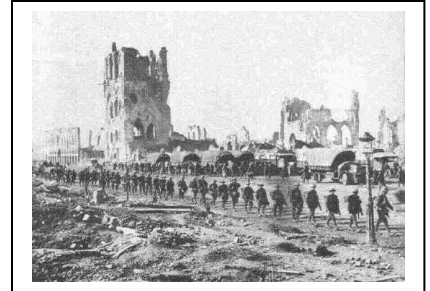
These defences had held and the Canadian artillery, which had been employing newly-developed tactical procedures, had inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. *Hill 70* was to remain in Canadian hands.

(Right: *A 220 mm. Canadian artillery piece, under camouflage on the Lens Front in the summer of 1917, being readied for use – from Le Miroir*)



The assault on *Hill 70* had been made by formations of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisions. The 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion, being of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division was not a part of this operation, but had been active in the outskirts of Lens during that same period, partially in the area of the Lens-Lievin Road where it today still crosses the Béthune to Lens railway line, and in the western outskirts of the city of Lens itself.

This Canadian-led offensive campaign had been scheduled 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 New Zealanders, and then the Canadians, were ordered to prepare to move north; thus the Canadians were obliged to abandon their plans.



(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*)

In the middle of October the Canadians had been ordered north into Belgium and to the *Ypres Salient*. Officially designated the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign – ongoing since the end of that July - 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: *Somewhere, perhaps anywhere, on the battlefield of Passchendaele during the autumn of 1917. – from Illustration*)

From the time that the Canadians had 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 to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions which were the spearhead of 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 – November 10 - the reverse was to be true with troops of the Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division having finally entered the remnants of Passchendaele itself.



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

(Right below: *Just a few hundred metres to the south-west of Passchendaele – and looking in the opposite direction from the site of the above monument – this, according to the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary, is in the vicinity of where the unit was to have been in trenches on October 30 of 1917. – photograph from 2010*)

In the meanwhile, October 11 had been the first day of the transfer of the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion which would bring it, after a year's absence, and for a second occasion, to the area of Ypres. By the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month the unit was in *Toronto Camp* in the area of Brandhoek, a village to the west of Ypres itself, and half way along the road to Poperinghe.



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On the 27<sup>th</sup>, the thirty-two officers and six-hundred eighteen *other ranks* of the Battalion had moved to the vicinity of Potijze, north-east of Ypres, to be quartered in shelters and dugouts. There, for a further six days, they had mostly been engaged in providing working-parties and, at least on one day, had sent out one-hundred men to carry some of the many wounded to the rear.



(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*)

Back at Brandhoek on November 2, the unit had entrained on the following day again for Cæstre, in northern France. After further days of training and inspections, the Battalion had found itself back in *Toronto Camp*, Brandhoek, on November 10.

From there it had been ordered to Ypres, from Ypres to Potijze, from Potijze to Abraham Heights, and from there to *Crest Farm* (see photos taken on the crest on page above) on the outskirts of the no-longer existent community of Passchendaele itself - all of this during the space of two days: once there at *Crest Farm* the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion had relieved companies of three other Canadian battalions.

According to the Battalion War Diary entry for November 16... *The total casualties for the tour were 4 Officers and 172 O.R. which is exceedingly heavy for four days in holding the line, and shows the intenseness of the situation in the vicinity of Passchendaele.* It had been an almost- ceaseless enemy artillery bombardment which had inflicted the vast majority of these losses on the unit.

On the next day, November 17, the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion was relieved and began to retire to France – on foot and by motor transport. Six days again, on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, after a march of some twenty-eight kilometres from Cantraine it had been billeted in the proximity of La Thieuloye, to the north-west of Arras and far from the forward area. By December 21, however, the Battalion was once more at the front – posted to the *Chaudière Sector* - and for most Battalion personnel, Christmas Day of 1917 turned out to be just one more day in the trenches.



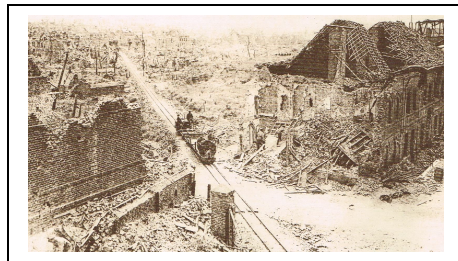
(Right above: *The Canadian National Monument on Vimy Ridge as seen looking south-westwards from the Chaudière Sector – photograph from 1914*)

But, perhaps by way of compensation, the last day of 1917 had been celebrated by everyone being taken by train to Neuville St-Vaast for a bath!

Much of January, most of February and the first two weeks of March, 1918, were for the most part a quiet time, not only for the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion but indeed for the entire Canadian 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade.

On March 12 the unit was preparing to leave *Alberta Camp* to go back to the front lines. They were to once again be posted to the *Lens Sector*.

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, the Germans had 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\*.



(Right above: *While the Germans did not attack Lens in the spring of 1918, they bombarded it heavily during the time of their 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.

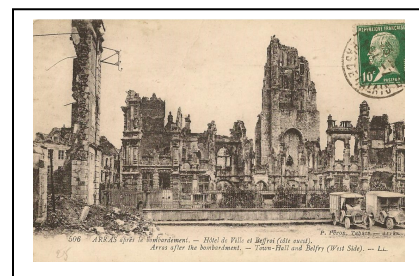
\*A second but lesser such offensive, '*Georgette*', fell in northern France and in Belgium on April 9, in Flanders, the area where the by-then Royal Newfoundland Regiment was serving with the British 29<sup>th</sup> Division. It also was successful for a while, but petered out at the end of the month.



(Right: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918 – from Illustration*)

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

It would seem that the Battalion remained *in situ* in the Lens Sector until the end of the month of March when it was transferred some kilometres south to the Arras Sector, there to move back and forth in the area to the north of the city itself. But neither the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion nor any *other* units of the Canadian Corps were to be posted to *the Somme* to staunch the German onslaught of that spring; the unit remained in the region to the north and north-west of Arras.



A further month was to pass before the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to be ordered forward from the relative security of reserve near Valhuon to the area close to Roclincourt, perhaps half-way between Vimy and the city of Arras. It began its tour there on July 10 and was relieved – back into *support*? – a week later.

Five days later again it returned to the front near Roclincourt - on this occasion to take part in two raids to inflict casualties and to obtain information – until it in turn was relieved on the final day of the month. Casualties incurred by the Battalion during that month of July were light by the norms of the day.

(Right: Arras Road Cemetery, Roclincourt, in which lie a number of Canadian dead and at least one Newfoundlander – photograph from 2014(?))



All this, however, was to change during the month of August. Under the new Allied Generalissimo, Foch, an immense offensive was being prepared to push the Germans back whence they had come some four months previously – and beyond\*.

*\*Nobody knew it at the time of course and perhaps, after four years of static warfare, no one dared to think it, but this campaign - to become known as the Hundred Days – was to end with the Armistice of November 11 of 1918. (Although by that time there had been several such agreements as the Central Powers one by one were to leave the field.)*

In the previous April, the German spring offensives had almost reached the gates of Amiens in the south and had advanced towards the Channel ports in the north before being stopped. That same area in front of Amiens was to be the jumping-off point for the Allied attack of August 8\*, thus the early days of August saw a great transfer of Canadian troops from the area north-west of Arras to the new theatre of battle some ninety kilometres to the south. The move was to be rapid – and to be cloaked in secrecy.

(Right: The 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 – The edifice houses a flag and other commemorations of the sacrifice of the Dominion of Newfoundland – photograph from 2007(?))



*\*It was to be the end of September before the Allied counter-attack was to commence in the north on the front in Flanders where the Royal Newfoundland Regiment was serving.*

The 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion left its at-the-time quarters in the proximity of Écoivres and Mont St-Éloi on the evening of August 3 and was bussed some one-hundred twenty kilometres before it dismounted at four-thirty on the following morning in, or close to, the community of Oisemont – still at a distance of forty-seven kilometres from Amiens.



(Right above and page following: The village of St-Éloi at an early period of the Great War and a century later - The ruins of the Abbey St-Éloi – destroyed in 1793 – are visible in both images. – from *Le Miroir* and (colour) from 2016)

The 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion billeted in or in the vicinity of the villages of Heucourt and Prouzel on successive days having marched there by night. Then, on August 6... *The Brigade Group began its move to concentration area BOIS DE BOVES. At five o'clock on the afternoon of the next day again the Brigade began a further, final movement into the BOIS DE GENTELLES.*



Excerpt from the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry of August 8, 1917: *Notification received that zero hour was to be 4.20 A.M. and at 5.30 A.M. the Battalion started to move. It moved around the south end of the GENTELLES WOOD and then south and parallel to the ROYE Road, crossing the RIVER LUCE and taking up a position along Old German trench system... From here it could be seen that our attack was progressing favourably and many prisoners were being sent back. The Battalion moved again at 9.20 A.M...*



(Right above: *The remnants of the community of Roye, this picture taken during the year prior to the events of 1918 – from a vintage post-card*)

The attack of August 8 was for the most part a great success – the Canadians having by the end of the day advanced an unheard-of eleven kilometres. It continued in places overnight and, in general, recommenced early in the morning of the morrow. On August 10, the 87<sup>th</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> Battalions were operating in support of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigades as the attack continued, the other two battalions of the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade having been withdrawn temporarily.



(Right above: *The caption records this as being a photograph of German prisoners taken by the Canadians, some of them carrying a wounded officer – Allied or German officer is not documented. Also to be noted is one of the newer tanks. – from Le Miroir*)

On the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup>, the unit had made its way to the village of Rosières, in the vicinity of which Private Greeley was to report to duty on either August 12 or 13.

\* \* \* \* \*

Private Greeley's unit apparently then spent time in the vicinity of the village of Rosières before by August 19 being reported as having advanced as far as the community of Hattencourt. There it was involved in an action which had as its objective to advance the line some five-hundred yards... *Line was secured without difficulty on left but strong resistance was met with on the right in vicinity of FRESHCOPSE where heavy bomb fighting took place... Our casualties reported to be light.* (Battalion War Diary)

In his entry of the following day, August 20, the War Diarist wrote... *Our artillery continue to be very active carrying out harassing fire and destructive shoots. Special attention is paid to the bridges across the SOMME.*

The attacks were continuing and, as the objective of that current offensive had been to advance to the River Somme, it would appear that this goal was about to be realized. On that same August 20, the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion again retired.



(Right: *Canadian soldiers at work consolidating their newly-won positions while others cross a river on an improvised bridge. – from Le Miroir*)

On the night of August 24-25 the entire 11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade was withdrawn into reserve and was replaced in the line by elements of the French 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Divisions. The Brigade was about to leave the area as it had come: quickly and discretely. Only days hence it would be fighting another battle to the east of Arras, the area that it had left just over three weeks previously.

As for the 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion, during the evening of August 27, it boarded a train at Longeau Station and at sixteen minutes past eleven of that same evening, began the railway journey from there to Acq from where the personnel then took busses to Berneville.

Two days later again, Private Greeley and his comrades-in-arms were back in the area of Neuville-Vitasse, to the south-east of Arras, and preparing for a further offensive.

(From 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary): *87<sup>th</sup> Battalion Canadian Infantry (Canadian Grenadier Guards)*

*Operational Order No. 138*

*a) The Canadian Corps will attack DROCOURT-QUEANT LINE and enemy positions in rear, on a date and at a time to be notified later\*.*

*\*The date in question was to be September 2.*

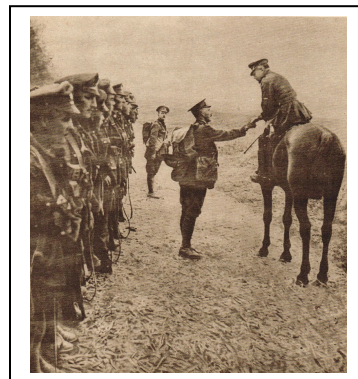
*b) 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division on the right, 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division in the centre...*

*c) The 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Brigades will carry out the initial attack, objective the "RED LINE".*

*d) ...11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Brigade will pass through and continue the attack to the "BLUE LINE".*

*e) The 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion... will carry out the first advance to the "GREEN LINE"...*

The 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved to its assembly areas on the night of September 1-2, 1918, and – not being a part of the first wave - at zero plus one hour moved forward to its *jumping off* positions. The four Battalion Companies were formed up in the order of advance: "B" on the right, "D" on the left, "A" in support and "C" in reserve.



(continued)

Unfortunately there appears to be no record of in which Company Private Greeley was serving at the time.

*(Preceding page: After the successful operation of breaking the Hindenberg Line at Drocourt-Quéant, Canadian troops are here being inspected by the Commander-in-Chief of the British and Commonwealth Forces in Europe, Douglas Haig. – from Le Miroir)*

Excerpts from 87<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry of September 2: *At 5.30 A.M. heavy barrage opened. Enemy's reply did not reach our assembly position. At 6.20 A.M the Battalion moved forward... We were to attack at 8 A.M. but the situation was still obscure. The C.O. consulted with the O.C. of the 75<sup>th</sup> Battalion and then hoping that by advancing on the left the situation on the right might be eased, decided to push on. According at 8.30 the Battalion went forward...*

*On reaching the crest of the ridge just east of the sunken road, the leading Coys came under heavy Machine Gun and shell fire, frontally and on both flanks... At 1.30 P.M. the C.O. advised Brigade that we could not hope to get further without artillery and tank support and shortly after the G.O.C. stated that we could hold on to what we had and await orders...*

This the Battalion did, on the understanding that the advance would continue on the following morning. Apparently casualties were fairly heavy, particularly for 'B' Company, but unfortunately the War Diarist decided to record only the losses among the officers.



*(Right: The Canadian Memorial to those who fought at the Drocourt-Quéant Line in early September of 1918: It stands to the side of the main Arras-Cambrai road in the vicinity of the village of Dury and also of Mount Dury. – photograph from 2016)*

*And on September 3... Credit is due to officers and men for their behaviour. The fighting on top of MOUNT DURY and on the forward slope was extremely heavy and not withstanding very heavy casualties the made made (sic – but probably... men made) ground and held their position under very heavy shell and machine gun fire and with the left flank quite exposed.*

But by September 3, Private Greeley was dead.

He was the son of Thomas Greeley, former fisherman, to whom he had allocated as of February 1, 1918, a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay, and of Martha Greeley, to whom he had willed his all, both of 1206, Gertrude Street, Verdun, Province of Quebec at the time of their son's conscription – and by April of 1920 again residing in Portugal Cove, Newfoundland.

Private Greeley was reported as having been *killed in action* on September 2, 1918, in fighting near Mount Dury\*, adjacent to the Arras-Cambrai Road.

(continued)



Walter Greeley had attested at the apparent age of twenty-three years and seven months: date of birth at Portugal Cove, Newfoundland, May 24, 1894.

(Right: *The sacrifice of Private Walter Greeley is honoured on the War Memorial in the Community of Portugal Cove, Newfoundland.* – photograph from 2010)

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

*\*Of the three-hundred thirty-seven interred in Dury Mill British Cemetery (seen on first page) only nine were not serving in a Canadian unit, and all but eighteen died on September 2 of 1918.*



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 26, 2023.