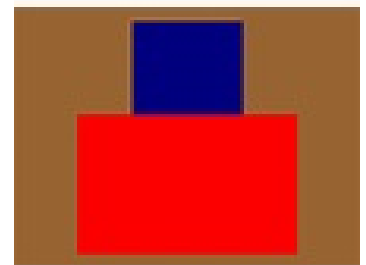




Lieutenant Edward Jeffery (Number 26095) of the 16th Battalion (*Canadian Scottish*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Ligny St- Flochel British Cemetery, Averdoingt: Grave reference, I. F. 18.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder-flash of the 16th Battalion (Canadian Scottish) is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)

(continued)



His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of an *undergraduate*, there seems to be no clue documented as to exactly what Edward Jeffery was studying at the time or exactly where he had been studying it. Neither is there any mention in his files of his early years living in the Dominion of Newfoundland or of his movements to the Canadian province of Quebec by September of 1914, which was both where and when he attested.

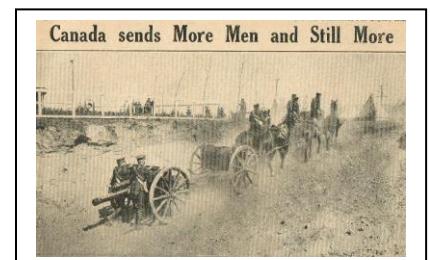
But where exactly he *enlisted* on August 16, 1914, is *not* recorded on those first pay records which document this as being the date on which the Canadian Army* began to remunerate Private Jeffery for his services. It is then yet another source which informs us that the unit into which he was temporarily *taken on strength* was the 69th Annapolis Regiment of the Canadian Militia, a Nova Scotia formation. On his attestation papers he has then recorded his previous military experience as having been four years' service with the *Church Lads Brigade*, a Church of England sponsored young men's para-military force.

**Apparently the term 'Canadian Army', although employed ubiquitously during the Great War, was not to become official until 1940.*

The Canadian Militia had evolved as a force for the defence of Canada, and as such its units were unauthorized by law to operate outside the frontiers of the country. However, when war was declared in early August of 1914, the Militia regiments became active in recruiting and in forwarding those volunteers – many of whom were Canadian Militia personnel – to the new *Overseas Battalions* that were very soon being authorized and mobilized.

Thus it was on September 21, 1914, that Private Jeffery presented himself at the recently-established military complex at *Valcartier Camp*, there to undergo a further medical – for vaccinations? – and also his attestation. It was also on this day that he was transferred from his former militia formation to the 14th Battalion (*Victoria Rifles*) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

(Right: *Canadian artillery being put through its paces at the Camp at Valcartier. In 1914, the main Army Camp in Canada was at Petawawa. However, its location in Ontario – even though near to the Ottawa River – made it impractical for the despatch of troops overseas. Valcartier was apparently built within weeks after the Declaration of War. – photograph (from a later date in the War) from The War Illustrated*)

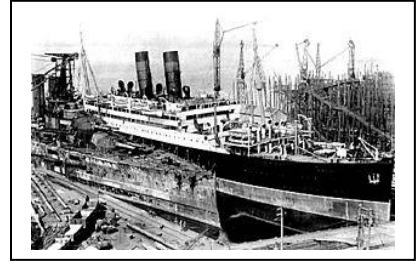


Only four days later, the second of two 14th Battalion contingents embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Andania* in the port at Québec in tandem with the 13th Battalion of Canadian Infantry, also taking passage on her for the trans-Atlantic voyage to the United Kingdom. *Andania* cast off and then moved upstream to anchor above the port, there to remain until on or about September 30. At that time she then slowly sailed down past the city and downstream to once again anchor, on October 3, on this occasion at the Gaspé.

(continued)

(Right below: A 1913 photograph of *Andania* undergoing construction in Scotland – in the foreground is the cruiser *HMS Ajax*. *Andania* was later to be torpedoed and sunk by U-46 off the coast of Ireland in January of 1918 with the loss of seven lives. – from the Wikipedia web-site)

At the Gaspé a convoy of thirty-one passenger vessels was being assembled which was to transport the first Canadian Contingent overseas. It sailed on October 3 of that 1914 escorted by five war-ships of the Royal Navy. On October 5, as the formation passed along the south coast of Newfoundland, the small Bowring Brothers' steamer *Florizel* sailed to meet and join it, carrying the *First Five-Hundred* of the Newfoundland Regiment to war.



The convoy reached its destination, the English south-coast naval port of Plymouth-Devonport, on October 14. However, such was the poor organization that some troops were to remain on board their ships for several days before disembarking*, including the Newfoundlanders. The 14th Battalion was however not one of these; it disembarked on the morrow, October 15, at half-past six in the evening and marched to Plymouth Railway Station. There it was put on board a train for the journey to *Salisbury Camp*.

For Private Jeffery and his comrades-in-arms it was to be a long night: The train pulled out of Plymouth at forty-five minutes past midnight and was not to reach its destination, Patney Station, until just after dawn of the 16th.

**In fact, the convoy had been due to sail into the port of Southampton, but a submarine alert had seen this destination altered and Plymouth-Devonport used. These facilities, however, were at the time were in the throes of re-construction and refurbishment to which the disembarkation delays were due.*

Excerpt from Battalion War Diary entry for October 16: *...detained and marched to West Down South, Salisbury Plains, about three hours march. Very tiring for the men as they were soft after nearly three weeks on board ship. Found tented lines all ready for occupation.*



(Right above: *The convoy carrying the Canadian Expeditionary Force at anchor in Plymouth Hoe on October 14, 1914 – from The War Illustrated*)

(Right: *The harbour of Plymouth-Devonport as it was almost a century after the Great War: it is a lot less busy nowadays. - photograph from 2013*)

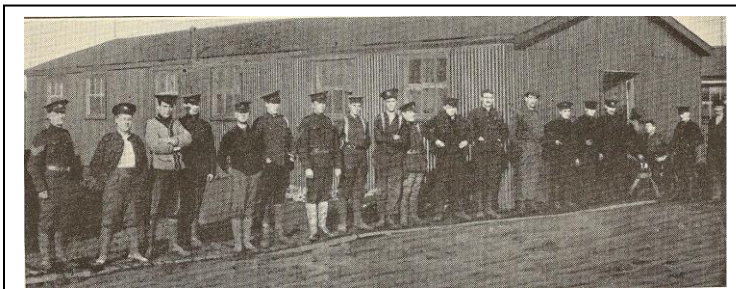


(continued)

Army Regulations of the period were such that recruits were to undergo some fourteen weeks of training after the time of enlistment; at that point they were to be considered as...*fit for active service*. Thus the newly-arrived Canadians were to spend the remainder of October and up until the first week of February, 1915, in becoming proper *Soldiers of the King* – even if they were *colonials**.

**They may have been considered thus but the majority of the first wave of Canadian soldiery to land in England, as the nominal rolls of these Overseas Battalions show, had been born in the British Isles.*

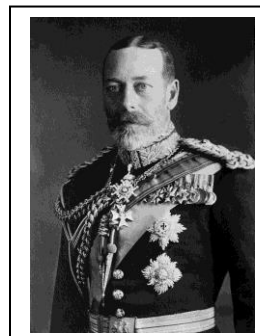
After a terrible winter spent under canvas, on February 4 the Division marched to a review area where it was inspected by His Majesty, King George V and the War Minister, Lord Kitchener*. The next few days were to then be spent in final preparation for departure and on February 10, the 14th Battalion boarded a train to take it to the west-coast port of Avonmouth.



**For whom the Canadian city of Kitchener, Ontario, was named in 1916 – it had been called Berlin until then.*

(Right above: *Canadian troops during the autumn of 1914 at Bulford Camp, Wiltshire – from The War Illustrated*)

(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia*)



The Battalion boarded its transport directly from the train in the early morning of the 11th. HMT *Australind* was apparently not a large ship: it was crowded carrying only the 14th Battalion and the personnel of a heavy battery. She sailed later that day accompanied by an escort of destroyers.



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

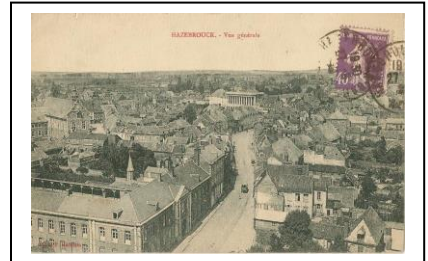
The crossing, according to the Battalion's War Diarist, was a tempestuous one, one man of the heavy battery being killed when thrown against some ironwork, and it had been only on the afternoon of February 15 that some of the ships carrying the Canadian Division – including the *Australind* transporting the 14th Battalion - steamed into the harbour at St-Nazaire on the Brittany coast.

There many of the men – still feeling the effects of the voyage – were to be retained on board ship for a further night before boarding trains at seven in the morning of the 16th.

Excerpt from 14th Battalion War Diary entry for February 16: *Passed through several large towns on way. No. 4 Company (French Canadian) sang old French songs during halts, which greatly astonished the inhabitants.*

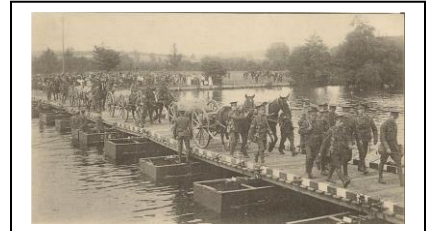
According to the Battalion War Diary, it was to take forty-seven hours for the train(s) carrying the 14th Battalion to make the journey of six-hundred ninety-four kilometres from St-Nazaire to the northern French town of Hazebrouck.

(Right: *An image of the town of Hazebrouck, from the period just after the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



There the unit... *left by road for Fletre...Pavé (cobble-stone) roads very trying for the men, accustomed to soft English roads, but no stragglers.*

(Right: *Troops – said to be British, but the Canadians wore British Uniforms – on the march in the north of France during the early period of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



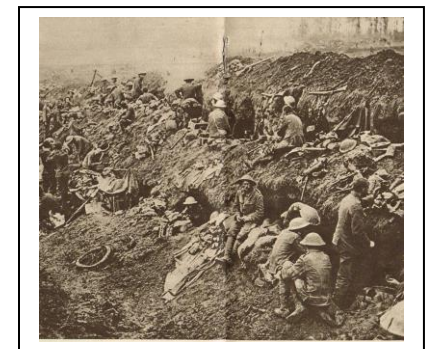
Four days later again – so has recorded the War Diarist on February 23 - the 14th Battalion was once more on the...*March to Armentières. Left Fletre 8 a.m. marching via Meteren and Nieppe. Pavé road troubling the men but no stragglers. Arrived Armentières in the afternoon... No. 1 and 2 Companies billeted in the Asylum, Nos. 3 & 4 in large warehouse in town.*

Armentières is a town on the French side of the Franco-Belgian frontier and, at that stage of the *Great War*, very close to the forward area, and those front lines were where the 1st and 2nd Companies of Private Jeffrey's 14th Battalion found themselves on only the day after the unit's arrival, for instruction from the North Staffordshire Regiment. At the same time four platoons of the 3rd and 4th Companies were performing the same duties under the watchful eye of the Rifle Brigade.

**And also at the same time, the 14th Battalion personnel was starting to become accustomed to the routines, rigours and perils of life in – and out of - the trenches of the Great War; maybe some eventually did.*

On February 27 the Battalion's first casualty (wounded) was recorded; on March 4 came the first fatality.

**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.*



(continued)

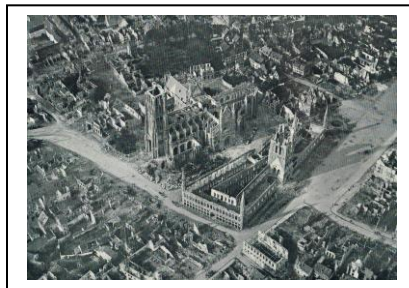
The unit was then withdrawn into reserve – either Brigade, Divisional or Corps Reserve, the former nearest to the forward area, the latter the furthest away.

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.

(Preceding page: 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)

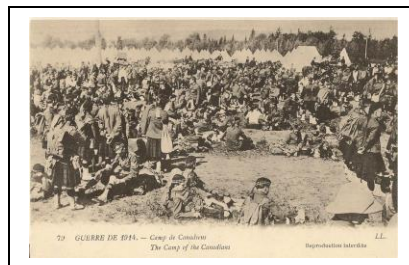
The first seven weeks of active service for the 14th Battalion were to pass much as described above. It was a quiet period, perhaps even instilling a false sense of what war was all about. That, however, was all about to change.

(Right: An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle of Second Ypres - which shows the shell of the almost-abandoned medieval city, an image entitled Ypres-la-Morte (Ypres the Dead) – By the end of the conflict there was little left standing. – from Illustration)



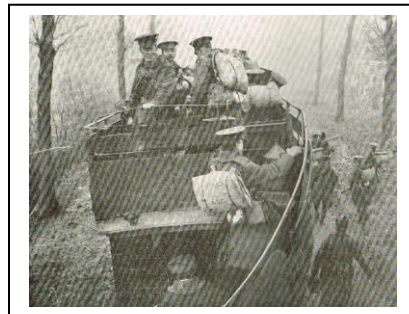
On April 7 the 14th Battalion marched from Estaires – just south of Armentières – westwards to billets in the vicinity of Cassel from where it was soon to cross the frontier from France into the *Kingdom of Belgium**.

**It is worth taking a look at a map of the Franco-Belgian frontier as it doesn't run east-west all the time.*



(Right above: The caption reads merely 'Camp of Canadians' but it is from the early days of the Great War, thus likely in either northern France or in Belgium. The troops are from a Canadian-Scottish unit. – from a vintage post-card)

It was nine days afterwards, on April 16, that Private Jeffery's Battalion was ordered to a posting in the forward area in the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan (*St-Julien*), just to the north-east of the medieval city of Ypres. Having been taken by bus to the Belgian town of Poperinghe, the unit had then marched via Vlamertinghe and Sint-Jaan as far as Wieltje. From there it was conducted by French guides – whose unit the Canadians were about to relieve* – into the trenches at Sint-Juliaan.



**It was not only the 14th Battalion but the entire Canadian Division which was at that time moving into the area from its former posting in northern France, and there relieving French formations.*

(Right above: Busses requisitioned from the public transportation system in London being used to carry troops in Belgium – from Illustration)

(continued)

This area for which Canadian, British and French troops were now to be responsible was known as the *Ypres Salient*. It was also to become known as one of the most lethal theatres of the entire *Great War* - and the Canadians were about to become witness to that.

The *Second Battle of Ypres* saw the first use of gas by the Germans on the *Western Front*. That use was later to become an everyday event – employed by both sides - and, with the advent of protective measures such as advanced gas-masks, chlorine was to prove no more dangerous than all the rest of the military arsenals of the warring nations.



But on this first occasion, to troops without the means to combat it, the yellow-green cloud of chlorine proved overwhelming.

(Right above: *The very first protection against gas was to urinate on a handkerchief which was then held over the nose and mouth. However, all the armies were soon producing gas-masks, some of the first of which are seen here being tested by Scottish troops. – from either Illustration or Le Miroir*)

The cloud was noticed at five o'clock in the afternoon of April 22. In the sector subjected to the most concentrated use of the gas, the French Colonial troops to the Canadian left wavered then broke, leaving the left flank of the Canadians uncovered. A retirement – not always very cohesive – had ensued.

Excerpt from the 16th Battalion War Diary entry for April 22, 1915: *April 22 - At billets St. Jean - Heavy shelling of Ypres and vicinity began. At 5 p.m. received orders to stand to. At 6 p.m. the battn. less No. 2 Coy. began to move up towards St. Julien. Shelling continuous. On way up Ypres St. Julien road, one gun of a British R.H.A battery galloped past battn. and came into action in field on left of road just above Wieltje. 1,3 & 4 Companies took up position...*

(Right: *Entitled: Bombardement d'Ypres, le 5 juillet 1915 – from Illustration*)

On the 23rd the situation was to be relatively stable and the positions in the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan were held until the morning of the 24th when a further retirement became necessary due to heavy and accurate enemy artillery fire.

At times there were to be breaches in the British and Canadian defensive lines but, fortunately, either the Germans were unaware of how close they were to a breakthrough, or else they did not have the means of exploiting the situation. The moment passed and the Canadians began to close the gaps.

(continued)



(Preceding page: *The Memorial to the 1st Canadian Division – the Brooding Soldier – stands just to the south of the village of Langemark – at the Vancouver Crossroads - where the Canadians withstood the German attack – abetted by gas – at Ypres (today Ieper) in April of 1915. – photograph from 2010*)

Private Jeffery's 14th Battalion was ordered to retire on April 26 and withdrew to some former French reserve trenches. Called forward again to the west bank of the *Yser Canal* on the 28th, it then moved over to the east bank on the night of April 29-30. The unit remained in the area of the front and under shell-fire.

It was not until the night of May 3-4 – another source records May 4-5 - when the Battalion was eventually relieved and marched back to the Battalion transport lines.



(Right above: *The Yser Canal at a point in the northern outskirts of Ypres almost a century after the 14th Canadian Infantry Battalion retired to its western bank – to the left – photograph from 2014*)

Less than two weeks later, in the middle of the month of May, the Canadian Division was ordered south, down the Front further into France. The 14th Battalion thus moved from the area of the French town of Bailleul - where it had hurriedly been re-enforcing and re-organizing - to serve in British offensives at Festubert and at Givenchy. This was to be an action fought in response to a request to support a larger operation by French troops a little further down the line.



The British plan of attack was less than imaginative and while some three kilometres of ground was taken, through the use of the frontal attack the British High Command had also contrived to destroy much of what had remained of their small pre-War professional Army after *Second Ypres*.

The Canadian and also Indian troops* of the Meerut Division – they too ordered to support the British effort - hardly fared better, each contingent having incurred over two-thousand casualties before this short-lived offensive was to draw to a close.

The French efforts further south – using the same suicidal tactics - were likewise to be a failure but on an even larger scale; their offensive, also having gained little, would cost them just over one hundred-thousand *killed, wounded and missing*.

**The Indian troops also served – and lost heavily – in other battles in this area in 1915 before being transferred, mostly to the Middle East.*

(Right above: *A one-time officer in the Indian Army pays his respects to the fallen at the Indian Memorial at Neuve-Chapelle. – photograph from 2010(?)*)

At the end of the month of May the 14th Battalion marched away from Festubert to *rest billets* at Obblinghem, in close proximity to Béthune. Unlike other Canadian units it had not been involved in any offensive actions and consequently its losses had been light.

Then on June 6 the 14th Battalion left its billets at Oblinghem where it had been billeted for a week, having been ordered further south to Givenchy-les-la-Bassée*, a small village not far distant from Festubert. Ordered into the forward trenches on two occasions during that month to support further British activities – and with the same results, although less numerous, from repeating the same mistakes – on or about June 24 the Canadian Division was beginning to retire from the area.

**Since the place is oft-times referred to simply as Givenchy it is worthwhile knowing that there are two other Givenchys in the region: Givenchy-le-Noble, to the west of Arras, and Givenchy-en-Gohelle, a village which lies in the shadow of a crest of land which dominates the Douai Plain: Vimy Ridge.*

As a part of that withdrawal from Givenchy, the 14th Battalion was to march to billets in or near to the community of Outtersteene, five kilometres south-west of Bailleul. From there it was to move towards and into Belgium, to the *Ploegsteert Sector*, just across the frontier.

Having reached the area of the village of Ploegsteert, there the 14th Battalion remained – as indeed did the entire Canadian Division. In the next number of months it came to be well-acquainted with the Franco-Belgian area between Armentières in the east – any further east would have been in German-occupied territory – Bailleul in the west, and Messines in the north; given the route marches enumerated in the War Diary and the itineraries used, it would have been surprising had it been otherwise.



(Right above: *Some of the farmland in the area of Messines, a mine crater from the time of the 1917 British offensive in the foreground – photograph from 2014*)

* * * * *

BUT there is a question mark which hangs over this entire period of his military career: While one *active service* file records Private Jeffery as... *Arrives with unit – St Nazaire – 15.2.15...* thus implying that he was with the 14th Battalion in France and Belgium all the while recorded above, a second such paper documents simply the following: *Transferred to 12th Battalion* (this was a reserve unit) – *Tidworth* (Salisbury Plain) – *1/3/15 – Divisional orders; On Muster Roll 14th Bn., France – 1-8-15...* which would suggest that he remained in England until at least August of 1915. This particular paper goes on to finally record... *To be Lieutenant 17th Res Bn – 17.3.16*

There appears to be no further clarifying information in Private Jeffery's dossier.

The 1st Canadian Division* was to remain in the *Ploegsteert Sector* until the spring of 1916. In the meantime, in September of 1915, the Canadian 2nd Division disembarked in France and, within days, was on its way to Belgium, to serve in the sector just to the north of the Canadian Division – now, logically, designated as the Canadian 1st Division.

**The Canadian Division had often been designated as simply that, until the arrival of the 2nd Canadian Division on the Continent in September of 1915.*

After the confrontations of that spring of 1915, the following autumn and winter were to be a relatively quiet time. And it was likely during this period, although not confirmed, that Private Jeffery decided that he was officer material and applied for an Imperial Commission – unless it occurred during the BUT months (see above).

Thus it was that on March 7 of 1916 Private Jeffery was apprised that he was... *to be Lieutenant and posted to 17th Res (Reserve) Battalion*. To that end he travelled from France via the Canadian General Base Depot at *Rouelles Camp* in the vicinity of Le Havre, where he was very temporarily *taken on strength* before being posted back to England to the large Canadian military complex of *Shorncliffe**.



(Right: *The French port-city of Le Havre, through which Private Jeffery likely passed, at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

**This Canadian Army establishment was on the Dover Straits and just south of the town and harbour of Folkestone. A number of smaller camps of different names comprised the entirety which was designated as Shorncliffe. Given its proximity to Folkestone – within marching distance – it is not surprising that it was from there that many Canadian units crossed to the Continent and thence to the Western Front.*



(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*)

His movements at this time become a little convoluted – at least the bureaucracy of it all does – although it may be that Lieutenant Jeffery* himself remained in the one and same place, *Shorncliffe*, with a minimum of upheaval.

**Referred to on an early occasion – March 7, 1916 – as Temporary Lieutenant, nowhere in his files does his rank appear to be referred to as that of Second Lieutenant.*

The bureaucracy referred to is chronologically as follows: *To be Temporary Lieutenant to General List & attached to 17th Battalion – dated 7/3/16; to England from France – 22/3/16*; Canadian Base Depot on strength from unit 25/3/16*; struck off strength (from 17th Bn.) on appointment to commission – 29-3-16; off Canadian Base Depot strength to Shorncliffe – 30/3/16; struck off (again from 17th Bn.) Posted to General List – 1/4/16; attached (to 17th Battalion) for Quarters and Rations – 13/4/16.*

**&* These are the dates in his files. But geographically this order does not make sense since the Canadian Base Depot at the time was in the vicinity of the French port-city of Le Havre. Logically these two entries should read... Canadian Base Depot on strength from unit – 22/3/16; to England from France – 25/3/16 – unless the transfer to the CBD was simply on paper.*

The General List was a record of all those officers who, since not being attached to any particular unit, were readily available for service. On May 29, Lieutenant Jeffery was reported as *off Command*; thus it would seem that from this date he was to be permanently attached to the 17th (Reserve) Battalion. A month later, on June 6, he was appointed to be the unit's Grenade Officer.

Then on August 3, 1916, he was hospitalized and diagnosed as suffering from appendicitis. Admitted into the small Helena Hospital for officers – originally built at Shornecliffe* as a hospital for Army families, he was operated upon - on that day of admission - to be discharged on September 12.

**Some records have Lieutenant Jeffery being transferred into the larger Shornecliffe Military Hospital on August 5, but a medical file has him spending a full forty days at Helena Hospital.*

Lieutenant Jeffery appeared before a Medical Board on the day before his release from hospital, the Board submitting the following report on the same day:

This officer has now recovered he had a drain in the wound and the scar although firm may later yield.

Appendicitis – he is considerably improved, but not yet entirely recovered. Board recommends as follows.

- *Unfit for 'General Service'*
- *Fit for service at home*
- *Likely to be unfit for a month*
- *Condition caused by General Service Conditions*
- *One month sick leave (as of September 11)*

He returned to service with the 17th (Reserve) Battalion on October 12, 1916.

One month later, on November 14, Lieutenant Jeffery was a married man. The details of his courtship are sparse: he was already in hospital when, on August 10, consent to wed was granted by his Commanding Officer. His wife to be was Joyce R. whose maiden name remains undisclosed in the available files; she has left two addresses: Springvale, Curdridge, Botley, Hants (*Hampshire*); and, possibly later, North Stoneham House near Eastleigh, Hants.

On December 8, a further Medical Board considered Lieutenant Jeffery to be... *Fit for General Service.*

The next records of him are from the turn of the year 1916-1917. On January 2 he was sent *on command* to the Canadian Military School, a part of the *Shornecliffe* complex. He was now not to report back to the 17th Battalion from there until the last day of January*.

**During Lieutenant Jeffery's absence the 17th (Reserve) Battalion had been re-organized. In fact it had officially been transferred on January 23 to Camp Bramshott, the Canadian military establishment in the county of Hampshire (Hants). But if he were with the 17th Battalion at Bramshott, his subsequent hospitalization at Shornecliffe (see immediately*

below) would make no sense. It must surely be the case that some residue 17th Battalion personnel were still at Shorncliffe on January 31, winding up the unit's affairs there.

Not long after re-joining his Battalion, Lieutenant Jeffery was to be hospitalized for a second occasion: this time he was admitted on February 13 into the *Westcliffe* Canadian Hospital in nearby Folkestone for treatment to a case of tonsillitis. He was discharged from there ten days later, on February 23.

(Right: *A view of the coastal town of Folkestone almost a century later as seen from the top of the white cliffs of nearby Dover – photograph from 2009*)



At some point, likely after hospitalization, he returned to the Canadian Military School, as on March 3 he is reported in the records as having... *Successfully passed regular(?) Exam at Canadian Military School and granted certificate.* Two days later, on March 5, he reported to the 17th (Reserve) Battalion at its new camp, *Bramshott*.

(Right: *Royal Canadian Legion flags amongst others adorn the interior of St. Mary's Church in the English village of Bramshott. – photograph from 2016*)



Fifty-three days later again, on April 27, 1917, Lieutenant Jeffery was back at *Shorncliffe*, at *Camp Dibgate*, having been taken on strength by the 14th (Reserve) Battalion. Again this transfer may have been a bureaucratic one rather than physical as, on that same April 24, he is recorded as having been sent... *on command to musketry school, Aldershot.*

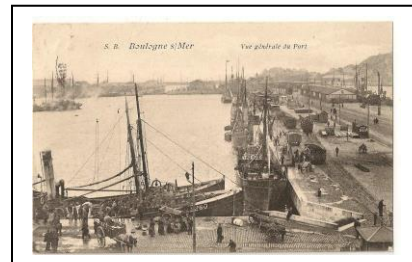
From Aldershot he returned to his unit at *Dibgate*, Shorncliffe, on May 19.

During the summer and the autumn of that 1917, Lieutenant Jeffery was to undergo three further courses: he is recorded as having... *qualified as a 1st Lieutenant* – was this to supercede his *temporary* status? – in a *Combined Officers' Course* at Bexhill; then he was sent *on command* to the *Canadian Trench Warfare School* at Bexhill from August 13 until September 8; and subsequently, for a second time, to the same *Trench Warfare School* on October 13.

Two days later, on October 15, he was transferred from the 14th (Reserve) Battalion to be taken on strength by the 11th (Reserve) Battalion, also based at *Shorncliffe*. There he was to remain for the next six months.

Lieutenant Jeffery likely travelled from *Camp Dibgate* to the Continent through the nearby Harbour of Folkestone and the French port of Boulogne on the coast opposite. The date was April 10, 1918, and on this date as well he likely learned that he had now been *taken on strength* by the 16th Battalion (*Canadian Scottish*) of the Canadian Infantry. But at whichever port it was that he disembarked, it was at the 1st Canadian Infantry Base Depot in the vicinity of the coastal town of Étaples that Lieutenant Jeffery reported *to duty* on the morrow, April 11, 1918.

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



On April 14, 1918, he was forwarded to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp, at Calonne-Ricouart some eighty kilometres to the east of Étaples, where the Camp War Diary records him as having arrived on April 16. From there it was to be another month, on May 16*, that he left there to join his new unit. On the following day he joined his new Battalion in Anzin, to the north-west of the shattered city of Arras.

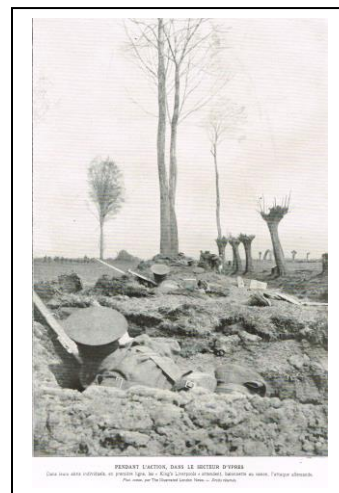
****This date is drawn from his personal dossier; the War Diary of the CCRC – by that time operating from Aubin St-Vaast – while having recorded his arrival, appears not to have documented his departure to the 16th Battalion on May 16, nor on any other date between April 16 and mid-July.***

* * * * *

Lieutenant Jeffrey's 16th Battalion (*Canadian Scottish*) was – as was *Private* Jeffrey's 14th Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*) - an element of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself a component on the (1st) Canadian Division, and its history had been until this time much the same as had been that of the 14th Battalion.

The 16th Battalion had crossed to France at the same time as had the 14th, to be stationed at first in the area near Armentières and had subsequently also moved to the *Ypres Salient* just in time for the German attack of April 22, 1915. In the following May and June the 16th Battalion had likewise seen action at Festubert and then at Givenchy before having been withdrawn back into Belgium to the Ploegsteert Sector in the area of the Franco-Belgian frontier. The following months, compared to what had gone before, were to be tranquil – as was said: *war is ten per cent terror, ninety per cent boredom.*

(Right: Troops – in this instance British – in hastily-dug trenches in the Ypres Salient. These are still the early days of the year as witnessed by the lack of steel helmets which came into use only in the summer of 1916. – from Illustration)



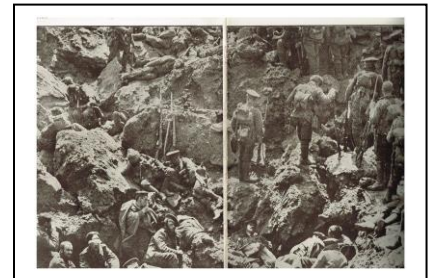
In late March and during the first three weeks of April of 1916, the 2nd Canadian Division, having arrived on the Continent some six months before, in mid-September of 1915, was to undertake its first major infantry action in co-operation with British forces. It had been at St-Éloi, in the area just to the north of the *Ploegsteert Sector*.

The *Action at the St. Eloi Craters* had officially taken place from March 27 until April 17 of that spring of 1916. St-Éloi was a small village some five kilometres to the south of the Belgian city of Ypres and it had been there that the British had excavated a series of galleries under the German lines, there to place explosives which they were to detonate on that March 27 and to follow up with an infantry assault.

After a brief initial success the attack had soon bogged down and by April 4 the Canadians were to be replacing the exhausted British troops. They were to have no more success than had had the British, and by the 17th of the month, when the battle would be called off, both sides had been back where they had been some three weeks previously – and the Canadians had incurred some fifteen-hundred casualties.

(Right below: *A purported attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – perhaps at St-Éloi – from Illustration*)

However, as previously noted, this confrontation had been a 2nd Canadian Division affair and the personnel of the 16th Battalion during that period would likely have been disturbed by only the noise of the German artillery – and some heavy shelling from time to time in their own area, as the Battalion's War Diary also reports.



The next large-scale infantry activity to be contested between the Canadian forces and the German Army was to come about in the south-eastern area of the *Ypres Salient* where the Canadian 3rd Division had been posted. The situation, however, had rapidly deteriorated seriously enough to the point where units other than those of the 3rd Division had soon been ordered into the fray.

On June 2 the Germans had attacked the only high ground in the *Ypres Salient* remaining under British control. This had been just to the south-east of the city of Ypres itself, the area including the village of *Hooze*, *Sanctuary Wood*, *Hill 60*, *Maple Copse* and also the promontory which since that time has lent its name – in English, at least - to the action, *Mount Sorrel*.

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



The enemy, preceded by an intense barrage, had overrun the forward Canadian positions and for a while had breached the Canadian lines. However, the Germans had been unable to exploit their success and the Canadians were to re-organize their defences. But the hurriedly-contrived counter-strike of the following day, June 3, delivered piece-meal, poorly co-ordinated and badly supported, was to prove a costly experience for the Canadians.

(Right above: *The Canadian memorial which stands atop Mount Sorrel just to the south-east of the city of Ypres (today Ieper) whose spires and towers may be perceived in the distance – photograph from 1914*)



(continued)

(Preceding page: *Maple Copse, the scene of heavy fighting in June of 1916, and its cemetery wherein lie numerous Canadians – photograph from 2014*)

On June 2, at the outset of the confrontation, the 16th Battalion had been stationed behind the line to the south-west of Ypres but by the following morning it and the other three battalions of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade – by then temporarily attached to the 3rd Canadian Division – had marched to the area of *Railway Dugouts* and then advanced further in the direction of *Maple Copse* and *Hill 60*.

Ordered to prepare to counter-attack – later countermanded – the unit had then begun to consolidate existing defensive positions and to excavate new ones.

On June 6 the Germans had made a further attack and the 16th Battalion had been made ready once more to counter-attack if the Germans were to manage to take *Hill 60*. In the event they had not, and on the night of June 7-8 the unit had been relieved.



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

Then, on the night of June 11-12, the 16th Battalion – in fact the entire 3rd Brigade – had been ordered moved up again, the Battalion to the area of Zillebeke from which it had been relieved only days before. During the remainder of June 12 it would move forward again until, just after mid-night, it had been reported to be in its assembly trenches.

The final attack of the *Mount Sorrel* operation, preceded by a heavy barrage, courtesy of a re-organized and well-prepared Canadian artillery, had gone in as early as one-thirty in the morning of that June 13. At eight minutes past three, some ninety minutes later, the 16th Battalion had been able to report its objectives as having been taken and that it had already begun to extend and to consolidate them.

The unit had thereupon remained in place for the following twenty-three hours before having been relieved by the 10th Canadian Battalion. For the 16th Battalion the affair at Mount Sorrel had come to a satisfactory conclusion – although at a price: the attack of June 13 had resulted in a casualty list of two-hundred fifty-seven killed and wounded.

(Right above: *Almost a century after the Great War, reminders of a violent past close to the site of Hill 60 to the south-east of Ypres, an area today protected by the Belgian Government against everything except the whims of nature: In the first week of June of 1917, at the start of the Battle of the Messines Ridge, a British mine was detonated under its summit, thus removing much of its resemblance to a hill. – photograph from 2014*)



(continued)

For the two months which had then succeeded the confrontation at *Mount Sorrel*, things were to revert to the everyday routines of trench warfare. There had been no concerted infantry action by either side, such activity having again been limited to raids and patrols. However, this had not precluded a lengthy casualty list at times, for the most part due to the enemy's artillery-fire and to his snipers.

During the month of August and September the Canadian Battalions had gradually been withdrawn from the *Ypres Salient* and ordered to camps for training in what had been termed by *the Staff* as *open warfare*. It appears that the 16th Battalion was to be one of the first to retire, having left the forward area for Brigade Support during the night of August 7-8. There were then to be a further five days of motorized transport and of marching.

On August 13 the unit had reached the northern French community of Watten in the area of which the Second Army training areas had been prepared. The British summer offensive in France had not been proceeding as planned and depleted units of exhausted troops by then were being sent north into Belgium*. Their place was, at least partially, to be taken by the Canadians by that time in training.

**The 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment of the British 29th Division was one of those. It was stationed in Ypres itself from early August until October 8 when it was ordered to return to the Somme.*

Two weeks later, on the night of August 27-28, the 16th Battalion had moved piecemeal to the railway station in the northern French centre of St-Omer. The unit had then entrained there at one o'clock in the morning to be conveyed south to Conteville, a distance of about eighty kilometres, where it arrived some eight hours afterwards, at nine o'clock in the morning. It had been a long night.

From there it was to be a further four days – all of it on foot – a stop each night in fresh billets, some of which the Battalion War Diarist described as... *Best billets for ages*.

(Right: *Almost a century after the 16th Battalion passed through it on the way to the First Battle of the Somme, the once-splendid railway station in St-Omer is today in dire need of renovation* – photograph from 2015)



Their trek had terminated at bivouacs in *Brickfields Camp* in close vicinity to the provincial town of Albert on September 1, before the unit had almost immediately been ordered into support positions at La Boisselle on the very next day.

(Right: *The Lochnagar Crater caused by the mine – claimed by some to be the largest man-made explosion in history up until that date – detonated at La Boisselle* – photograph from 2011(?))



(continued)

**La Boisselle was the site where, on the morning of the attack of July 1 of that same 1916, the British detonated the largest of the nineteen mines that they had excavated and set under the German lines. The crater, now a century old, is still impressive, even today.*

By that September of 1916, the *First Battle of the Somme* had already 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 span of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

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



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 having been the two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and the eight-hundred personnel of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment which was to lose so heavily on that day at a place called Beaumont-Hamel.

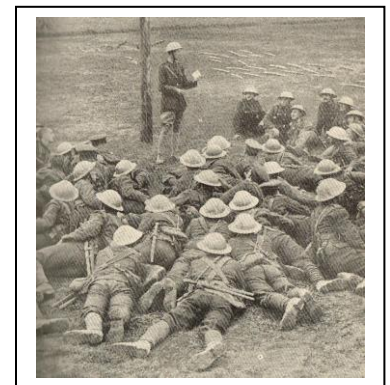
As the battle had progressed, other troops, from the Empire (*Commonwealth*), were to be brought in; at first it had been the South African Brigade (July 15), the Australians and New Zealanders (July 23) before the Canadians had entered the fray on and about August 30 to be part of a third general offensive. Their first collective major action was to be in the area of the two villages of Flers and Courcelette on September 15.



(Right above: *The village of Courcelette, seen from the north, just over a century after the events of the First Battle of the Somme* – photograph from 2017)

(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*)

But by that time the 16th Battalion had been in the front line at to relieve an Australian battalion before in turn having been relieved by another Canadian battalion. This first experience of the front line of *the Somme* was to last less than three days but the War Diarist had by then already recorded that... *Companies in front line suffered severely...* likely due to the very heavy shelling that he also recorded.



The numbers as reported by the War Diarist for that period: *...401 Casualties, 25 per cent of which were killed or are missing...* Almost all of these had fallen victim to the German artillery-fire, there having been no infantry action reported during that three-day period*.

**The count may not have been quite that high: other sources suggest that it may have been in the two-hundreds.*

The unit was not to be involved in the aforementioned general offensive of September 15. Having been withdrawn well behind the lines on September 7, on that same date it was in the process of making its way back to billets in Albert.

Then on the morrow, September 8, the 16th Battalion had gone marching into the rear area, likely to free up billets for the incoming troops who were to undertake the offensive planned for September 15. The route was to be: Warloy; Toutencourt; Bonneville for four days of training; Val de Maison; then Contay for a final two nights before its return to Albert where the unit had arrived on the 18th. And there it remained for another six days.

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

On September 24, the Battalion had received orders to supply personnel for mopping-up parties in the course of an upcoming attack by the 13th and 15th Battalions of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade.

The attack had gone in on the 26th and the action had concluded on the night of September 27-28. *On counting casualties found that we had 116 casualties of whom 17 were killed...* Extract from 16th Battalion War Diary of September 28, 1916.

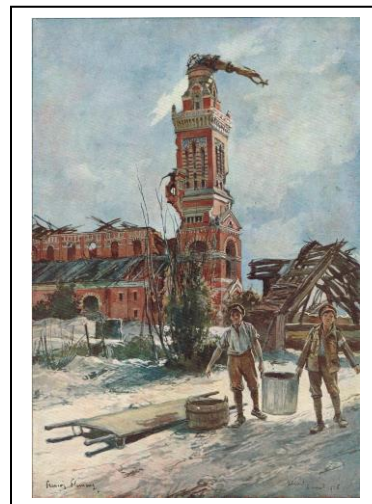
A final assault by the Battalion was to be undertaken on October 8 in conjunction with the Canadian 13th and 3rd Battalions against the German positions known as *Regina Trench*. At first at best only partially successful, German counter-attacks had driven the Canadians back in the centre, obliging the troops on the two flanks to withdraw. The Diary entry of the day also records... *Reports received that all officers were killed and wounded except two...*

Estimates for the losses among the other ranks were to amount to a total – all categories - of some three hundred.

(Right above: *Wounded troops being evacuated in hand-carts from the forward area during the 1st Battle of the Somme* – from *Le Miroir* or *Illustration*)

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

(continued)



On October 9 the remnants of the unit had retired to Albert. On October 11 they had begun to retire from *the Somme*.

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



The 16th Battalion was to be on the move for some seventeen days, although spending periods of a day or two in various billets along the way. The unit had at first moved in a westerly direction, then turned northward to pass to the west of the battered city of Arras and beyond. On October 26 it reached the area of Camblain l'Abbé and Villers-au-Bois and on the following morning was back in trenches at Berthoual.

(Right: *Camblain l'Abbé, the village shown here to be a little less busy than it had been a hundred years before – photograph from 2017*)



This was the area – from Arras in the south to Béthune in the north - to which all the Canadian units withdrawing from *the Somme* were sooner or later to find themselves and where they were to remain until October of 1917. It would become more and more an area of Canadian responsibility.

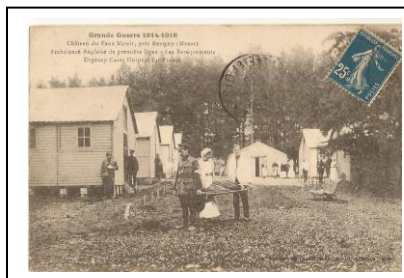
The winter of 1916-1917 had been a further period of the everyday grind of life in and out of the trenches. There was to be little if any concerted infantry activity apart from the constant patrolling and the occasional raids by both sides. This latter activity had been initiated by the British High Command who had felt it to be a morale booster which would also keep the troops in the right offensive frame of mind – the troops who were then to be ordered to carry them out in general loathed these operations.



(Right above: *A detachment of Canadian troops going forward during the winter of 1916-1917 – from Illustration*)

There was of course the daily trickle of casualties, as usual for the most part due to the enemy's artillery and to his snipers. To this should be added, it should not be forgotten, the daily count of those sick – and perhaps surprisingly even more so, those with dental problems - who also helped to keep the field ambulances and the casualty clearing stations busy.

(Right: *a British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some – from a vintage post-card*)



During the last half of the month of March the 16th Battalion had been posted for the most part in the rear area. As with a goodly number of Canadian units at this time, it was to undergo training for an offensive to take place in the months of April and May.

This was to be a programme sometimes novel exercises undertaken by most, if not all, of the battalions of the Canadian Corps before the upcoming British offensive: learning the topography of the ground to be attacked; the use of the enemy's weapons which, when captured, were to be turned against him; the by-passing and thus isolation of strong-points instead of the costly assault; the coaching of each and every soldier as to his role on the day; the increased employment of aircraft in directing the advance; the concept of a machine-gun barrage; and the exchange of information between the infantry and artillery so as to co-ordinate efforts...

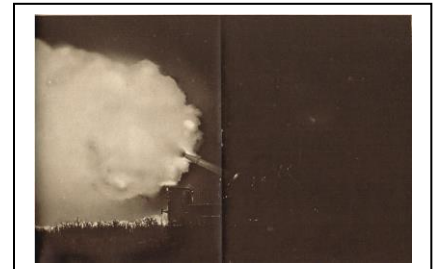
...and at *Vimy Ridge*, the use of tunnels and underground approaches to mask from the enemy the presence of troops and also to ensure the same troops' security.

The first few days of April were to see a number of raids made on enemy positions in order to gain last-minute intelligence; then on April 8 the various 16th Battalion Companies had begun to move forward to their assembly positions.

And as those final days had passed, so the Canadian and British artillery barrage had grown progressively heavier as well; on April 6, Good Friday, the War Diarist of another battalion was to describe it as...*drums*. By this time, of course, the Germans had *also* been aware that...something was in the offing...and their ordnance had in its turn been throwing retaliatory fire onto the Canadian positions - and their aircraft had been extremely busy.

(Right below: *A heavy British artillery piece spews its venom into the middle of the night during the course of the preparatory bombardment before the First Battle of Arras. – from Illustration*)

**It should be said that a great deal of the artillery used in the assault on Vimy Ridge was British and that a British Division also participated. Almost fifty per cent of the personnel who had been employed for that day were British, not to mention those whose contribution – such as those who dug the tunnels - allowed for it to happen.*



On April 9 of 1917 the British Army had launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was to be the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the 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 having been the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.



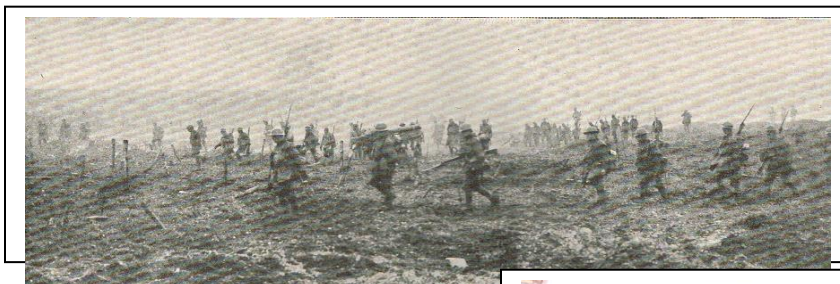
While the British campaign proved to be an overall disappointment, the French offensive of *Le Chemin des Dames* was to be a further disaster.

(Preceding page: *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 – with a British brigade under 2nd Canadian Division command - stormed the slopes of *Vimy Ridge*, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.

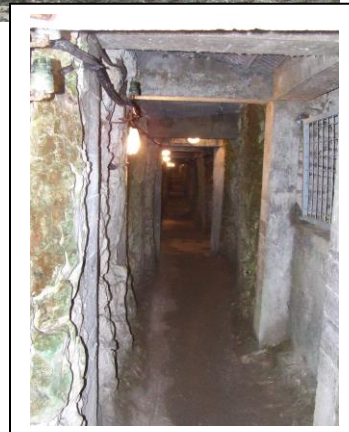
The Canadian 3rd and 4th Divisions had been assigned responsibility for the *Ridge* itself; to their immediate right had been the Canadian 2nd Division, attacking in the area of the village of Thélus on the southern slope; and to the right again the Canadian 1st Division had been ordered to clear the area lower down the slope again towards the village of Roclincourt.

(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4th or 3rd 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*)



(Right: *Grange Tunnel - one of the few remaining galleries still open to the public at Vimy one hundred years later. – photograph from 2008(?)*)

On April 10 the Canadians had finished clearing the area of *Vimy Ridge* of the few remaining pockets of resistance and had begun to consolidate the area in anticipation of the expected German counter-attacks. There had been on that day been the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted breakthrough – but such a follow-up on the previous day's success had proved impossible – and would have done so even if the orders had not been to halt and consolidate.



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

By nine-thirty in the evening of that second day, April 10, of the attack, the 16th Battalion had secured its immediate objectives – it had done so already on the first day – and had been in the process of consolidation in the event of the afore-mentioned expected enemy counter-attacks. By that time, the success of those two days had cost the Battalion a total of three-hundred twenty-three casualties of which sixty-five having been *killed in action* or *died of wounds*.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The monument to the 1st Canadian Division which stands just outside the village of Thélus: it was erected at Christmas, 1917. – photograph from 2017*)

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



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 Canadian success.

During the *Battle of Arras*, the success at *Vimy Ridge* had been almost the sole exception to the rule*, the rule being costly engagements too often accomplishing nothing. The attack at Arleux-en-Gohelle on April 28 was to gain some ground for the Canadian attackers but at great sacrifice. The later confrontation at Fresnoy was to be otherwise; the losses there had also been extensive – and the Germans had retained the village.

**This was so not only for the Canadians. The British and Australians experienced bloody reverses, not to forget the Newfoundland Regiment and its four-hundred eight-seven casualties on April 14 at Monchy-le-Preux.*

The remainder of the month of June and then all of July had comprised once again the rotations of the troops into the front, support and reserve positions. It was to be the month of August before a further concerted effort had been demanded of the Canadian Corps, and it also was to be in the same general area, albeit a little to the north of Vimy, in the outskirts of the mining centre and city of Lens.



(Right above: *This is what was to become of Lens by the time that the Great War had ended. – from a vintage post-card*)

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 his reserves - from that area, it had also ordered operations to take place at the sector of the front running north-south from Béthune down to Vimy.



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*)



(continued)

(Preceding page: *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 had been 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 that of the city of Lens itself.

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



(Right: *The portrait of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie is from Illustration.*)

Objectives had been limited and had for the most part been achieved by the end of August 15. Due to the supposed dominance of *Hill 70* over the entire area, it had been expected that the Germans would endeavour to retrieve it and so it was to prove; on August 16 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 fast and the Canadian artillery, which had been employing newly-developed procedures, would inflict heavy losses on the enemy. The captured *Hill 70* had remained in Canadian hands.

It had been the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions that had been confided the responsibility for undertaking the attack on *Hill 70*, and the 16th Battalion had played its part. By the night of August 13-14, six-hundred fifty-six personnel of the unit had moved forward to billets in the nearby mining village of Loos in readiness for the assault.

(Right: *The remnants of the village of Loos (see below) as it was already in early 1915* – from *Le Miroir*)

Excerpts from the... *NARRATIVE of 16th Battalion "The Canadian Scottish" in the ACTION against HILL 70 on AUGUST 15th/16th.1917.* – to be found in the 16th Battalion War Diary Appendices – recount the events of those days.

The Headquarters and two companies went into the trenches on the night of 13th/14th August... The day of the 14th passed fairly quietly with occasional shelling of the trenches and the back country.

(continued)



It was a difficult position from which to launch an assault as the only trenches available were the front line and the support line... It meant assembling a great number of men in the front line and, had the enemy opened a heavy barrage before ZERO hour, our attack might have been paralysed before it was launched.

At ZERO hour – 4.25 a.m. – the whole battalion leaped out of the trenches...and reached 'No Man's Land' in time to escape the enemy Barrage... Our Artillery was most excellent...and companies were enabled to follow the barrage very closely... All companies report that there was little or no resistance in the German front line and support line.

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

...the BLUE LINE was reached on time... During the consolidation a few casualties were caused by machine gun fire, but otherwise, no difficulties were encountered... Three companies advanced and reached the GREEN LINE on time...the final objective... little resistance was met with in the advance and casualties were light.

On the 16th the enemy began to get the range...and shelled heavily all that day and evening and we had considerable casualties. The great drawback was the want of water, and the men suffered severely from the want of it... We were relieved in the early morning of the 17th.

Looking back over the...action, I may say that it was perhaps the best prepared and systematically carried out of any we have been in.

The toll for August 15-16: thirty-seven killed in action; nine missing in action; two-hundred one wounded in action

This Canadian-led campaign had apparently been scheduled to continue into September and even longer, but the ongoing British summer offensive in Belgium had by then been proceeding less well than expected and the High Command had been looking for reinforcements to make good its by-then exorbitant losses. The Australians – further to the south than the Canadians - and then the Canadians themselves were to be ordered to prepare to move north; thus the Canadian Corps High Command had been obliged to abandon its plans.

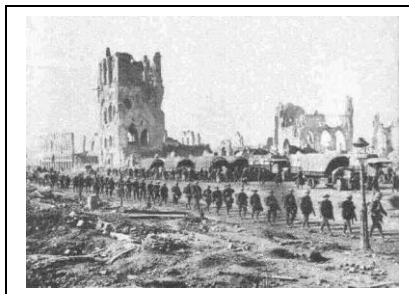
There were therefore to be no further major Canadian-inspired actions in the Lens-Béthune sectors and the troops yet again were to settle back into that monotonous but at times precarious existence of life in – and behind – the forward area. On most days, according to the Battalion War Diary, it had been the artillery which had fought it out – but, of course, the infantry was quite often the target.

Even though it had been known that the Canadians were to be transferred north into Belgium, for the 16th Battalion there would now be a nine-week interlude between the action at Hill 70 and the transfer to its next theatre of operations.

(continued)

During this time the daily grind of life in the trenches had remained the rule - with several exceptions when the unit had retired to areas behind the lines, particularly for training - although it had been becoming apparent that sports had begun to be considered more and more to be a morale booster among the troops.

In the middle of that October of 1917 the Canadians of the 16th Battalion had ordered north into Belgium and once more into the *Ypres Salient* which the unit had left some thirteen months before. Officially designated as the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign – ongoing since the last day of that July – was to come to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, having adopted that name from a small village on a ridge that had been – at least was latterly *professed* to have been - one of the British Army's main objectives.



(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*)

(Right below: *Somewhere, possibly anywhere or almost everywhere, on the battlefield of Passchendaele during the autumn of 1917. – from Illustration*)

From the time that the Canadians had entered the fray, it was to be they who had shouldered a great deal of the burden. For the week of October 26 until November 3 it was to be the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions which had spearheaded the assault, with the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions in reserve. From November 5 until the official end of the affair – November 10 - the reverse was to be true with the 2nd Division having finally entered – then bypassed - 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*)

The 16th Battalion had begun its transfer to the *Ypres Salient* on October 20 when it had marched to Houdain. It then was to march again for the next three days until it had reached the community of Ebblinghem. There it would be billeted for the next week while undertaking training.

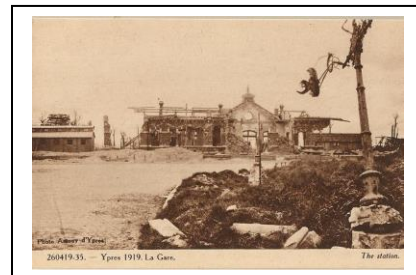


The Battalion had been ordered on its way again in the morning of the final day of October, having boarded a train which had crossed the Franco-Belgian Frontier to transport its charges to the ruins of what once had been the railway station at Ypres. The station being just outside the southern ramparts of the city, from there the Battalion had traversed the rubble of Ypres and passed by the Cloth-Hall – as in an above photo - in a north-easterly direction to arrive in the vicinity of Wieltje at half-past two in the afternoon.

(continued)

(Right: *The remnants of the railway station just outside the ramparts of Ypres where the 16th Battalion detrained – the image is from 1919 – from a vintage post-card*)

On November 2, the 16th Battalion was to move closer to the forward area – not that it has been wasting its time at Wieltje where it had furnished half its strength for working-parties. It was to do the same on the morrow, November 3: as the unit moved forward, half its strength had been employed in carrying rations and ammunition up to the forward area.



The unit on this day moved up to the Gravenstafel area, the site of an action during the Second Battle of Ypres where the newly-arrived (1st) Canadian Division had distinguished itself in the spring of 1915. The 16th Battalion had then moved into the line on the following day, its 'trench strength' by now diminished to six-hundred four *all ranks*.

Now preparations were to be made for an attack by the Battalion on the following day...on *Graf House*, which the 42nd Battalion had unsuccessfully endeavoured to take the previous night. *The ground is strewn with our dead and theirs* (Excerpt from 16th Battalion War Diary). That attack of November 4 was eventually called off and the unit contented itself with improving the trenches. On the evening of that day the 16th Battalion retired to an encampment at Wieltje.

(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 is the ground up which the Canadians fought during those weeks of October and November of 1917. – photograph from 2010*)

It moved forward again on November 7, to retire again on the morrow. There had been no infantry action but the German artillery had been ferocious: *In the afternoon our artillery opened barrage fire... This resulted in determined retaliation and out front line, support trenches and Battalion Headquarters were heavily shelled. A shell struck a funk hole... Great difficulty was experienced in getting out the wounded owing to the condition of the road. The shelling has been and continues so heavy in the area that it is impossible to bury all the dead...* Excerpt from 16th Battalion War Diary entry of November 8.



Casualties: 3 Officers killed; 1 Officer wounded; 11 O.R's killed; 38 O.R's wounded; 1 O.R. missing*.

**As in many other ways during the Great War – and the next -, officers and other ranks were almost always segregated. The biggest exception to this policy is probably in the post-war arrangement of the cemeteries where all lie in the same area and with the same headstone.*



(Preceding page: *Canadian troops – not having proper bathing facilities - performing their ablutions in the water collecting in a shell hole at some time during the last month of Passchendaele – from Le Miroir*)

Two days later the Battalion would be bussed to the south-west from the *Ypres Salient*; two days afterwards it had again boarded busses one more time for the short journey back across the border into France. On November 14 the unit had billeted close to Marqueffles, to the west of the city of Lens.

The 16th had been one of the more fortunate of the Canadian battalions to serve at Passchendaele: the total of its casualties – all in Belgium but for two wounded - its personnel transferred elsewhere, and its sick for the month of November had totalled one-hundred fifty-three.

And life had once more become the daily grind of the rigours and routines of trench warfare.

(Right: *A Canadian carrying-party – some of the work done by troops when in support and reserve – on the Lens front during the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)



(Right below: *Canadian soldiers in front of a temporary theatre peruse the attractions of an upcoming concert. – from Le Miroir*)

The month of December was to offer something a little different to all the Canadian military formations which were serving overseas at the time: the National General Election. Polls for the Army had been opened from December 1 until 17, and if the number of soldiers who voted from the 16th Battalion had been as high as those of other units recorded in some of the various war diaries, it would have been in the ninety per cent range*.



**The 16th Battalion War Diarist, however, has not seen fit to record this.*

Apparently, at the same time, the troops were to be given the opportunity to subscribe to Canada's Victory War Loan. This event the War Diarist *has* recorded: the 16th Battalion had risen to the occasion with the sum of twelve thousand dollars.

Thus the winter of 1917-1918 had passed. As had been the case of the three previous winters of the *Great War*, it was to prove to be an exceptionally quiet period, the Battalion having remained posted in the area of Lens. It was not to be until the latter part of the month of March that things had begun to stir again.

In fact it was to occur on the first day of spring.

(continued)

Perhaps not many people realize how close the Germans were to come to victory in that spring of 1918. Having transferred to the west the divisions no longer necessary on the *Eastern Front* because of the Russian withdrawal from the *Great War*, they had delivered a massive attack, Operation '*Michael*', launched on March 21. The main blow had fallen at *the Somme* in the area of, and also just to the south of, the battlefields of 1916, and it had struck for the most part on the British and Commonwealth troops there, particularly where the British Fifth Army was stationed adjacent to French forces.

(Right above: *While the Germans did not attack Lens – some sources have this to be nearby Liévin - 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 to oblige them to retain troops in the area. – from Le Miroir*)

The German advance had continued for some two weeks, having then petered out just in front of the city of Amiens. The ultimate failure of the offensive was to be the result of a combination of factors: British and Commonwealth resistance, German fatigue and logistical problems and a great deal of French co-operation with the British were the most significant.



**A second but lesser such offensive, 'Georgette', was to fall in northern France and in Belgium on April 9, in Flanders, the area where the Royal Newfoundland Regiment was serving with the British 29th Division. It also had been successful for a while, but was struggling by the end of the month.*

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



The War Diary suggests, however, that the 16th Battalion was not to be involved in the heaviest of the fighting. On March 23 all leave had been cancelled but other than that, nothing in the unit's journal suggests any sense of urgency until five days later.

On the 28th there appears suddenly to have been a frenzy of activity with the entire Battalion being transferred southward to Agnez-les-Duisans, seven kilometres or so to the westward of the city of Arras.

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



Just to the south of Arras was, in fact, the northern limit of the German attack of that spring. The 16th Battalion had been moved into the *Ronville Caves* under the city and had *stood to* on a number of occasions. However, the unit was not to be called upon and even during the days when it had moved into the trenches just to the south, there had been very little activity reported – other than the ubiquitous artillery – and few casualties incurred.

By the middle of April the unit had been withdrawn northwards whence it had come.

(Right below: *One of the several entrances into the Ronville Cave system – much of it hewn in the rock under much of Arras in 1916-1917, adding to work begun some four centuries before - almost a century after its use by Commonwealth and British troops. It was used at different times by personnel of thirty-six different Army Divisions. – photograph from 2012(?)*)

And there the 16th Battalion was to remain, in and out of the trenches, until the end of that April when it had begun a longer period posted to the rear area.

However, in the larger picture of things, by the end of the first week in April the situation to the south, on the *Amiens Front*, while still dangerously uncertain, had been becoming stable enough – and the British 3rd Army had stopped dead the enemy advance towards Arras - for the Canadians to be at least partially withdrawn from the positions to the south and south-west of Arras that they had occupied* - nor, when it came on April 9, does it appear that the German offensive to the north had warranted any move by the Canadians in that direction.



**The Canadians had been retained in situ because the enemy objectives had not been evident to the British High Command – nor, as the battle progressed, were the Germans apparently to remain faithful to their original plans. The Canadians were held back to forestall any German attempt to break through to the Channel ports and to block a possible enemy advance in the direction of the coal-fields around Béthune.*

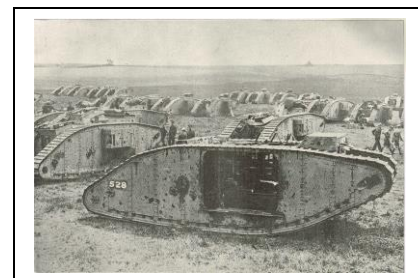
The Battalion was to undergo a period of training while serving in Brigade Support in the vicinity of the community of Anzin - and there it had been that – according to his own papers - Lieutenant Jeffery had reported *to duty* on May 16.

(Right above: *Re-enforcements for an unidentified Canadian-Scottish unit preceded by its pipe-band, on the march somewhere on the Continent – from Le Miroir*)



* * * * *

The training exercises continued until the end of the month and well into June, some of them being undertaken in conjunction with tanks – a first for the Battalion. Towards the end of that month the Battalion was transferred to the area of Écoivres-St-Éloi but as this area was also to the rear, the days' activities – of which many appear to be sports – were to be little different from those before.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *In 1917 the British formed the Tank Corps, a force which became ever stronger in 1918 as evidenced by this photograph of a tank park, once again 'somewhere in France' – from Illustration*)

(Right and right below: *The village of St-Éloi, adjacent to Écoivres, at an early period of the Great War and again 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*)



There were no casualties at all reported during the month – apparently not even during the football matches.

July 1, Dominion Day, was celebrated with the Canadian Corps in general and with several units in particular receiving visits from the Duke of Connaught – Governor General of Canada from 1911 until 1916 – and also Sir Robert Borden, the recently re-elected Canadian Prime Minister. The parades and inspections continued the following day.



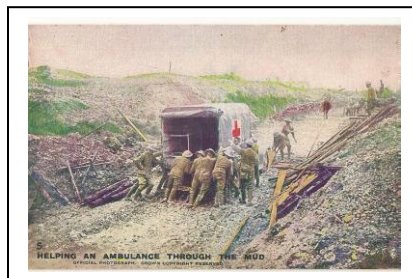
On July 3, it was back to training for the 16th Battalion for a further two weeks and it was not until the night of the 18th-19th that the unit relieved the 20th Canadian Infantry Battalion in the front lines at Tilloy. For the next ten days casualties were light, oft-times nil. Then it was decided to mount a raid.

OPERATION ORDER No. 30 – 26th July 1918

On night of Saturday July 27/28th, the 16th Battalion "Canadian Scottish", will raid the enemy trenches astride the CAMBRAI ROAD, and in posts in ORKNEY TRENCH, with the object of obtaining Identifications, Destroying the Enemy position, and raising hell generally.

NARRATIVE OF 16TH CANADIAN INFANTRY BATTALION, "CANADIAN SCOTTISH", RAID AGAINST THE ENEMY TRENCHES OPPOSITE TILLOY, JULY 27/28th 1918 - Excerpt

At 12.50 a.m., the barrage came down but on left ("Llandoverry") it fell somewhat short causing a number of casualties. In spite of this the parties under Lieuts. Meikle, Green and Jeffery reached their objectives, but only to find the enemy positions unoccupied. The party under Lieut. Meikle found one dugout which had occupants. They refused to come out and it was destroyed by a mobile charge. During the advance Lieut. Jeffery was seriously wounded and has since died.



Evacuated from the field, Lieutenant Jeffery was subsequently admitted into the 33rd Casualty Clearing Station at Ligny St-Flochel where he was deemed to be *dangerously ill*. Wounded also by gun-fire in the left buttock, the left heel and the forehead, by far the most serious injury was the one that had penetrated his abdomen.

(Preceding page: *transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

The son of the Reverend Charles Jeffery - Church of England minister who for years had served in the District of St. George-Port au Port and where he still apparently was residing at the time of his son's death – and of Mrs. June Elizabeth Jeffery, latterly of *The Parsonage*, Whitbourne, Newfoundland, he was brother to at least Frances-Edith.

Lieutenant Jeffery was also husband to Mrs. Joyce K. Jeffery (see further above) to whom he had allotted a monthly twenty-five dollars from his pay after December 1 of 1917 *.

**It would seem that before this, a monthly fifteen dollars – as of November 14 of 1916 - was going to or via a Reverend Underwood of Bridgetown, Nova Scotia.*

Lieutenant Jeffery was reported as having *died of wounds* on July 28, 1917, by the Commanding Officer of the 33rd CCS.

Edward Jeffery had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-six years and eleven months: date of birth at Bay St. George, Newfoundland – recorded on his attestation papers - October 19, 1888; on a copy of St. George's Bay Parish Records the year is 1885.

Lieutenant Edward Jeffery was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 23, 2023.

