



Driver Albert Madden (Number 560) of the 5th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Cagnicourt British Cemetery: Grave reference 2.B.10.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a glass finisher, Albert Madden appears to have left little trace of his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Québec. The only thing that may be said with any certainty is that he was resident in the city of Montréal, living with his mother at 1112, Demontigny Street, in January of 1915, for that was where and when he enlisted*.

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**His attestation papers have left unchanged the year originally recorded, 1914, but nothing else in the records of the time makes sense unless the date of his enlistment was that of January 15, 1915.*

It was on the fifteenth day of that January that he presented himself for medical examination and, having been thereupon pronounced... *fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*, was enlisted and underwent attestation. On that same day he was *taken on strength* by the 4th Section of the Divisional Ammunition Column*.

**Later, with the advent of the 2nd Canadian Division, the designation of the Canadian Division was changed, logically, to 1st Canadian Division.*

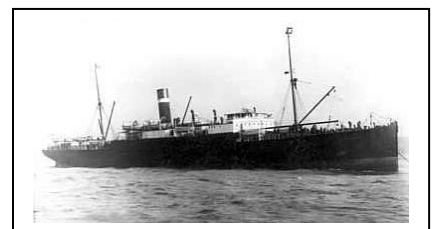
The official conclusion to the formalities of his enlistment was also brought about on that January 15 when a Captain Alfred Emile Routier declared - on paper - that... *having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

By the time of Driver Madden's enlistment the Divisional Ammunition Column was already in training on the Salisbury Plain in England. Perhaps the intention had been that he would eventually be one of a re-enforcement draft for that unit, but by the time that the 2nd Division Ammunition Column - mobilized in March of 1915 - was to take passage to the United Kingdom in May, Driver Madden was on the nominal roll of that unit - as also was the Captain Routier who had been satisfied with Driver Madden's attestation.

Driver Madden and his unit, in the interim of the four months before orders came for *overseas service*, apparently trained in the area of Montreal itself, not at Valcartier Military Camp to the north of the City of Québec, and was billeted in the Armoury of the Grenadier Guards. The War Diarist of the time felt obliged to compliment the quality of the food served to the men: *two eggs each day and chicken once a week.*

Although the SS *Corinthian* was at times engaged as a troop-carrier during the Great War, she mostly continued to service her peace-times itineraries. In Mid-May of 1915, however, she was engaged to carry elements of the Canadian Expeditionary Force across the Atlantic to Great Britain: apart from Section 2-4 of Driver Madden's unit*, on board *Corinthian* were a part of the 2nd Division Cyclist Company; the 4th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, Ammunition Column; and the 4th Canadian General Hospital.

**Section 1 and Headquarters' personnel of the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column later crossed the Atlantic in the month of June on board Caledonia.*



(Right: *The photograph of the SS Corinthian is from the wightonfamily.ca website.*)

The vessel departed Montreal on May 16 and eleven days later entered the English south-coast naval harbour of Plymouth-Devonport at six o'clock in the morning. Once having disembarked, the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column was transported by train to Otterbury Camp, several kilometres inland from the coastal town of Folkestone and also from the Canadian major military complex of Shornecliffe.

For the next number of months the whole area was to be a busy place as the 2nd Canadian Division units arriving from home were to be stationed there to train and organize while awaiting their transfer to the Continent in the coming September. It was also the opportunity for Driver Madden to make an allotment to his mother of seventeen dollars per month – a second source says twenty – from his pay, beginning on June 1.



(Right above: *Little remains of Shornecliffe 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*)

Apart from an accidental injury for which he was admitted into the Tent Hospital at Otterpool Camp on August 11 – and discharged on the following day – there appears to be little to report of those weeks spent in the county of Kent – unless a visit by the Canadian Prime Minister on July 17 is worth a mention. Training – or at least the cleaning of stables – began each day at six in the morning and had usually terminated by six in the evening. The officers at times receiving evening lectures – but then, on the other hand, one suspects that stable-cleaning at six in the morning was not on the officers' agenda.

In the middle of that September, the 2nd Canadian Division took ship across the English Channel to disembark in France. The great majority of the units, particularly the infantry, left England through the harbour of nearby Folkestone for the short two-hour crossing to the French port of Boulogne on the coast opposite.



(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*)

Not so the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column, the transport of which apparently necessitated eight trains: On September 15 it left from Otterpool and travelled via Shornecliffe to the south-coast port of Southampton. From there it embarked on three ships to sail during the hours of darkness of the following night to the port-city of Le Havre on the estuary of the River Seine. It arrived and landed there in the early morning of September 17 to again board trains that evening.



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

The commune of Berthen is in northern France, some two kilometres from the Franco-Belgian frontier and five from the larger French town of Bailleul. It is also about thirty kilometres from St-Omer which is where Driver Madden's unit alighted from the trains in the dead of night more than twenty-four hours later.

From St-Omer the Column personnel marched to nearby billets in various outlying villages and farms before, on the morrow, marching once more, to different billets in the area of the country town of Hazebroucke.

The end was in sight: over the course of the next three days, moving in assorted groups and detachments, the personnel and surviving horses – at least one had died – moved towards Berthen. It was now to be from this area that the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column would operate for the next number of months.



(Right above: A photograph of Hazebroucke as it was at some time between the Wars, likely in the 1920s according to the stamp – from a vintage post-card)

The role of the Divisional Ammunition Column – any divisional ammunition column – was to ensure a supply of all munitions, from that necessary for small arms, to the giant-calibre shells fed to the largest howitzers. Even though the artillery brigades had their own ammunition columns, these units were supplied through the divisional column whose stocks in turn were replenished by the divisional ammunition parks.

Thus, for example, Driver Madden, now of Section Three, on September 23 was busy delivering stocks to the 4th Brigade Ammunition Column of the Canadian Field Artillery, these munitions having been received the day before from the nearby 2nd Canadian Division Ammunition sub-Park. On the following day, September 24, bombs and grenades were being supplied directly to the 3rd, 4th and 5th Canadian Infantry Brigades... *as near trenches as possible.* (2nd DAC War Diary)

While still at Berthen in January of the New Year, 1916, Driver Madden was to run afoul of the authorities. Apparently on the 17th of that month he had absented himself for a period of five-and-a-half hours, a time when he was on *fatigue* and *evening stable duty*. He was duly sentenced to be confined to camp for the next five days. However, only two days afterwards, he then offended a Non-Commissioned Officer with some... *insubordinate language*. For this he earned six days of Field Punishment Number 1.

What exactly Driver Madden's duties were as a soldier of a Trench Mortar Group is not recorded. The mortars themselves were simplified guns which by 1916 had lost their original wheels so as to be able to operate from the confines of a trench. Firing a shell almost vertically these weapons could thus be used against targets that were close, even as near as the enemy positions only a matter of yards – or metres – away. And of course, they also covered No-Man's-Land.

(Right: Trench mortars of different calibres from the time of the Great War on display at the Musée de l'Armée, les Invalides, Paris – photograph from 1915)



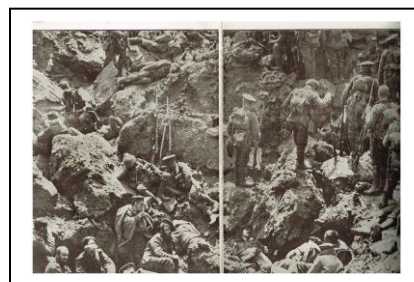
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It had not been so long before that the infantry had been responsible for the use of these weapons; now that task had fallen into the domain of the artillery units and it was the 4th Brigade, CFA – with personnel such as Driver Madden supplied by the 2nd Divisional Artillery Column – which was to maintain the three light, three medium and one single heavy battery.

The Trench Mortar Sections first came into action in the month of March, to support the 4th and 5th Canadian Infantry Brigades of the 2nd Canadian Division – the 6th Infantry Brigade was to have to wait until the month of May. The first test of the new Mortar Sections was to come in late March and early April during the *Action of St Eloi Craters*.

In early April, 1916, the 2nd Canadian Division underwent its baptism of fire in a major infantry operation. It was at a place called St-Éloi where, on the 27th day of March, the British detonated a series of mines under the German lines and then followed up with an infantry attack. The role of the newly-arrived Canadian formation was to later pursue the presumed British success, to hold and consolidate the newly-won territory.

However, the damage done to the terrain by the explosions, the often putrid weather which turned the newly-created craters into ponds and the earth into a quagmire, and then a resolute German defence, greeted the Canadian newcomers who were to begin to take over from the by-then exhausted British on April 3-4.

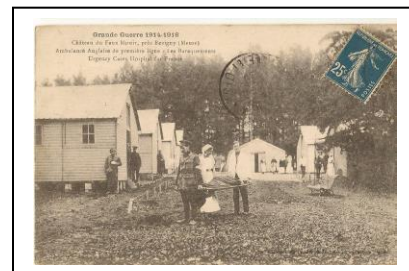


Two weeks later the Germans had won back the lost territory and had inflicted severe losses on the Canadians.

(Right above: *An attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – from Illustration*)

Unfortunately, despite the War Diaries of the 4th and 5th Brigades proving the active presence of 2nd Division Mortar Batteries during this period, they do not provide details of those actions in which they may have participated. Neither does the War Diary of the 4th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery.

Driver Madden's papers, however, provide some information about some of his personal actions during the month of May. Once again he was the victim of an accident, a lacerated wound, for which he was admitted on May 4 into one of the three stations being run by the 6th Canadian Field Ambulance at the time: at Reninghelst, Ouderdom and Dickebusch. He was forwarded from there on the next day, May 5, to the 5th Canadian Field Ambulance at Reninghelst.



Driver Madden was discharged from there on May 10, thereupon returning to his duties with the Trench Mortar Group.

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

Although it appears that Driver Madden was returned on paper* to the 2nd Division Ammunition Column on May 8-9, it also seems that in real terms he remained where he was, to continue to serve with the 2nd Division Trench Mortar Group.

**Driver Madden had been 'attached' to the Trench Mortar Group which means that he nevertheless remained on the nominal roll and as a responsibility of the unit from which he had been seconded.*

The next major confrontation with the German Army was to primarily involve units of the 3rd and 1st Canadian Divisions; although some 2nd Division units also served, according to their War Diaries, the 2nd DAC and the 4th Brigade CFA – and thus the 2nd Division Trench Mortar Group – were apparently not among that number.

On June 2 the Germans attacked the only high ground in the *Ypres Salient* which remained under British (and thus also Canadian) control. This was just to the south-east of the city of Ypres itself, the area including the village of *Hooge*, *Sanctuary Wood*, *Hill 60*, *Railway Dugouts*, *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, overran the forward Canadian positions and for a while had breached the Canadian lines. However, the Germans were unable to exploit their success and the Canadians were able to patch up their defences. The hurriedly-contrived counter-strike of the following day, delivered piece-meal and poorly co-ordinated, was a costly disaster for the Canadians.



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

On the night of June 12-13 the Canadians had tried again. On this occasion, better prepared and supported by a well-co-ordinated artillery plan, the counter-attack had been successful. Both sides were thus back much where they had begun eleven days earlier – and the cemeteries were a little fuller.

Private Madden was once more in trouble during this latter period - much more. He had been on *active service* on June 5 when he had decided to once more absent himself without leave. Being on *active service* at the time, of course, rendered the offence much more serious and he was committed to trial by Court Martial. Tried and convicted, he was awarded three months of Field Punishment Number 1, a sentence that he had only partially served when he was returned to the 2nd DAC from the Trench Mortar Group* on August 19.

**Surely this was the unit that he had abandoned on June 5, thus having been brought up before the Court Martial.*

Back with the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column on August 19, it was under that unit's watchful eye that he presumably finished his punitive sentence.

At about this time the Canadian Corps was preparing to leave Belgium* to serve at *the Somme* where the British summer offensive was not progressing as well as had been confidently predicted and where the horrendous butchery had resulted in the need for large numbers of re-enforcements. The Anzacs had already answered the call; now it was to be the turn of the Canadians.

**It was also at this time that the 4th Canadian Division was arriving in Belgium from England. It was to be the last formation to depart from the area, in late September and early October, after the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions.*

The 1st Canadian Division was the first to begin the transfer. Before eventually serving at *the Somme*, the Canadian Corps was to undergo days of training in north-west France in areas especially prepared for that purpose; as the 1st Canadian Division concluded its exercises, the 2nd Canadian Division was preparing to take its place.

On August 26 the 2nd DAC – with ammunition including almost two million rounds of .303 rifle bullets - moved westward to billets in the vicinity of the French village of Arneke. On the morrow it arrived in the training area in the early afternoon; the agenda was to include route marching, map reading and signalling instruction, but it also dealt with problems with harnessing – it must be remembered that much of the horse-power that the Column used was in fact...real horse-power – and the needs of the animals on which so much depended.

It was on September 5 that the 2nd DAC boarded trains to take them southwards. The next twenty-four hours were spent on and off trains until all sections of the unit were in the area of St-Ouen. After four days spent in the area all sections of the DAC marched eastward towards Vadencourt and to the sound of the guns. On September 11, another day's marching brought them to the large camp established at *Brickfields*, in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert – and well within range of the enemy guns.

For Driver Madden's Ammunition Column, work was to begin immediately, both in the distribution of ammunition and cleaning the facilities for both men and horses, facilities which were deemed to be in an appalling state.

One cannot overestimate the importance of horses to the logistics of all the armies of the Great War. A perusal of the 2nd DAC War Diary entries of this times finds horses a main subject on many an occasion, particularly those injured or killed, whereas other means of transportation, motor-lorries or the light railway and tramlines, not as often.



(Right above: *An unidentified ammunition column bringing forward artillery shells at some time during the 1st Battle of the Somme – from Le Miroir*)

A casualty count of the animals was also kept: for example, from October 29 to November 4 (inclusive) a total of eighty-five horses and/ or mules were either killed outright or were destroyed because of incurred wounds. This practice continued until the end of the war, the loss of animals almost always greater than the human casualty numbers.

The main ammunition dump out of which worked the 2nd DAC was located on the road leading out of Albert to Bouzincourt, a village to the north-west, perhaps some four kilometres distant. There Driver Madden's unit was to work until the last week in November when it would retire from the Somme with the other elements of the 2nd Canadian Artillery.

On November the following order was issued: *On November 28 the 2nd Canadian Divisional Artillery will proceed by route march to re-join the 2nd Canadian Division at Barlin...*

The artillery column was to proceed in a north-westerly direction to Amplier, from there to skirt the western side of the already-shattered city of Arras, then beyond, to finish four days later, on December 1, at Barlin. From there the 2nd DAC was ordered to continue on for the remainder of that day to nearby Bruay, a further five or so kilometres distant, where it was then to be billeted and stationed.

During those four days the column, moving for the most part on foot and hoof, was to have covered some eighty kilometres.

Three days after having arrived in Bruay, Driver Madden and his unit were on their way back to nearby Barlin. The Lahore Division Artillery which had been there previously had by that time moved, and the 2nd DAC moved in as now they were closer to the ammunition stocks. It was to remain there until January 23 of the New Year, 1917.

The winter of 1916-1917 for the Canadian infantry was one 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. Many of the units were withdrawn in rotation to rest – but also to train – in the rear areas of the sectors which stretched from Béthune in the north to Arras in the south, this being the part of the front for which the Canadians since 1st Somme had become responsible.



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

And if the infantry was not busy – and likewise the artillery – the same may be said for the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column. On that January 23 it had retired a further ten kilometres from the forward area to Calonne Ricouart, just to the west of Bruay. Here the unit had time not only for the daily routines but apparently also for football, boxing and road-racing – and for any newcomers, or those deemed to be a little rusty, there were riding schools.

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Private Madden's documents record him having been attached to Ammunition Dumps as of January 26 while the 2nd DAC had been stationed at Calonne Ricouart. However, the War Diary entry of that time is not precise as to whether he was still based with the 2nd DAC or whether he had been transferred to another locale*.

**In fact the War Diary records nothing at all for that date, the page being left blank for January 26.*

All this reprieve from work at or near *the front* came to an end twenty-five days later, on February 17, when the unit was ordered to report to Cambligneul, a four-hour march away, and in the direction of the forward area. There it took over an area which had been vacated earlier on that day by another divisional ammunition column. The War Diarist was not impressed by the state of the facilities that the 2nd DAC had inherited: *Billets & lines left by 3rd CDAC were found to be in a filthy condition. There are no horse standings and accommodation for men is very poor.*

The three weeks following saw re-enforcements report *to duty* – horses, mules and men – as well as the equipment that their arrival necessitated. The numbers involved suggest that the 2nd DAC had been up until that time operating well under strength.

On March 1 Driver Madden reported to the 5th Canadian Field Ambulance, also stationed at Cambligneul. He was suffering from scabies, a condition brought about by the presence of lice – hardly an uncommon thing during the Great War. Once treated he was forwarded on March 2 to the 4th Corps Rest Station and from there was discharged back *to duty* with his unit two days later again.

March 8 saw most of the 2nd DAC on the move once more, on this occasion to Gauchin-Légal five kilometres to the north-west. Apparently the War Diarist was now much pleased with the accommodation, at least for the horses which were by then housed in the stables of the nearby chateau. The tasks of the moment were twofold: supplying horses for the construction of a light railway and the ongoing creation of an ammunition dump in the rear area in the vicinity of La Targette.

Only days later, on March 14, Driver Madden was once more in trouble: for having been *Absent Without Leave* during a two-and-a-half hour period during the afternoon of March 13 he was awarded five days of Field Punishment Number 1, the severity of the sentence likely because he was on *active service* at the time. Where exactly the incident occurred is not certain, his service forms simply having recorded...*field*.

Apparently the wintry conditions were making life difficult for the horses and mules upon which much of the transport depended, to the point that, after one ten-day period with no respite, the Commanding Officer was led to appeal for more motor transport. There seems to have been no immediate action taken by the authorities.



(Right above: *Canadian gunners at work manoeuvring their gun in the mud: an example of the conditions during the winter of 1916-1917 – from Illustration*)

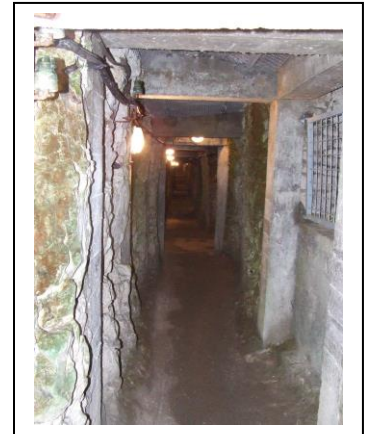
On April 9 of 1917 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it was to be the most expensive 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 was to prove an overall disappointment, the French offensive was a disaster.

(Above right: *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, stormed the slope of Vimy Ridge, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.



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

(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4th or 3rd Division, equipped – or 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 Canadian War Records and Illustration*)



The War Diary of the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column records little of the unit’s activities of April 9 except to note... *the Battery Wagon Lines moving forward on account of capture of the VIMY RIDGE.*

However, the following excerpts from an appendix to the War Diary for the month of April gives an idea of the work involved for those endeavouring to keep the necessary supplies of munitions flowing to the forward area: *Prior to the attack on VIMY RIDGE April 9th, Sections of “A” Echelon to fill up 4th, 5th and 6th Brigades C.F.A. to 1500 rounds 18-pdr per gun and 1200 per 4.5” howitzer. Positions were also constructed and filled with ammunition for 5th Divisional Artillery...*



(Preceding page: *A light railway under construction at Vimy Ridge: used to transport ammunition (see below) and other necessary supplies to the forward area, it would also then evacuate wounded away from the battle-field. – from Canadian War Records and Illustration)*

The above tasks, in addition to keeping up ordinary expenditures proved very heavy during March and April. The congestion of traffic was such...that teams were frequently out as long as ten hours making one trip from dumps to guns. The work with the bad weather and exposure resulted in very heavy evacuation – particularly from March 24th to April 29th when weather conditions were at their worst. Evacuations for debility in March, 138, in April, 164. In April a total of 40 mules and 178 horses were evacuated.

After April 9th, the ammunition situation changed. An attempt was made by Canadian Corps Light Railways to send ammunition...on the LENS-ARRAS Road. The cars were hauled by mules or steam tractors to...Dump on...road, and from there taken on by gasoline tractor. ...Most often the railway was not available all the way...and ammunition had to be off loaded... From there it was pushed by Infantry – a very tedious process and had to be unloaded frequently when meeting cars of wounded... 12000 rounds of (artillery) ammunition were put into this dump.

There had been, on the first days, April 9 and 10, the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – this was the goal of every offensive, the highly-touted, and highly unlikely, *breakthrough* – but such a follow-up of the previous day's success proved to be logistically impossible as per the above War Diary excerpts. Thus the Germans were gifted the time to close the breach and the conflict once more reverted to one of inertia.

One of the dangers of working with live ammunition is, of course, that it is somewhat dangerous. Not only does it explode when fired and when it hits enemy targets, but it also does so if and when struck by enemy gun-fire.

Excerpt from 2nd DAC War Diary entry for May 1: *In the afternoon heavy shelling occurred... One shell struck a corner of the Ammunition Dump and detonated a pile of 18 pdr, with the result that other piles caught fire and heavy shelling was directed at the Dump. All tar...and Camouflage were burned, the Camouflage proving very inflammable. No men of this unit were injured, though one shell struck their dug out. Officers and men took refuge in the cellar of a ruined house. The house was struck and several infantrymen there killed. Ammunition was destroyed...*

Those working in the dumps were not always that lucky.

In the meantime, Driver Madden had been docked three days' pay for his absence on April 15 at an early-morning parade.

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, a success which was not to be repeated for another sixteen months.

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There now followed a three-month period during which the Canadian Corps re-enforced, re-organized and even, at times, rested. The Canadians were by this time responsible for those sectors of the Western Front from in front of Béthune in the north stretching south as far as the city of Arras.

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 reserves - from this area, it had also ordered operations to take place at the sector of the front running north-south from Béthune to Lens.



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

(Right above: *An example of the conditions under which the troops were ordered to fight in the area of Lens during the summer of 1917 – from Miroir*)

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

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



(Right: *This gentle slope which rises 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*)



Objectives were 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, it was expected that the Germans would endeavour to retrieve it and so it proved; on the 16th several strong counter-attacks were launched against the Canadian positions, positions that by this time had been transformed into defensive strong-points.

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



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

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(Right below: *Canadians soldiers walking in the captured rear area of Hill 70 during the days after the battle – from Le Miroir*)

Yet even though it was to be the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions ordered to undertake this task, the War Diary of the 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column appears not to exhibit anything other than the routine of a unit withdrawn well to the rear area. On August 15, the day of the attack, the entry is brief: *1 OR on leave. 3 OR to First Army Rest Camp. 6 OR from leave.*



This Canadian-led campaign had apparently 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 its by-then exorbitant losses. The Australians and New Zealanders – further to the south than the Canadians - and then the Canadians themselves, all were ordered to prepare to move north; thus the Canadian Corps was 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 was the artillery which fought it out – maybe so but, of course, the infantry was quite often the target.

Some of the personnel of the 2nd DAC were to be sent on different courses during this period while new officers and men arrived and others were transferred to other units. Many were also granted leave: the United Kingdom and the French capital city were usually the destinations.



(Right: *A view of the area of Marble Arch, London – in fact, in the City of Westminster – just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Driver Madden's turn came on September 4 when he was granted ten days' leave. There is no record of where he was to spend this time but it may well have been Paris as two weeks was usually the time allotted for a return journey across the English Channel. He reported back *to duty* on September 14, in time to say his farewells before completing a transfer to the 5th Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery on September 23.

* * * * *

The 5th Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery was also an element of the 2nd Divisional Artillery. It had sailed from Canada from the port of Halifax on August 10 of 1915 on board the Royal Mail Ship *Metagama* to arrive in the English south-coast naval port of Plymouth-Devonport eight days later.



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(Preceding page: *The photograph of the SS Metagama is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries.*)

The unit had then been transported the same *Otterpool Camp* that Driver Madden had known, reporting it to be most insanitary. There it would remain undergoing organization and training for the following three months before being transferred to *Napier Barracks* in Shorncliffe itself. There the Brigade was to await the order to proceed overseas once more, on this occasion the short distance across the English Channel to the Continent.

While the infantry battalions, the 4th Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery and other units of the 2nd Canadian Division had landed in France in the middle of September, the 5th Brigade, C.F.A., was not to do so until mid-January. On the 17th of that month it was taken by train from Shorncliffe to Southampton from where it sailed later that day to the French port-city of Le Havre.

It had been apparently only days before that the unit had received its full complement of ordnance, comprising both field guns and howitzers*. The 5th Brigade was to be equipped with 18 – pdr (*pounder*) field guns and also 4.5 – inch howitzers, both standard weapons of the British and Commonwealth forces at the time.

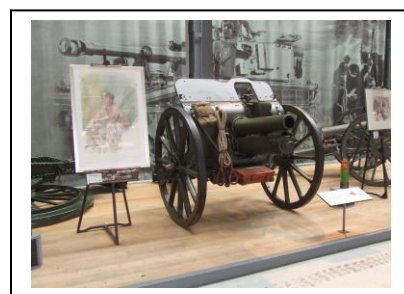
**Howitzers are cannon that have a high trajectory enabling them to shoot over intervening obstacles onto a target not far distant. ‘Guns’ with their longer barrels, on the other hand, have flat trajectories and thus a longer range.*

(Right below: *The British 18-pounder field gun was the mainstay of the British and Commonwealth artillery during the course of the Great War. – photograph from 2011(?) at the Imperial War Museum, London*)

Having travelled in the main by motor transport, the 5th Brigade was reported as having... *arrived complete...* in the vicinity of the northern French community of Thieushouk on January 21. Three days later again the unit was receiving instruction from the by-then veterans of the Royal Artillery posted in the area. By the first week in February, the various batteries of the Brigade were relieving their counter-parts of other units.



The sector for which the 2nd Canadian Division became responsible was to the south of the city of Ypres, a part of the front leading towards the Franco-Belgian frontier. It was to remain posted there until the end of August of 1916, much of this time being spent engaged in duels with the enemy guns and supporting local actions by Canadian and British Infantry forces. However, there were two occasions on which the fighting was more than just part of a daily routine.



(Right above: *A British 4.5-inch howitzer of Great War vintage stands in ‘Firepower’, the Royal Artillery museum at Woolwich Arsenal. – photograph from 2011(?)*)

As related on a previous page, the 2nd Canadian Division had undergone its baptism of fire in a major infantry operation at St-Éloi, an action which, although initiated by the British and subsequently supported by the Canadians, had terminated, at best, in a costly stalemate.

One of the factors which had carried the latter days for the Germans was that of both the quality and quantity of their artillery, both of which had increased as the days passed. It was a lesson that was soon to be absorbed by the Canadians and responded to in the not-too-distant future.

In the meantime, on April 8, the 2nd Canadian Divisional Artillery – thus the 5th Brigade – had been relieved from the St-Éloi area for a period of four days before it had then travelled just to the north to relieve the units of the 3rd Canadian Division in the adjacent sector*. Posted into the vicinity of Dickebusch, to the south-west of Ypres, the 5th Brigade was still close enough to St-Éloi to provide support when called upon.

**By this time the newly-arrived 3rd Canadian Division was responsible for the south-east sector of the Ypres Salient (see below) and the 1st Canadian Division for the sector between the 3rd and 2nd Canadian Divisions.*

The months of April and May as reported in the 2nd Brigade War Diary had been routine and quiet, any action by the guns being mostly of a local nature and undertaken by a single gun or battery*. Once again counter-battery and harassing fire, retaliatory shelling and the occasional infantry-assisting barrage were the order of each day.

**Although the Brigade War Diary records the enemy as by now routinely delivering gas in artillery shells, some of it was reported as no longer being the familiar chlorine. It was likely phosgene – sometimes delivered with chlorine - at the time, mustard gas not making its appearance until 1917.*

(Right: An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle of 2nd 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)

Some of the Canadian guns had been sited on the ramparts of Ypres from where, in a flat country, they were dominant. The only high ground in *the Salient* was in the area for which the 3rd Canadian Division was responsible, that of place-names such as *Hooze, Sanctuary Wood, Railway Dugouts, Hill 60, Maple Copse and Mount Sorrel.*

As related in previous pages, on June 2 the Germans had attacked that high ground.

(Right above: *Some of the ramparts at Ypres, wide enough to walk on and on which there is even sited a cemetery: The interiors are deep and hollow; in fact they provided shelter for A & B Companies of the Newfoundland Regiment in 1916. – photograph from 2010*)



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

The area of Mount Sorrel had been the area of responsibility of the 3rd Canadian Division that the Germans had attacked, and it had thus been troops of that formation which had been the most involved. The situation nonetheless had become critical enough for units of the adjacent 1st Canadian Division to become involved as well as some units of the 2nd Canadian Division.



As for the artillery, the ordnance of the 2nd Canadian Division had begun to engage the enemy in a now-coordinated effort as of June 5: *...the batteries of 5th C.F.A., if not engaged on their own front, will fire on enemy's trenches as follows...* - there follow two lists of intended targets for each battery, each list dependent on different orders to be despatched from the 2nd Division Headquarters. With little respite, the guns were worked for the next nine days, the enemy artillery responding in kind.



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

(Right: *A century later, reminders of a violent past close to the site of Hill 60 to the south-east of Ypres where the German artillery blew the Canadian positions to pieces in that June of 1916. Today it is an area protected by the Belgian Government against everything except the whims of nature. – photograph from 2014*)



On June 12, in preparation for what was to prove to be the final action of the confrontation, the 5th Brigade participated in a ten-hour bombardment of the enemy positions – although apparently not in the final short barrage preceding the attack just after one o'clock in the morning of June 13.

The German artillery was still active for the forty-eight hours following the successful – and perhaps surprisingly rapid – Canadian storming of the enemy positions. Also was the 5th Brigade again, now in anticipation of possible German counter-attacks. However, those that materialized were few in number - and fewer again had any success.

During the early summer period the personnel of the 5th Brigade settled into the daily routines and rigours of the life of an artilleryman. Apparently towards the end of July a new formation comprising five batteries of the Canadian Field Artillery – the 15th, 18th, 20th, 23rd and 28th – was initiated. Having been designated as *Dodd's Group* – after Lieutenant-Colonel Dodds, its Commanding Officer – it appears to have supplanted the 5th Brigade, C.F.A., as its War Diary has replaced that of the latter-named unit for much of the month of August, 1916. Its Headquarters were now further to the south, at La Clytte.

On August 22, what had been until that time a quiet period for *Dodd's Group* was interrupted by the reception of Operational Order No. 1. It may well have also sounded the end of *Dodd's Group* itself as from this point onward the War Diary reverts to documenting the efforts of the 5th Brigade, C.F.A.: *...the 1st Artillery Group, composed of Divisional Headquarters...5th Brigade, C.F.A., 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column, and Headquarters, Divisional Train, will march to ZERMEZEELE on the 26th...*

Then: *The 1st Artillery Group consisting of 5th Brigade C.F.A. and 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column will move to Second Army Training Area on August 27th...*

For whatever the reason, Dodd's Group had been an entity a bare month.

As had been ordered, the 5th Brigade reached its destination of Poulincove, over the frontier into north-west France, where it had taken over what were to be its billets for the succeeding nine days.

Training was to continue apace, not only for the human personnel but also for the animals on which the unit depended for much of its mobility: exercise rides, signalling, harness overhauling, camouflage, manoeuvring guns and wagons, and co-operation with aircraft were all a part of that short period.

On Tuesday, September 5, the 5th Brigade placed its guns, battery after battery at three-hour intervals, on board trains for the journey south to Auxi-le-Château. Headquarters and other personnel entrained later on that night. As each train arrived at its destination, the guns, horses and equipment were unloaded, whereupon the batteries and personnel proceeded to the community of St. Ouen – five hours march distant - there to billet in a large meadow – the officers in the village - for the night.

The first stage of the transfer to *the Somme* was complete.

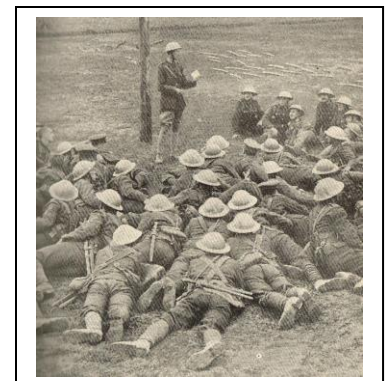
By that September of 1916, the *First Battle of the Somme* had been ongoing for two months. It had begun with the disastrous attack of July 1, an assault having cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the short span of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

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



On that first day of *1st 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 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment which was to lose so heavily on that morning at Beaumont-Hamel.

(continued)



(Preceding page: *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) on September 15, 1916. – from The War Illustrated*)

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

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



The next day was an event rare in the calendar of the 5th Brigade – an apparent day of rest. The two following, however, were otherwise: on the 8th the Brigade marched to Vadencourt; and on the morrow the exercise was continued with the unit arriving ten in the morning at the large military *Brickfields Camp*, established in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert. The date was September 9.



By the same time the next day, the batteries of the Brigade were busy registering and even, later in the day, duelling with their German counter-parts.

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

It continued thus for the four following days but with an emphasis more and more on *special tasks* in preparation for the upcoming attack. At times such as that, particular attention was given to known hostile artillery and machine-gun positions, to observation balloons, to approach routes behind the lines – to impede the arrival of re-enforcements – and to cutting the enemy wire.



(Right above: *Gunners, likely British, in action with their eighteen-pounder guns at the Somme at some time during the summer of 1916 – from Le Miroir*)

The Brigade War Diary offers the reader positive entries a propos the work of September 15 to 17, perhaps because the unit was supporting one of the very few attacks of the day which might be termed a success, the attack and capture of the village of Courcelette by troops of the 2nd Canadian Division. Unfortunately, most other diaries of the day, of both Canadian and British forces, were unable to do likewise.

The advance in general had not been the hoped-for success and, even where it had been, it was at an exorbitant cost.

The attacks were to continue until late November, some of the smaller *nibble and hold* variety, some of a more general nature. The result was that *some* territory was wrested from the Germans – an average of three kilometres along the thirty-kilometre front, to include nothing of any military value - but always at a high price: the battle to achieve a breakthrough – always a tenuous possibility at best – became simply a battle of attrition.

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



In-between the attacks, a typical 5th Brigade War Diary entry – this one of October 16 – reads as follows: *Enemy fire normal with a large number of lachrymatory shells around Battery Positions. S.O.S. from our own front during night & also from our Right & Left. Batteries effectively replied. Hostile batteries shelled. Greater activity than normal from hostile aircraft.*

While the confrontation at *the Somme officially* drew to a close with the capture of the village of Beaumont* by the Scottish 51st Highland Division in mid-November of that 1916, further attacks followed and it was not until November 26 that the 5th Brigade was to be withdrawn from its positions, headquarters at the time having been based in the vicinity of the ruins of Pozières. During the period of eleven weeks since its arrival at *the Somme* the 5th Brigade War Diary reports its batteries having been constantly active and as having in particular provided barrage and other support for Canadian attacks on October 1, 8 and 21, then November 10 and 18.

**Beaumont was one-half of the commune of Beaumont-Hamel, Hamel being a community which at the time was behind the British lines. The site of the Newfoundland Regiment's attack on July 1, 1916, was on ground between the two villages.*



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

On November 26 the 5th Brigade to make its way westwards on foot. Subsequently turning northwards it was to pass to the west of the city of Arras and beyond, in the next number of days via such places as Raincheval, Doullens, Frévent, St-Pol and Monchy-Breton before arriving at Ruitz, Magnicourt and Houdain where the Brigade was to be billeted and stabled.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The city of Arras was to endure four years of bombardment during the Great War; the Grand'Place (Grande Place) already looked like this by March of 1917 and more was to follow. – from Le Miroir*)

The 5th Brigade was now in a part of the Western Front which was to become the responsibility of the Canadian Corps. This extended from the area of Béthune in the north of France to the region of Arras in the south and it was in various locales of these sectors such as Hersin, Aix-Noulette and Amettes that the unit was to pass much of the winter of 1916-1917.

Amettes was a training area and the 5th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, remained there until February 15 when it then moved south-eastward to Mont St-Éloi, closer to the forward area and also within range of the longer-ranged German guns. There it... *started building 54 gun pits and hauling 54000 rounds of ammunition for pending operations.*



(Right above and right: *The village of St-Éloi at an early period of the Great War and a century later - The ruins of the Abbaye St-Éloi – destroyed in 1783 – are visible in both images. – from Le Miroir and (colour) from 2016*)



There was... *night firing as usual.* And towards the end of the unit's posting to Mont St-Éloi a great deal of time – and ammunition – was expended in cutting the wire in front of the German positions.

One month later the 5th Brigade moved forward once more, on this occasion to La Targette. The first three entries of the Brigade War Diary for this new posting, those for March 12, 13 and 14 include the following remarks: *Our Batteries at work strengthening battle stations – Work on Battle Positions – OPs (observation posts) reconnected and located for Battle Zone... Something was in the offing.*

The preparations continued apace and accelerated during the days that followed and were to include support for several raids, some at battalion strength, on German positions. These actions also gave an opportunity to the Canadian gunners to perfect the new tactics that were to be imminently adopted, not only on April 9, the day of the attack on Vimy Ridge – and the first day of the *Battle of Arras* – but as already seen in previous pages, in the days preceding the attack as well.

Several of the War Diaries of the attacking infantry battalions credit much of the success of the day of the storming of Vimy Ridge to the newly-conceived practices of the artillery forces and to the carefully-planned and rehearsed co-operation between gunners and foot-soldiers.



(Preceding page: *Canadians occupying the third line of the German defences on Vimy Ridge – from Canadian War Records and Illustration*)

All of this artillery action was, of course dependent on the stocks of munitions and other supplies being available when needed. The Brigade War Diarist makes mention of this: *From Zero minus 13 to Zero day the Group fired 45,320 rounds 18 pr. and 11,003 rounds 4.5 How. A further 18000 rounds being expended to cover the assault on Zero day, and reserve of some 12.000 kept in hand for counter attacks. This was all hauled by our own horses from Dumps in vicinity of Gran Servins & Camblain l'Abbé. At the same time teams were bring up material to make pits strong enough to keep guns in action. This long haul on 9 miles each way was very hard on horseflesh and despite greatest attention all horses lost condition and many died...*

It may be remembered the Driver Madden had been engaged in work such as this – and had served at this time and in the same battle – six months before his transfer to the 5th Brigade, C.F.A..



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

Excerpt from 5th Brigade War Diary entry for April 11: *Wednesday One third of the Brigade stuck in the mud and mire on what used to be road across No Man's Land from Neuville St Vaast to Thelus. Many horses down in Shell Holes. Pioneers instead of digging out the road had thrown clay to fill in holes... Heavy snowfall during night. 20 horses die from exhaustion and exposure.*

As already seen elsewhere, the success of those first days was not to be repeated for well over a year. The Canadians had done extraordinarily well at Vimy Ridge: elsewhere the British and the Anzacs (*Australians and New Zealanders fighting in a common Army Corps*) had not fared as well. And on April 14, the Newfoundland Regiment had suffered a further beating – despite winning nine medals (see further below) – in an ill-conceived attack at a place called Monchy-le-Preux.

By May 15, the date of the official end of the *Battle of Arras*, the 5th Brigade had moved into prepared positions in the vicinity of the Lens-Arras railway line where it passed – and still passes - to the east of the village of Thélus. It was soon to again move to other locations, but the next three months, in contrast to what had passed just before, were to be quiet and mostly uneventful.



(Right above: *The village of Souchez as it already was in 1915, two years before the 5th Brigade, C.F.A., was stationed there at the end of June, 1917 – from Le Miroir*)

(continued)

Uneventful, of course, does not preclude artillery duels, harassing fire both delivered and received, infantry support and, at this point in the War, increased activity by enemy aircraft – all of them perils of the artilleryman’s daily lot.

As has been previously recounted, the period from the middle of that May – subsequent to the Battle of Arras – until the second week in August had not been an overly demanding time for the Canadian Corps, with many units being allowed the luxury of as much rest as war-time ever permits and, as will be remembered, it was not until mid-August that the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions were to be called upon to deliver an attack in the northern outskirts of the city and mining-centre of Lens.



(Right above: *Canadian troops advancing to the front lines loaded with equipment for upcoming operations – from Le Miroir*)

In preparation for the storming of Hill 70, the necessary artillery had been organized into two groups, the 5th Brigade being in the Right Group, to be responsible not only for a contribution to the opening barrages, but also for the subsequent protection of the right flank of the attacking troops. Firing was then to continue all during the night of August 15-16 to dissuade any enemy troop build-ups during that time.

But even before the issue of these orders the 5th Brigade had already been in situ, engaging enemy artillery positions and other identified defences.

At 4.25 AM barrage was opened as per Rt. Group O.O. 78. General hostile batteries replied promptly but the retaliating barrage though growing intense in places was very scattered and in general weak. After completion of barrages the batteries fired throughout the day on enemy movement in trenches and in the open thus helping to kill the counter-attacks which the enemy attempted to make. Many casualties were caused during this work. All objectives were secured by 2nd Can Division heavy casualties were inflicted and prisoners taken... Shortly after noon enemy commenced shelling our newly-won trenches but this never became intense... (from 5th Brigade War Diary entry for August 15, 1917)

The next few days were spent by the infantry in the consolidation of the former German positions and in the establishment of new ones. The artillery answered the several S.O.S. calls requested by the infantry and broke up counter-attacks as well as preventing their build-up. By August 20, *normal activity* was being reported and, at the end of the month the Brigade was ordered to retire to the adjacent community of Lievin, five kilometres to the west of Lens.



(Right above: *Canadian troops under fire in the Lens Sector during the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)

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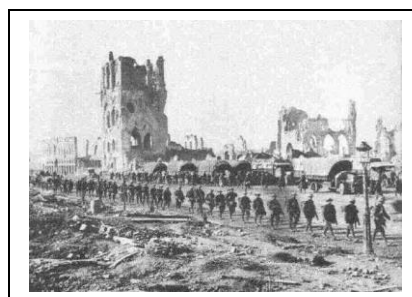
The unit was still active, engaging the enemy for the next two weeks before moving once more, further back to the vicinity of Aix-Noulette during the period of September 11 to 13. The Brigade was to retire once more in the next few days, on the 16th. A week later again, Driver Madden reported *to duty*.

* * * * *

On that September 23 the 5th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery, was stationed in a position known as *Fort George*, in a southern sector of Canadian responsibility and not far removed from Vimy. This was, of course, the same area in which Driver Madden's 2nd DAC had been serving since his new unit, the 5th Brigade, was also an element of the 2nd Canadian Division.

Driver Madden's 5th Brigade was to remain in this position for a further month, until October 23 when it was called north to serve for a second time in the Kingdom of Belgium. It had been some seven weeks since the Canadian Corps had been advised that it was to be called to there to re-enforce the current British – and by this time Anzac – efforts underway in that theatre: now it was to do so.

Officially designated as the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the British campaign – ongoing since the last day of that July – was to become better known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was – at least was latterly *professed* to have been - one of the British Army's main objectives.



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



From the time that the Canadians entered the fray, it was they who shouldered a great deal of the burden. For the week of October 26 until November 13 it was to be the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions which spearheaded the assault, with the 1st and 2nd Divisions in reserve.

From November 5 until the official end of the affair – November 10 - the reverse was true, with the 2nd Division (see below) finally entering 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*)



(continued)

On that October 23, Driver Madden's 5th Brigade marched from its positions to the Arras-Béthune Road and turned northwards. By the evening of that day it had covered the twenty-five or so kilometres from there to the community of Annezin just north of Béthune itself. There, in and in the farms surrounding Annezin, it billeted for the night, to be on the road once more at seven o'clock on the following morning.

During the next three days the Brigade moved via Hazebrouck, Godeswaersvelde and Steenvoorde, and then as far as the Belgian village of Vlamertinghe, just west of Ypres and where it was to spend that night of October 26-27. The unit's War Diarist had apparently already served in the area of Ypres, the 5th Brigade having been stationed for some twelve months in 1915 and 1916, and had formed his own opinion of it: *Passed into Belgium...Not glad to be back.*

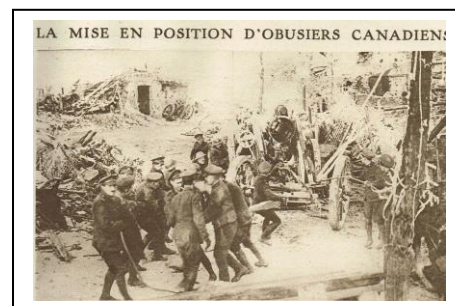
Several officers had already preceded the Brigade as far as the forward area to the east of the city of Ypres to arrange the imminent relief of the British 66th Divisional Artillery by the Canadians. The relief of October 27, however, was perhaps to be less well-organized than the newcomers might have expected: *All Battery positions were under heavy fire when 5th Brigade parties arrived and no-one could be found to be taken over from. Guns were supposed to be taken over in situ. Some were knocked over while relief was in progress – some were bogged in the mud. Ammunition was scattered by shell-fire. D23 Battery had to move guns at once.*

On the next day, things having been organized as well as conditions would allow, the unit began to register its guns and then delivered barrage and harassing fire in... *Preparation for second phase of Canadian assault on Passchendaele.*



(Right above: *Canadian artillery troops manoeuvring a heavy gun into position during Passchendaele, never an easy job – from Le Miroir*)

A shortage of ammunition caused problems; the conditions which the ammunition columns, mostly pack animals, had to endure were horrendous: on that same day, October 29, on a single mission, one such train was to lose one-third of its animals.



(Right above: *A second photograph, possibly of the same personnel and of the same gun being positioned – if so, or even if not, the location is still the field at Passchendaele – from Le Miroir*)

At ten minutes to six o'clock in the still-dark morning hours of October 30, the artillery of the combined Canadian and British forces let fly with a rolling barrage to support the advance of the infantry. It was slow, advancing but fifty yards every four minutes, a pace apparently dictated by the hard-going through mud and by the presence of the German pill-box defences.

(continued)

Later in the day it was necessary for the guns to dissuade and deter enemy counter-attacks, and then to answer the SOS calls from the infantry. All during this time the German artillery was retaliating with shrapnel, high-explosive and, on this day according to the War Diary, with Yellow Cross – mustard – gas.

The plight of the infantry may have crossed the mind of the Brigade War Diarist on this date, a thought which he committed to his journal. He describes the conditions that the foot-soldiers were more likely to encounter than would those who served the guns: *Owing to very muddy state of ground roads have to be made of planks and more resemble bridges. No communication trenches are possible trench mats being spread over surface of ground. A step off these in places takes you up to the neck in soft slime. These conditions make it easy for the army to keep roads and approaches under fire and this he does day and night and our casualties from this source very heavy...*

A further attack was delivered on November 6, the artillery providing a barrage at six in the morning ...for storming of Passchendaele Ridge. The objectives of the day were taken in the space of four-and-a-half hours after which the guns turned to the protection of the former German positions now in Canadian hands.



(Right above: *Canadian troops from an unidentified battalion at Passchendaele having taken shelter in a ditch just prior to an attack – from Le Miroir*)

On the six following days the artillery repeated the same full-scale barrage at about the same hour, although it appears that any further attacks were of a more local rather than co-ordinated nature. But at six in the morning of November 13 – according to some sources, three days after the official end of the battle – the cannons were silent, as they were for the following mornings as well.



The cost to the unit at Passchendaele had been twenty-one *killed in action* and one-hundred sixty-one *wounded*, all ranks.

(Right above: *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*)

As for the guns: *19 – 18 pdr guns & three 4.5 hwrs (howitzers) damaged and destroyed by shellfire. All guns and hows were pulled out of mud...for repair. Some were condemned... Many guns salvaged which had been left as bogged by Bde taken over from*.*

**It was usually a point of honour for one's guns never to be abandoned. If they ever were, they were to be disabled.*

Fifty horses had also been casualties.

(continued)

Driver Madden and the 5th Brigade retired from the field at Passchendaele on November 23, moving back to the community of Vlaminghe where billets were provided as they had been more than three weeks prior. On the morrow the Brigade marched south and crossed the frontier into France.

On that evening of November 24 the billets were in the vicinity of Hazebrouck: three days later the retirement to its final destination was complete as the unit marched into the community of Olhain, well to the west of the city of Lens. There the Brigade's different components were dispersed to various locations in the area.



(Right above: *The caption reads: A sector held by the Canadians. It is likely a part of the city and mining sector of Lens or, if not, one of the surrounding smaller centres which were in Canadian hands by early 1918. Two officers explore the vestiges of the place. – from Le Miroir*)

By the beginning of December the 5th Brigade was back in action again, in the area of Thélus on the southern end of the ridge at Vimy. After a two-day respite on December 21-22 it was on the move to the village of Ames, further to the north, some nine hours' march distant. There the entire 2nd Canadian Division was to be spending time in Army Reserve.

The final days of 1917 were spent by the 5th Brigade in training, with the occasional inspection thrown in. There was a church service in a packed local school-house on Christmas Day and various dinners before New Year's Eve by which time some personnel had departed on specialized courses, and a howitzer battery team had gone as instructors to the Canadian Artillery School.

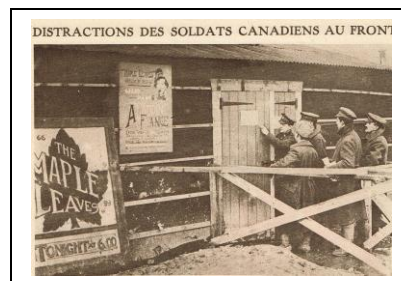
In fact, Driver Madden had also departed briefly during that month of December: on Christmas Eve, to be precise. He had incurred contusions to his abdomen in another accident and was admitted into the 5th Canadian Field Ambulance, also at or in the vicinity of Ames, on Christmas Day itself. The problem was likely none too serious as, on Boxing Day, he found himself on his way back to his unit to report *to duty*, which he did on the 27th, St. Stephen's Day.

Curiously, perhaps, the Brigade War Diarist omitted in December to note what might have been supposed to be an important occasion, even in the course of a war: the Canadian National Election. During that month, Canada's military was afforded the opportunity to cast its votes; it was also at the same time encouraged to buy War Bonds, thus helping to pay for the conflict in which it was fighting. One must presume this neglect to surely have been simply an oversight on the part of the Diary's author.

Driver Madden and his 5th Brigade were stationed at Ames until January 17 of the New Year, 1918. During this period, training, as might be expected, had occupied much of the time. However, inspections, church parades and at least one bath and one concert were recorded in the War Diary as having helped to pass the time away.

(continued)

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



On January 14 had come orders that the 5th Brigade was to relieve the 4th Brigade in the Méricourt and Avion Sectors to the south of Lens. Thus, after a two-day march, on January 20 the unit found itself established in the area of Givenchy-en-Gohelle, a village which lies in the shadow of Vimy Ridge.

The succeeding five weeks comprised for the most part routine artillery work in which it appears that the 5th Brigade was substantially more aggressive than its German counterpart. There appears to have been just one solitary raid undertaken by the Canadian infantry during that time, an action for which the Brigade had been employed in the habitual wire-cutting and barrages. It went in on February 18 and was deemed by all to have been a success... *the Artillery barrage reported excellent by the infantry.*

Four days afterwards, on February 22, the 5th Brigade had in its turn been relieved, withdrawn to the area of the La Targette – Mont St-Éloi Road and Haillicourt. It was to be a three-week period comprising inspections and routine training before a final three days, March 11,12 and 13, of intensive training in new techniques of gun-laying.

On March 15 Driver Madden's unit was on the march once more, albeit a trek of only one-and-a-half hours, from Haillicourt to Sains-en-Gohelle, west of Lievin, itself west of Lens. The relief completed, once again the daily routines of life in the artillery became the norm, the area reported for the most part as being... *generally quiet.*

Unit March 22, that is, when things became a little more frenzied.

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, they delivered a massive attack, Operation 'Michael', launched on March 21. The main blow fell on 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 there.

(Right below: *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 the result of a combination of factors: British and Commonwealth resistance, fatigue, logistical problems and French co-operation with the British were the most significant.



(continued)

**A second but lesser such offensive, 'Georgette', fell 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 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)

The 5th Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery was, of course, not serving at the time in those sectors directly affected by the German attack, although there was to be an accelerated artillery and aerial activity in the area to keep the British uncertain of their intentions. On the evening March 21 there was nothing recorded by the Brigade War Diarist to indicate that any news of the gravity of the situation to the south had reached the Canadian Corps High Command.

But by the following day the 5th Brigade, C.F.A, Headquarters had been apprised: orders for relief were cancelled as also were orders for a planned raid in the Lens Sector on March 24; the Brigade was then ordered to withdraw on that night and to continue the march on the following day to the community of Écurie, a destination that was later ordered changed to Frévin-Cappelle where the night of the 23-24 was spent by the horses mostly under cover and by the men mostly in the open.

The following day, March 24, was a day passed in the cleaning and overhauling of equipment and kit; superfluous supplies were placed to one side. Leave was cancelled, and those already *on* leave were being recalled, including the Commanding Officer who had been in Boulogne. Sites were located for the positioning of guns in case of a further enemy offensive, this one in the area of Canadian responsibility.

Orders were received over the next two days and were countered almost as quickly. At two in the morning of March 27 the Brigade began a march to the village of Basseux, thirteen kilometres to the south-west of Arras. It arrived there five hours later having been slowed by congested roads and enforced halts where it found... *Horse lines in the open. Little shelter for the men. Village being evacuated by civilians and well filled with Artillery and Infantry. Men and horses obtained much needed rest. Orders were received and issued for move at night...but were almost immediately cancelled. Order received at 10.25 pm to harness up & be prepared to hook in and move off. Upon receipt of this order the Brigade stood to most of the night but nothing developed.*

28th No fresh development. Men rested up after stand to of previous night. (5th Brigade War Diary)

Various War Diaries of the time show several units moving hither and thither in this fashion, ordered and counter-ordered to seemingly little effect. By the end of that month of March, nevertheless, things appear to have stabilized and, finally, very few if any Canadian forces appear to have been sent to the area of the German offensive.

(continued)

The 5th Brigade was next sent, on March 29, to a sector based on Agny in the Neuville-Vitasse Sector. Closer to, and more to the south of, the city of Arras than Basseux, it was also nearer to the forward area and to the northerly extreme of the new battle-fields. There it was to remain, engaging the enemy for the entire three months of April, May and June.

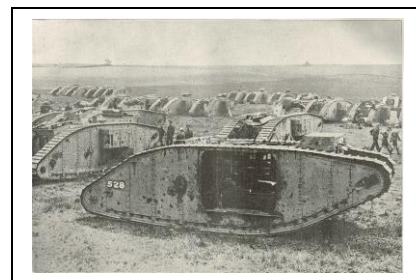
Perhaps a little incongruously, for all the action and commotion of that month of March, 1918, casualties incurred *in action* by Driver Madden's Brigade amounted to one *killed* and one *wounded* – twenty-five had been hospitalized on account of sickness.

After the German offensives of March and April, a relative calm had descended on the Western Front as the German threats had faded; the enemy had won a great deal of ground, but there had been nothing of any military significance lost to the Allies on either of the two fronts.

Nor was the calm particularly surprising: both sides were exhausted and needed time to once more re-organize and – less and less feasible in these later years of the war – to re-enforce.

The Allies from this point of view were a lot better off than their German adversaries – they had two empires to draw from and the Americans were belatedly arriving on the scene. An overall Commander-in-Chief had been appointed, Ferdinand Foch, and he was setting about organizing a counter-offensive. Thus the front was to remain quiet – until the second week in August.

(Right: *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'. Many of the troops to be involved in the fighting from this time onwards underwent training in the company of tanks. – from Illustration*)



Meanwhile, in May, Driver Madden had been in trouble once more, having absented himself without leave for several hours on the night of May 17-18. For that he had been admonished and had forfeited a day's pay – a light penalty, perhaps, considering his record in such matters.

(Right: *The venerable 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 – photograph from 2007(?)*)

Having spent the final days of June retired well to the west of Arras, on Dominion Day the 5th Brigade, C.F.A., had begun a slow, if not leisurely, return to the forward area, to report on July 15 to Gouves, just to the west of Arras, in readiness to relieve the 281st Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery. The relief itself had been scheduled for July 20 but ...*on the night of the 18th the pending relief was cancelled, and orders were received for the brigade to march to the SAVY Area on the morning of the 19th to be G.H.Q. Reserve.*



Thus on the following morning, Driver Madden's Brigade set off southwards to the community of Berles-au-Bois. There it remained until the 24th when it set off again and, by a circuitous route, arrived in the area of Orville at half-past-four in the morning of July 31. The march resumed again that night*.

**The 5th Brigade, C.F.A., was not to be the only Canadian unit on the move at this time. Within a matter of some two weeks, at the end of July and beginning of August of 1918, the entire Canadian Corps had been transferred from the sectors north of and around Arras to face the Germans on the front which they had established on the Somme at the time of their offensive four months earlier.*



The majority of the Canadian forces had passed behind the city of Amiens before turning eastward, marching during the hours of darkness, to ensure surprise. This it had succeeded in doing, as the events of the few following days were to prove.

(Right above: The small country town of Doullens was one of those passed through by the 5th Brigade during its march towards the theatre of the 3rd Battle of the Somme. – from a vintage post-card)

Having marched for a further four nights, the 5th Brigade, at one-thirty in the morning of August 4, reported to its temporary destination west of the community of Villers-Brétonneux where, just to the south-east of the village, its batteries were to be sited. The guns were moved into position over the course of the following three nights. As part of the reserve, the guns were to immediately, literally, follow the infantry, advancing into action at the same time.

Excerpt from 5th Brigade, C.F.A., War Diary entry for August 8, 1918: Zero hour 4.20 am. Barrage opened particularly well... At the outset our Infantry were somewhat confused by the heavy mist but by 7.30 am. this had sufficiently cleared to enable our line to reform and from then on the advance was rapid and very little artillery support was required... During the day all batteries took up at least five different positions and were at all times in close support of our Advancing Infantry. Fairly heavy casualties occurred in the 18th & 20th Batteries when going through the initial barrage, but from then on the going was good...

Those casualties amounted to five killed and thirty-two wounded, all ranks; the faithful horses fared worse: fifty killed.

The advance continued on the morrow, the guns advancing with the infantry. Accompanying the foot-soldiers were Forward Observation Officers who sent back the co-ordinates of the enemy positions which were hindering the advance. On the next day again, the 4th Canadian Division passed through the 2nd and both the infantry and artillery of that 2nd Division withdrew to rest.



(continued)

(Preceding page: A group of German prisoners, some serving here as stretcher-bearers, being taken to the rear after their capture by Canadian troops: a tank may be seen in the background – from Le Miroir)

On August 12 the 5th Brigade, C.F.A., was back in action. By now the fighting was harder and casualties beginning to rise as the Germans recovered from their initial surprise. They then, however, decided to retire to more tenable positions and an Allied* offensive scheduled for August 15 was postponed indefinitely. By the 17th, two days later the entire 5th Brigade had retired from the battle.



(Right above: Ever fearful of a German counter-offensive, the Allies took time to consolidate the positions won from the enemy: here a Canadian wiring-party is at work. – from Illustration)

**The 3^d Battle of the Somme – the opening confrontation of what was to become known as the Hundred Days, which in turn led to the Armistice of November 11 – was fought by the Allies, in the Great War this signifying the French and its Empire, the British and the British Empire (Commonwealth). Some American units – Associated troops – also served, often in sectors for which the French were, or had been, responsible.*

The Brigade War Diary entry for August 17 gives the impression that its author expected the unit to soon be back in the fray once more. This was, in fact, to be so, but it was not to be on the Amiens front from which it had just withdrawn; on the evening of August 19, at half-past seven, Driver Madden's unit began an overnight march as far as Agnicourt, some twenty-five kilometres distant.

This was the first step in the transfer of the 5th Brigade, C.F.A., back whence it had come only two weeks earlier. In fact, the entire Canadian Corps was to retrace its steps – in the same manner, by night, and by routes well to the west, many units then being transported by bus and train – back to the Arras Sector*. The 5th Brigade, however, was obliged to walk – or to trot.



**Most of the retiring Canadian units were to be replaced by French troops.*

(Right above: The town of Albert, the remnants of its basilica (shown on a previous page) in the background, as it was upon liberation in August of 1918 – from Le Miroir)

By August 23 the 5th Brigade was spending the day at rest in the area of Simencourt, some thirteen kilometres to the south-west of Arras. However... *During night batteries were engaged moving guns into positions and hauling ammunition to battery positions.* On the night following, the stocks of ammunition were completed: for the eighteen-pounders, four-hundred rounds plus fifty rounds of smoke; for the howitzers, three-hundred fifty rounds plus fifty rounds of smoke.

(continued)

On the day of August 25th the... Brigade remained... *in silent positions*. In the later afternoon the personnel moved forward to the prepared positions.

At 3 am. August 26th. the Canadian Corps in conjunction with Third Army attacked (Brigade War Diary). The advance was launched from the Arras Sector and was planned to strike along the axis of the main Arras-Cambrai Road. Once again, the element of surprise played a major role, the Germans still believing the Canadians to be in front of Amiens. *The...Attack was entirely successful, our troops advancing rapidly. At 7 am. our batteries started forward and took positions...* Once again the more mobile artillery pieces were to keep apace with the infantry.

The following excerpt narrates the laying-down of a barrage as it was requested to support the advance of the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade on that same day: *Initial barrage was laid down on Sunken Road...to the river. Lift 200 yards every three minutes, until barrage rests on final objectives where it remains for five minutes and then lifts 200 yards, fire four minutes then stop. Attack was entirely successful*...* (Brigade War Diary)

**Of interest to Newfoundland readers may be that on August 26 Monchy-le Preux was captured by troops of the 3rd Canadian Division. More than sixteen months earlier, on April 14 of 1917, the Newfoundland Regiment had been ordered forward into a battle that should never have been. While a desperate defence later in the day had earned ten men – nine from the Regiment – a medal each, the unit had suffered some four-hundred fifty killed, wounded, missing or prisoner.*



After Beaumont-Hamel, April 14, 1917, was to be the costliest day of the (Royal) Newfoundland Regiment's war.

(Right above: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the south-west. In 1917 the Newfoundlanders, already in the village, advanced out of the ruins of the village to the east, away from the camera; in 1918 the Canadians, attacking from the west, encircled the place. – photograph from 2013*)

By September 30, this so-called *Battle of the Scarpe* ended, only partially successfully. And while the 2nd Canadian Division infantry was withdrawn, the artillery remained in situ, now to support the efforts of the 1st Canadian Division.

The advance resumed on September 2, to be almost entirely successful, so much so that late in the day of September 3, Canadian and British troops were approaching the Canal du Nord, many of the German forces already retiring to its east bank.

(Right: *Douglas Haig, C.-in-C. of British and Commonwealth forces on the Western Front inspects Canadian troops after their successful operation of September 2 against the German Drocourt-Quéant Line – from Le Miroir*)



(continued)

Three days later, on the night of September 6-7, the 5th Brigade of the C.F.A. was relieved and withdrew in the direction of Cherisy. Relieved it may have been but during its withdrawal it received the attentions – in the form of high explosive and mustard gas – of its German counterparts during the next two days.

Several casualties were thus incurred on the march to Cherisy. While there, the unit's weaponry was to be withdrawn even further, to the Calibration Depot at Ablain St-Nazaire where one of its guns was condemned.

(Right: *The church at Ablain St-Nazaire as it was already in the autumn of 1915 – from Le Miroir*)



After ten days at Cherisy, on September 17 the Brigade should have been moving even further afield, to the vicinity of Dainville to the south-west of Arras, there to serve in Corps Reserve. It was not to be: a counter-order arrived which returned the unit to the forward area to relieve the 6th Brigade, C.F.A., on the nights of September 16-17 and 18-19.

Preparations apparently were already underway for the crossing of the Canal du Nord. Driver Madden's Brigade was by now re-enforced by three further batteries in order to be responsible for the defence of the locks and bridge-heads on its sector of the waterway just in case of a German riposte before the upcoming offensive.

At this same time, on September 19, a message was received containing a single simple piece of information: it was to be the Canadian Corps which would force the Canal.

In the meantime there was ammunition to be brought up, hostile batteries recently identified to be engaged, from time to time a local enemy attack to be countered and finally, positioning of the guns for the day of the attack. By September 26... *All Batteries reported in position by 1.30 am.. Wires were laid to all Batteries...*



Zero hour was announced as 5.20 A.M. Sept. 27th.

Sept.27 Barrage started at 5.20 am. Hostile shelling in Artillery area was slight until about 7.00 am...

(Right above: *German prisoners evacuating wounded out of the area of the unfinished part of the Canal du Nord which the Canadians crossed on September 27, thus opening the road to Cambrai – from Le Miroir*)



(Right above: *The same area of the Canal du Nord as it was almost a century after the Canadian operation to cross it – photograph from 2015*)

The crossing of the Canal du Nord had been effected by mid-morning on that day and the Germans were in retreat. Further objectives were taken, including Bourlon Wood after a fierce fight. But as the day progressed, the German resistance was beginning to stiffen. It was not to be a walk-over, after all.

(Right: *Two German field-guns of Great War vintage stand on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City, the one in the foreground captured during the fighting at Bourlon Wood on September 27 – photograph from 2016*)



There appear to be no details recorded of the incident after which Driver Madden was reported as... *wounded and missing* except that it was on September 27. It was a later report from a second source that then recorded him as having been evacuated for medical attention to the 2nd Canadian Field Ambulance which had by then been established at Cagnicourt – or perhaps he was sent to the Advanced Dressing Station run by the same Ambulance and closer to the forward area.



(Right: *Canadian wagons crossing the Canal du Nord as Engineers prepare to repair a bridge – from Le Miroir*)

The son of Sarah Madden (widow) of 1112, Demontigny Street East, Montreal, he leaves behind him no details of any other family members, nor do other sources appear to provide any such information.

Driver Madden was reported as having *died of wounds* on that same September 27, 1918, by the Officer Commanding the 2nd Canadian Field Ambulance.

Albert Madden enlisted at the *apparent age* of nineteen years and ten months: date of birth (in St. John's, Newfoundland, according to his papers), March 4, 1896.

Driver Albert Madden 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 27, 2023.