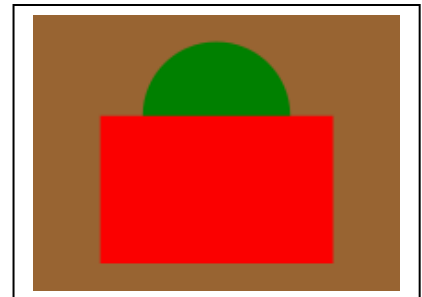




**Private James Patrick Mallard (Number 7876) of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (*Eastern Ontario*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in R.E. Farm Cemetery: Grave reference III.C.9.**

**(Right: *The image of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion shoulder-flash is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)**

**(continued)**



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, James Patrick Mallard appears to have left little information to posterity a propos his emigration from the Dominion of Newfoundland to Canada. However, it is possible that he is the young man recorded as a passenger on the SS *Ivermore* who took passage from Port aux Basques to North Sydney on September 28 of 1911. On his way to the Province of Quebec to seek work as a labourer, he recorded his birth year as likely being 1890 (compatible with some records, see below). This *does* require confirmation.

From that time on, no more documentation appears to be available until he enlisted at the military complex being established at Valcartier, Quebec. It came about on August 24 of 1914, according to the pay records which show this to have been the first day on which the Canadian Army began to remunerate him for his services. They also show that he was *taken on strength* on that same date by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Governor General's Foot Guards, this a regiment of the Canadian Militia\* and a unit which was soon to be absorbed by the newly-authorized and newly-forming 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (*Eastern Ontario*) of the Canadian Infantry.

*\*Militia regiments were organized for Home Defence only, therefore volunteers recruited by them were transferred to the new formations which were destined for overseas service.*

Private Mallard apparently did not undergo a medical examination until August 26 at which time the Medical Officer considered him...*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*. The examination took place also at Valcartier, Québec, where he had enlisted and where he was to attest later, on September 22. On that date the formalities of his enlistment were concluded by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel David Watson who declared - on paper - that... *having finally been approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

(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 – and away from the Great Lakes – 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*)*



There was to be little time for training for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in Canada; it would have to be done once the formation arrived in the United Kingdom. It was to be only days after his attestation – it may well have been on September 22 - that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion boarded His Majesty's Transport *Cassandra* at Québec for trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom.



Apparently also travelling – and recorded as having boarded *Cassandra* on September 25 - was a part of the personnel of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Field Ambulance\*, the remainder to sail on accompanying vessels.

(continued)

(Preceding page: *The image of Cassandra is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

If *Cassandra* followed the example – or perhaps set it – of other vessels, then, having weighed anchor in the Port of Quebec, she then was to *drop* it again a few minutes later. On or about September 25, once having embarked military personnel, a number of ships then sailed *upstream* some two kilometres from Quebec City to spend the next few days in Wolfe's Cove.

Whenever it was that *Cassandra* sailed from Québec – a number of the ships did so on September 30 - it was only to drop anchor days later further downstream, at the Gaspé. There the convoy of thirty-one transports and its naval escort organized itself for the trans-Atlantic crossing and finally sailed from Canadian waters on October 3.

Whether Private Mallard was aware of it is not documented but, on October 5, as the formation was passing along the south coast of Newfoundland, the small Bowring Brothers' steamer *Florizel*, sailed to meet it and join it, carrying the *First Five-Hundred* of the Newfoundland Regiment overseas.

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. The 2nd Battalion was one such: while the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Field Ambulance personnel landed on October 15, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was not to set foot on land until October 25, whereupon it was transported by train to the Salisbury Plain.

The War Diarist concludes his entry for that October 25 by noting that the railway journey only began at almost two o'clock on the following morning, to arrive at the *train's* destination at seven-thirty a.m.



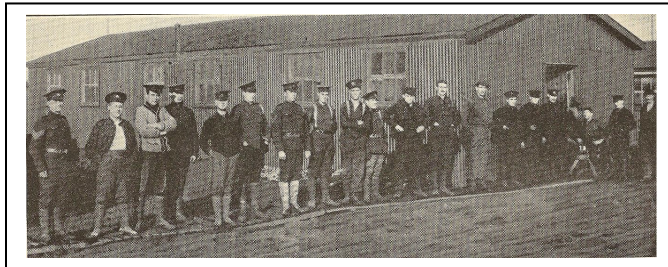
*Bustard Camp*, the *unit's* destination, was a further five or six hours' march distant, to be undertaken on foot.

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

The Army Regulations of the day were such that troops were to undergo some fourteen weeks of training from the time of enlistment; at that point they were to be considered as being 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*.

(continued)

On February 4 the Canadian Division\* marched to a review area where they were inspected by His Majesty, King George V and the War Minister, Lord Kitchener\*\*. The next few days were spent in final preparation for departure then, on February 7, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion boarded a train to take it to the English west-coast port of Avonmouth.



*\*Designated as such until, logically, the advent of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, when it became the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division.*

*\*\*For whom the Canadian city of Kitchener 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*)*

At Avonmouth, Port of Bristol, on the following day, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion – by now a unit of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade - boarded HMT *Blackwell*, the ship then sailing later that day as part of the Canadian Division Armada. It was apparently a very rough and unpleasant voyage, the Battalion War Diary making but a single mention of it... *Men very sick*. Three days later, on February 11, the vessel dropped anchor in the French port of St-Nazaire on the coast of Brittany, the Battalion disembarked and, by five o'clock on that same evening, was travelling northwards to the area of the Franco-Belgian frontier.

For the first weeks of its service on the Continent, the Canadian Division was to be posted to the Fleurbaix Sector in northern France and just south of the border town of Armentières. It was in the area of Armentières that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was then introduced to the rigours and routines of trench warfare\* by the North Staffordshire Regiment and the King's Royal Rifles – and to the harsher realities of combat when the Battalion suffered its first fatality on February 20.

*\*\*During the Great War, British and Empire (later Commonwealth) battalions had their time more or less equally divided into three postings: in theory a week was to be spent in the front lines, at times little more than a few metres separating them from the enemy forward positions; a second week was then served in support positions, perhaps a hundred metres or so behind the front. The unit was then withdrawn into reserve – either Brigade, Divisional or Corps Reserve, the former nearest to the forward area, the latter the furthest away.*



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

*(Right above: A photograph of Canadian troops in support positions somewhere on the Somme in the autumn of 1916, only months earlier having been equipped with those steel helmets and, less visible, British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III Rifles – from *Illustration*)*

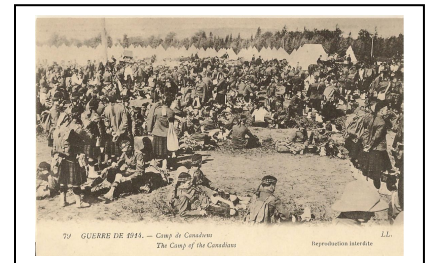
Two months later, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion had then been posted to the *Ypres Salient* and it was on April 18, at twenty-five minutes past ten in the morning, that the unit – in fact, the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade - was to begin to cross the border into the *Kingdom of Belgium*.

The Brigade traversed the frontier to the west of the Belgian town of Poperinghe where it was to remain for two days before advancing eastwards to the community of Vlamertinghe for two more. It was at this propitious moment that the Germans decided to launch their attack in an effort to take the nearby city of Ypres.

(Right: *While the caption reads that these troops are ‘English’, this could pertain to any unit in British uniform – including Empire (Commonwealth) units. This photograph, in fact a vintage post-card - is surely from early in the war as there is no sign of a steel helmet. – from a vintage post-card*)



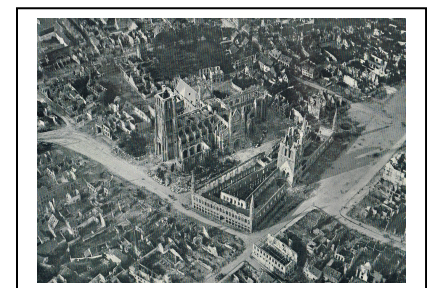
(Right below: *The caption reads merely ‘Camp of Canadians’ but it is from the early days of the Great War, thus likely in either northern France or in Belgium. The troops are from a Canadian-Scottish unit. – from a vintage post-card*)



Up until that time, during the few days of a Canadian presence, *the Salient* had proved to be relatively quiet. Then the dam broke - although it was gas rather than water which, for a few days, threatened to sweep everything before it. The date was April 22, 1915.

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

The 2<sup>nd</sup> *Battle of Ypres* saw the first use of chlorine gas by the Germans during the *Great War*. It was later to become an everyday event and, with the introduction of protective measures such as advanced gas-masks, the gas was to prove no more dangerous than the rest of the military arsenals of the warring nations. But on this first occasion, to inexperienced troops without the means to combat it, the yellow-green cloud of chlorine proved overwhelming.



(Right: *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*)



(continued)

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. Then a retreat, not always very cohesive, became necessary while, at the same time, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade were moved forward to support the efforts of the French and of the Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade.



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

By the second day of the attack, April 23, the situation had become relatively stable – at least temporarily - and the positions in the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan held until the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> when a further retirement became necessary.

At times there had been breaches in the 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 to exploit the situation. And then the Canadians closed the gaps.

Private Mallard's 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion remained attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade in the north-eastern sector of *the Salient* until April 25 when it withdrew towards Vlamertinghe and re-joined its parent 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade.



Remaining there to rest on the following day, the unit was then ordered forward to occupy positions near a (the?) pontoon bridge on the Yser Canal. Having been heavily shelled on the morrow, the Battalion subsequently returned to its billets at Vlamertinghe on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

(Right above: *The Yser Canal at a point in the northern outskirts of Ypres almost a century after the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade moved forward to its western bank from Vlamertinghe: west is to the left – photograph from 2014*)

There it was to remain until May 3 when it was withdrawn further, to the northern French centre of Bailleul, there to re-enforce and re-organize.



(Right: *The Memorial to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division – the Brooding Soldier – stands just to the south of the village of Langemark (at the time Langemarck) 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*)

On May 15 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was ordered to move further down the line via Colonne and Hinges to Béthune from where it was to advance three days afterwards towards the areas of Festubert and Givenchy. The French were about to undertake a major offensive just further south again and had asked for British support.

There at Festubert, a series of attacks and counter-attacks took place in which the British High Command managed to gain three kilometres of ground but also contrived to destroy, by using the unimaginative tactic of the frontal assault, what was left of the British pre-War professional Army. The Canadian Division was also to contribute to the campaign but – not having the same numbers of troops to put in the field as did the British – would happily not participate to the same extent. It nonetheless suffered heavily\*.

*\*The Canadian Division and Indian troops - the 7<sup>th</sup> (Meerut) Division\* also having been ordered to serve at Festubert – had proportionately hardly fared better than the British, each contingent – a Division - incurring over two-thousand casualties before the offensive drew to a close.*

The French effort – using the same tactics - was likewise a failure but on an even larger scale; it 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 to the Middle East.*

(Right: A one-time officer who served in the Indian Army during the Second World War, pays his respects to those who fell; he is pictured at the Indian Memorial at Neuve-Chapelle. – photograph from 2010(?))



On the final day of May the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion had been relieved from its posting at Festubert and on June 1 was in billets in Essars; in another nine days' time it was ordered further south to Givenchy-les-la-Bassée\*, a small village not far distant from Festubert. Despatched into the forward trenches from June 11 to 17 to support British efforts, the unit incurred the same sort of results – fourteen killed, seventy-nine wounded - from having repeated the same sort of mistakes as at Festubert.

By June 17 the Canadian Division was beginning to retire from the area, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion among the first to do so.

*\*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 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was to march to billets in or near to the community of Oblinghem, two kilometres removed from the larger community of Béthune. From there on June 25, it began to move towards and into Belgium, to the Ploegsteert Sector, just across the frontier.

Having reached the Ploegsteert area, there the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion would remain – as would the entire Canadian Division.

(continued)

In the next 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: *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*)

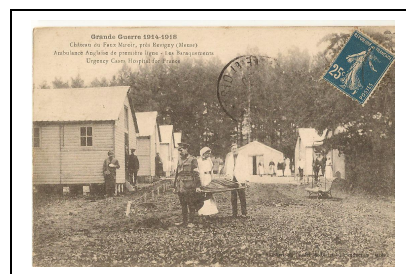


The Canadian Division would remain in that border area of West Flanders until March and April of the following year when its services were to be required in the southern area of the *Ypres Salient*.

During those following eight months neither side made much concerted attempt to dislodge the other from its muddy quarters in the trenches. As with all the other units at the front, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion's time was divided between postings to the front-line trenches, to the support positions, and into reserve. Casualties were caused mostly by artillery fire\*, snipers, and the occasional raid on the enemy lines.

*\*It is estimated that some sixty percent of the casualties of the Great War were due to artillery-fire.*

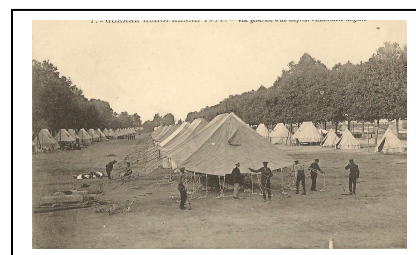
For several days during the month of September, Private Mallard was in need of medical attention: he had sprained his ankle. At first admitted into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Field Ambulance at Bailleul, he was one of thirty-four military personnel to receive treatment in the facility on that day.



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

On September 23, six days following, he was transferred to the 53<sup>rd</sup> (North Midland Division) Casualty Clearing Station, also established at Bailleul. Private Mallard was to remain there in care for but a single day before being discharged *to duty*, and back to his unit, on September 24.

(Right: *a British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War. Other such medical establishments were of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card*)



Private Mallard was to serve only a further six weeks with his unit. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for November 5, 1915, reads as follows: *Enemy's artillery active. In morning threw over a few H.E. shells around RE (Royal Engineers) Farm. In afternoon enemy bombarded our front lines and support lines with about 30 large (8.2) calibre shells also about 50 smaller shells 7.7 cm and 4.1 shells.*



**Wounded Ptes Brown G, Carmichael J, McKinnon(?) R and Parrish CD  
Killed 8483 Sgt Hardy(?) E, 7576 Pte Mallard JP**

Possibly the only child of Patrick Mallard, fisherman, and Mary Anne Mallard (née *Kennington*), recorded as being of King's Road, St. John's, and then of nearby Quidi Vidi Village, Private Mallard was reported as having been...*killed in action in the field...in trenches north of Wulverghem...on that November 5 of 1915.*

James Patrick Mallard had enlisted at the apparent age of twenty-two years: date of birth, August 18, 1892 (attestation papers), but also August 18, 1890, the date found in the St. John's Roman Catholic Basilica Parish Records. (While this date seems the more likely, any confirmation would be appreciated.)

Private James Patrick Mallard 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 27, 2023.