



Private Archibald Emmanuel March (Number 3204044) of the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Highlanders*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Duisans British Cemetery, Étrun: Grave reference VII.A.17.

(Right: *The 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion emblem, worn as a head-dress cap badge, is from the Wikipedia web-site*)

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a seaman, Archibald Emmanuel March has left little history behind him of his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Prince Edward Island. All that may be said with certainty is that he was in the provincial capital, Charlottetown – his address C.G.S. Aramore - in the month of October, 1917, and again during the first months of the following year, 1918\*.

*\*There is an entry in the Ancestry.ca records of a young man, A. March, crossing from Port aux Basques to North Sydney in the year 1916, of a compatible age and religious denomination, but nothing more.*

Archibald Emmanuel March was drafted under the terms of the Canadian Military Service Act of 1917 – also referred to as conscription. It was on October 23, 1917, and it was in Charlottetown that he underwent a medical examination, being declared as Category A2 - fit for service both at home and abroad. It was, however, to be a further three months before he was called to service.

Private March's pay records show that January 17 of 1918 was the first day for which he was remunerated by the Canadian Army. On that date he was *taken on strength* at the Artillery and Infantry Depot by the 1<sup>st</sup> Depot Battalion (*Nova Scotia Regiment*) – although apparently the Battalion did not *officially* come into being until April 15, 1918 – but was not to attest for another six weeks, on March 1. This formality was confirmed by a Captain(?) McCauley, Commanding Officer of 'H' Company.

March 1 of 1918 was also the date on which Private March was prevailed upon to write his will. On it he bequeathed his everything to his mother.

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

It was on April 9 – a second source says April 7 – that Private March's 1<sup>st</sup> Depot Battalion embarked onto two transport ships in the harbour at Halifax\*. The vessel *Ulua* was the one on which his detachment was to cross the Atlantic to the United Kingdom, in the company of - at least - personnel from the Casualty Depot at Halifax and some recruits for the B.E.F.\*\* – *Casualty units MD6*.



*\*Some records report him as a soldier of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft, but this contingent sailed later; this later date and the date of arrival appear to be incompatible with Private March's records.*

*\*\*Possibly from Newfoundland since the Newfoundland Regiment – by that time 'Royal' – was a unit of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the British Expeditionary Force.*

(Right above: *American troops returning home on board the troop transport Ulua after the cessation of hostilities – from the Wartime Heritage Association web-site*)

Ten days after having sailed from Canadian waters on April 9, *Ulua* docked in the English west-coast port of Liverpool. From there Private March's detachment was transported south by train to the Canadian military complex by then established in the vicinity of the villages of Liphook and Bramshott – to which community the camp owes its name – in the county of Hampshire.

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



Upon its arrival at Bramshott Camp, the newcomers were sent to the Canadian Command Depot at Frensham Pond, a subsidiary camp, which some sources cite as having been a segregation camp. Private March remained in what may have amounted to quarantine for a month before being released from there to his new unit on May 29\*.

*\*This practice of isolating new arrivals from Canada had already been in use since the early days of the Canadian presence in the United Kingdom. In 1918, however, the Spanish 'flu epidemic had made this routine particularly essential.*

On the first day of its posting at Bramshott back on April 20, his detachment had been transferred – at least bureaucratically - to the 17<sup>th</sup> Canadian (*Reserve*) Battalion. This was the *new unit* with which Private March was then to train for the next three months, until mid-August when he was ordered to the Continent.

Having been stationed at Bramshott, Private March's reinforcement draft likely travelled via the English port of Southampton and its French counterpart, Le Havre. The draft left Bramshott Camp on August 21 and reported to the Canadian Infantry Base Depot in the vicinity of Étapes two days following, on August 23. He was one of the two-hundred eighty-two arrivals at the Base Depot on that date.



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

Three days later again, on August 26, he was one of the eleven-hundred four personnel despatched from the CIBD to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp also at Étapes from where he was ordered to join the unit by which he had by then been *taken on strength* – just prior to his departure from Bramshott. Private March's draft is recorded in his personal files as having reported *to duty* with the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Highlanders*) on the morrow, the last day of August, 1918.

His arrival to the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion went unnoticed, however, by the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diarist. In fairness to the officer in question, on that day the unit was preparing for a move forward into the front lines in the area of Monchy-le-Preux\* later that evening.

(continued)



***\*Of interest to Newfoundland readers may be that on August 26 Monchy-le Preux had been captured by troops of the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 taken 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)***

***The Battalion was on its way forward just after eight o’clock on that evening but... Owing to the difficulty of relieving several different Battalions and owing to the congestion of traffic en route, relief was not completed until 4.15 a.m. on the 1<sup>st</sup> September (85<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for August 31, 1918).***

***Whether Private March was to move forward with the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion on that evening of August 31 is not documented.***

\* \* \* \* \*

***The 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Nova Scotia Highlanders) had been organized in Canada in late 1915. The unit had taken passage to the United Kingdom in October of the following year – travelling on Olympic – and had been despatched to France in February of 1917 to be a future element of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division which had disembarked in France as late as August of 1916.***

***The unit, having been stationed at Witley, had passed through the English-Channel port of Folkestone on February 10 to embark on His majesty’s Transport London for passage to the Continent. The Battalion had disembarked at noon that day in Boulogne to march to the nearby St. Martin’s Rest Camp.***



***By February 14 it had travelled inland to report to Gouy-Servins where it had remained until the second day of March.***

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

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



***(continued)***



A goodly number of sources at this point in the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion's history appear to err, often by *omission* it must be said, rather than by *commission* - the author pleads guilty of the same mistake. While these sources record the Nova Scotia unit as being with the 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, this omits the fact – confirmed by the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade War Diary – that it was as an element of *this* formation that the 85<sup>th</sup> Brigade served until after the action of April 9 on Vimy Ridge:

Excerpt from 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade... *Operational Order No. 51 issued at 11.15 a.m., 12.1V.17 – On relief the 85<sup>th</sup> Bn will pass to command of G.O.C. 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade...*

It appears that the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion as an entity moved forward to the front line for the first time only on April 8. It apparently had been officially designated as a *working unit*, to be employed in reserve. However, due to its Commanding Officer's insistence, it had been undergoing exercises for several weeks before, training on prepared sites at Bouvigny Huts - and in meticulous fashion – and its officers briefed on the upcoming operation. This insistence by Lieutenant-Colonel Borden, and these preparations, was to stand the Battalion in good stead for what was to follow.

What followed, of course, was to be the Canadian attack of April 9, 1917 on Vimy Ridge, an operation in which the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to play a conspicuous role late in the afternoon.

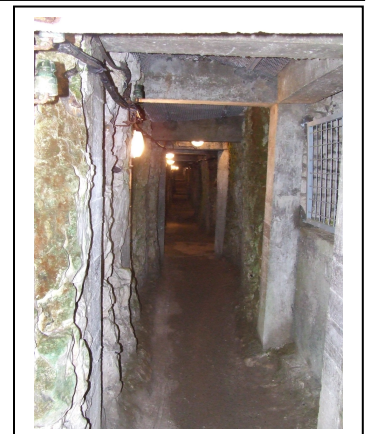
However, prior to this as yet unforeseen duty, the tasks of the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion on that day were as follows: *Construction and filling Dump at Strong Points 5 and 6; Construction of deep dug-out...; Digging C(ommunication) T(rench) from front Assembly Trench...; Party to carry wire and assist Brigade wiring party on construction...; Party to carry forward ammunition for Stokes Guns; Prisoners of War Escort Party; Battle Police...*



(Right: *the Canadian National Memorial which, since 1936, stands on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

On that April 9 of 1917 the British Army launched an offensive not only at Vimy Ridge, but also in a large area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields of the previous year; this was the *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a French effort elsewhere.

In terms of the count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, one of the few positive episodes being that Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.



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

(continued)

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

**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.**

**The attack on Vimy Ridge had taken place on the opening day of the five-week-long *Battle of Arras*. The days and weeks that followed were to be less auspicious than had been April 9 and 10, and the realities of life in the trenches took hold once more. That early success was not to be repeated until the summer of 1918.**

**(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Illustration*)**



**At three o’clock on the afternoon of April 9, the C.O. of the 85<sup>th</sup> battalion had been ordered to despatch two of his four Companies, one to each of the 87<sup>th</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalions whose assault was being jeopardized by the enemy from positions on top of the crest. He was also ordered to be in position with the remainder of his command at half-past four in two of those well-known tunnels for further orders.**

**Those orders arrived thirty minutes early: *BATTER trench...is strongly held by fresh enemy... Will attack it with 2 companies of 85<sup>th</sup>...***

**4.15 p.m. – G.O.C. (General Officer Commanding) arranges assault on *BATTER...by 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion...***

**6.30 p.m. – *85<sup>th</sup> Battalion attacked without a barrage, and reached their objectives without much opposition. (Excerpts from 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for April 9, 1917)***



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

**Apparently the objectives in question were known collectively as *Hill 145* which, once taken, was consolidated into a strong-point by the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Today the Canadian National Memorial at Vimy stands atop it.**

**On April 13 the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade was relieved and the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved back to the Bouvigny Huts where it had been quartered in March. From this time forward, until the end of the *Great War*, it was to serve as a component of the 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade (see *Operational Order* further above).**

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 – as well as his reserves - from this area, it had also ordered operations to take place at the sector of the front running north-south from B ethune to Lens.

The Canadians were to be a major contributor to this effort, the best-documented action of which was to be the confrontation fought at *Hill 70* by troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisions.

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



(Right: *This gentle slope rising to the left is, in fact, Hill 70. A monument to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Infantry stands nearby in tribute. This successful operation showed the progress that had been recently made, particularly in artillery tactics. – photograph from 1914*)

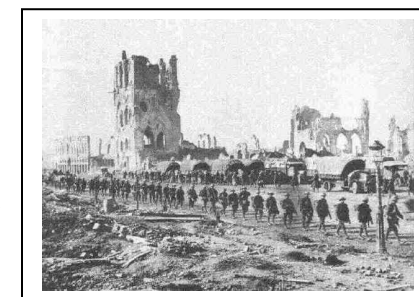


*\*The Canadians apparently had expected, and had indeed planned, further action in the area, but the ongoing Third Battle of Ypres was not proceeding according to expectations and the British were running out of re-enforcements. The Canadians – and the Anzacs - were to be asked to provide the necessary man-power.*

While not heavily involved in the Canadian-led summer of 1917 campaign in the mining area of the Lens-B ethune Sectors, the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion was slated to play its part in that other ongoing offensive, the one in Belgium, further to the north – a battle that has come to symbolize the wretchedness of war. Officially designated the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was – ostensibly - one of the British Army’s objectives.

(Right below: *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*)

From the time that the Canadians entered the fray, it was they who shouldered a great deal of the burden. During the week of October 26 until November 3 it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions which spearheaded the assault, with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions in reserve. From November 5 until the official end of the affair – November 10 - the reverse was true with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division finally entering the remnants of Passchendaele itself.



The 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been in action during the final two days of October and had incurred more than fifty per cent casualties among both officers and *other ranks*: a total of six-hundred eighty-eight went into action; three-hundred ninety-four had become casualties. The unit was shattered.



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



During the winters of the *Great War* on the *Western Front* neither side undertook to launch an offensive. The armies held their ground, infantry activity was limited to patrols and to the occasional raid; casualties were mostly the result of artillery fire and snipers\*. The 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been withdrawn south from *Passchendaele* in the first week of November, 1917, and was once more back in France, in the area of *Lens*, and enduring the routine of life in the trenches\*\*.



*\*Not to forget illness and disease*

*(Right: The Monument to the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Nova Scotia Highlanders) which stands in a field by the side of the road from Zonnebeke to Passendale (Passchendaele) – photograph from 2014)*

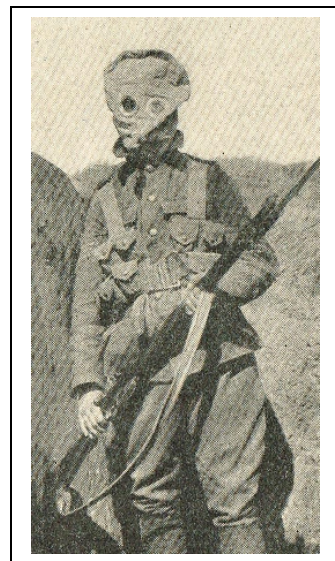
*\*\*During the Great War, British and Empire (Commonwealth) battalions had their time more or less equally divided into three postings: in theory a week was to be spent in the front lines, at times little more than a few metres separating them from the enemy forward positions; a second week was then served in support positions, perhaps a hundred metres or so behind the front; finally the unit in question 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 the less-visible British-made short Lee-Enfield Mark III rifles – from Illustration)*

By November 20, the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion had withdrawn to the area of the commune of *Raimbert*, not far removed from the larger northern centre of *Béthune*. The time spent there behind the lines was to comprise the usual training, competitions, sports, lectures, church-parades, musketry, gas-drills, inspections, concerts, re-enforcements, working-parties... the list in the *Battalion War Diary* does go on... but the *Diarist* has omitted an important event.



*(continued)*

**(Preceding page: A photograph, from 1917, of a Canadian soldier during training in the use of his 'gas-helmet': As may be imagined, it was difficult for the wearer to perform the duties of a soldier, particularly in the event of an attack. – from *Le Miroir*)**

The month of December offered something a little different – and a reminder of home - to all the Canadian formations which were serving overseas at the time: the Canadian General Election. Polls for the Army were open from December 4 until 17, and participation, in at least some units, was in the ninety per cent range\*.

**\*Apparently, at the same time, the troops were given the opportunity to subscribe to Canada's Victory War Loan. Thus the soldier fighting the war was also encouraged to pay for it as well.**

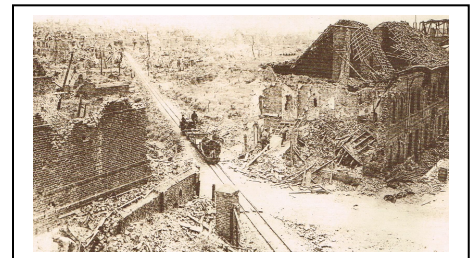
After that, the winter of 1917-1918 had been a quiet period; However, the first day of spring of 1918 - was to bring to a close this relative calm.



**(Right above: *Souchez*, in the forward area of the sector where the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been posted in March of 1918, already looked like this in 1915, three years earlier, before the French turned the area over to the British – from *Le Miroir*)**

Perhaps not many people realize how close the Germans came to victory in the spring of 1918. Having transferred the divisions no longer necessary on the Eastern Front because of the Russian withdrawal from the War, the enemy then launched a massive attack, Operation 'Michael', on March 21.

**(Right: While the Germans did not attack Lens, the sector where the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion was serving, in March of 1918, but they bombarded it heavily during the time of their offensive in order to keep the British uncertain about their intentions and to oblige them to retain troops in the area. – from *Le Miroir*)**



The main blow fell at *the Somme* in the area of, and also just to the south of, the battlefields of 1916, and it fell for the most part on the British and Commonwealth troops serving there.

The impressive German advance continued for a month, but petered out just in front of the city of Amiens. The ultimate failure of the offensive was a result of a combination of factors: British and Commonwealth resistance, fatigue, logistical problems and French co-operation with the British were the most significant.

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

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During all this period since the German offensives of that spring had been contained\*, the Allies – their High Command now unified under Foch – and the newly-arriving American divisions were contemplating an offensive of their own.

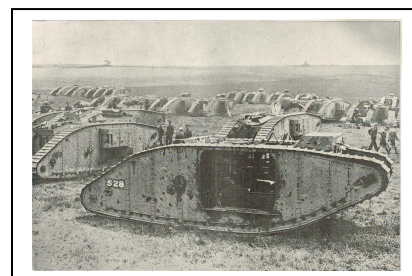
*\*And, while a great deal of ground had been ceded to the Germans, on neither front had anything of military importance been lost – none of the Channel ports, nor the railway junction at Amiens, and the British and French armies had not been severed, one from the other, either militarily or politically.*

On August 1 the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for the day reads as follows: *Fine. Word received regarding probable move by the whole Canadian Corps with a rumour of operations to follow. Nothing definite as to whether North or South. Preparations being made for a quick move, as it has to be done on the Battalions (sic) own wheels.*

That August 8, a week later, would be the opening day of the Allied offensive, the greater part on this occasion British- and Commonwealth-led, which was to result in the Armistice of November 11. On the Allied side this succession of battles became known as *the Hundred Days – Les Cent Jours*: what the Germans called it is less certain, although August 8 was to be, as far as Ludendorff was concerned, *the Black Day of the German Army (Der Schwartze Tag)*.

By that August 8, the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion had travelled south-west by train to disembark at Hangest-sur-Somme – about half-way between Abbéville and Amiens – and from there had marched some twenty-five kilometres westward to the smaller community of Vergies.

*(Right: Tanks in ever-increasing numbers were to be used by the Allies in the last battles of the Great War. 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)*

This transfer had taken place on August 3 and 4 by which time at least the Battalion War Diarist had known the reason for all this activity: *The scheme will be known as the L.C. (Llandoverly (sic) Castle) Operation, and will take place in a very few days, on a front of from 20 to 30 miles, East of Amiens, to a depth in places of eight miles. The show will be staged by the 3<sup>rd</sup> British Corps, Australians, Canadian Corps, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> French Army, all under Field Marshal, Sir. Douglas Haig. The principal objective of the operation, to relieve the pressure on AMIENS.*

*(Right: The gothic cathedral in the city of Amiens which the leading German troops had been able to see on the western skyline in the spring of 1918 – photograph from 2007(?))*





At nine o'clock on the evening of August 4, the Battalion had begun another long march, about twenty-eight kilometres eastward, to Briquemesnil, where it arrived at five in the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>.

Two days later again there had been a further... *hard march*...to the *Bois du Boves*, some nine kilometres to the south of Amiens, from where the attack of August 8 was to be launched on the next morning.

(Right: *On August 8, captured positions on the Somme being consolidated by Canadian troops against any German counter-attack – from Le Miroir*)



Whereas the first part of the transfer had been accomplished mostly by train and by motor transport, the second part had been done by night marches, and around to the west and then the south of Amiens to keep the movement from the eyes of any German aviation observers. It worked: the Germans were totally taken by surprise.

Thus the assault had been an overwhelming success, with territorial gains rarely seen since the opening weeks of the war in 1914. The 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion continued in its advance until August 18 when the unit was relieved and ordered withdrawn into Divisional Reserve – yet still, it would seem, within artillery range.

The War Diarist reports twenty-seven killed and one-hundred fifteen wounded for the entire month of August – still too many, to be sure, but far from those appalling figures of *Passchendaele*.



(Right: *In one of the many villages liberated from the Germans, Canadian and enemy wounded await evacuation to the rear. – from Le Miroir*)

The 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion was not to return to the forward area until the night of August 31-September 1 when the 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade was despatched to the front line. By that time, and in just as much secrecy, the Canadian Corps had been transported back whence it had come and it was already back on the Arras Front ready to deliver a further attack.

It was, of course, at this point, that private March and his draft from the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp arrived to take their place in the ranks of the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

\* \* \* \* \*

A first offensive in this area had already been achieved by the Canadians and British during the final days of August. On September 2, other units passed to the offensive, attacking the trenches of the Drocourt-Quéant Line, advancing along the axis of the Arras-Cambrai road as far as, and then capturing, Dury village.



On the following day, the push continued virtually unopposed for a further six-and-a-half kilometres, some units advancing as far as the *Canal du Nord*.

(Preceding page: *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*)

(Right: *The Canal du Nord almost a century later, at a point where it intersects the main Arras-Cambrai Road. The construction of the Canal was in fact still not completed at the time and parts of it were dry. – photograph from 2015*)



On September 5 the unit retired, although to where exactly appears not to be documented. On the 8<sup>th</sup> the Battalion retired even further, to the area of Wailly south-west of Arras, to a hutted camp which, for the obvious reason, was known as Wailly Huts.



Excerpt from 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for September 17, 1918: *C.O. was called to a conference at Brigade in the Afternoon and, as had been expected, brought back word of another show... This operation has, as its ultimate objective, the city of CAMBRAI...*

The 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to remain in the area of Wailly until September 25. Apparently there were several other Canadian Battalions in the neighbourhood as the War Diary records a baseball game being played just about every day – games from which, for the most part, the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion team seems to have emerged victorious.

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

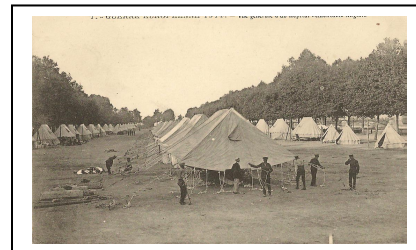
On September 25 the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved from its quarters at Wailly Huts to board a train. The War Diarist of the day takes up the story: *...the Battalion marched off at 5.30 p.m. arriving at Supply Station, ARRAS, at 7.00 o'clock. Battalion due to entrain at 8 p.m., but no word of the train had been received. Battalion was quartered in one of the large freight sheds in the station, with the rest of the Brigade in the surrounding buildings.*

*About 11.30 p.m. enemy aircraft came over and dropped a bomb in the yards about 2 feet from the edge of the building where the Battalion was quartered, killing 1 Officer and 9 other ranks and wounding 1 Officer and 53 other ranks. The wounded were immediately evacuated and the Padre was left behind to look after the burial for the Battalion.*

Casualty Report; 3204044 Private March, A.E.: *Whilst with his Battalion in Arras Station waiting for a train he was wounded in the head by shrapnel from an enemy aerial bomb. He was taken to the No. 4 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station where he succumbed to his wounds.*

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(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)



In fact, Private March had at first been evacuated to the 84<sup>th</sup> (1/2<sup>nd</sup> London) Field Ambulance before being forwarded to the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station at Agnez-les-Duisans.

Excerpt from 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian CCS War Diary entry for September 26, 1918: *Large number of severely wounded from 72<sup>nd</sup> and 85<sup>th</sup> Cdn. Bns. received as a result of aeroplane bombing at Arras station.*

Private March was one of forty-four Canadian soldiers to die at the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station during the month of September, 1918.

The son of Alexander March, fisherman, and of Margaret Mary March (née *Campbell*) – to whom as of May 1, 1918, he had allocated a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay – of Port au Port, Newfoundland, he was also the oldest of eleven siblings: Mary-Isabel, John-A. (Number 5425 of the (Royal) Newfoundland Regiment who was to survive the Great War), Maggie, Patrick-J., Aloysius, Michael, Laurence, Dougal, Hugh and Mary.

Private March was reported as having *died of wounds* at twenty minutes past nine in the morning of September 26, 1918, by the Officer Commanding the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station at Agnez-les-Duisans.

Archibald Emmanuel March had enlisted at the apparent age of twenty-one years: date of birth at Port au Port, Newfoundland, October 9, 1896.

Private Archibald Emmanuel March was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to [criceadam@yahoo.ca](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 27, 2023.