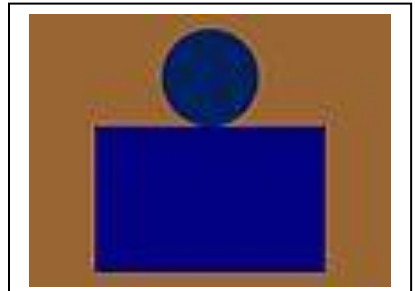


Private Andrew Haldane Miller, Number 71977*, of the 27th Battalion (*City of Winnipeg*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Kensal Green (All Souls) Cemetery, London: Grave reference, 173.7.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder-patch of the 27th Battalion (City of Winnipeg), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)



(continued)

**The Canadian Archives have his number documented as 41977; however, this appears to be incorrect (see above), as also does the spelling of his intermediate name which has been written as Haldene.*

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *clerk*, Andrew Haldane Miller appears to have left little behind him *a propos* his early years, at least a part of it spent on Power Street in the capital city of Newfoundland, except that he had been a student at Bishop Feild College since his name is to be found on the Feildian Roll of Honour.

At some time following his schooling he travelled to Glasgow, perhaps for apprenticeship as a clerk, for he later recorded having spent three years in service with the Glasgow Highlanders, a unit of the Highland Light Infantry of the Territorial Army. Exactly when this period was, has, unfortunately, not been recorded.

Again at some later date he retraced his metaphoric steps back from Scotland across the Atlantic and beyond, until, by October of 1914, he had travelled as far west as the city of Winnipeg, for that was when and where he enlisted.

The 27th (Overseas) Battalion (*City of Winnipeg*) had not been authorized until November 7, 1914, or gazetted until the following February. However, the 79th Regiment (*Cameron Highlanders of Canada*) of Canadian Militia had already been recruiting since the time of the Declaration of War. As a Militia unit, it was not legally permitted to operate outside the borders of the country, but it was permitted to engage young men for service in the new Overseas Battalions which were then being organized*.

**Thus, for example, seven officers and two-hundred fifty other ranks of the Regiment were despatched to Valcartier Camp in time to be shipped to the United Kingdom in October of 1914, there to form a company of the 16th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.*

It was on October 25 that Andrew Haldane Miller presented himself in Winnipeg for a medical examination, a procedure which was to find him...*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*...and for attestation, his oath witnessed by a Major Bell but, perhaps more pertinently, by Lieutenant Colonel Irvine Robinson Snider, Commanding Officer of the soon-to-be 27th Battalion.

Six days later, on the final day of that October of 1914, the formalities of Private Miller's attestation was brought to a conclusion when another major – otherwise unidentified – of the 79th Cameron Highlanders of Canada, declared – on paper – that...*Andrew Haldane Miller...having been finally approved and inspected by me on this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this attestation.*

The 79th Regiment, Cameron Highlanders of Canada, to the 4th Company of which Private Miller was now attached, had been training during the months prior to his enlistment, since June of that year, at the recently-established tented *Sewell Camp* some two-hundred kilometres to the west of Winnipeg. It is not recorded where it was to train during the winter months but the unit is historically associated with the *Minto Barracks* in the city of Winnipeg itself.

(continued)

But then it is not sure that Private Miller was to immediately join his new unit: a second medical report, this dated November 18, 1914, cites the date of his enlistment, in Winnipeg, as having been the same November 18.

Moreover, what are apparently his first pay records show February 18 of 1915, the day on which he was to be *taken on strength* by the now-operational 27th Battalion (*City of Winnipeg*), as having been the date on which he was first remunerated for his services to the Canadian Expeditionary Force*.

**There appears to be nothing in his files that shows either the activities or whereabouts of Private Miller during that interim period of one-hundred ten days. However, of course, this does not necessarily preclude his having served that time with the 79th Regiment.*

Yet once again there appears to be no further record of the activities of Private Miller and the other recent recruits to the 27th Battalion, not until May 13 when the War Diarist took up his pen to commence the official journal which would recount the unit's passage through to the end of the conflict.

On the morning of that date the Battalion was piped by the band of the 43rd Battalion as it...*marched to the CPR Sidings from the Barracks at Tuxedo*...with about two-thousand well-wishers to see it on its way. Having travelled via Port Arthur and then Smith's Falls, the trains arrived in Quebec City very early in the morning of May 16. The men breakfasted in their carriages before then, at about nine o'clock, boarding the ship which was to carry them to overseas service.

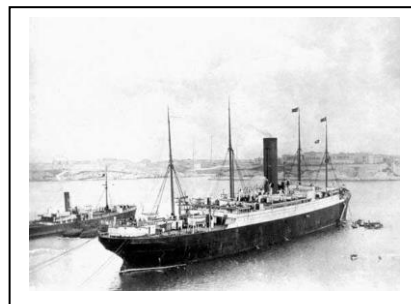
At about three o'clock in the afternoon of the same day, the vessel was towed into mid-stream and there released to begin her twelve-day journey.

It was to be the *Carpathia* which was to transport Private Miller to the United Kingdom, but he was not alone to take passage on her: apart from his 27th Battalion, also on board were the 31st Battalion, the personnel of the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade and the Borden Motorized Machine-Gun Battery.

The vessel was a trans-Atlantic liner of the *Cunard Line*, although whether she was still operating commercially for the *Cunard Company* or had been requisitioned by the British government for war-time service is not clear. However, she was to carry a great number of troops during most of the war-time period.

The ship's claim to fame had been that in April of 1912, she had raced through ice-strewn seas for some four hours and had rescued some seven-hundred fifty survivors of the *Titanic* disaster. Towards the end of the *Great War*, in July of 1918, she herself would be sunk, torpedoed by a German U-boat with the loss of five lives.

(Right: *The image is of 'RMS Carpathia' in the harbour at Halifax in or about the year 1912. – from the Encyclopædia Britannica web-site*)



(continued)

Carpathia reached the south coast of England in the early hours of May 28, 1915, and was thereupon towed into the port and Royal Navy facility of Plymouth-Devonport. It was apparently then to take all day for the ship to off-load the cargo on board as it was not until the morrow that the military passengers were able to disembark, the infantry to board trains which were to transport it across country to the south-eastern county of Kent.



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

The 27th Battalion by now had been attached to the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade, its staff and upper echelons having also voyaged on *Carpathia*. The Brigade itself was a component of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division now organizing and forming in England at the recently-established Canadian military complex of *Shorncliffe*. It was from this camp, located on the Dover Straits in the county of Kent, and in close proximity to the harbour and town of Folkestone, that the 2nd Canadian Division would soon be departing for service on the Continent.



(Right above: *Little remains of Shorncliffe Military Camp today apart from a barracks occupied by Gurkha troops. The Military Cemetery almost alone serves as a reminder of the events of a century ago. – photograph from 2016*)

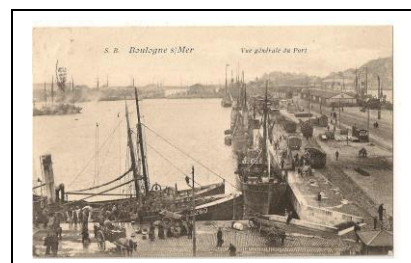
Thus Private Miller was to remain stationed at *Shorncliffe* until the middle of September of 1915, when his unit then sailed from the aforesaid harbour of Folkestone on the 17th of that month, to disembark in the French port of Boulogne on the coast opposite at two-thirty in the early morning of the 18th.



From there it would be transported by train east then north to a camp in the vicinity of the commune of St-Sylvestre close to the Franco-Belgian border. The remainder of the transfer was thereupon to be made on foot.

(Right above: *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*)

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



(continued)

(Right below: Troops – in this case likely British – on the move either in or towards Belgium in the early days of the Great War: Canadian units – apart from distinguishing badges and flashes – were to wear the same uniforms and, apart from their rifles and machine-guns (both later to be replaced), used much the same equipment as the British troops. – from a vintage post-card)

At this early period of the *Great War*, Canadian troops arriving in France were being despatched immediately upon arrival towards the areas of the Franco-Belgian frontier. At one time or another, all were eventually to be stationed in Belgium, either in the *Ypres Salient*, a region which was to prove to be one of the most lethal theatres of the entire *Great War*, or in the sectors leading southwards from the area of the city of Ypres to the frontier with France.



The 2nd Canadian Division was now to be stationed in or adjacent to the *St. Eloy sub-Sector*, some five or six kilometres to the south of Ypres.

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



As the reader likely knows, the 2nd Canadian Division was not the first such formation to set foot in the Kingdom of Belgium. The 1st Canadian Division had already been in the *Ypres Salient* since February of that 1915 and had distinguished itself in that April during the *Second Battle of Ypres*. However, this particular confrontation had taken place months before the arrival of the 2nd Canadian Division which now had to settle down to the business of the daily routines and rigours – and perils - of trench warfare*.

****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.

(continued)

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

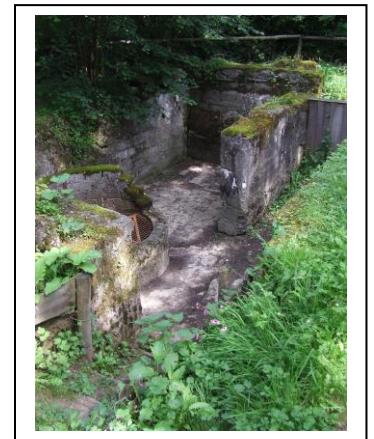
Almost seven months were now to pass before the 2nd Canadian Division – and thus Private Miller's 27th Battalion – would be plunged into its first major conflagration. That is not to say, of course, that there had not been a steady number of casualties during that period – the majority due to enemy artillery and to snipers.

But of those seven months, Private Miller was to serve only some nineteen weeks.

* * * * *

On the first day of February of 1916 Private Miller was seconded to serve with the newly-formed 250th Tunnelling Company of the Royal Engineers, at the time also operating in the *Ypres Salient*. This posting was likely to allow him to gain experience in this recently-introduced and perhaps particularly unpleasant form of warfare as on April 26 he was ordered to the 2nd Canadian Tunnelling Company and – directly? – from there to the 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company on June 7, 1916.

(Right: *The remains of a construction built at Messines in 1916 by the Germans to counter-act the British tunnellers: they sank twenty-nine wells – one seen here – from which horizontal galleries were excavated to intercept the British tunnels being dug under the German lines. – photograph from 2014*)



The underground war was in a class all of its own and it must be near-impossible to imagine the feelings and emotions of even the most seasoned miners as they toiled in those primitive conditions, sometimes as far as thirty metres below the surface. For example, before Private Miller's posting to that unit, the 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company War Diary entry for April 24 - the Company serving in and under the forward area in the vicinity of Armentières at the time - reads partially as follows: *Heavy strafing along the whole Front. Lieut. Flett and nine sappers entombed in mine at Trench 88...*

Being buried alive was probably the eventuality that tunnellers most dreaded. On this occasion the...*entombed party liberated after 18 hours – none the worse for their experience*. The story did not always enjoy such a happy ending.

(Right: *Railway Wood and, just perceptible in its fringe, the white Memorial to the twelve Royal Engineers of the 177th Tunnelling Company who were buried alive while working in tunnels beneath this place: Their remains are there to this day. – photograph from 2015*)



(continued)

The 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company was to undertake more dangerous work at *the Bluff* and in the vicinity of St-Éloi during the period of Private Miller's secondment, honeycombing both areas with tunnels. At times the enemy was heard doing likewise and small amounts of explosives were often detonated to collapse the German workings – and of course, the Germans reciprocated.

Asphyxiation from gas or from a lack of oxygen was a further common danger, and on the surface enemy snipers and artillery both took their toll as did further mishaps associated with the handling of explosives.

It was also about this time that the entire underground of that area was beginning to be transformed into living-quarters for large numbers of troops: not only dug-outs and shelters but dormitories, work-shops, kitchens, and medical facilities - and communication tunnels such as those soon to be used at *Vimy Ridge* - were now being excavated.

(Right: *One of the subterranean displays – this one of a medical facility - in the museum at Zonnebeke, Belgium – photograph from 2014(?)*)



On July 31 Private Miller returned to his Battalion from the 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company at a time when his unit was concluding a period of rest and training behind the lines at *Chippewa Camp* in the area of La Clytte.

(Right: *La Clytte Military Cemetery wherein lie eight-hundred forty-six dead of the Great War, of which fifty were in Canadian uniform – photograph from 2017*)

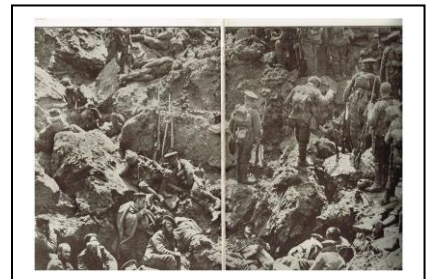


* * * * *

During Private Miller's absence, his 27th Battalion had been busy.

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

After an initial success the attack had soon bogged down and by April 4 the Canadians were to be replacing the by-then exhausted British troops. They had enjoyed no more success than had their British comrades-in-arms, and by the 17th of that April, when the battle was eventually to be called off, the Germans were to be back where they had been some three weeks previously and the Canadians had incurred some fifteen-hundred casualties.



(Preceding page: *A purported attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – from Illustration*)

Ironically, it had been the success of the explosions which were to be the principal cause of the failure of the British-Canadian venture. The weather at the time had been vile and it had rained much of the time. The craters created by the detonations had filled with water so as to become impassable, the explosions had also rendered the landscape unrecognizable and there had remained few viable paths and tracks.

The troops were to fight for days standing in water up to the knees – at times up to the waist – and had gone nowhere.

It had been on April 3 that the 27th Battalion was to be ordered forward...*to take over trenches in front of St. Éloi*. By the 7th, when the unit would eventually be relieved by the 21st Canadian Infantry Battalion, it had incurred two-hundred thirty *killed, wounded and missing in action*. Many of the unit's losses were to be due to the German artillery fire which had grown ever heavier as the days had passed.

During the fighting at the *St-Éloi Craters* the casualty count of the 2nd Canadian Division, as noted above, was to be in total some fifteen hundred. And as quite often transpired during the *Great War*, it had all been for very, very little.

Thus the 27th Battalion was to return to the daily drudgery of trench warfare. Some seven weeks of that uncomfortable and at times precarious life in and out of the trenches were then to pass before the enemy had made any further serious attempt to break the deadlock at Ypres.

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

That attempt would be from June 2 to 13 during which time was to be fought the battle for *Mount Sorrel* and for the area of *Sanctuary Wood*, the village of *Hooge*, *Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* between the German Army and the Canadian Corps. The Canadians had apparently been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions dominating the Canadian trenches when the Germans had delivered an offensive, overrunning the forward areas and, in fact, rupturing the Canadian lines, an opportunity which fortunately they were never to exploit.



The British Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, had reacted – perhaps a little too precipitately - by organizing a counter-attack on the following day, an assault intended to, at a minimum, recapture the lost ground. Badly organized, the operation had been a horrendous experience, many of the intended attacks had never gone in; those that *had*, had been delivered piecemeal and the assaulting troops had been cut to pieces.



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

The enemy was to remain in his captured Canadian positions and the attackers had been left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.

(Right below: *Maple Copse Cemetery, adjacent to Hill 60, in which lie many Canadians killed during the days of the confrontation at Mount Sorrel – photograph from 2014*)

On the day of the German attack the 27th Battalion had been in Reserve at “B” Camp and recovering from the exertions of the baseball and football games – and the band concert - of the previous day.

It had not been until June 6 that the unit would be ordered forward, at first into Ypres itself before then being divided to undertake various tasks, one of which had been to take defensive positions to oppose another German assault launched that day.

On the 7th and 8th the Battalion was to be in support; from the 9th until one o'clock in the morning of the 12th, it had been up in the forward trenches before it was to be ordered back once more into support positions. On the evening of that same day, other units had moved up into assembly positions to deliver a massive counter-attack – on this occasion better-organized and also well-supported by the Canadian guns – early on the following morning.

(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, an area today protected by the Belgian Government against everything except the whims of nature*. – photograph from 2014*)

****In the first week of June, 1917, on the opening day of the ‘Battle of Messines Ridge’, a British mine underneath it was detonated and removed any resemblance to a hill.***

The counter-stroke of June 13 had proved successful. After the previous eleven days of what at times had been ferocious fighting, apart from a small Canadian loss to the Germans of ground in the area of Hooze, the two opposing forces were now to find themselves returned much to their original positions of June 2. And there the matter would draw to a close: status quo – except that the cemeteries were now more full and more numerous.

(continued)



Thus the days had again reverted to that trench warfare routine which was to continue for some two further months. After this time the 27th Battalion – in the company of most of the other Canadian Battalions – was once more to be withdrawn, on this occasion for intensive training in ‘*open warfare*’ in one of several large areas that had been prepared for the task in the north-west of France. From there the Canadians were then to be ordered further south into France, there to play a role in the British summer offensive of 1916.

By that time, on July 31 of that summer of 1916, Private Miller had returned *to duty* with the 27th Battalion, on a day when the unit was in its final day behind the lines at *Chippewa Camp* in close proximity to the small community of La Clytte. Later that evening it was to return forward to the trenches.



(Right: *La Clytte Military Cemetery within the bounds of which are buried some eight-hundred fifty dead of the Great War, including fifty who wore a Canadian uniform – photograph from 2017*)

* * * * *

The trenches in question were once more in the area of St-Éloi where, on the night of August 4-5, the Battalion was to play a role in a minor raid on enemy positions in order to either take a prisoner or to identify the German unit opposite – or both. However, even though the enemy trenches had been entered and several of the enemy killed or wounded, no prisoner was forthcoming nor were any insignia to identify the unit.

A second such enterprise was undertaken on the night of August 7-8 but on this occasion the only enemy positions that the attackers had been able to enter were found to have been abandoned.

What Private Miller’s part in all of this, if indeed he was to play a part, has not been recorded.

This tour in the forward area proved to be longer than usual and it was not to be until August 16 that the 27th Battalion retired from to return to *Chippewa Camp*. There the unit was to spend the next three days in preparation for its departure from the sector – indeed from the country – and back into north-western France. On August 20 Private Miller’s Battalion was on the march by a circuitous itinerary towards the vicinity of Hazebrouck via the community of Steenvoorde where it had been billeted for that night.



It was now for the 27th Battalion, after a day of rest, and for other battalions of the 2nd Canadian Division that those aforementioned training exercises in ‘*open warfare*’ were to begin on or about August 22 – with the new Short Lee-Enfield Mark III rifle (see below).

(continued)

(Preceding page: Canadian troops likely in trenches built for training purposes – they are too prim and proper to be the real thing when compared to the photograph on a following page – and here equipped with Short Lee-Enfield Mark III Rifles, during the late summer or early autumn of 1916 – from *The War Illustrated*)

****The Canadian-produced Ross Rifle was an excellently-manufactured weapon; its accuracy and range were superior to that of many of its rivals, but on the battlefield it had not proved its worth. In the dirty conditions and when the necessity arose for its repeated use - and using mass-produced ammunition which at times was less than perfect - it would jam, leaving its user defenceless at a critical moment.***

By the summer of 1916 the Canadian units were exchanging it for the more reliable British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III, a weapon that was to ultimately serve around the globe until well after the Second World War.

Then, on September 4, the unit boarded a train in the larger centre of St-Omer.



(Right above: *The once-splendid railway station in St-Omer, which today is in dire need of some overdue attention – photograph from 2015*)

However, by this date, Private Miller had once more been seconded by another unit, the 2nd Field Company, Canadian Engineers*.

****It may be that he was taken on by a Tunnelling Company again as these were apparently attached to the Canadian Engineers. Unfortunately, no War Diary for the 2nd Field Company appears to be available for scrutiny at this time.***

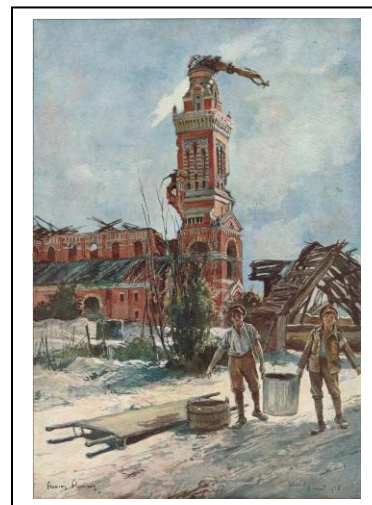
* * * * *

Private Miller's 27th Battalion was to carry on the war without him. On September 4 the...*Train moved out at 2.03 pm on time. The Battalion had subsequently...arrived and detrained at CANDAS at 2.15 am...some twelve hours later, whereupon the Canadians had been obliged to march four miles...where Battalion billeted.*

More marching was to follow, from their billets to the camp at Brickfields (*la Briqueterie*) in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert, a distance – on country roads – of some forty kilometres, where the Battalion had reported on September 7.

There the personnel of the 27th Battalion was to undertake training during the week that had followed.

(Right: *Canadian soldiers working carrying water in Albert, the already-damaged basilica to be seen in the background – from *Illustration)**



(continued)

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 which was to cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – during the short span of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

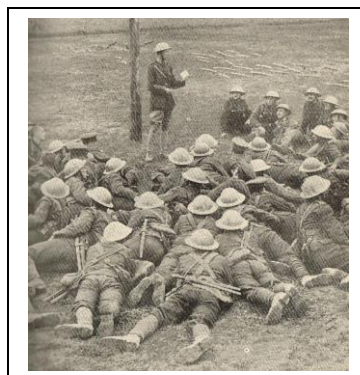
On that first day of *First Somme* all but two small units of the attacking divisions had been troops from the British Isles, the exceptions having been the two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and the eight-hundred personnel of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment which had lost so heavily on that day at a place called Beaumont-Hamel.

As the battle had progressed, other troops, from the Empire (*Commonwealth*), were to be brought in; at first it had been the South African Brigade (July 15), 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 collective contribution was to be in the area of the two villages of Flers and Courcelette.



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

(Right: *An image purporting to be that of a Canadian officer giving instructions to those under his command prior to the attack at Flers-Courcelette (see below), September 1916 – from The War Illustrated*)



Excerpt from 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary entry for September 15: *At 6.20 a.m. the Brigade carried out attack against German line, with 27th and 28th Bns. as assaulting Bns.*

These attackers of September 15 were to be assisted by three tanks, the first time that these new weapons would be used in battle.

(Right: *One of the earliest tanks built during the Great War, today on display at the Imperial War Museum in London – photograph from 2011(?)*)



Excerpts from Battalion War Diary entry of September 15: *At 6.20 a.m. the artillery barrage opened, 50 yards in advance of German trench and the first wave commenced crawling over.*

As the barrage lifted the Battn. advanced on to the first German Line and were met with heavy rifle and machine gun fire... This objective was reported to Battn. H.Q. as being taken at 6.27 a.m. The Battn. followed up the barrage closely and met very little opposition at SUNKEN ROAD...

(continued)

By this time the first wave was nearly wiped out and the second wave took its place. "A" Company then swung to the left and captured its last objective with one Corpl. and 15 O.R. "C" and "D" Coys. reached their objectives and immediately commenced to dig in. This was reported to Battn. H.Q. at 7.40 a.m.

(Right: After the fighting of Courcelette, lightly-wounded Canadian soldiers being administered first aid before then being evacuated to the rear for further medical attention – from Le Miroir)



The first day was overall to be, in fact, a mixture of success and failure; the second day, spent in the advanced trenches near *Sunken Road*, had been used for consolidation and for conveying supplies, ammunition and rations forward from the rear area. The War Diary reveals that, whatever the result, a heavy toll had been paid during the entire operation of September 15-17*: the 27th Battalion had incurred three-hundred ninety-four casualties *all told*; the four battalions of the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade had counted one-thousand one-hundred twenty-nine in total.



**The attack of the Canadian 2nd Division in the vicinity of Courcelette was apparently the only real success of the day, despite the losses, with all objectives having been attained. The other attackers achieved little yet paid the same price.*

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



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

At half-past eight o'clock on the morning of September 17 the depleted 27th Battalion had retired from the newly-won positions in the area of Courcelette and had withdrawn to bivouacs back at *Brickfields Camp*.

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



The Battalion was now to go on a little tour of the surrounding country-side, at first by bus before the exercise would then become a prolonged route march. There was soon to be a further British-inspired offensive – the *Battle of Thiepval Ridge* – but this was not to directly involve the majority of soldiers of the 2nd Canadian Division. Thus in order to provide the necessary billets and bivouacs for the incoming troops – many of them from the 3rd Canadian Division – it had been necessary to vacate Albert and the nearby camps.

The 27th Battalion had passed via the communities of LaVicogne, Bonneville – where it was to remain for three nights, to train and to have a bath – before returning to Albert by way of LaVicogne and Vadencourt. On September 24, it had arrived by motor-bus at Albert, and from there had marched up to the forward trenches where it would eventually relieve the 3rd Battalion that night.

It was to remain there for a brief twenty-four hours before then retiring, only to have been sent forward in small parties to take part in an offensive operation to begin on the night of September 26 in support of the 31st Battalion. Both of these units were at the time badly under-strength at about two-hundred fifty men each* and so they had joined forces to operate as a single unit.

**Establishment trench strength of a battalion was approximately one thousand.*

Although the action of the night of September 26-27 had apparently been planned as an attack in battalion strength, it would seem as though it had in fact evolved into a succession of offensive patrols, many of which had found their objectives to be devoid of Germans, they having retired to new positions. There had been, however, sufficient opposition for the 27th Battalion War Diarist to be able to record ten *killed in action*, sixty-four *wounded*, one *died of wounds* and thirteen *missing in action*.

The 27th Battalion had retired on September 29 to the appropriately-name...*Sausage Valley*...there to be quartered in old German trenches and dugouts. Total casualties for the month of September had amounted to four-hundred ninety-three.

The month of October was to begin with an attack in the area of *Regina Trench* by the 24th and 25th Canadian Infantry Battalions accompanied by two companies of the 27th Battalion in support. The attacks, says the War Diarist, were...*only partially successful*...and later that night – in fact early the following morning – the 27th Battalion was to be relieving two other battalions.

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

On October 2 the unit was to busy itself occupying abandoned enemy positions, consolidating them, establishing advanced bombers' and Lewis-Gun posts and connecting what before had been a series of isolated positions. The day's work had been terminated that night by the excavation of...*100 yard trench from post in COURCELETTE Trench to E. MIRAUMONT Road to join up with the 18th Battalion*.



On the night of October 3-4 the unit was relieved and withdrew to *Brickfields Camp* perhaps to snatch a few hours of precious sleep before, later during that October 4, it was on the march once more, to the westwards, that night to sleep in tents in the vicinity of the village of Warloy.

(continued)

And thus came to an end for the 27th Battalion (*City of Winnipeg*) Battalion the *First Battle of the Somme*.

(Right: *Warloy Communal Cemetery Extension wherein lie thirteen-hundred fifty-seven Commonwealth, British and German graves as well as one-hundred eighty-five French – photograph from 2017*)

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His personal records show that Private Miller was to re-join his unit after service with the Canadian Engineers on that same October 4 although the venue of that reunion is not clear.

After two days spent at Warloy, a period highlighted perhaps by a presentation of decorations, the 27th Battalion was on the move, again on foot, for the next eight days, to the westward prior to turning northward to bypass the battered city of Arras before coming to a halt on October 15 in the area of Fosse dite de Barlin. There it was immediately ordered forward into support positions to relieve a British battalion.



(Right above: *The remnants of the Grande Place (Grand'Place) in Arras which had already been steadily bombarded for two years by the end of the year 1916 – from Illustration*)

This area was some twenty kilometres north to northwest of Arras and was in the primary coal-mining area of France. Thus the Canadian units now retiring from the battle to this area were to find themselves serving in a region of towns and small villages rather than in open country which had mostly been the case before, even in Belgium. However, for the moment at least, things were a lot quieter and a great deal less dangerous than they had been only ten days previously when that *open country* had been the fields of *the Somme*.

The remainder of the month of October followed much the routines of front line, support and reserve as told on an earlier page but as recounted above, it was a lot less lively. Casualties for that period were *killed in action*, fourteen; *died of wounds*, nine; *wounded*, forty-eight; and *missing in action*, thirteen. Given that some of these numbers had been incurred at *the Somme* in the early part of the month, they stand in stark contrast with those of September.



(Right above: *The remnants of the village of Souchez as it already was in 1915 before the British took the area over from the French – from Le Miroir*)

And again in that November, after a further month of the same grind of life in and out of the trenches: *killed in action*, three; *wounded*, nine.

(continued)

By this time a number of 27th Battalion personnel was being granted a period of leave: Private Miller was to be one of that number and received a ten-day furlough, from December 12 to 22, to return to the United Kingdom. There are no further details of him until he admitted himself into the Endell Road Military Hospital in London on December 16.

(Right: *London – in fact the City of Westminster – in the area of Marble Arch, in or about the year 1913, just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



There he was diagnosed as suffering from pleurisy, a condition to which was soon to be added the problem of pneumonia.

The son of Lewis Haldane Miller, former manager of *Calahan Glass* in St. John's, but deceased January 13, 1910, and of Mary Miller (née *Morrison*) – to whom as of May 1, 1915, he had allotted the monthly sum of fifteen dollars from his pay – of 26 Power Street in St. John's (she later of 6207 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, United States of America) - he was also brother to John, to Agnes and to Janet.

Private* Miller was reported as having *died of sickness* in Endell Road Hospital** of *double pneumonia* on December 27, 1916.

**Two of his papers have recorded his rank as having been that of lance corporal, but this is documented neither on his Active Service Form nor on his pay records nor by the CWGC on his grave-stone.*

***Other papers document him as having died of wounds but the medical records in his personal dossier prove otherwise.*

Andrew Haldane Miller had enlisted at the *apparent age* of thirty years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, October 21, 1894 (from attestation papers and also parish records*).

**Ancestry.ca has 1891 as the year of birth, but that was apparently the year of the birth of his sister Janet.*

Private Andrew Haldane Miller 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) (right).



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*.
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