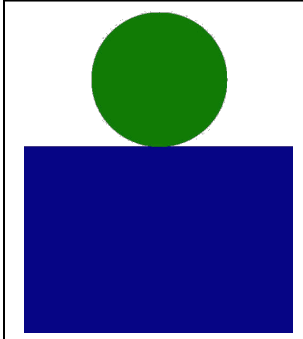




Private James Monk (often found as *Monks*), (Number 775710) of the 18th Battalion (*Western Ontario*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Thélus Military Cemetery: Grave reference, II.D.6..

(Right: *The image of the shoulder-flash of the 18th Battalion (Western Ontario) is from the CEFSG web-site.*)

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a carpenter, James Monk left the Dominion of Newfoundland on November 26, 1910, at the age of thirteen in the company of his mother. On that day they crossed the Cabot Strait on board the SS Bruce from Port aux Basques to North Sydney on their way to join James' father who was by that time working in Toronto as a carpenter*.

**Whether James' three siblings were living with their father at that time or whether they were to travel to Toronto on a later date is not recorded but the entire family was there by the time that the 1911 Census was taken.*

The same Census records the by-then fourteen-year old James employed as a labourer.

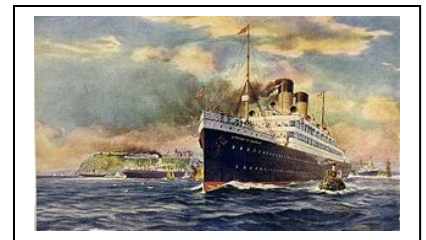
All the relevant documents – pay records, attestation papers and medical report - agree that it was on December 30 of 1915 and in the city of Toronto that James Monk enlisted. On that same day he presented himself for the above-mentioned medical examination, which pronounced him as...*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*,...and was thereupon attested.

The formalities of his enlistment were then brought to a conclusion on that December 30 by the Commanding Officer of the 126th 'Peel' Battalion – by which unit Private Monk was then *taken on strength* – Lieutenant Frederick John Hamilton, when he declared, on paper, that...*James Monk...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this attestation.*

It was now to be more than seven months before the order was to arrive for the Battalion to proceed overseas. During the interim the unit would undergo preparatory training: at first, during the remainder of that winter and the entire spring of 1916, this was undertaken in the newly-constructed Armoury in Brampton and in an elderly school-building in the west end of Toronto.

With the arrival of the summer, however, the venue was changed: at first the 126th Battalion was posted to *Niagara Camp* before then being ordered to the recently-established *Camp Borden*. It was to be from there that Private Monk's unit was to proceed to *overseas service*.

A long train journey from Ontario during the second week of August, 1916, brought the 126th Battalion to the east-coast port of Halifax where it embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Empress of Britain* on the 14th day of the month for the trans-Atlantic crossing.



(Right above: *The requisitioned Canadian Pacific Steamship Company's vessel Empress of Britain spent the first year of the Great War as an Armed Merchant Cruiser before taking on the role of a troop transport for the remainder of the conflict.* – image from the Wikipedia web-site)

Private Monk's unit was not to travel alone: also taking passage for the United Kingdom on the ship were the 117th, 120th and 121st Battalions of Canadian Infantry, for a total of well over four-thousand military personnel passengers.

Empress of Britain sailed on the day on which the 126th Battalion embarked and, after an uneventful voyage, docked in the English west-coast port of Liverpool ten days later, on August 24. Private Monk's Battalion was thereupon ordered onto trains and was transported southwards to the Canadian military complex of ***Camp Bramshott***. The establishment had only recently been created in the county of Hampshire in proximity to the villages of Liphook and Bramshott, the latter having lent the complex its name.



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

Private Monk and his comrades-in-arms of the 126th Battalion were to spend just over seven weeks at ***Camp Bramshott***. Then in mid-October the unit's personnel was to be divided into (perhaps) three detachments: one of four-hundred fifty to join the 109th Battalion, one of three-hundred fifty to be absorbed by the 116th Battalion, and the remainder to be sent to the 8th Canadian (*Reserve*) Battalion*. According to his personal military records, Private Monk was transferred to the 116th Battalion, to be stationed at not-far-distant ***Camp Witley***, on October 15.

****This last transfer to the 8th requires confirmation as it is not cited by some sources.***

The Battalion's organizers and its personnel – as was to be the case for the majority of the Canadian Overseas Battalions - had originally anticipated that the unit would be ordered into ***active service*** on the Continent, but this was not to be. In fact the Battalion would be officially disbanded on May 21, 1917*.

****Before the end of the Great War, Canada was to have despatched overseas two-hundred fifty battalions – although it is true that a number of these units, particularly as the conflict progressed, were below full strength. At the outset, these Overseas Battalions all had presumptions of seeing active service in a theatre of war.***

However, as it transpired, only some fifty of these formations were ever to be sent across the English Channel to the Western Front. By far the majority remained in the United Kingdom to be used as re-enforcement pools and they were gradually absorbed, particularly after January of 1917, by units that had by then been specifically designated as Canadian Reserve Battalions.

By that October of 1916, the Canadian Corps had been involved in the ***First Battle of the Somme*** for almost two months, during which time it had suffered horrific losses. It was to fill the depleted ranks of those battered units that many of the troops arriving in England were now destined.



(Right above: ***Dead of the Somme awaiting burial*** – an unidentified photograph)

(continued)

His posting to Camp Witley was not of long duration: on November 28 Private Monk was *struck off strength* by the 116th Battalion in preparation for *overseas service* – and *active service* – with the 18th Canadian Infantry Battalion (*Western Ontario*). On that night, November 28-29, he crossed the English Channel, likely passing via the English south-coast port of Southampton and the French industrial city of Le Havre, on the estuary of the River Seine.

Established at Rouelles, close to the city of Le Havre, was the Canadian Base Depot. It had been in operation there since September of 1915, its purpose to organize the reinforcements being sent from England before despatching them on their way to their new units. It was to Rouelles that Private Monk – one of eleven-hundred fifty-seven arrivals on November 29 – proceeded after disembarkation.



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

He apparently did not remain at the Base Depot for long. Although the date of his departure from there is not to be found among his records, the day on which he reported to duty with his new unit, the 18th Battalion, is: December 3, 1916.

This was a day when the 18th Battalion, having retired some weeks before from the *First Battle of the Somme*, was in the area of the front – from the town of Béthune in the north almost to the outskirts of the city of Arras in the south – which was becoming more and more a Canadian responsibility. On that December 3, the unit, having just been relieved, was moving into Brigade Support in the vicinity of the community of Calonne.

Private Monk was now on *active service*.

* * * * *

The 18th Battalion (*Western Ontario*) was an element of the 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself a component of the 2nd Canadian Division, newly-formed by September of 1915. It had been in the middle of that same month that the formation had embarked from England and landed in France, the majority of its units having passed through Folkestone and Boulogne on the way to their first posting, in the *Kingdom of Belgium*.



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



(continued)

The sector to which the 2nd Canadian Division had been designated was to the south of the remnants of the shattered city of Ypres. There the new-comers were quickly to become accustomed to the rigours and routines of life in the trenches*.

**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 the forward area, the latter 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: A photograph of Canadian troops in support positions somewhere on the Somme in the autumn of the same year, 1916: By that time they had been equipped with steel helmets and also the less-evident British-made Short Lee-Enfield Mark III rifles – from Illustration)



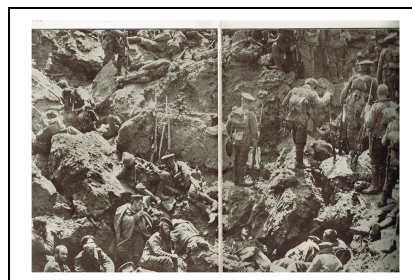
One of the communities of the area of the 2nd Canadian Division's operations – a village mostly abandoned by the civilian population by then – had been that of St-Éloi, where the 18th Battalion, some seven months after having arrived on the Continent, was to fight its first major engagement.

(Right below: An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915, 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)



It had begun on March 27 of 1916 when the British had detonated a series of mines in galleries tunnelled under the German lines and had followed up with an infantry assault. All had not, however, gone as planned: the British attack was to become bogged down, not least of all because of the problem of crossing the craters caused by its own mines - these had then become filled with water due to the abundant rain. The troops had often fought immersed up to their knees – and at times to the waist.

On April 3 it had been the turn of the Canadian 2nd Division to enter the fray to relieve the by-then exhausted British troops. Fighting under the same abominable conditions, they, like the British, had found that the shattered landscape little resembled what they had been told to expect. And they, like their British comrades-in-arms, had floundered and lost their way as the German defences had daily grown ever-more resolute and their incessant artillery fire ever stronger.



(Preceding page: *An attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines, possibly at St-Éloi – from Illustration*)

The fighting was to linger on into the fourth week of April – although the official end to the engagement is recorded as April 17 - by which time the Canadians alone were to have lost almost fifteen-hundred men and all for nought: the Germans by then had won back all that had been lost.

The 18th Battalion had become directly involved when on April 8 it had been ordered to attack Craters 2 and 3; this had been followed by several days during which the unit had supplied working-parties and carrying-parties before it had then retired on the 11th after a final bombing raid on the previous night.

The exact number of 18th Battalion casualties is hard to ascertain but during the entire period there had been approximately twenty *killed in action* or *died of wounds* and perhaps some seventy *wounded* and *missing*.

A further six weeks were now to pass before the next infantry action involving the Canadian forces would come to pass. It had been, however, a confrontation which primarily involved the newly-arrived 3rd Canadian Division, although other units were to be deployed as the situation became critical – but the 18th Battalion was not to be one of those to be called upon.

From June 2 to 14 had then been fought the battle for *Mount Sorrel* and for the area of the village of Hooze, *Sanctuary Wood, Maple Copse, Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* between the German Army and the Canadian Corps. The Canadians had been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions dominating the Canadian trenches when the Germans had delivered an offensive, having overrun the forward areas and, in fact, having ruptured the Canadian lines, an opportunity which fortunately they had never exploited.

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

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



The Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, had reacted 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 been delivered – those that had been, were to go in piecemeal and the assaulting troops had been cut to pieces - the enemy had remained where he was and the Canadians had been left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.

(continued)

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



Ten days later the Canadians again had counter-attacked, on this occasion better informed, better prepared and better supported by a competent artillery program. The lost ground for the most part had been recovered, both sides had returned whence they had started on June 2 – and the cemeteries were now a little fuller.

During this period, although the 18th Battalion had been posted into a forward area until June 12, it was not the sector which had been threatened by the German offensive. Then subsequently, from the 12th until the 17th of the month, the unit had been withdrawn into the area of the remnants of the village of Dickebusch.

For the 18th Battalion, after the activity of the confrontation at *Mount Sorrel*, things had reverted to normal, the Battalion War Diarist more than occasionally having employed terms such as *quiet* and *normal* in his daily entries. Existence in the trenches once again was to return to the pattern of routines as described in an earlier paragraph and patrolling appears to have been the limit of infantry activity. Almost without exception, casualties were to be due to the enemy's artillery and to his snipers.

The first half of the month of August had been spent well away from the front, at *Alberta Camp* in the area of Poperinghe(?) and then even further afield in Brigade Reserve at La Clytte.



(Right: *La Clytte Military Cemetery wherein lie eight-hundred forty-six soldiers of the Great War of whom fifty are Canadian. – photograph from 2017*)

From the 15th of the month of August until the 22nd, the Battalion was once more ordered to undertake a tour in the trenches and once again it had been *quiet*: the total casualty count for the entire week and a day had been a single *other rank - killed in action*.

On that August 22 the 18th Battalion had been relieved and had moved back to *Kenora Camp*. On the following day it had rested, had had a bath and then a clothing parade. On August 24...*Battalion parade full marching order for march to STEENVOORDE. 4th Canadian Brigade group move as a whole* (excerpt from 18th Battalion War Diary entry for August 24, 1916).

Steenvoorde is in northern France. Not only the 4th Brigade but the entire 2nd Canadian Division was now to leave Belgium for the training areas that had been created for the 2nd Army on the French side of the frontier. The 1st Canadian Division had done so some two weeks previously and the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions were later to follow suit. The 18th Battalion, as a unit of the Canadian Corps, was now to prepare for its role in the ongoing British offensive of the summer of 1916: the *First Battle of the Somme*.

(continued)

The 18th Battalion had reached Steenvoorde on the day that it had left *Kenora Camp*, August 24, but there were yet four more days of marching to follow before its final billets were to be reached at the village of Tournehem in the area of which much of the unit's training would take place.

The following day, August 29, had been the first day of that training and what the troops felt about their first exercise – a route march – may well be imagined. Nevertheless the numerous such treks that were now to follow were eventually to stand the Canadians in good stead. The same may not, in retrospect, have been true for much of the remainder of training which had been described by its organizers as exercises for...*open warfare*.

The period of training had continued for six days, during which time the War Diarist was not to note any novel developments. Not novel, perhaps, but there would be one change to an important piece of the infantryman's equipment: his rifle*.

**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 jammed, 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 rifle that was to ultimately serve around the globe until well after the Second World War.

On September 9 the 18th Battalion was on the move once more and paraded to the railway station in the community of Audruicq, there to entrain for the journey southwards to the French *Département de la Somme*. At ten-thirty that evening it arrived at Auxi-le-Chateau and thereupon marched to billets in the community of Cramont where it remained to rest until the morning of September 6.

The Battalion personnel was likely to later have been grateful for that day of rest and for having undergone the numerous route marches of the preceding weeks: their destination was still some sixty kilometres distant and was now to be reached – on foot – in four days.

Billets had been anticipated in communities along the route and the nights were to be spent in Bonneville, Hérissart and Vadencourt before, on September 9, the unit marched through the provincial town of Albert to bivouac in a field in the nearby *Brickfields Camp*.

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 – in the short span of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.



(Preceding page: *Canadian soldiers working, carrying water in the centre of Albert, the town's already-damaged basilica in the background – from Illustration*)

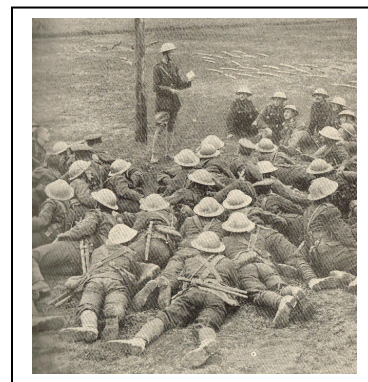
On that first day of *First Somme*, all but two small units of the attacking divisions had been troops from the British Isles, those exceptions being the two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and the eight-hundred personnel of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland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

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



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

Having arrived at *Brickfields* the 18th Battalion once again had rested for a day before commencing training for the imminent offensive. It had then drilled for three days – at times under enemy artillery fire but without any reported casualties - before its first elements had begun to move forward on that evening of September 13, into their designated positions, a task that was to be completed by the night of September 14-15.



(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*)

The 18th Battalion War Diarist was apparently not an officer given to long and detailed reports; nor does this particular document contain, as do many, appendices in which certain occasions are recorded at length. Thus the entry for September 15 is neither long nor laboured – some of it, in fact, included in that of the day before:



September 14...6.24 A.M. Battalion attacked German front and second lines to depth of 1200 yds. and held the position gained. (both objectives gained)

September 15...Battalion holding ground gained.

September 16 morning...Battalion relieved by Gordon Highlanders. Battalion in reserve at Tara Valley...

(continued)

(Preceding page: *The village of Courcellette just over a century after the events of the First Battle of the Somme as seen from its northern outskirts – photograph from 2017*)

For the most part, the offensive of September 15 and the two days following – which had involved not only the Canadian Corps – was not to be the hoped-for success. In most cases, indeed, casualties had once more been heavy and the gains very limited. The only real success had been the advance by the 2nd Canadian Division – of which the 18th Battalion was a unit – towards the village of Courcellette which had been taken in the evening of the 15th and the nearby sugary refinery which had already fallen that morning.

This success, however, had come at a price, and a heavy one at that; the War Diarist records the Battalion losses among other ranks and officers in different entries but the totals for the operation had amounted to fifty-six *killed in action*, two-hundred seven *wounded* and seventy *missing in action*.



(Right: *Wounded soldiers at the Somme being evacuated to the rear area in hand-carts – from Le Miroir*)

As of September 18, the 18th Battalion was now to endure several more days of marching. The High Command had planned for yet another *push* during the fourth week of that September; however, the Canadian troops to be involved were for the most part not to be those which had just fought at Courcellette.

Those who had survived the offensive of September 15-17, and who were not presently receiving medical care were now to be sent on an eight-day route march to an area far to the rear...and then back. This had been to free up the billeting space in the vicinity of Albert necessary to accommodate the incoming soldiery.

Thus, on that aforesaid September 18, the 18th Battalion had marched as far as Vadencourt and on the next to Lavicogne. On September the unit had rested before continuing on the morrow to St-Léger-les-Domart. There it would remain on September 22 for a first inspection of rifles, before a second one undertaken by the Commanding Officer. The proceedings had thereupon terminated with a pay-parade.

The unit was to be back on the road the next day, then having retraced its steps to Lavicogne on September 23, to Vadencourt on September 24, and finally having reported back to Albert – and beyond to an area known as the *Chalk Pits* - on September 25. The following days had been served in that vicinity until the final night of the month when...*Battalion relieved 21st Bn in line...*



The Battalion had spent only until October 3 in the front-line positions, although it was by then to have played an offensive part in an advance of some five-hundred yards where a new trench had been dug and settled into by the end of the day.

(continued)

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

There is no suggestion in the War Diary entries of early October that its author realized that this was to be his Battalion's final contribution to the *First Battle of the Somme*, but this was to be so. Having been withdrawn into reserve on October 3, two days were now to pass before the unit had marched again to billets at Lavicogne; but on this occasion it was not to return.

As had – and as were to do – the other units of the Canadian Corps upon their retirement from *the Somme*, the 18th Battalion had, by a semi-circular itinerary, passed to the west of the city of Arras and beyond. By October 14 it was in billets at its destination, the community of Bully-Grenay.



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

This area – from just north of Arras in the south to the town of Béthune in the north was now to become more and more a Canadian responsibility. As the Canadian troops departed from *the Somme* in their turn, the last units in late November and early December, they all followed much the same itinerary northwards. The Canadian Corps was to remain in these sectors for the best part of – and in some cases, more than – a year.

That autumn followed by the winter of 1916-1917 was to be one of relative calm, allowing the 18th Battalion – and many others - to return to the everyday thankless grind of life in – and out of – the trenches of the *Great War*; after *the Somme* it had perhaps been a welcome respite.

There was to be little if any concerted infantry activity apart from the constant patrolling and the occasional raids by both sides. The medical facilities during this period were to be kept much more busy by cases of sickness and dental problems than by the numbers of wounded in need of treatment.



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

And it was during this period, of course, in early December – the third day of the month according to his personal file – that Private Monk had reported from the rear area *to duty* at Calonne to where his new unit on that same day, had retired, *it* from the forward area.

* * * * *

Privat Monk spent Christmas day in the front-line trenches...*Position same. Lieut. P.G. Might admitted to hospital. Enemy seems to have very much water in his trenches. Patrol reports all quiet* (Entire entry of 18th Battalion War Diary for December 25, Christmas Day, 1916).

And the raid mounted on Boxing Day – no fraternity in that 1916 as there had been in 1914, the first winter of the *Great War* – appears to have been rather anti-climactic, apart from the casualty list, although whether Private Monk played a part in it is not recorded: *A raiding party under Lieut. Eastwood entered enemy line and worked down the trench. No enemy were encountered at all. A rifle was found in one unoccupied bay. Several dug outs were bombed but no Bosches were seen. Our casualties were nil...*(Excerpt from the 18th Battalion War Diary entry of December 26, 1916).

Private Monk's Battalion was to remain in support and front-line positions until January 20 when it was ordered withdrawn to the area of Haillicourt for ten days of inspections, bayonet fighting, physical drill, platoon drill, section drill and communication drill, with two afternoons dedicated to that contradiction in terms...*recreational training*.

More of the same was to follow during the first two weeks of February in proximity to the community of Auchel, a dozen or so kilometres distant to the north-west of Haillicourt before, in mid-month, the Battalion marched to billets at Écoivres, further to the south. Six days later again, on February 19, after thirty days of service behind the lines, Private Monk's unit moved up to the front and into trenches in the *Thelus Sector*, just south of a crest of land which dominated the entire area to the east: *Vimy Ridge*.



(Right above: *Vimy Ridge and the Canadian Memorial as seen from the once-German perspective on the Douai Plain, La Chaudière Sector* – photograph from 2015)

This tour surely brought the personnel of the 18th Battalion back to the realities of the *Great War*. The trenches were in poor condition and muddy, thus necessitating the constant employment of working-parties; the artillery of both sides was particularly active, rendering life for the infantry of both sides uncomfortable and dangerous. Casualties, if not numerous, were constant.

Periods in support and the front line were followed in the middle of March by four days spent in the relative calm of Brigade Reserve before the unit was once again recalled to the front. By this time it was becoming evident to all that a major operation was soon to be undertaken in the area, and to that end a raid by the Battalion was planned to determine the strength of the German defences opposite.

On the night of 23/24th we raided the enemy trenches...the object being to destroy known dugouts and Trench Mortar emplacements. This we accomplished and caused casualties among the enemy who held his position strongly manned...(Excerpt from 18th Battalion War Diary entry for March 23, 1917)

After having been relieved on March 24, training was to continue apace in the vicinity of the Bois Des Alleux (*Alleux Woods*). By this time the units of the Canadian Corps were in turn being retired from the forward areas to undergo more intensive training and exercises in preparation for what was to come.

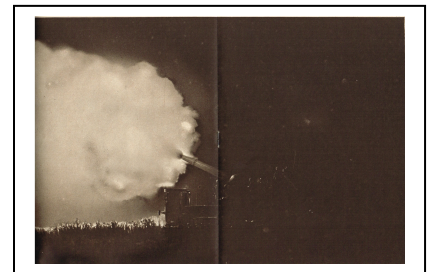
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Among these preparations were to be some novel developments: use of enemy weapons; each unit and each man to be familiar with his role during the upcoming battle; the construction of ground layouts built, thanks to aerial reconnaissance, to show the terrain and positions to be attacked; the introduction of the machine-gun barrage; and the excavation of kilometres of approach tunnels, not only for the safety of the attacking troops but also to ensure the element of surprise.

In the case of the 18th Battalion, practice – in full battle-gear - of the attack on prepared replicated sites began on April 1 and 2, two days and a pay-parade before Private Monk and his unit were returned to their previous front-line positions...*for the purpose of digging “jumping-off” trenches...and cutting lanes in our wire, ready for the Battalion’s advance...*(Excerpt from 18th Battalion War Diary entry for April 4, 1917)

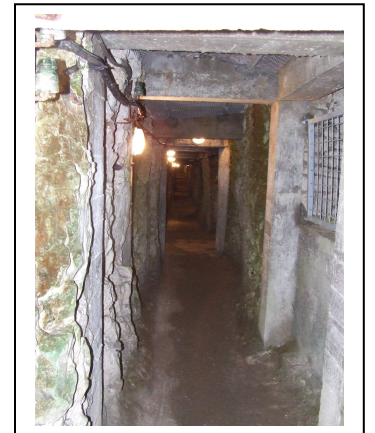
It thereupon returned on the morrow to the training area.

As the days had passed the artillery barrage had grown progressively heavier, on April 6, Good Friday, the War Diarist of another battalion describing it as...*drums*. By this time, of course, the Germans were aware that something was in the offing and their guns in their turn threw retaliatory fire onto the Canadian positions - and their aircraft were very busy.



(Right above: *A heavy British artillery piece continues its deadly work during a night before the attack on Vimy Ridge. – from Illustration*)

On April 8 at a quarter to eight in the evening the...*Battalion commenced to move to its battle position...with Battalion H.Q. located at ZIVY CAVE. The Battalion, comprising 12 Platoons, approximately 600 strong, moved into the line by Platoons by 100 yds intervals. Bombs (grenades) and shovels were picked up en route, and despite the fact that the enemy heavily shelled all routes and C.T’s. (communication trenches) all night, the assembly was completed without a casualty...*(Excerpt from 18th Battalion War Diary entry for April 8, 1917)



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

By three forty-five in the morning of April 9, all the 18th Battalion forces were reportedly in their assembly and *jumping-off* positions.

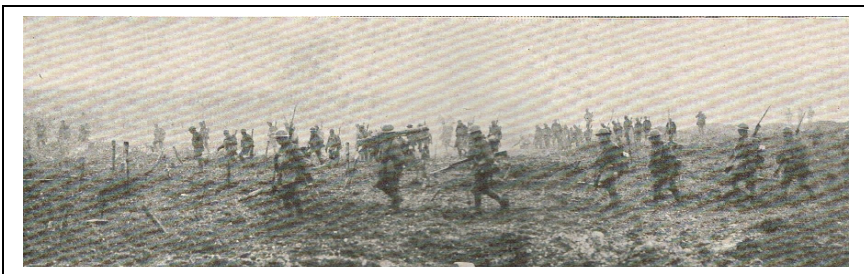
The Battalion War Diarist takes up the story of Private Monk and his 18th Battalion’s attack on *Vimy Ridge* of April 9, Easter Monday, 1917: *At zero hour...5.30 a.m., the advance was made. Simultaneously with the opening up of the Artillery Barrage the Battalion left the “Jumping-Off” trenches and attack the German front line. Very little opposition was met with whilst capturing the first line system of trenches.*

(continued)

The enemy barraged “No-man’s-land” for about fifteen minutes, after which his Artillery fire became very indiscriminate. The support line was captured without any difficulty and the Battalion Objective...finally reached...captured...and in the act of being consolidated. The casualties at this point had been very slight...

At 10.50 a.m....a message was received...reporting that the consolidation of the objective and the reorganization of the Battalion was complete. Telephone communication...was successfully maintained throughout.

(Right: Canadian troops of the 4th or 3rd Division, burdened with all the paraphernalia of war, on the advance across No-Man’s-Land during the attack at Vimy Ridge on either April 9 or 10 of 1917 - from Illustration)



The 18th Battalion now remained in situ....The night of the 9/10th being spent in the Black Objective and funk-holes being the only shelter... The approximate casualties for the whole operation were:- 2 officers killed...40 O.R’s. killed and 180 wounded.



One of those 40 O.R’s. killed had been Private Monk.

(Right above: Canadians under shell-fire occupying the third line of trenches on Vimy Ridge, unidentified dead lying in the foreground. – from Illustration)

The son of Charles Monk (Monks on most documents), fisherman and later carpenter, and of Susanna (Susie) Monk (née Collins) – to whom he had willed his all and also to whom he had allocated a monthly twenty dollars from his pay, both documents signed on August 1, 1916 – of Paradise Sound (she originally from Flat Islands), Newfoundland*, he was also oldest brother to Ever(? – Heber?), to Isaac, to Hattie and, posthumously, to Mildred born in 1918.**

***After their arrival in Toronto the family lived at 1048, St. Clarence Avenue; at the time of enlistment at 75, Ashburnham Avenue; and later again, at 274, Nairn Avenue.**

****According to the 1911 Census, their neighbours at the time in Toronto were Henry and Martha Monk with their children Clifford and Josephine, also from Paradise Sound, and who also emigrated to Canada in 1910. As yet it has been difficult to establish the relationship between the two families.**

Private Monk was reported as having been killed in action on Easter Monday, April 9, 1917, during the fighting on Vimy Ridge. The date of his burial is recorded in his personal papers as having been April 15, 1917.

James Monk had enlisted at the apparent age of eighteen years and seven months: date of birth in Paradise Sound, Newfoundland, May 24, 1897 (from attestation papers).

Private James Monk 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. Last updated – January 25, 2023.

