

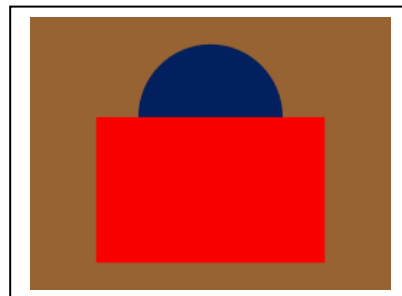


(Above: Flat gravestones – used because of ground subsidence – at Boulogne Eastern Cemetery – photograph from 2011)

(continued)

Private Arthur Murphy, Number 26106 of the 14th Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*), Canadian Expeditionary Force is buried in Boulogne Eastern Cemetery: Grave reference VIII.C.13.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder-patch of the 14th Battalion (Royal Montreal Regiment) is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *machinist*, Arthur Murphy *may have been* the young man – his occupation at that time being that of a *fisherman* – whose name is found on the passenger list dated August 25, 1910, of the *SS Bruce*. The vessel made the crossing on that day from Port aux Basques in the Dominion of Newfoundland to North Sydney in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia.

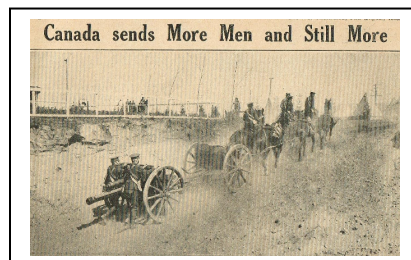
However, that particular Arthur Murphy, appears to have been on his way to the city of Boston although that still would have left him some four years to find his way back to Canada, to Montreal. That is where John, the older brother of the Arthur Murphy of this dossier – and cited as his next-of-kin - is documented as residing, at 1583, St. Hubert Street, at the time of Arthur's attestation.

His first pay records show that it was on August 12 that the Canadian Army first began to remunerate Private Murphy for his services, and that it was also on this date that he was *taken on strength* by the 3rd Regiment of the *Victoria Rifles*, a unit of the Canadian Militia.

The regiments of the Canadian Militia had been raised for the defence of the country and, by law, were unauthorized to serve beyond its frontiers. However, they were not precluded from recruiting volunteers who would eventually be transferred into the new Overseas Battalions which were now being raised.

Such was the case with Private Murphy who trained for some six weeks with the *Victoria Rifles* – and underwent a medical examination on August 28 - before being transferred to the nominal roll – and the pay records of – the 14th Overseas Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, the Battalion by then based at the military complex of Valcartier in the province of Quebec.

He was then attested on September 21, the day before the formalities of his enlistment were brought to a conclusion by the officer commanding 'E' Company to which Private Murphy had been attached. On that September 22, Captain Allan Crawford Shaw declared – on paper – that *...Arthur Murphy...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this attestation.*



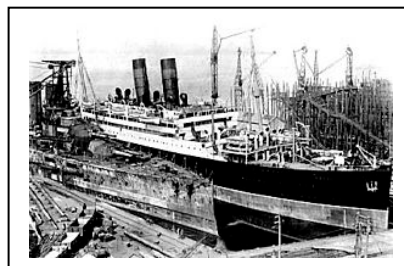
Only days later, Private Murphy, Captain Shaw, 'E' Company and other Companies of the 14th Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*) were en route for the United Kingdom. The Battalion was by that time a component of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade of the (1st) Canadian Division*.

**Shown in different sources as the 1st Canadian Division as well as simply the Canadian Division until, logically, the advent of the 2nd Canadian Division. There were eventually to be four such formations serving on the Western Front, while the 5th Canadian Division was to remain in the United Kingdom for training and for re-enforcement purposes.*

*(Preceding page: Canadian artillery being put through its paces at the Camp at Valcartier. In 1914, the main Army Camp in Canada was at Petawawa. However, its location in Ontario – and away from the Great Lakes – made it impractical for the despatch of troops overseas. Valcartier was apparently built within weeks after the Declaration of War. – photograph (from a later date in the war) from *The War Illustrated*)*

The 14th Battalion was not to travel overseas as a single entity. Five of its eight companies* – 1,2,3, 7 and 8 - embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* in the *Port of Quebec* on September 25, to wait on board ship – anchored in the St. Lawrence River opposite *Wolfe's Cove* - for some five days before moving downstream to the Gaspé. Also embarking with the 14th Battalion for passage to the United Kingdom were the 13th Canadian Infantry Battalion, the Headquarters Staff of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, and the (1st) Divisional Train.

Private Murphy's 'E' Company took ship on Board HMT *Andania* - likely on September 28 with 'D' and 'F' Companies – otherwise identified as 4,5 and 6 - and also with the entire 16th Overseas Battalion and the (1st) Divisional Signals Company. Three other officers, from the 15th Battalion, brought the number of military personnel travelling on board *Andania* to some eighty officers and eighteen-hundred *other ranks*.



(Right: The photograph of the Royal Mail Ship Andania at Scott's Yard, Greenock, alongside the cruiser HMS Ajax, is from the Wikipedia web-site. She was torpedoed and sunk in January of 1918.)

**These appear, in fact, to be eight half-companies which were later amalgamated into four companies of regulation strength. To which of these companies Private Murphy was eventually attached appears not to be documented.*

The two ships weighed anchor on September 30, and by October 3 both *Alaunia* and *Andania* had moved downstream from Quebec to its rendezvous point at the Gaspé with the other vessels which were to transport and escort the Canadian Expeditionary Force across the Atlantic Ocean. Ten days later, having traversed the Atlantic, the convoy of thirty-one plus one* transports and five vessels of the Royal Navy steamed into the English south-coast naval harbour of Plymouth-Devonport on October 14.

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

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The convoy had reached its destination; however, such was the lack of organization that some troops were to remain on board their ships for up to ten days before disembarking. It should be said, however, that the *original* port of disembarkation was to have been the much larger port of Southampton, but a submarine alert had diverted the ships into an unprepared Plymouth-Devonport harbour which was undergoing refurbishment and construction at the time.

'D', 'E' and 'F' – 4,5,6 - Companies were to remain on board *Andania* until or until about the 18th of the month, four days after the ship had anchored. Hours after the troops had finally set foot on land, they were being transported by train to the Army Establishment on Salisbury Plain.



(Right: *The harbour of Plymouth-Devonport as it was almost a century after the Great War, and a lot less busy than at that time - photograph from 2013*)

West Down South, Private Murphy's final destination, was a further eight miles' (some thirteen kilometres) march from the railway station.

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

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



Thus the newly-arrived Canadians were to spend the remainder of October and up until the first week of February, 1915, in becoming proper *Soldiers of the King* – even if they were *colonials*. They were to be wet and cold soldiers at times as well, to spend that entire winter under canvas.

On February 4 the Canadian Division marched to a review area where they were inspected by His Majesty, King George V and the War Minister, Lord Kitchener*. The 14th Battalion War Diarist recorded that *...As the weather was bad, all ranks wore greatcoats, which made the men seem very big and solid.*

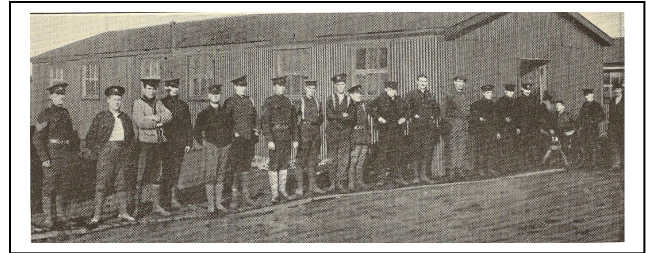


(Right: *George V... By the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – from the bing.com/images web-site*)

**For whom the Canadian city of Kitchener was to be named in 1916 – it had been called Berlin until then.*

(Right below: *Canadian troops during the late autumn of 1914 at Bulford Camp, Wiltshire – from [The War Illustrated](#)*)

On February 10 the 14th Battalion marched from its encampment to the railway station at Amesbury from where the unit proceeded overnight by train to the port-city of Bristol and to the Avonmouth Docks. There it immediately took ship onto HMT *Australind* which was to transport it and a Heavy Battery of the Canadian Artillery to France.



The ship departed Avonmouth on the same February 11 to sail directly into a winter storm which was to last, at a greater or lesser degree, for the duration of the voyage. So violent was it that the War Diary entry for February 13 read... *One man of battery killed by being thrown against iron stanchion.*



(Right above: *The image of the SS Australind – apparently an Australian Ship – is from the [Australian National Maritime Museum web-site.](#)*)

Australind docked in St-Nazaire on February 15, four days after having left port in England. On the following day again, by seven o'clock in the morning, according to War Diarist's records, the 14th Battalion was... *On board train proceeding to front.*

It wasn't exactly to the Front: It took some twenty-three hours - until the morning of the 17th - for the 14th Canadian Infantry Battalion to complete the just over seven-hundred kilometre journey to the northern French town and rail centre of Hazebrouck. From there the unit began to march the dozen or so further kilometres – on cobble-stone roads which played havoc with the soldiers' feet - to the vicinity of the commune of Flêtre where the men were to be billeted in houses and in the surrounding farms. Battalion Headquarters was established in the local chateau.

Six days later again, Private Murphy and his comrades-in-arms were on the move on foot once more, on this occasion via the towns of Meteren and Nieppe to Armentières, the final community before the forward area and the front lines were reached. For those first weeks of its service on the Continent, the Canadian Division was to be posted to this area, to the *Fleurbaix Sector*.



That night the first platoons of the 14th Battalion were sent forward into the trenches for instruction with the experienced Imperial (*British*) troops whom the Canadians were eventually to replace, men of the North Staffordshire Regiment and of the Rifle Brigade.

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

It was likely on the following night of February 25-26 that Private Murphy's turn in the trenches came. At that moment he was to begin to experience the real routines, rigours - and perils - of life on the Western Front*.

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



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

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

The 14th Battalion was not to remain long at Armentières itself and it left there on March 1, two days afterwards to be allotted the responsibility of trenches in the area of Fremelles. On March 4 it was reported that... *Had first man killed in trenches by sniper.*

On March 10 the Battalion experienced at least the sounds of a major battle as British and Indian troops went into action some three miles to the south at Neuve-Chapelle. The confrontation, which was to last for three days, was to be less than a success but apparently very little news of it would filter to the Canadians in the trenches. *Their* existence was still relatively calm.

By mid-April the Canadian Division had been issued orders to move into the *Ypres Salient*, the area to the east of the Belgian city of Ypres where the Germans had been stopped in their westward advance during the late autumn of 1914. There the Canadians were to replace French troops.

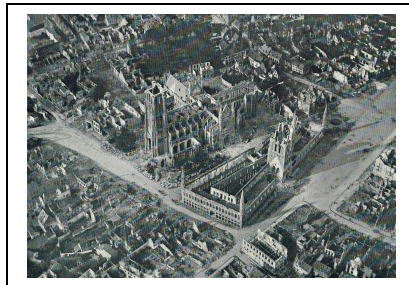
On April 16 the 14th Battalion crossed the Franco-Belgian frontier during its collective bus-ride from the community of Steenvoorde to Poperinghe. Theirs was just one of the many troop movements at the time as the Canadian Division made its way to *the Salient*. From Poperinghe the unit continued eastward on foot, through Vlamertingue and then the remnants of Ypres itself, to the north-east sector of *the Salient* in the area of the Sin-Juliaan to Poelcappelle Road where it was to relieve a French-Colonial unit that evening.



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(Preceding page: *Troops boarding one of the many buses requisitioned by the Army from the London area – from Illustration*)

The trenches which the Battalion had now inherited were reportedly in bad condition thus, upon arrival, the personnel of the unit began to work on improving them. In five days' time they would be glad they had – some units were still arriving or even still *en route* on April 22 when the Germans attacked.



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

The 2nd Battle of Ypres saw the first use of chlorine gas by the Germans during the *Great War*. Gas was later to become an everyday event and, with the introduction of protective measures such as advanced gas-masks, the gas was to prove no more dangerous than the rest of the military arsenals of the warring nations.



But on this first occasion, to inexperienced troops without the means to combat it, the yellow-green cloud of chlorine was to prove overwhelming.

(Right above: *The very first protection against gas was to urinate on a handkerchief which was then held over the nose and mouth. However, all the armies were soon producing gas-masks, some of the first of which are seen here being tested by Scottish troops. – from either Illustration or Le Miroir*)

The cloud was noticed at five o'clock in the afternoon of April 22. In the sector subjected to the most concentrated use of the gas, the French-Colonial troops to the Canadian left wavered then broke, leaving the left flank of the Canadians uncovered. At that moment a retreat, not always very cohesive, became necessary.



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

On only the night prior to the attack the 14th Battalion had been relieved and had retired from the forward area to the area of St-Jean (in Flemish *Sin-Jaan*). At six o'clock on the evening of the 22 it was returning to the proximity of front whence it had come just twenty-four hours previously, to take up positions in trenches close to 3rd Brigade Headquarters.

By the second day of the attack, April 23, the situation had become relatively stable – at least temporarily - and the positions in the vicinity of Sint-Juliaan were held – in fact, the Battalion was ordered forward to assist the 16th Battalion - until the morning of the 24th when a further retirement became necessary due to the heavy and accurate enemy shelling which had begun in the very early hours of the morning.

The shattered 13th and 14th Canadian Infantry Battalions were to retire four more times during that Saturday, April 24, before finally being relieved by British troops – but they had succeeded in holding the Germans at bay.

(Right: *Troops – in this instance British, the King's Regiment (Liverpool) – in hastily-dug trenches in the Ypres Sector. These are still the early days of the year as witnessed by the lack of steel helmets which came into use only in the spring and summer of 1916. – from Illustration*)



At times there had been breaches in the defensive lines but, fortunately, either the Germans were unaware of how close they were to a breakthrough, or else they did not have the means to exploit the situation. And then the Canadians closed the gaps.

On Monday, April 26, Companies 2, 3 and 4 of the Battalion were withdrawn – Number 1 Company remained in the lines* - to the *Transport Lines*, there to be ordered to support a French attack although they apparently took no part in it. By late that same evening the entire Battalion had been withdrawn into reserve positions.

**By this time the previous eight half-Companies had become four regulation Companies but whether Private Murphy was a soldier of Number 3 – or 'C' – Company – as one might logically suppose – is not to be found among his papers.*

The unit continued to be moved back and forth between there and its *Transport Lines* until April 28 when it was ordered into positions on the west bank of the *Yser Canal*, to stay there and in positions on the east bank until the evening of April 30.

(Right: *The Yser Canal at a point in the northern outskirts of Ypres almost a century after the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade moved forward to its western, and then eastern, bank: west is to the left – photograph from 2014*)



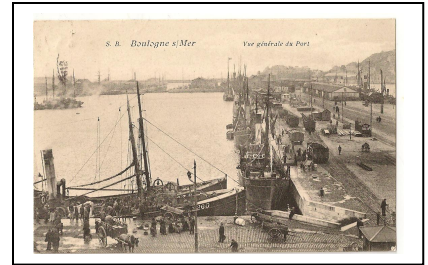
On May 1 the 14th Battalion was withdrawn into trenches, there to remain for a further three days, all that time receiving the attentions of the German artillery.

(Right: *The Memorial to the 1st Canadian Division – the Brooding Soldier – stands just to the south of the village of Langemark (at the time Langemarck) at the Vancouver Crossroads where the Canadians withstood the German attack – abetted by gas – at Ypres (today Ieper) in April of 1915. – photograph from 2010*)



On the night of May 4/5 the Bn was relieved and marched to its *transport lines*. (Excerpt from 14th Battalion War Diary) By this time the crisis had passed and the 14th Battalion was to play no further role in 2nd Ypres.

There appears to have been some initial confusion about the wounding of Private Murphy. The seemingly correct version records him as having been struck in the abdomen by a bullet while serving in the trenches on May 1. There is no information among his papers as to where he was evacuated on that day, but by May 4 he had been admitted into the 11th General Hospital, at the time situated in the French coastal town of Boulogne.



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

The following are excerpts from medical reports issued by the medical staff of the 11th General Hospital:

4/5 – Wounded three days ago, bullet entering Right loin and emerging slightly below & to left of navel. Discharge from wound in loin – Localized pain – frequent vomiting, bile-stained material... No sign of fluid in peritoneum... urine normal – No action of bowels for three days...

5/5 – Operation to close wounds to small intestine...

*7/5 – Condition worse...Signs of obstruction. Vomiting continues...Pulse gradually worse. Died of peritonitis at 7.40 pm**

11/5 Buried

**An addendum of a later date has been inserted into the report of May 7 to the effect that this is the...Correct date.*

The son of Vincent Murphy, fisherman, and of Mary Joseph Murphy (née *Oliver* and reported as deceased by February of 1922) of Job's Cove, Bay de Verde, Newfoundland, he was also brother to John, Ellen, Soloman (sic), Ann and Elizabeth*.

**These latter three died at the ages of six, four, and two respectively, of diphtheria.*

Private Murphy had at first been reported by the commanding officer of the 11th General Hospital as having *died of wounds** on May 10, this date later revised to May 7 – the time of his passing at twenty minutes to eight in the evening (both the date and time confirmed by the above report of the 11th General Hospital).

**In fact, of peritonitis as a result of his wounds.*

Arthur Murphy had enlisted at the *apparent age* of twenty-two years: date of birth at Job's Cove, Newfoundland, August 29, 1892 (confirmed by the Register of Newfoundland Births).

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Private Arthur Murphy was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 26, 2023.