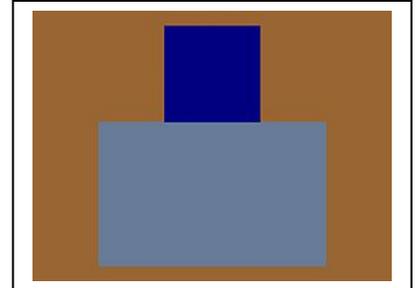


**Private Arthur Ludlow Murphy (Number 2537499) of the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Ontario County*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated in the stone of the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge.**

**(Right: *The image of the shoulder-patch of the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Ontario County), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)**

**(continued)**



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *cook*, Arthur Ludlow Murphy is likely to have been the young man reported in the 1901 Census as a domestic employed by Mr. William Burns of the industrial city of Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. There appear to be no details available of his movement to there from the Dominion of Newfoundland or after...except that for a one-year period he had served in the Royal Canadian Regiment – Regimental Number 1312, the number suggesting a period well prior to the time of the Great War\*.

*\*The Canadian War Graves Commission states... Served in the South African War... but it is not clear whether this refers to Arthur Ludlow Murphy or to his father, John. A one-thousand strong unit from Canada, the Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry, was sent at the turn of the century to fight the Boers, but any further information has yet to come to light.*



(Right: *The Queen's South Africa Medal*)

From there he at some time made his way to Boston, Massachusetts – where he was to reside at 105, Green Street - for just prior to his enlistment he is recorded as having registered there before crossing the United States – Canada border at St. Albans, Vermont, on his way to Toronto. The crossing was made on August 7, 1917.

Arthur Murphy is shown on his papers as having presented himself for medical examination, and for subsequent enlistment and attestation on that same August 7 at the Toronto Mobilization Centre.

On that date he was very *taken on strength* for a brief time by the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment R.G. Service Battalion. On the following day, the formalities of his enlistment were brought to a conclusion when the officer commanding that unit declared – on paper – that... *Arthur Ludlow Murphy...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this attestation.*

A single day later again, on August 9, Private Murphy was transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Depot Battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> – and at a later date, to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – Central Ontario Regiment.

It was now to be some six months before Private Murphy was to take passage to the United Kingdom and eventually from there to *active service* on the Continent of Europe. In the interim he and his unit were to train although where this took place is not documented.

Private Murphy likely showed some potential during the autumn of 1917 to become a non-commissioned officer as, on January 7 of the New Year, 1918, he was sent on an NCOs' course. It would, however, unfortunately then appear that he may not have met expectations as he was *returned to his unit* after only a single week and was to remain a private for the remainder of his military career.

It was to be on February 2 of 1918 that a detachment 1<sup>st</sup> Depot Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Central Ontario Regiment – Private Murphy among that number - took ship onto His Majesty's Transport *Scandinavian* in the harbour at Halifax, the port still in disarray after the explosion of December, only two months previously. Other units may well have sailed in Private Murphy's company but their identity is not recorded in available files.

**Scandinavian** left Canadian waters on February 5 – which also suggests that other units boarded her – and, eleven days later, then docked in the English west-coast port of Liverpool. From there a train transported Private Murphy's detachment to the opposite end of the country, to the county of Kent.



(Right: *The image of Scandinavian in peace-time livery is from the bing.com/images web-site.*)

In the vicinity of the town and harbour of Folkestone the Canadians had by that time established the large military complex of *Shorncliffe*. *East Sandling* was one of its subsidiary camps and there it was that the detachment from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Central Ontario Regiment detrained. It was immediately *taken on strength* by the 8<sup>th</sup> (Canadian) Reserve Battalion which was already stationed there, for further training.



Private Murphy was to remain at *East Sandling* until the beginning of April when the 8<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalion was ordered to *Witley*, another Canadian establishment situated in the southern part of the county of Surrey.

(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*)

Almost a further two months were to pass before Private Murphy was eventually ordered to the Continent. It was on June 2 that the Canadian Infantry Base Depot, by then established in the French coastal town of *Étaples*, reported having received seventeen-hundred ninety-four *other ranks* from England to re-enforce units of the Canadian forces already serving on the Continent. Private Murphy was but one of them.

Five days later, two-thousand six *other ranks* were despatched to the nearby Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp from the CIBD\*, arriving there on the same day. This was to be the last stage before being ordered to a particular battalion although, for Private Murphy, *this stage* was to last more than two months. He was not to join his new unit, the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Ontario County*), until mid-August.

*\*This number, of course, was not destined to join a single company, battery or battalion. Most of the Canadian forces in the field at this time were now re-enforcing for the upcoming summer offensive (see below).*

The exact date on which Private Murphy left the CCRC to report to the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion appears not to be recorded. However, as will be seen later in this dossier, such were the happenings at this time that it was likely to have been a move requiring a number of days. His detachment of five officers and one-hundred *other ranks* was reported by one source as having arrived to join the Battalion on August 15 but also, in another, on August 17. Perhaps both are correct – Private Murphy et al reporting to the rear echelons on that first date, then being sent forward to be posted, each man to his Company, two days later.

\* \* \* \* \*

The 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion had arrived in France from England on February 11, 1917, to become an element of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division. Having disembarked in England from Canada the previous summer, until its transfer to the Continent it had provided re-enforcements for other Canadian units. Now it was to play a direct role – more or less.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division already had its full complement of four battalions in each of its three brigades, thus the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion was, at least temporarily, superfluous. After some preliminary training and organization it had been divided among the four battalions of the 9<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade – one platoon per company.

For the next while, not only was training undertaken in this fashion, but so were operations using the same arrangement of personnel. However as the time for the impending British spring offensive drew ever closer, the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion once again became a unit unto itself, to ready itself for its role in that confrontation – a role that appears not to have existed.

On April 9 of 1917 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere.

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

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



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

On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions, for the first time acting as a single, autonomous entity – with some British units under Canadian command - stormed the slope of Vimy Ridge, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.

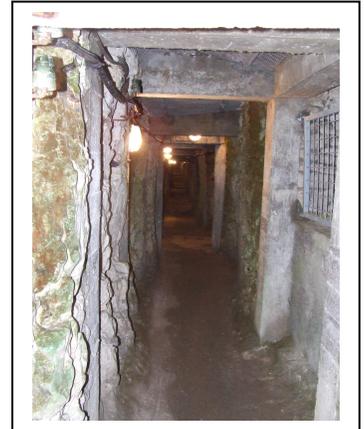


The Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions had been handed responsibility for the Ridge itself; to their immediate right had been the Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, attacking in the area of the village of Thélus on the southern slope; and to the right again the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Division had been ordered to clear the area lower down the slope again, towards the village of Roclincourt and, farther afield, the city of Arras.

(continued)

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

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



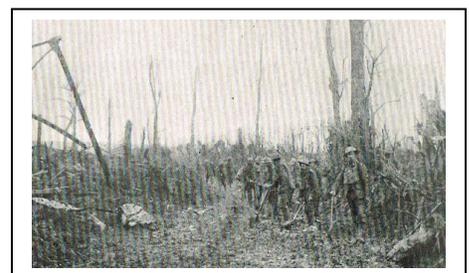
On April 10 the Canadians finished clearing the area of Vimy Ridge of the few remaining pockets of resistance and began to consolidate the area in anticipation of the expected German counter-attacks. There had on those first two days been the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted breakthrough – but such a follow-up on the previous day's success had proved logistically impossible. Thus the Germans closed the breach and the conflict once more reverted to one of inertia.

The part played on April 9 by the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion *also* appears to have been one of inertia, the orders issued to the unit having been those of... *bringing scheme of consolidation after attack, into effect*. On April 10 it supplied a working party of one-hundred fifty men: on the next, April 11, it moved into support positions and sat there all day to be targeted by the enemy artillery.

It must have been with mixed feelings that the Battalion War Diarist entered the casualty count for those three days on Vimy Ridge: eight dead and twenty-four wounded.

Orders were now to come, on April 17, from the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade Headquarters: the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to become a Canadian Pioneer Battalion\* - in fact, work-parties from the Battalion had just days before completed some road-building - and to be attached to the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade.

*\*Pioneer Battalions were responsible for the construction and repairing, and also the improvement of such things as trenches, dugouts, wiring, drainage, sanitary facilities, roads and the like\*. It was hard work and undoubtedly the personnel was chosen, from amongst other attributes, each man for his physique and also for his experience in such work.*



*In the case of the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion it would seem that expediency also had had a part to play.*

(Right above: *The caption to the image, translated, reads: Canadian sappers building a road somewhere... 'in liberated territory' – from Le Miroir or Illustration*)

*\*In fact, much of the work done was also the responsibility at times of the Engineers.*

(continued)

It would seem that the eventual solution chosen by the High Command had an aura of iniquity about it. The 60<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Victoria Rifles*) of the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade, of a strength of more than eleven hundred, was to be disbanded, its personnel distributed to other units – twenty-six to the 116<sup>th</sup> - and the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to take its place in the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

This replacement was effected during the period of April 28 to 30 – leaving, perhaps not surprisingly, a somewhat bitter taste in the mouths of some of the personnel of the now-defunct 60<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

Thus on May 1, 1917, the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion became a bona fide unit of the 9<sup>th</sup> Canadian Brigade. Yet it would seem - from an admittedly superficial scan of the Battalion War Diary - that a great deal of *pioneer* work still came the way of the 116<sup>th</sup> to go along with the other routines, rigours and perils of life in the trenches of the Great War\*.

*\*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 five-week *Battle of Arras* having terminated in mid-May, the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the other units of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division were now to face a long period of the grind of trench warfare\*. This was not to be the case for many of the other units of the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions which were serving in sectors from Vimy in the south to Béthune to the north: the Canadian Corps High Command had some offensive work planned for them.



*\*During some of the early days of its service with the 9<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, the Battalion was again in the area of Vimy Ridge and was, in fact, residing in Grange Tunnel (see above).*

*(Right above: The village of Souchez, just to the north of Vimy, already looked like this in 1915 when the French passed control of the area over to the British. – from Le Miroir)*

(continued)

The British High Command\* had long since by this time decided to undertake a summer offensive in the *Ypres Salient*, Belgium. Thus, in order to divert German attention – and also his reserves - from *that* area, it had ordered operations to take place as well in the sectors of Canadian responsibility running north-south from Béthune to Lens.



(Right above: *An example of the conditions under which the troops were ordered to fight in the area of Lens during the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)

The Canadians were to be a major contributor to this effort.

*\*It should be remembered that during the Great War the British High Command was in control of not only its own troops but also those from all the British Dominions, colonies and territories.*

(Right: *Canadian troops under fire advancing across No-Man's Land in the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)



On July 11 of this as yet routine summer the Battalion... *formed up on the Gouy Road for the reception of His Majesty, King George V, on his recent tour through France.*

(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](http://bing.com/images) web-site*)



Eleven days later, the 116<sup>th</sup> was to be involved in a raid on enemy positions which was undertaken during the night of July 22-23, its objective being the destruction of enemy positions and also the taking of prisoners for intelligence purposes. This was to be the biggest operation – and the most costly – to date for the unit.

The War Diary reports a success on both counts, against which was to be weighed the price of twelve – all ranks - *killed in action*, forty-five *wounded*, and seventeen *missing in action*.

(Right: *Canadian troops in the forward area during the summer of 1917 – from Illustration*)



Elsewhere on the Canadian front, on August 15, a major attack\* was launched by troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Divisions in the suburbs of the city of Lens and just to the north, in the area of a small rise known as *Hill 70*.

(continued)

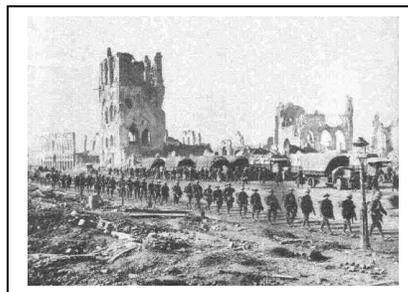
The 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion, however, was not to play a part in this particular offensive and on that day was in fact busy marching to billets in Auchel and being inspected on the way by Major-General Lipsett\* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division. On the three days following, cleaning-up, training and baths were the primary topics of the War Diary entries.

*\*He was one of the few officers of this rank to be killed in action – on October 14, 1918.*

The Canadian efforts in their sector had been expected to continue into September and even longer, but the ongoing British summer offensive in Belgium was proceeding less well than expected and the High Command was looking for reinforcements to make good the exorbitant losses. The Australians and then the Canadians were ordered to prepare to move north; thus the Canadians were obliged to abandon their plans.

It was on October 15, that a still undermanned 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion\* began to make its way on foot and by train, to the area of the Franco-Belgian border. Later that day the unit was being billeted in the northern French town of Cæstre where it was to remain and train for the next week.

*\*It had been operating at some two-thirds regulation strength since August until some re-enforcements – still insufficient - arrived on unrecorded dates just prior to departure.*



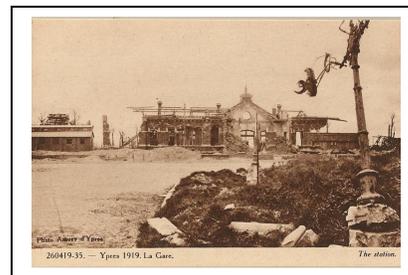
(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

It was then to be on October 22, at fifteen minutes to four in the morning, that the Battalion entrained for Ypres, likely alighting at the shattered railway station just outside the southern ramparts of the city. From there the unit marched through the rubble to the north-east until it reached *Camp X*, close to the village of Wieltje.



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

(Right: *The railway station at Ypres (Ieper) in 1919, a year after the War – from a vintage post-card*)



Officially designated the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign into which the Canadians were about to be thrust – already ongoing since the last day of that July of 1917 - came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was – ostensibly - one of the British Army's objectives.

From the time that the Canadians entered the fray, it was they who shouldered a great deal of the burden. For the week of October 26 until November 3 it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Divisions which spearheaded the assault, with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions in reserve.

From November 5 until the official end of the affair – November 10 - the reverse was true with troops of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division finally entering the remnants of Passchendaele itself.

(Right: *The monument to the sacrifice of the Canadians standing in the outskirts of the re-constructed village of Passchendaele (today Passendale) – photograph from 2010*)



For the forthcoming three days the Battalion supplied working-parties before, on the 26<sup>th</sup>, moving forward into close support and providing stretcher-parties for an attack on that day. Its casualties were to be mercifully light – two *killed in action* and ten *wounded*.

(Right: *Part of the battle-field as it is today, just a few hundred metres to the south-west of Passchendaele – and looking in the opposite direction from the site of the monument on the previous page – photograph from 2010*)



The succeeding days, some spent in the front line before relief permitted a retirement back to Wieltje, were uneventful. They were *all* spent by the Battalion personnel serving in carrying-parties – mostly of ammunition - and working-parties.

(Right: *A Canadian carrying-party delivering the trappings of war somewhere on the Western Front in 1917, although likely not in the forward area – and likely not at Passchendaele: Apparently the use of the head-band had been adopted in the Canadian forces from its use by the indigenous peoples at home. – from Le Miroir*)



On November 1 to 4 the unit was shuttled, again piecemeal, up to the forward area and then, on the 5<sup>th</sup>, back again to Wieltje, by far the majority of casualties during that tour having been caused by artillery fire.

(Right: *Canadian soldiers on the Passchendaele Front using a shell-hole to perform their ablutions – from Le Miroir*)

On October 31 the unit was despatched back to the forward area where its duties were once more those of working-parties. On November 2 it was then withdrawn and was not to return to the front again during the battle. Nonetheless, it remained active in the neighbourhood of Ypres itself until the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month when it was ordered to return to France.



The 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion had fared a lot better than had many of the units which had fought at *Passchendaele*. By November 24 it was in the area the northern French community of Lillers, in more or less the same sector(s) that it had left a month before.

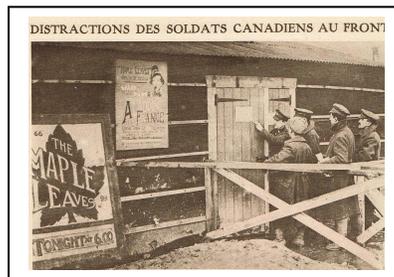
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The month of December offered something a little different – and a reminder of home - to all the Canadian military personnel who were serving overseas at the time: the Canadian General Election. Polls for the Army were open during that month and participation, in at least some units, was in the ninety per cent range\*. Although the Battalion War Diarist does not mention the statistics for the 116<sup>th</sup>, he does note that voting was carried out on December 1.

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

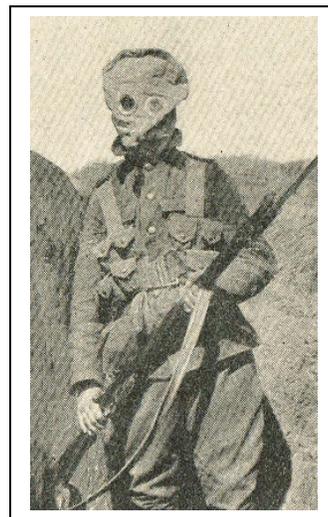
Now, for the first time, the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Ontario County) was to experience the relative calm of a winter – the fourth – of the Great War. Once again the medical services were to report more admissions from sickness than from all other causes – except perhaps dental problems. And once again enemy artillery and snipers were the greatest enemy of the men in the trenches – rivalled by only the lice\*.

*\*Although it is true that the High Command persisted in encouraging raids on the enemy. It was felt that it was good for troop morale and for the soldier's offensive spirit. Needless to say, the soldier in question – the British 'Tommy' earning but his single shilling per day and his Canadian counterpart his one dollar and ten cents – was not always in complete agreement with his superiors.*



(Right: Canadian soldiers while off-duty perusing the program of an upcoming concert 'somewhere on the Continent' – from *Le Miroir*)

This *relative calm* allowed for the more frequent withdrawal of units to the reserve areas, for the most part out of the range of all but the most powerful artillery pieces. For the troops there were of course the inevitable training, physical exercises, musketry, gas drills, familiarization with *their* new equipment and also that of the enemy, inspections, route marches, lectures, baths, foot inspections, bombing (grenade) routines, parades, awards of decorations, more working-parties and carrying-parties, ad infinitum so at times it must have seemed... but there were also *some* periods of rest, at times concerts, inter- and intra-unit competitions and increasingly...sports.



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

(continued)

(Right: *The caption cites this as being an Official Canadian Photograph of a... 'violinist playing traditional music near Lens'. - from Le Miroir*)



And what is more, during those activities, one presumes, no-one was shooting at them. Thus the winter of 1918-1919 passed. Then came the spring.

Perhaps not many people realize how close the Germans came to victory in the spring of 1918. Having transferred the divisions no longer necessary on the Eastern Front because of the Russian withdrawal from the War, they launched a massive attack, Operation 'Michael', on March 21, that first day of the spring. The main blow fell at *the Somme* in the area of, and also just to the south of, the battlefields of 1916, and it fell for the most part on the British and Commonwealth troops stationed there\*.



(Right above: *While the Germans did not attack the city of Lens in the spring of 1918, they bombarded it heavily during the time of their spring offensive in order to keep the British uncertain about their intentions and thus to oblige them to retain troops in the area. – from Le Miroir*)

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

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

(Right: *The City Hall of Arras and its bell-tower looked like this by the spring of 1918 after nearly four years of bombardment by German artillery. – from a vintage post-card*)



However, despite, at times, the critical situations in the areas of both *the Somme* and *Flanders*, apparently neither the services of the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion, nor those of any unit of the entire Canadian Corps, were required during either *Michael* or *Georgette*.

The next months were once again ones of relative calm after the turmoil of the early spring as now the Allies and the newly-arriving Americans began in their turn to prepare for an offensive campaign – and therefore as the German forces began to gird themselves for the inevitable retribution which was soon to burst upon them.

(continued)

The newly-appointed Generalissimo of the Allied and Associate forces on the Western Front was the Frenchman, Ferdinand Foch. His plan was to strike not only hard, but to strike often and ubiquitously, thus eventually overwhelming an already stretched enemy defence. Any retirement by the enemy was to be closely followed up, the pressure to be unrelenting.

The calm continued into the month of July and there appears to be no indication in the Battalion War Diary of anything grand in the offing, only the routine of everyday existence in the trenches – and the seemingly-inevitable working-parties.

However, things were about to change: On July 29 the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion was ordered to parade in battle order and to vacate its current billets. Moving on foot and also by bus, by August 1 the Battalion had arrived in Aumont, to the west of the city of Amiens and some ninety kilometres to the south-west of where it had been encamped only days previously.

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

The 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion was not alone in this change of sectors. In fact the entire Canadian Corps was on the move. In the space of about two weeks, the four Canadian Divisions\*, infantry and artillery, were to be transferred from their sectors of responsibility around and to the north of Arras, to the new front to the east of Amiens where the German offensive of April and May had come to a halt.

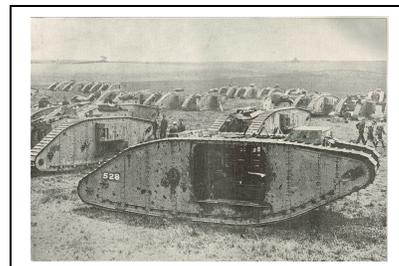
*\*A few units, making themselves visible, had moved in the opposite direction, north into Belgium, to give the impression of any upcoming offensive was to be once more in the area of the Ypres Salient.*



The first stages of this huge and complex operation had for the most part been undertaken by motor transport and by train. However, once the troops had reached an area north of Amiens they passed to the west, encircling the city to the west and south in order then to move into their new positions eastwards.

And these latter movements had been made on foot and at night so as not to allow the German reconnaissance planes with their observers any indication of something happening. Given the immensity of the venture, it is perhaps surprising to learn that it worked. The enemy was apparently to be caught entirely by surprise.

It would also seem that many of the Canadian troops were also caught by the same surprise: it was not until August 3, while on his way marching towards Amiens that the Battalion War Diarist noticed that... *increasing evidence of an offensive was to be seen...A large number of tanks were passed, moving up the road.*



(continued)

(Preceding page: *In 1917 the British formed the Tank Corps, a force which was to become ever stronger in 1918 as evidenced by this photograph of a tank park, once again 'somewhere in France' – from Illustration*)

August 4 and 5 were spent by the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion – and by many others – in two forested areas, the *Bois de Boves* and the *Bois de Gentelles*, as they all moved closer to their assembly and jumping-off points. On the night of August 7-8, the troops of the first waves of the attack were in position.



(Right: *Canadian and German wounded from the first days of the battle – some cases more serious than others - waiting to be evacuated to the rear – from Le Miroir*)

(Excerpt from the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry of August 8, 1918) *In the line: the Battalion attacked in conjunction with troops on the right and left, zero hour being at 4.20 a.m. The attack was highly successful, the Unit bivouacking for the night at the final objective. Weather fine. Our casualties were 2 officers and thirty-nine other ranks killed, 10 officers and 148 other ranks wounded or missing.*

From August 8 until August 15 the Battalion – as did the other Canadian units - moved steadily forward\*, the only exception during the early morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> when an enemy counter-attack had necessitated a temporary retirement. On the night of August 15-16 the Battalion was relieved and withdrawn, moving back into support as far as Le Quesnel.



*\*On the first day the advance had been some eleven kilometres, a feat unheard of since the opening months of the Great War in 1914.*

(Right above: *Hillside Cemetery, Le Quesnel, wherein lie at least two Newfoundlanders who wore Canadian uniforms, Private Pugh and Lieutenant Goodyear – photograph from 2017*)

It was on that August 15 (or the 17<sup>th</sup>) that the documents of Private Murphy (and the Battalion War Diary) record his reporting *to duty* with the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

\* \* \* \* \*

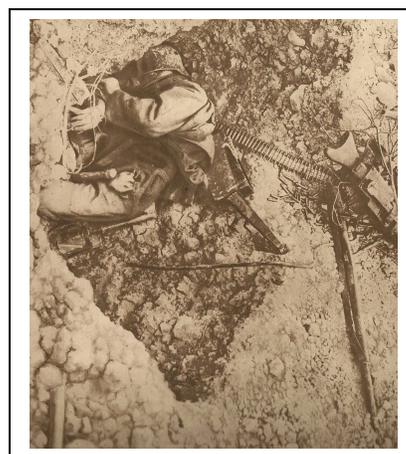
After its latest withdrawal, Private Murphy's unit was not to return to the forward area during the remainder of this, the *Battle of Amiens*. After some days of rest, on August 19, it was ordered to withdraw entirely from the field and to return whence it had come some dozen days previously. Its place – and the place of other Canadian units now being withdrawn – was to be taken by French forces.

The 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion – and during the next few days, the Canadian Corps in its entirety – retired in much the same manner and by the same itineraries as they had arrived in front of Amiens. By August 25 Private Murphy was camped in a field on the Arras to St-Pol road, listening to the band of the Royal Canadian Regiment and awaiting orders.

The orders in question were received at one o'clock in the morning of the next day... *to be ready to move at thirty minutes' notice*. Thus, during that morning the Battalion moved to a point east of Arras from where, at twenty minutes past mid-night of August 26-27 it was moved forward to its assembly points.

The strategy of Marechal Foch has already been outlined above. On this occasion he was now planning to strike the enemy along the axis of the main road from Arras to Cambrai even while the attack of less than three weeks earlier in front of Amiens was still being pursued. And once again the Canadian Corps was to be used in a major role; the Germans, having been deceived once about their whereabouts – and believing them still to be stationed somewhere on the Amiens Front – were about to find themselves mistaken for a second time.

(Excerpt from the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for August 27, 1918) *Zero Hour was at 4:55 a.m... the objectives being Boiry-Notre Dame and Artillery Hill... Considerable opposition was encountered from machine guns, and further progress being impossible after the capture of these two woods it was found necessary to re-organize, the whole under the command of Major Pratt, Major Sutherland\* having been killed by machine gun fire. It was found necessary to withdraw the line somewhat to complete re-organization...*



*\*At the time acting commanding officer of the Battalion*

(Right: *A German machine-gunner who fought to the last – from Illustration*)

The attack continued on the following day\*, the Battalion finding itself being relieved by troops of the 4<sup>th</sup> British Division later that same evening. On this occasion, the number of casualties was recorded as having been forty-five (all ranks) *killed in action*, two-hundred twenty-seven *wounded* and twenty-three *missing*.

*\*In fact this was the third day of the Battle of the Scarpe, the first assault having been delivered on August 26. It continued until August 30.*

By the time that the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved up to the forward line again in the area of Vis-en-Artois on September 3, some Canadian units had already taken part in the next of the planned series of attacks by the Canadian Corps and by British forces. This latest had been against the Drocourt-Quéant Line, a component of the German defensive Hindenburg Line itself. The enemy positions had been breached and by August 4, patrols – some of them from the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion – were reported as having advanced as far as the Canal du Nord, although the area was still being disputed by the enemy.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *Douglas Haig, C.-in-C. of British and Commonwealth forces on the Western Front inspects Canadian troops after their successful operation of September 2 against the German Drocourt-Quéant Line – from Le Miroir*)

(Right: *Vis-en-Artois British Cemetery: The cemetery contains the remains of 2,369 soldiers of the Great War – originally mostly from 1918 - of whom only 885 have been identified. – photograph from 2010*)



During the days following until September 11, the Battalion War Diary entries are a litany of patrols and little more. On that date the unit retired to Guemappe, a fair distance to the west of the Canal du Nord. On the 18<sup>th</sup> it moved further west again, to Arras where it was to remain until September 26 when it followed orders received the day before to begin to move forward once more.

On September 27 the Canadian Corps attacked the German defences along the Canal du Nord in the area of Sains-Les-Marquion where its construction was yet to be finished and where it was not filled with water. The attack was successful, the waterway was traversed, and this success was followed up by a substantial advance on that same day.



(Right above: *German prisoners evacuating wounded out of the area of the unfinished part of the Canal du Nord which the Canadians crossed on September 27, thus opening the road to Cambrai – from Le Miroir*)

The 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion and Private Murphy were not to play a role in the crossing and it was not until the next day, September 28, that his unit moved up to the vicinity of the Canal itself. On the morrow it went into action.

(Excerpt from the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry of September 29, 1918) *In accordance with Brigade operation orders, the Battalion moved up, following closely behind the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, through Bournonville and assembled...at 6:30 p.m. Orders were received that the 58<sup>th</sup> Battalion would attack the Marcoing Line...and that the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion passing through would attack and capture St. Omer. Zero hour 7:00 p.m. At Zero hour the Battalion moved off...and made their way over...to...the 58<sup>th</sup> Battalion...found to be established in the Marcoing Line. ...We moved through them...sending patrols to get in touch with the enemy. The village seemed to be very strongly held by machine guns. No reconnaissance of ground having been made, we decided that our attack on the village would be delayed until the following morning.*

(The following continuation of the War Diary entry refers to September 30, 1918) *Zero Hour 6:00 a.m. 'B' and 'A' Companies attacked and were caught under heavy Machine gun fire, coming from the enemy trenches... These two Companies were practically wiped out.*

*Our casualties for the day were about 260 killed and wounded.*

(continued)

(Excerpt from the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for October 1, 1918) In the Line: *The attacking returned in the morning. During the night, the battalion was relieved in the front line by the 24<sup>th</sup> battalion...*

The son of John Murphy (likely deceased at the time of enlistment) and of Catherine (also *Katherine*) Murphy – to whom, as of February 1, 1918, he had allotted a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay, and to whom a War Gratuity cheque for one-hundred eighty dollars was assigned – there appear to be no further details of his family from available sources.

Private Murphy was reported as *missing in action* on October 1, 1918. A later paper cites...*for official purposes presumed to have DIED on or since 1/10/18\**.

*\*The verdict of...officially presumed dead...was usually issued some six months after the date of the fatal incident.*

Arthur Ludlow Murphy had enlisted at the *apparent age* of thirty-four years and two months: date of birth (from attestation papers) in Harbour Grace, Newfoundland, May 8, 1883.

Private Arthur Ludlow Murphy was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

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

