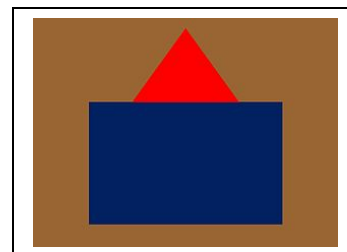




**Private Maurice (also *Morris*) Murray, Number 67943 of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord: Grave reference I.E.26.**

**(Right: *The image of the shoulder-flash of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)**



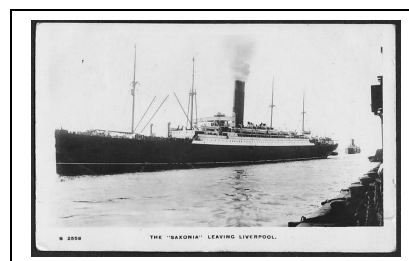
**(continued)**

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a labourer, Maurice Murray may have been – this information requires confirmation – the young man recorded on the passenger list of the SS *Ivermore* on May 28, 1912, and who crossed on that day from Port aux Basques in the Dominion of Newfoundland to North Sydney in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. He was his way to the industrial city of Sydney.

His first pay records and his medical record of December 1, 1914 – on which he is confirmed as being *fit for overseas service* – show that he enlisted on November 30 of 1914, as that is the date on which the Canadian Army began to remunerate him for his services. The date on which he was *taken on strength* by the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*) was the date of that medical examination, December 1.

It was to be a further six months after Maurice Murray’s enlistment before the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion embarked for overseas, the unit having trained at the Halifax Armouries during that period – although it was interrupted by an outbreak of diphtheria. The formalities of his enlistment had been brought to a conclusion during this time when, on February 2, the officer commanding the unit, Lieutenant-Colonel G.A. LeCain, declared – on paper – that... *Maurice Murray, having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

Private Murray and his unit embarked onto the vessel *Saxonia* in the harbour at Halifax on May 20 of 1915 for passage to the United Kingdom. The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to travel in the company of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion from Québec, and also with a contingent of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Ammunition Park, a total of some two-thousand three hundred military personnel all told.



*Saxonia* sailed on the same May 20, to dock in the English south-coast harbour and naval facility of Plymouth-Devonport at ten minutes past four in the morning of May 29.

(Right above: *The image of the Royal Mail Ship Saxonia leaving the port of Liverpool is from the Wikipedia web-site. Requisitioned by the British for government service she was deployed for use early in the conflict as a floating prisoner-of-war camp before seeing use as a troop transport as of 1915.*)

The new arrivals apparently soon were on board trains which were to speed them across southern England to the county of Kent. There Private Murray’s Battalion proceeded to the large and newly-forming Canadian military establishment of *Shorncliffe*, just down the Dover Straits from the town and harbour of Folkestone.



(Right: *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*)

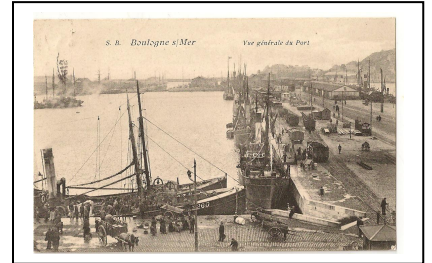
(continued)

The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*) was a component of the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself an element of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division. The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division had been serving on the Continent since February of that same 1915, having been deployed in northern France and in the *Kingdom of Belgium* during that time, and had distinguished itself during the *2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Ypres* in the spring of that same year. By the late summer of 1915 it was now the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division also to take a place in the line.



(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*)



On September 15, 1915, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion marched from *Shorncliffe Camp* in the late afternoon en route for Folkestone where the unit boarded a troop transport for the short crossing to the Continent. Sailing at ten o'clock that same evening, the troops disembarked in the French port of Boulogne two hours later, at one o'clock in the morning\*.



*\*There is a one-hour time difference between the United Kingdom and France.*

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

Later, on that same September 16, and after several hours of rest, the Battalion marched to meet transport which was to take them into northern France, not far from the frontier with Belgium, and not far distant from the large centre of Hazebrouk\*.

By September 23, the Nova Scotia Unit was relieving a British unit, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, *the King's Own*, in trenches close to the Franco-Belgian border in the area of the Kemmel-Ypres Road.



(Right above: *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*)

(continued)

The following months were to be a relatively quiet period for all the troops of both sides in the trenches in Belgium; there was, of course, a steady trickle of casualties, usually due to enemy artillery fire and to his snipers, but until the spring of 1916 there was to be only the daily grind of the infantryman's life in – and out of – 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 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 the next year, 1916, but by that time equipped with steel helmets and also the less-evident British-made Short Lee-Enfield Mark III rifles – from Illustration)*

*Casualty report: Whilst on duty in the trenches on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1915, he had his left arm broken and left side injured by a portion of an enemy shell. He was taken to No. 2 Casualty Clearing Station where he died the next day.*

The son of Maurice Murray, fisherman, and of Catherine Murray (née *Murphy*) of Ship Harbour, District of Placentia, Newfoundland, he was also brother to Michael, to Catherine, to William – whom he named as his *next of kin* – and perhaps also to James.

Private Murray was reported by the officer commanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Bailleul as having *died of wounds* on December 2, 1915.

Maurice Murray had enlisted at the *apparent age* of twenty-two years: date of birth (from attestation papers) June 29, 1892, but also (from a copy of the Placentia Roman Catholic Parish Records) June 30, 1894.

Private Maurice (also *Morris*) Murray 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 26, 2023.**