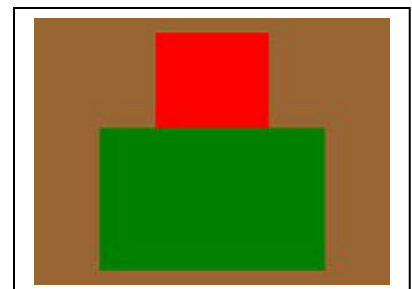




**Patten, Corporal E. H. Patten, (Number 540027) of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Northern British Columbia &, after August 1917, Central Ontario) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Lijssenhoek Military Cemetery: Grave reference IX.D.10A.**

**(Right: The image of the shoulder-patch of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion is from the Wikipedia web-site.)**



**(continued)**

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a clerk, Eli Harris Patten appears to have left behind him no history of his initial movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Ontario. All that may be said with certainty is that he was in the provincial capital city of Toronto in August of 1915, for that is where and when he enlisted.

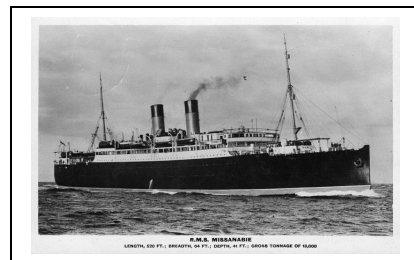
According to the documentation to be found in his files, Eli Harris Patten presented himself for enlistment, for a medical examination – which found him fit for overseas service - and for attestation in Toronto on August 23 of 1915. On that day he was *taken on strength* by the *Corps of Guides*. However, this was likely only a posting of convenience as, three days later, on August 26, he was taken on strength by the Divisional Cyclist Depot, despatched there by the aforementioned *Corps of Guides*, this latter unit apparently having become responsible for the training of the cycle companies in Canada.

By that time, three days before on August 23, the officer commanding the Cyclist Depot, Captain G.B. Schwartz, had officially brought to a conclusion the formalities of Private Patten's enlistment when he had declared – on paper – that... *Eli Harris Patten having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

The Cyclist Depot was situated in Toronto, at least some of the units being based there at *Exhibition Camp*. Private Patten was to remain in training there, being promoted on two occasions: on November 19 to the rank of lance corporal, and a month later on December 23 – a second source has December 17 - to that of acting corporal.

It was in this rank of corporal that he made the journey back to Newfoundland at about this time. The reason for his home-coming does not appear to have been recorded and neither do any other details of his voyage back to Newfoundland, but the return voyage to Canada, from Port aux Basques to North Sydney, is documented as having been made on January 10 of 1916 on board the steamship *Sagona*. Corporal Patten then travelled by train from North Sydney to Toronto to report back *to duty*.

By the time that he was to sail for overseas service, Corporal Patten had been attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisional Cyclist Company. It was on January 22 of 1916 that the eight officers and one-hundred ninety-three *other ranks* of the unit embarked onto the Canadian Pacific Steamship *Missanabie*. They had begun their journey from Toronto by train four days before.



(Right: *The photograph of His Majesty's Transport Missanabie is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

They were not to travel alone. Also taking ship for the trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom were several other Canadian military units: the 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisional Cavalry Squadron; the Second Draft of the 66<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Canadian Infantry*); the First Draft of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Regiment (*Halifax Rifles*); a draft of the 66<sup>th</sup> Regiment (*Princess Louise Fusiliers*); the Fifth Draft of 'C' Section of the Second Canadian Field Ambulance; and the Canadian Second Tunnelling Company.



*Missanabie* docked in the English south-coast naval port of Plymouth-Devonport on January 30 – a second source has the day following – whereupon Corporal Patten's unit was transferred south to *Chisledon Camp* in the vicinity of the town of Swindon. He was to remain there until the month of June.

In the meantime, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisional Cycle Company had been transferred on March 27, 1916, to the Continent on *active service* with the Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. Corporal Patten, however, was not among the personnel to be ordered overseas on this occasion. For whatever the reason was, he was to remain at *Chisledon Camp* where he eventually was *taken on strength* by the newly-forming 4<sup>th</sup> Divisional\* Cyclist Company.

*\*The 4<sup>th</sup> Division was itself at the time only just in the process of formation. It was to be in that summer of 1916 (also see below) that it was despatched to serve on the Western Front. It was to be the last of four Canadian Divisions to serve on the Continent; the 5<sup>th</sup> Division remained behind in England for the duration of hostilities to serve as a training unit and also as a re-enforcement pool.*

Corporal Patten served with the 4<sup>th</sup> Divisional Cyclist Company for less than a month – in fact the Company *itself* did not last much longer, being broken up before ever travelling to the Continent. On June 9 he was posted to *Camp Bramshott* in the county of Hampshire, and to the 74<sup>th</sup> Battalion which was *also* by then being used as a re-enforcement pool – and was *also* soon to be broken up, in that September\*.



(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*)

*\*By far the majority of the two-hundred sixty Overseas Battalions authorized by the Government of Canada went no further than the United Kingdom. There they were destined to serve as re-enforcement pools for the fifty or so battalions of the four Canadian Divisions serving on the Continent.*

On July 18 Corporal Patten was *struck off strength* by the 74<sup>th</sup> Battalion to be *taken on strength* by the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (*Northern British Columbia &, after August 1917, Central Ontario*) which was then preparing for service on the Continent. Ten days later, on July 28, he was prevailed upon to write his will in which he left his all to his father. It was then only some two weeks later, on August 12, that he set foot on French soil.

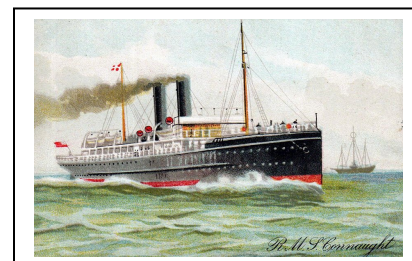
The 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (*Northern British Columbia &, after August 1917, Central Ontario*) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force was a component of the 11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself an element of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division.

This Division, the last of the four to arrive to serve on the Continent, landed in France in August of 1916 - the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion itself disembarking at Le Havre on August 12 - to be immediately ordered north into the *Kingdom of Belgium* and to that part of the forward area southward of Ypres and towards the part of the line after which the Western Front traversed the Franco-Belgian frontier.

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

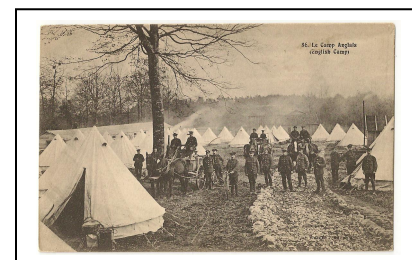


(Right below: *The image of the Royal Mail Ship Connaught, on which the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion traversed the English Channel en route to active service, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Connaught, while only months later returning from Le Havre to Southampton on March 3, 1917, was torpedoed and sunk.*)



By August 15, 1916, the unit had, for the first time, taken its place in the forward area of the front in Belgium, near to St-Éloi and by the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month had already incurred its first thirty-one casualties, of which six had been fatalities.

The Battalion was to remain in the St-Éloi sub-Sector until October 17 when it withdrew to a *tented camp*. The 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion - and the entire Canadian 4<sup>th</sup> Division, following the lead of the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisions - was about to migrate southwards into France, there to play a role in the ongoing British offensive of that summer and autumn of 1916, at *the Somme*.

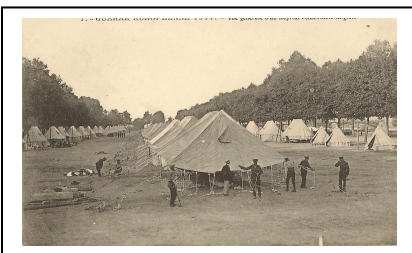


(Right: *A typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card*)

However, Corporal Patten was not to serve with the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion during *First Somme* as on September 1, while his Battalion was serving in the *St-Éloi sub-Sector*, he had lost his personal battle with the German Army.

Casualty report: *“Died of Wounds” – While on duty in the front-line trenches, he was wounded in the head and back by fragments of an enemy trench mortar bomb. He received first aid and was taken to No 17 Casualty Clearing Station, where he succumbed to his wounds.*

(Right: *A British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War: Other such medical establishments were of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card*)



(Excerpts from the 102<sup>nd</sup> War Diary entry of September 1, 1916, as written by Lieutenant Colonel John Weightman Warden, DSO, commanding officer of the unit) *...visited front line, found enemy had absolutely flattened our Trench 14 for 110 yards ...and as soon as they discover the repairs, they promptly knock it down again with rum jars\*... During the night my Sgt, Scout & one man was killed out in front...*

(continued)



***The Trenches are in a horrible state from the heavy Rain, men have no shelters... Shelling occurred most was on my right...also communication Trenches were badly knocked down in places, will require about 50,000 sand bags to repair...***

***\*A type of mortar bomb nick-named thus because of its shape***

The son of John Benjamin Patten, master mariner and businessman – to whom he had allocated a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay as of April 1, 1916 - and of Elizabeth Patten (née Hickman) of Grand Bank, Newfoundland, he was one ten children - Jane-Hickman, George, Samuel-Hickman, Gerald, Sarah, Howard, Gustave, Elizabeth and Grace his siblings.

Corporal Patten was reported as having *died of wounds* at the 17<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station - established at the time at the Rémy Siding, Lijssenhoek, Belgium - on September 1, 1916, by the unit's commanding officer.

***(Right above: The sacrifice of Private Eli H. Patten is honoured on the War Memorial which stands in the community of Grand Bank. - photograph from 2015)***

Eli Harris Patten had enlisted at the apparent age of twenty-one years and eight months: date of birth at Grand Bank, Newfoundland, December 13, 1893.

Corporal Eli Harris Patten 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.

