

Private Walter Charles Peckham (Number 709958) of the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles is buried in St. John's (Old) Anglican Cemetery on Forest Road in the capital city: Grave reference, 12 F (Family Plot).

(Right: The image of a cap badge of the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, is from the Wikipedia Web-site.)



(continued)

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a butcher, Walter Charles Peckham appears to leave behind him no history of his travels from the Dominion of Newfoundland to Canada. While there is no precise date it may be surmised that he did not do so until after September 28 of 1910.

This was the day on which his first wife, the former Elizabeth Diamond, passed away at the age of twenty-six years from pulmonary tuberculosis. The couple had married at the Gower Street Parsonage on June 14 of 1905, this a mixed marriage, the bride of the Methodist persuasion while her husband belonged to the Church of England congregation.

The couple were parents to two children, Gordon Edward – recorded as eleven years of age by April 19, 1916 – and Lillian Dakin(?) – being some nine years old on that same date. Lillian apparently remained, until at least the date of her father's death, in the house of her grand-parents at 149, Gower Street; her brother seems to have lived in both Sydney, Nova Scotia, and Fredericton, New Brunswick, at least at certain times during this same period.

Walter Charles Peckham also had made his way to Fredericton by 1916* for it was there that he was to be married again. Curiously perhaps, the Fredericton City Records provide no date for the occasion: but they do provide his age at the time – thirty-four – which makes the year of this second wedding to be 1916.

**There is a Walter Charles Peckham - single, Church of England member and self-employed butcher from Newfoundland - recorded by the 1911 Censor as residing at 516 Lean Street, Sydney. But he is also documented as living there with his brother William Charles – and Walter's own files show no brother of that name.*

For Walter Charles Peckham this was also to be a mixed marriage, the couple exchanging their vows in the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. The bride, some ten years younger than her husband, was Bessie C. McPherson* of Nashwaak, York County, New Brunswick.

**It was to her, as his wife and also as guardian of his two children, that as of July 1 of 1916 he allocated a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay. Another file suggests twenty dollars but his pay records document the amount to have been the former.*

However, later pay records then appear to document that, as of October 1, 1918, the fifteen-dollar payment was transferred to Private Peckham's mother who was also then cited as being the guardian of his children. There seems to be no further information a propos his second wife.

Private Peckham's first pay records show December 22 of 1915 to be the day on which the Canadian Army first remunerated him for his services, thus suggesting this to be the day on which he enlisted. On that same day he was taken on strength by the 104th Overseas Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Days later, on December 28, in Sussex, New Brunswick*, Private Peckham then underwent a medical examination – which found him fit for overseas service – and also attestation.

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This was also the day on which the formalities of his enlistment were brought to an official conclusion by the officer commanding the 104th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel George W. Fowler, when he declared – on paper – that...*Walter Charles Peckham, having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

**The venue of his enlistment on December 22 appears not to be recorded.*

The 104th Battalion likely trained at the nearby *Sussex Military Camp*, most of it a tented affair, until the call came for the unit for overseas service. That call came towards the end of the month of June and on the 28th day of that month, Private Peckham's 104th Battalion embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Olympic* in the harbour at Halifax.

The 104th Battalion was not to travel alone: Also boarding the vessel for trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom were the 91st, 94th and 101st Battalions of Canadian Infantry, the 13th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles (by that time dis-mounted), a draft of the 57th Battery of the Canadian Field Artillery, the 3rd Draft of the Royal Canadian Regiment, the 4th Divisional Train of the Canadian Army Service Corps as well as a CASC Workshop and a draft of the Canadian Engineers.

The sister ship to the ill-starred *Titanic* and also to *Britannic* which had been sunk by a mine in the eastern Mediterranean in November of the previous year, *Olympic* was one of the largest ships afloat at the time, able to accommodate well over six-thousand passengers: she was likely close to that number on this occasion.



(Right above: *HMT Olympic, on the right, lies at anchor along with HM Hospital Ship Aquitania, centre, at Mudros Bay in the autumn of 1915. – from a photograph originally from the Imperial War Museum, London*)

The ship sailed from Halifax on the morrow, June 29. Six days later, in the English west-coast port of Liverpool she then began to disgorge her cargo of some six-thousand military personnel. Such were the logistical problems posed by such a large number, however, that it was apparently not to be until the following day, July 6 – sources differ - that the 104th Battalion set foot on English soil.

From Liverpool Private Peckham's Battalion was transported by train to the large Canadian military complex of *Shorncliffe* which by that time had been established on the Kentish coast, in the vicinity of the Dover Straits and of the harbour and town of Folkestone. It was during this period that, from September 15 until only the following day, that he was hospitalized for a mild case of myalgia.



(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*)

When it was exactly that Private Peckham – and with him, one must presume, the entire 104th Battalion – was transferred to Witley, is not documented among his papers.

Witley Camp was situated in southern Surrey and it was there that he was apprised on November 28 that he was to be transferred to the 5th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles, by that time already serving on the Continent.

A week later, on December 4, Private Peckham was reported as having landed in France at Le Havre on the estuary of the River Seine and then as having reported *to duty* to the Canadian Base Depot established in the vicinity. It was to be a further two weeks before, on December 19, he was despatched to join his new unit and a further five days before he did so, on December 24, Christmas Eve, one of a draft of seventy-five re-enforcements to do so on that day.

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

Apparently the 5th CMR Battalion had been involved in a raid only two days previously, and had retired from the forward area into Brigade Reserve just twenty-four hours before Private Peckham's arrival. While the War Diarist has not recorded the precise location of the unit's encampment at this time, he notes that daily working parties were being sent out to work on the defences in and about Écurie, a community a half-dozen kilometres to the north of Arras.



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The 5th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles, originally recruited in the area of the Eastern Townships of Québec, was a component of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade*, itself an element of the 3rd Canadian Division. The 3rd Division had begun to form in France in December of 1915 – officially coming into being at mid-night of December 31, 1915, and January 1, 1916. By that time, the 5th CMR had been on the Continent for some two months, since October 24, 1915.



**All of the 8th Brigade's four infantry battalions, as of January 1, 1916, were dis-mounted Canadian Mounted Rifles, the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Battalions. Prior to that, the 5th Regiment, CMR, had been a unit of the 2nd Mounted Rifle Brigade and the troopers had, as the name implies, horses. In order to become an infantry battalion, not only were the Regiment's horses sent elsewhere – often to officers serving behind the lines – but the Regiment, not being of regular infantry battalion strength, had to absorb personnel from other Mounted Regiments, units which, while not immediately disbanded, were thereafter no longer active. Thus on January 1, 1916, the CMR Regiments became CMR Battalions.*

(Right above: *Some of the farmland in the area of Messines (see below), a mine crater from the time of the 1917 British offensive in the foreground – photograph from 2014*)

From that end of October, 1915, until almost a year later in 1916 (see below), the 5th CMR had been stationed in Belgium; at first it had served at the southern end of the front there, just before the trenches crossed over the frontier into France – Messines and Kortepyp, right on the border, in the forward area and Meteren to the rear are three place-names which often appear in the Battalion War Diary; then, latterly*, it had been transferred to the vicinity of *Maple Copse* in the *Ypres Salient*, in a sector just south-east of Ypres (today *leper*) itself (also to be seen below).

**The 3rd Canadian Division was transferred to the Salient at the end of March of 1916, the 5th CMR Battalion marching through Ypres to its positions on March 24.*

In the 5th CMR Battalion, personnel were to learn about the rigours and the routines of 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 being the 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 posting at times for weeks on end.

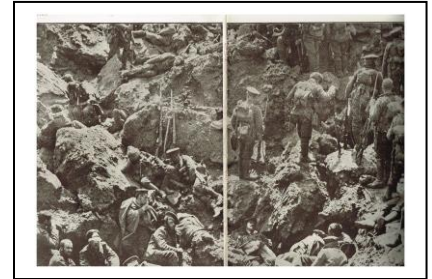
(Right above: A photograph of Canadian troops in support positions somewhere on the Somme in the autumn of 1916, only months earlier having been equipped with those steel helmets and, less visible, British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III Rifles – from Illustration)

The sector surrounding *Maple Copse*, now the responsibility of the 3rd Canadian Division, comprised such places as the village of *Hooge*, and those that now went by English names such as *Sanctuary Wood*, *Hill 60*, *Railway Dugouts* and *Mount Sorrel*, a promontory which was to lend its name to the upcoming confrontation.

But first, in April, it had been the 2nd Canadian Division, in a sector to the south of Ypres and towards the Franco-Belgian frontier, which was to receive the attention of the German Army for a few days. This period was not to be as tranquil as that being experienced during the same time by the personnel of the 5th CMR Battalion and the other units of the Canadian 3rd Division.

The *Action at the St. Eloi Craters* officially took place from March 27 until April 17 of that spring of 1916. St-Éloi was a small village some five kilometres to the south of the Belgian city of Ypres and it was here that the British had excavated a series of galleries under the German lines, there to place quantities of explosives which they detonated on that March 27 and followed up with an infantry assault.

After a brief initial success the attack had soon bogged down and by April 4 the Canadians were replacing the by-then exhausted British troops. They were to have no more success than had the British, and by the 17th of the month, when the battle was called off, both sides were back where they had been some three weeks previously – and the Canadians had incurred some fifteen-hundred casualties.



(Right: *A purported attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – from Illustration*)

However, as previously noted, this confrontation was a 2nd Division affair and the personnel of the 5th CMR Battalion during that period would likely have been disturbed by only the noise of the German artillery some kilometres away.

However, it was to be only some seven weeks after this action that the relative calm of the 3rd Canadian Division's trenches in the south-east sector of the *Ypres Salient* was to be shattered by the German attack at *Mount Sorrel*.

It was from June 2 to 13-14 that the confrontation at *Mount Sorrel* - and in the area of *Sanctuary Wood, Maple Copse, Hooge, Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* - between the German Army and the Canadian Corps was played out.

The Canadians had apparently been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions which dominated the Canadian trenches when the Germans delivered an offensive, overrunning the forward areas and, in fact, rupturing the Canadian lines, an opportunity which fortunately they never chose to – or could - exploit.



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

The British commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, reacted by organizing a counter-attack on the following day, an assault intended to, at a minimum, recapture the lost ground. However, badly organized, the operation was a horrendous failure, many of the intended attacks never went in – those that did went in piecemeal and the assaulting troops were cut to pieces - the enemy remained where he was and the Canadians were left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.

(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*)



On that June 2, the 5th CMR was serving in Brigade Support at Maple Copse, having been posted there since the night of May 31-June 1.

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The following are excerpts taken from the War Diary of the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifle Battalion entry of June 2, 1916: *A red letter day in the history of the Battalion, ever to be remembered by those who lived through it. In the early morning, enemy sprung a mine in part of line held by 4th CMR Battalion and began a bombardment of the Brigade area... and all the ground in MAPLE COPSE and vicinity. The men were kept under cover as much as possible...*



...Several attempts were made to get in touch with the front line but without success. Runners sent out by us... were killed or returned wounded, with news that the communications trenches had been blown in, and that it was impossible to get through enemy barrage fire...

(Right above: *Maple Copse Cemetery, adjacent to Hill 60, in which lie many Canadians killed during the days of the confrontation at Mount Sorrel – photograph from 2014*)

A new defensive front line was organized later that day, to be consolidated as much as possible before being used as a jumping-off position for the counter-attack which began at ten minutes past seven on the following morning, June 3.

It is not clear exactly what role the 5th CMR played: it held *Maple Copse* all day during a bombardment so intense that apparently no-one could ascertain exactly what was happening elsewhere; attempts were also made to communicate with the survivors of the 4th CMR Battalion which had been holding the front-line at the time of the attack but which had been isolated ever since that time.



(Right above: *Railway Dugouts Burial Ground (Transport Farm) today contains twenty-four hundred fifty-nine burials and commemorations. – photograph from 2014*)

Later that evening, when the 5th CMR had been relieved and was ordered to retire, it was found to have incurred a total of three-hundred ninety-three casualties. The 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade during those same two days, June 2 and 3, had incurred a total one-thousand nine-hundred fifty – an almost fifty per cent casualty rate.

(Right: *Hill 60 as it remains a century after the events of 1916 and 1917 in the area of Mount Sorrel, the village of Hooge, Sanctuary Wood and Maple Copse: It is kept in a preserved state – subject to the whims of Mother Nature. – by the Belgian Government – photograph from 2014*)



So severe had the losses been that the 8th Brigade – and thus the 5th CMR Battalion – played no further role in the action at *Mount Sorrel*.

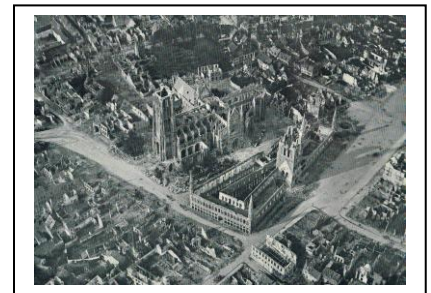
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From June 5 when the unit withdrew, until July 16, the 5th CMR Battalion had stayed in the area of Steenvoorde, a French community well to the rear, there to re-enforce and also to re-organize. It was not until the 19th, having at first travelled by train before marching through the south-eastern outskirts of Ypres itself, that it once more took its place in the forward area close to Zillebeke, just down the line to the west of the area of *Maple Copse*.

There for four days, with little or no infantry action reported, the unit still incurred ten *killed*, twelve *wounded* and eight *shell-shocked*. Thus the routine of trench warfare recommenced with the Battalion closer to Ypres itself during this cycle than it had been previously.

(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 little left standing. – from Illustration)*

On August 22 the War Diarist had noticed – and noted – an influx of British and Irish troops in the sector, units which had been transferred from a place called *the Somme*. These troops were soon relieving the Canadians who were being withdrawn from Belgium. On August 23 it was to be the turn of the 5th CMR and, as if to mark a special occasion... *Baths at POPERINGHE allotted to Battalion from 7.30 am until 12 noon, accommodation 150 per hour.*



The 5th CMR Battalion was withdrawn to the area of North Steenvoorde in north-western France where it was to remain until September 7. The area had been transformed into a training-zone for what was optimistically termed by its planners as *open warfare* and myriad drills were performed, from the section and platoon level up to - and including - that of both battalion and brigade.

On that September 7 the thirty-seven officers and eight-hundred ninety *other ranks* of the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, were taken by bus to board a train at Bavinghove for the journey south.

(Right: *A number of the public London busses were requisitioned as troop transport during the Great War. Here one is being used by some lucky troops while others, to the right, are obliged to continue on foot. – from Illustration)*



The train pulled out of Bavinghove Station at nine minutes to ten on that evening and pulled *into* the station at Candas at eight o'clock the next morning. After breakfast in a field there began a march which was to last some five days and which would end on September 12 in Brigade Reserve at La Boisselle*, the remnants of a village just to the east of the provincial town and centre of Albert.



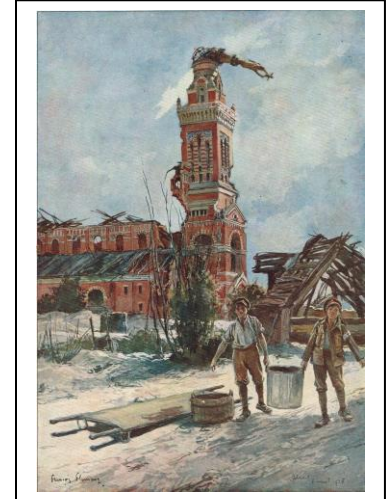
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****Today the village of La Boisselle is known for the huge crater which remains there a century after the detonation of the largest of the nineteen mines exploded just prior to the attack of July 1. At the time it was perhaps history's largest man-made explosion. The crater, now more than a hundred years old, is still impressive, even today.***

(Preceding page: The aforementioned Lochnagar Crater caused by the mine – apparently the largest man-made explosion in history up until that date – detonated at La Boisselle – photograph from 2011(?))

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, the assault having cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the space of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

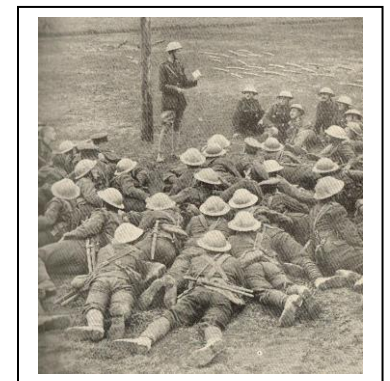
(Right: Canadian soldiers at work carrying water in the centre of Albert, the already-damaged basilica in the background – from Illustration)



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 July 1, 1916, at a place called Beaumont-Hamel.

As the battle had progressed, other troops, from the Empire (*Commonwealth*), were 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: 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)



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

It was early on the morning of September 14 that the 5th CMR Battalion finished relieving the 4th CMR whose place it took in the lines and from where it had been ordered to advance on the next morning.



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The Battalion had been... *ordered to attack and consolidate, with two companies, the German trenches...and to bomb down...the trenches and establish blocks. These trenches to be held by Infantry Posts as they were cleared by the bombers* (Excerpt from the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary).

During the time of the relief and also for the remainder of that September 14, the Germans had reacted violently to the movement and to the obvious offensive preparations ongoing on the Canadian side of No Man's Land. The unit was to incur a number of casualties during the day.

By 4.00 a.m. all assaulting troops were in positions, and all details in regard to the attack completed... 6.20 a.m. As soon as the barrage lifted the 5th CMR BATTALION attacked in two waves and two full Sections of Battalion bombers...

Objective was reached with few casualties. The trenches were found to have been well manned. Twenty prisoners and three machine guns were taken, about 250 Germans were bayoneted and a large number retreated overland to FABECK GRABEN and were caught by our Machine gun fire (8th Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary)...

This somewhat optimistic appraisal of events by the War Diarist notwithstanding, the *few casualties* that the Battalion had incurred totalled two-hundred seventy-seven *killed, wounded and missing* during the day. The 5th CMR Battalion remained in its newly-won positions until the following evening when it was relieved under cover of darkness and was able to retire to the large military camp at the *Brickfields (La Briqueterie)* in the outskirts of Albert.



(Right above: *Wounded at the Somme being transported in hand-carts from the forward area for further medical attention – from Le Miroir*)

From then until the end of the month, the 5th Battalion, CMR, was kept in reserve, largely in the area of Bouzincourt. Nevertheless, while out of range of most German ordnance, there was little rest and the personnel was kept busy, much of the time in road construction; even while the Canadian 1st and 2nd Divisions were once more on the offensive and the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade was in reserve, the Battalion's services were not called upon.

It was finally on September 27 that the 5th CMR Battalion was ordered up to the forward area once more, whereupon it moved on its way to relieve the 1st CMR Battalion in the front line on September 30.

Further orders were awaiting the unit: *Tomorrow afternoon at about 3 pm we are to attack, capture and consolidate a line of German trench known as REGINA TRENCH. As the front of our objective is well wired the artillery have been heavily engaged today endeavouring to cut the wire. Patrols are to be pushed out as far as possible after dark and report on the cutting. All ranks keyed up and in fine spirits, very eager to attack* (5th CMR Battalion War Diary – excerpt from entry of September 30).

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On October 1 the 5th CMR Battalion had attacked as planned and initially had achieved some success, certain German positions being overrun and captured. However, much of the wire that the artillery had been engaged the day before in destroying still remained uncut; *this* and several enemy counter-attacks put increasing pressure on those in the captured German positions.



(Right above: *Regina Trench Cemetery and some of the area surrounding it which was finally wrested from the Germans by Canadian troops in November of 1916 – photograph from 2014*)

Much of the newly-won terrain was re-taken by the enemy, the Canadian survivors obliged to retreat to their former positions... and *Regina Trench* itself was to remain – apart from a few hours later during that month, on October 27 – in German hands until November 11.



At about ten o'clock on that evening of October 1, the Battalion was relieved by the Royal Canadian Regiment and fell back to Albert where it was billeted. The efforts of the day had cost another two-hundred twenty-four casualties.

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

For the next number of days the Battalion remained *in situ*, often supplying working-parties for work on roads in the area of Pozières. It was not until the night of October 9-10 that the unit moved forward once more to the front line. It was ordered to remain there for the following day while the Canadian artillery cut the German wire in preparation for an offensive operation.

That day in the trenches was punctuated by a working-party being sent to dig a jumping-off trench and by German guns accurately shelling the Battalion's positions. Apparently those positions were also shelled by the Canadian guns who were inaccurately bombarding the German wire: these *shorts* inevitably caused casualties and the German wire – reported by patrols as being some four-foot high – remained unscathed.

Any offensive action now appears to have been either cancelled as far as the 5th Battalion CMR was concerned as it was withdrawn to Albert in the late evening of October 11. It arrived there just in time to receive orders for it to move back to the lines two days later, in the afternoon of the 13th. The tour was to be of short duration as the Battalion was to be relieved by a British unit and was back in billets in Arras by mid-night of October 14-15.

For the Canadian unit, whether its personnel was aware of it at the time or not, the *First Battle of the Somme* had come to an end. On the morrow afternoon the entire 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade began to withdraw to the west.

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It had continued westward for a single day before boarding a train at Acheux and being transported to Candas. There the Battalion had remained until October 20 when it began to march: via Finvillers, Autheux and Outrebois to Ransart; then through Arbres, Rebreuve, Honval and Sibiville to arrive in Sericourt; thence by Runeville and Ternas to Tinques; thence to Savy to finally arrive at Étrun on October 25 where it was to train, re-organize and re-enforce until the end of the month.

Its route had taken the Battalion by a semi-circular itinerary to the westward of Arras to a sector to the north of that battered city. In fact, the entire Canadian Corps as it retired from *the Somme* was now to be stationed in that same area, from Arras and north as far as the northern town of Béthune. By November 1 the 5th Battalion CMR was back serving in the front-line positions in the area of Étrun.



(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*)

The late autumn of that 1916 – after the *1st Battle of the Somme* - and the winter of 1916-1917 was a time for the remnants of the Canadian battalions to re-enforce* and to re-organize. There was to be little concerted infantry action during this period apart from the everyday patrolling and the occasional raid - sometimes minor, at other times more elaborate – against enemy positions.

**Even having received several re-enforcements, at the end of October the Battalion numbered only four-hundred seventy-seven personnel in total, less than fifty percent of full battalion strength.*

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

There was of course, the constant trickle of casualties, for the most part occasioned by the enemy artillery and snipers. However, it was mostly sickness and dental work that kept the medical services busy during this period.



It was during this period of course, on Christmas Eve, that Private Peckham's re-enforcement draft had reported *to duty*. Even with those extra numbers the 5th Battalion CMR was under strength: by the end of December it numbered seven-hundred fourteen personnel all told.

On December 29 Private Peckham's new unit moved forward to relieve the 1st Battalion CMR and he was now serving in the trenches of the *Western Front* for the first time.

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Private Peckham's introduction to the forward area may well have given him a false impression of what exactly war was like at the front. While it is true that during the month of January and the first half of February the 5th Battalion CMR, following that routine of trench warfare, was to serve in the front lines, support and reserve, it was overall to be a very quiet period.

In fact the Battalion War Diary records that during the entire period from October 23 of 1916, after its retirement from *the Somme*, up until February 12, 1917, when it was posted to the rear area for training – a total of one-hundred twelve days – the unit's casualty figures had been just eight *killed in action* and fifty-one *wounded*.

For the final two weeks of February Private Peckham's Battalion was withdrawn to the areas of Mont St-Éloi and then Raimbert for two weeks of specialized training. In March it was then sent to Cauchy-à-la-Tour for some three weeks before it moved to nearby Houdain for further days of specialized training.



Among these exercises were to be some novel developments: use of captured 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.



(Right above and right above: *The village of Mont St-Éloi* at an early period of the Great War and a century later - The ruins of the Abbey St-Éloi – destroyed in 1793 – are visible in both images. – from Le Miroir and (colour) from 2016*)

**Not to be confused with the St-Éloi in Belgium of earlier pages.*

On March 23 the unit was sent south by route march to Villers-au-Bois. The 5th Battalion was still to the rear however, there ostensibly to rest. However, the War Diarist records that working-parties were in fact the order of most days, and it would also appear that this – exacerbated by the foul weather and the German guns – contributed to make this a most miserable tour *out of the trenches*.



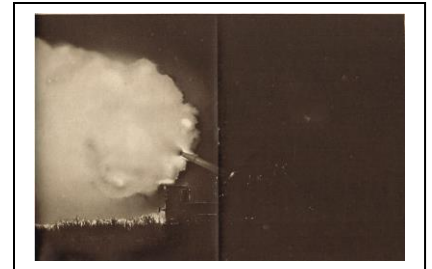
(Right above: *Villers Station Cemetery, Villers-au-Bois, was used primarily by medical facilities in the area during the years 1916-1918. Today within its bounds lie over twelve-hundred Commonwealth dead – the majority Canadian – and also thirty-two former adversaries. – photograph from 2017*)

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During the first days of April, Private Peckham's unit was still behind the lines, at *Woodman Camp*. It was by then becoming noticeable that the Canadian artillery was now ranging onto pre-selected targets and that a preliminary barrage was in its opening stages. Exactly what all these preparations were all about was to become clear on April 5 when the following operational orders were received:

(Excerpts from 5th Battalion War Diary entry for April 5, 1917) *The Canadian Corps, in conjunction with a larger operation by the Third Army on our Right (the 1st Army on our Left) will attack and capture VIMY RIDGE. The 3rd Canadian Division will attack with two Brigades in line and one in reserve...the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade on Right... - although as late as April 7 the War Diarist was still guessing as to the actual date of the upcoming attack.*

As the days passed the artillery barrage grew progressively heavier, on April 6, Good Friday, the War Diarist 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 the night. – from Illustration*)

At ten o'clock in the evening of April 8, Private Peckham's 5th Battalion CMR, one-thousand thirty-one strong began to advance through the mud to their assembly positions. As they moved forward, the troops...*proceeded to Dumps to load up with material & tools, bombs, water, wire, S.A.A. etc. for carrying forward.*

2.30 A.M. "A" Company entered GOODMAN TUNNEL followed by "D" Company and halted... 4th C.M.R. Bn. in Tunnel ahead.

4.30 A.M. "A" and "D" Coy's moved forward in Tunnel again and halted... "B" and "C" Coy's filing into Tunnel.

5.30 A.M. ZERO HOUR Intense artillery bombardment – one continuous roar. The ground trembled and there is mingled with the roar of the guns the swishing and screeching of the shell-filled air. 60 guns are covering our advance, forming a "rolling barrage". Smoke and debris thrown up by the bursting shells give the appearance of a solid wall...

On that 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.



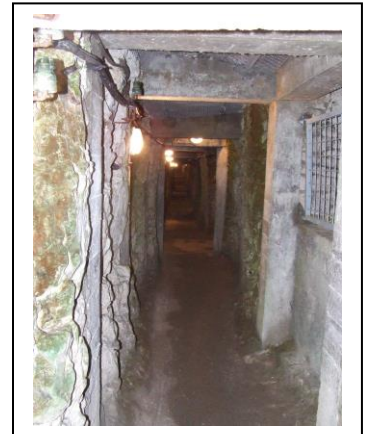
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(Preceding page: *The Canadian National Memorial which, since 1936, has stood on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

While the British campaign proved to be an overall disappointment, the French offensive – *le Chemin des Dames* – was a disaster.

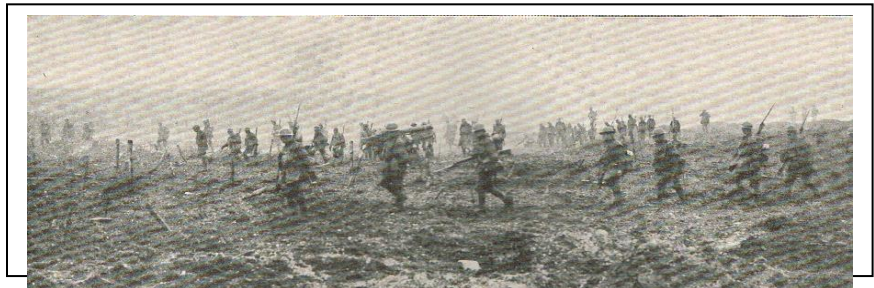
On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions, for the first time acting as a single, autonomous entity, had stormed the slope of Vimy Ridge, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants*.

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



(Right below: *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*)

(Extract from 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary, Appendix D): *5th CMR Bn. in Reserve with two Companies in GOODMAN TUNNEL, and two Companies in PYLONS DUGOUTS. H.Q. with Bde. H.Q...*



5.48 a.m. A Coy. 5th C.M.R., detailed to support 1st C.M.R. reported to have deployed clear of the Tunnel and be advancing in rear of the 1st C.M.R...

6.10 a.m. A Coy...bayoneted or captured about 40 Germans who emerged from PRINZ ARNOLF TUNNEL and attempted to shoot our troops in the rear.

7.05 a.m. A Coy...reported to have reached SWISCHEN STELLUNG in support of 1st C.M.R.

9.05 a.m. D. Coy., subsequently followed by B. Coy...ordered to move forward to SWISCHEN STELLUNG in support of our front line troops, and H.Q. and C. Coy...ordered to move forward to head of GOODMAN TUNNEL...

April 10th Noon The 5th C.M.R., less one Coy...were held in readiness to push through VIMY to the line of the railway running through VIMY Station, in the event of their not being held...

The 5th C.M.R. ordered to stand down...

The four Battalions of the Bge. were relieved...during the night April 11/12th



(Preceding page: *German prisoners being escorted to the rear by Canadian troops during the attack on Vimy Ridge – from Illustration*)

April 12th. 12 noon Casualties sustained during the above operations were:- ...5th C.M.R. Battalion 2 Officers 90 O.Rs.

There had been, on and just after April 9 and 10, the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted breakthrough – but such a follow-up on those days' successes proved logistically impossible. Thus the Germans closed the breach and the conflict once more reverted to one of inertia.

The remainder of the relatively short, five-week long, *Battle of Arras* was not to be fought in the manner of the first two days and by the end of those five weeks little else had changed and the Germans had recovered from the initial Canadian success.

After *Arras* the situation had slowly reverted again to that of everyday trench warfare. Until the end of June the 5th CMR Battalion when in reserve was withdrawn to Villers-au-Bois; then, when on support and front-line duty, Private Peckham and his comrades-in-arms were to find themselves in an area designated *Vimy Defences*. With the advent of the month of July, the unit was withdrawn from the forward line for almost the entire month to prepare for upcoming events.

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



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

(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*)

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

On August 15, a major attack was launched by Canadian 2nd Division troops in the suburbs of Lens and just to the north, in the area of a small rise known as *Hill 70*. The 8th Brigade was not a part of this offensive, but at the same time was moving forward from the rear area to take advantage of any retreat by the Germans.



It was on August 18 that the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade took over billets from the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade at Les Brebis, just to the south of Mazingarbe. On the night of August 19-20 the 5th CMR Battalion moved forward into support positions and, on the 21st-22nd, into the front line.

The 5th CMR Battalion War Diary entry for August 24, 1917, reads partially as follows: *...Our right front and communication trenches were shelled at intervals during the day. The enemy subjected our front line...to a short bombardment at about 2.00 am...*

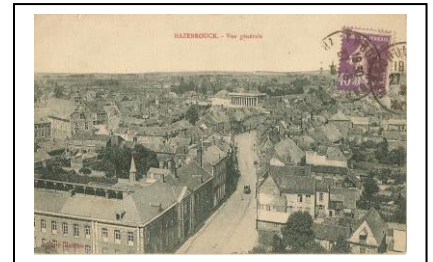


Then on August 27th: *The total casualties for the tour are as follows – Killed 11 other ranks, Died of Wounds 3 other ranks, Wounded 3 officers 25 other ranks*

(Right above: *Canadian troops in the Lens Sector in the summer of 1917 working under shell-fire in the trenches – from Le Miroir*)

This Canadian-led campaign had apparently been intended to continue into the month of September and even beyond. Despite some promising results as seen at *Hill 70*, however, the British High Command was to decide otherwise: the affair at *Passchendaele* was not going well, casualties were high and there was now a shortage of reserves. Thus the Canadians were ordered to prepare to move into Belgium and the fighting in the Lens-Béthune Sectors came to a premature end.

After a month of September, much of it spent in training, and during which there was little infantry activity, on October 15 the Canadians of the 5th CMR Battalion were transferred north by train to St-Sylvestre Cappel in the area of the French town of Hazebrouck. From there they would be ordered to Belgium and, once more, to the *Ypres Salient*.

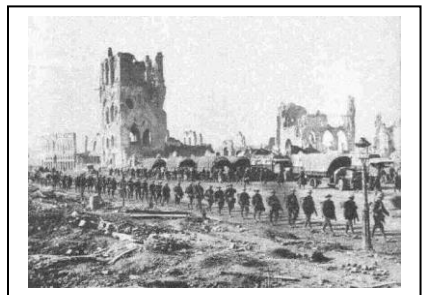


(Right: *The community of Hazebrouck in the period between the wars – from a vintage post-card*)

It was not until those final weeks of October that the Canadian Corps became embroiled in the offensive to the north-east of Ypres. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign 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.

(Right below: *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*)

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 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions who spearheaded the assault, with the 1st and 2nd Divisions in reserve. From November 5 until the official end of the affair – November 10 - the reverse was true with troops of the Canadian 2nd Division finally entering the remnants of *Passchendaele* itself.



(continued)

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

It had not been until October 22 that Private Peckham's Battalion left the relative comfort of the billets in St-Sylvestre-Cappel to march and then take a train to the battered remnants of Ypres. From the station the unit then continued, once more on foot, to the north-east outskirts of the city and to a new reserve camp at Wieltje.

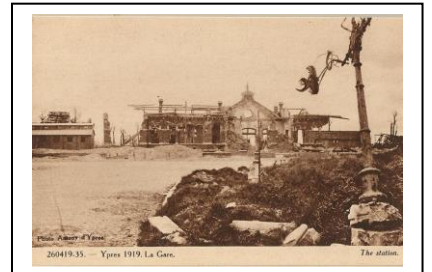


There Private Peckham's Battalion remained – on occasion being shelled and also bombed by enemy aircraft – before moving forward to a reserve area on the 26th. The period from then until the 29th was spent firstly... *pumping water out of the trenches to make them habitable...* and then in preparation for an attack to be delivered.

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

(Right below: *Canadian soldiers using a shell-hole and its contents as a wash-basin to perform their ablutions during the period of Passchendaele – from Le Miroir*)

The attack went in early on the morning of the 30th but even before it began, the 5th CMRs had already suffered heavily. By mid-morning it was being reported that 'A' Company had failed to reach its objectives and that it had incurred many more casualties during the intervening period. By mid-day its losses were termed as *severe* and of the survivors, ordered to re-enforce another unit... *only six or eight men reached this objective.*



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

On the following day the Battalion retired to *Camp X*, from there on November 1 retiring even further west into the rear area. There the personnel was to be employed erecting tents, the compensation for which, it appears, was to be a bath in the town of Poperinghe on November 3.



Then it was back to erecting tents.

On one occasion, November 12, the Battalion was ordered forward to the area of Wieltje, well within range of the German guns which targeted "D" Company's field kitchen and destroyed it. "D" Company, however, was not to be afforded the chance to avenge this atrocity as the stay at Wieltje was of short duration. Only some twenty-four hours after its arrival there the Battalion was on its way to the rear area once more, to Brandhoek – half way between Ypres and Poperinghe – where it was then to remain until November 19th.



Passchendaele was thus over for the 5th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles and for Private Peckham, and on that November 19 the unit boarded busses which were to transport it over the Franco-Belgian frontier in a south-westerly direction to the vicinity of the community of Haverskerque from where it marched the twenty-eight kilometres to Flechin, further south again.

Flechin was to be Private Peckham's Battalion's home for the next month, until December 18 when it marched – the War Diarist says *with difficulty* because of the icy roads – to the area of Fouquières and Les Brébis in the *Loos Sector* where it moved into the front lines on December 21.



(Right: *The mining community of Loos as it was in 1915, more than two years before the 5th Battalion CMR was stationed in the area – from Le Miroir*)

That Christmas of 1917 was spent in the front line, no mention of any festivities having been made of it whatsoever in the Battalion's War Diary. However, on December 28, the day after the one on which the unit had retired, the following entry was made: *This being the first time in the History of the Battalion...the Battalion a tour in the front line without one casualty.*

It would appear that Private Peckham himself celebrated Christmas elsewhere than in the trenches with his unit, as he had been granted leave. However, the precise dates appear to have been recorded properly – perhaps December 21 to 30 - and his destination not at all.

One of the things that the War Diarist appears to have omitted among his daily reports of this period was the Canadian national election. The Canadian Forces personnel serving in the United Kingdom, on the Continent and elsewhere, were to cast their vote during the month of December; in some cases that were reported in other units' war diaries, more than ninety per cent did so. Also offered was the opportunity to invest in War Bonds, thus allowing those fighting in the conflict the opportunity to pay for it as well.

The winter of 1917-1918 was to be, as had been the prior winters of the Great War, a quiet period. The 5th Battalion CMR went through those successive tours in the front, support and reserve areas; when at the front it appears that a steady pattern of patrolling went ahead on a daily basis, usually involving an officers and some twenty *other ranks*; support often meant serving with working and carrying parties; while reserve was for the most part more work and carrying, a lot of training and, increasingly, sport and competitions of a military nature.

(Right below: *A Canadian carrying-party – some of the work done by troops when in support and reserve – on the Lens front during the summer of 1917: the use of head-straps was apparently adopted from a practice of the indigenous Canadians – from Le Miroir*)



(continued)

One raid by the Battalion was carried out during this time, on March 15. Not a particularly major event, it nonetheless involved several officers and one-hundred fifty-one other ranks. Lasting but a few brief hours, it cost the unit five dead and twenty-two wounded and, as far as the Battalion War Diarist was concerned, was...*a great success*.

Thus the winter passed until, on March 21, it was the first day of spring and the Germans attacked.

Perhaps not many people – apparently for a while this included the Battalion War Diarist - realize how close the Germans had come to victory in that March and April of 1918. On that March 21 Private Peckham and his unit had just withdrawn to Cellars Camp at Neuville St-Vaast away from the forward area. The personnel were spending the day cleaning up their new quarters.

Having transferred the divisions no longer necessary on the Eastern Front because of the Russian withdrawal from the War, the Germans launched a massive attack, designated as Operation ‘*Michael*’, on that day. The main blow was to fall at *the Somme* in the area of, and also just to the south of, the battlefields of 1916, and it had fallen for the most part on the British and Commonwealth troops posted there.



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

It was as late as March 25 that... *Orders were received from the 3rd Canadian Division that the Battalion would “STAND TO” at 5.00 AM Morning of the 26th March and be prepared to move forward at 30 minutes notice.* The order was followed and Private Peckham’s unit stood to for some three hours after which time the order was cancelled.

On March 28 the Battalion eventually *did* move forward and by the end of the next day, with the entire 3rd Canadian Division, was in the area forward of the village of Roclincourt, the 5th Battalion occupying an elevated area known as *Point du Jour*. There the unit awaited a German attack which finally did not materialize.



(Right: *Point du Jour Military Cemetery, just to the north of the city of Arras, within the bounds of which lie dead from the years 1916 to 1918 – photograph from 2010*)

On March 30, after several days of enemy artillery attention but no infantry activity, Private Peckham’s Battalion was relieved and moved back to *Cellars Camp* to rest. Two *other ranks* had been *killed in action* during the tour and nine had been *wounded*.

(continued)

The Battalion was to remain at *Cellars Camp* for a week before being posted once more to front-line positions. The military situation appears to have been stabilizing by this time as the personnel were now able find the time to indulge in a concert on April 4.

(Right below: *Canadian soldiers stand in front of a temporary theatre and peruse the attractions of an upcoming concert.* – from *Le Miroir*)

The German advance was to continue for a month before it began to peter out just in front of the city of Amiens.

The ultimate failure of the offensive had been the 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’, was to fall in northern France and in Belgium on April 9, in Flanders, the area where the Royal Newfoundland Regiment was serving with the British 29th Division. It also had been successful for a while, but was struggling by the end of the month.*

(Right: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918* – from *Illustration*)

Thus a relative calm had descended on the front as the German threat had faded – the enemy had won a great deal of ground, but had gained nothing of any military significance on either of the two fronts. Nor was the calm particularly surprising: both sides were exhausted and needed time to once more re-organize and – less and less feasible in these later years of the war – to re-enforce.

The Allies from this point of view were a lot better off than their German adversaries – they had two empires to draw from and the Americans were belatedly arriving on the scene.

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

An overall Allied Commander-in-Chief had been appointed, Foch, and he was setting about organizing a counter-offensive. Thus the front was to remain quiet – until the second week in August.

AS for the 5th Battalion CMR during these months from March until August, there was the everyday grind of life on the *Western Front*, although the unit was to experience it in several different sectors: in April in the areas of *Hill 70* and *Les Brébis*; in May it was at *Dieval*, *Witterness* and *Guarbecque*, all in the general area of the northern French town of *Béthune*; in June Private *Peckham’s* unit was posted to both *Bomy* and *Flechin* before moving back south to *Izel-lès-Hameau*, to the west of *Arras*, on the 25th.



(Right below: *Canadian troops in the vicinity of Hill 70 a short time after its capture by the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions – from Le Miroir*)

During these three months, most of the Battalion's time had been spent undergoing training and manoeuvres. These had been performed not only at Brigade and Battalion level but in smaller groupings down to sections. At the end of June, these exercises completed, the unit ceded its place to another Canadian battalion and was now to return *to duty* in the forward area of the *Mercatel Sector*.



Nothing of great import was recorded in that early during the tour in the front lines, the War Diary entries being for the most part a litany of the activities of the numerous patrols sent out each day. In the middle of the month the Battalion retired to Bellacourt for a bath, for several inspections by officers of the upper echelons – presumably *after* the bath – and for sports. Whether Private Peckham was a participant or otherwise is not recorded, but his unit captured overall first prize – events included wrestling on horseback, tug-of-war on horseback and tent-pegging.

On July 23, after further training, lectures, instruction with the new tracer ammunition, and a baseball tournament, the 5th Battalion CMR was moved to the “Y” *Huts Camp* to the west of Arras. The unit was apprised that it was to be prepared to move at twelve hours' notice. Two days later it was transferred the nearby area of the *Bois de Bray (Bray Wood)*, only a forty-minute march distant, for further training on the Battalion's Lewis Guns*.

**Light machine-guns requiring only a two-man crew*

(Excerpt from Battalion War Diary entry for July 28, 1918) *A message was received from 8th CIB that the 5th CMR Battalion would entrain at AUBIGNY on Tuesday July 30th destination at present remains unknown.*

In fact both the date and the venue of the entrainment were both to be otherwise: on July 30 Private Peckham and his unit undertook an eight-hour march to Saulzy where orders were then received at ten o'clock in the evening that the unit would board a train at Mondicourt some seven hours later at five-thirty on the following morning, July 31.

Seven and a half hours later the Battalion got off the train at Prozeul(?). The remainder of the transfer was now to be undertaken on foot towards that part of the lines in front of the city of Amiens where the German offensive had been halted in April, almost four months earlier. This sector was now to be the spring-board for the upcoming Allied offensive.

The 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, was not alone in being transferred to the area: a large number of other Canadian units – indeed, the entire Canadian Corps – had at that time begun to move in a semi-circular itinerary to the west of Amiens, then south, then east again to finish in front of the city. This movement was to be effected in only a matter of days, much of it on foot, and all of the latter stages during the hours of darkness.

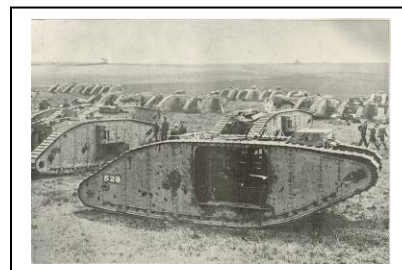
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It was intended to surprise the enemy – and it did. It also, in fact, surprised many of the Allied units, whose personnel – if various War Diaries are to be believed – were still unaware, only days prior, of the offensive which was by then imminent.

On August 4, Private Peckham and his Battalion encamped in the Bois de Boves and later, on evening of the same day, moved into the area of St-Nicholas. There the 5th Battalion CMR stayed until the night of August 7-8 when it moved into its jumping-off positions: the Allied* attack - well supported by tanks - was to commence on the morrow morn.

**The Allied force at the outset comprised British, Canadian, Australian and New-Zealand units to which also added more and more French formations (see below).*

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



The next morning, August 8, was foggy when the barrage had descended upon the German defenders. The first assault had been ordered for twenty minutes past four in the morning but it was to be a further two hours before the 5th Battalion, originally in Divisional Reserve, was ordered forward.

It would appear from the Appendices in the Battalion War Diary that the 5th Battalion CMR was not to be involved in the fighting until the following day. By that time the Germans had been pushed back, some eleven kilometres in places, along the entire front, a feat almost unimaginable at the time after four years of stale-mate*. At seven-thirty on the morning of August 9 it and the 4th Battalion CMR were ordered to pass through other units of the 3rd Canadian Division to continue the attack of the preceding day.

**The first day of the Battle of Cambrai in November of 1917 had been a notable exception.*

At 12.00 noon of August 9... Verbal Orders were received from the G.O.C., 8th Cdn. Inf. Bge., that the 5th C.M.R. Bn. on the RIGHT and the 4th C.M.R. Bn. on the LEFT would attack and capture FOLIES and if possible BOUCHOIR, the attack to be made as soon as possible. (Excerpt from Appendix 3 of the 5th Battalion War Diary)

By late afternoon Bouchoir was reported as having been captured and an operation was ongoing in co-operation with French troops and tanks which was to result in the capture of the village of Arvillers later on that same day*.

**The village of Folies is not mentioned again in Appendix 3.*

The 5th Battalion was now placed in Corps Reserve and ordered to consolidate some of the positions that had been won on that day. For a number of reasons the speed of the Allied advance was now slowing but to those who had known the battles of *the Somme, Arras and Passchendaele* where progress, if any, had been measured in a few metres, it all seemed more than a little strange.



(Preceding page: Canadian soldiers consolidate newly-won positions while others cross a river on an improvised bridge. – from *Le Miroir*)

The Battalion War Diarist summed it up in his entry of August 10 when he wrote: *It seems strange, 24 hours ago we captured this ground, tonight we are undressing & going to bed well behind the lines in Corps reserve.*

He also reported a total of fifty-nine casualties incurred by the 5th Battalion up until and including that date.

(Right: A group of German prisoners, some serving here as stretcher-bearers, being taken to the rear after their capture by Canadian troops: a tank may be seen in the background – from *Le Miroir*)



A further push had been planned for September 12 but...*the enemy is apparently bringing up his artillery and is offering a stout resistance. Operational order from Brigade stated that owing to increasing defensive of enemy the attack of the Canadian Corps would probably not take place for two days. The 8th C.I. Bde. Operation Order was cancelled & the Brigade is to remain in its present position...*

The Operation Order was re-instated and again cancelled on two further occasions before the Battalion received the news that the 3rd Canadian Division was to be relieved by the 1st Canadian Division and was to move back to *Le Quesnel Wood* on the 16th.

(Right: *Hillside Cemetery, Le Quesnel*, in which lie at least two Newfoundlanders who wore a Canadian uniform – photograph from 2015)



On one occasion a single company was ordered forward into the trench system but apart from that episode – innocuous as it turned out – the Battalion remained out of action during this, the 3rd *Battle of the Somme*.

At six in the morning of August 20, after a twenty-four kilometre march, the unit boarded a train for Bouquemaision, some forty miles to the north of Amiens and apparently, at least on this occasion, a nine-hour train-ride away.

After a further march to its billets, the 5th Battalion and Private Peckham were back in the sector which they had left only three weeks previously.

And so, would soon be the remainder of the Canadian Corps. Having been withdrawn, their places in the line taken by French troops, the Canadians had left the *Amiens Front* by the same itineraries as by which they had arrived. What is more, the same discretion and secrecy was now practiced once more. By the end of August the Canadian Corps was ready for offensive operations in tandem with British forces astride the axis of the main road leading from Arras to Cambrai.

(continued)

In fact this offensive was to begin on August 26 when British and Canadian troops were to fire the opening rounds of the *Battle of the Scarpe*. By the next day more Canadian battalions would have joined the fray and, two days later again, units of all the Canadian Divisions were to have seen action on this new front.



And once again, it appears that the Germans were not prepared for the appearance of the Canadian Corps.

(Right above: Some of the ground on which fighting took place at the end of August and beginning of September of 1918: The Arras to Cambrai road – looking in the direction of Cambrai – may be perceived just left of centre on the horizon. – photograph from 2015)

It was in an area just to the north of the Arras-Cambrai Road that the four companies of the 5th Battalion, C.M.R., found itself by two-thirty in the morning of August 25.

(Excerpt from Appendix 9 of the 5th Battalion War Diary for the month of August of 1918) The 8th C.I.B. were ordered to attack and capture enemy positions from the ARRAS-CAMBRAI Road to the SCARPE River in connection with the 2nd Canadian Division, who were ordered to attack to the right. The 51st Division on the left were ordered to exploit any success south of the Scarpe by pushing patrols out along the north bank with a view to gaining MOUNT PLEASANT.

Among the tasks allotted to the 5th Battalion was an attack on MONCHY VILLAGE, perhaps better known to Newfoundland History as Monchy-Le-Preux*.

**On April 14, 1917, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had been ordered into an attack which was militarily untenable. It had failed and the enemy had organized a counter-attack. The remnant of the Battalion, its commanding officer, and a single soldier of the Essex Regiment – ten men in all – had held off this attack until re-enforcements arrived. All ten had subsequently been decorated.*



Although sources differ somewhat, the Newfoundland unit incurred losses of some four-hundred sixty on that day – killed in action, wounded, missing in action and taken prisoner – a count second only to that on the field at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916.

(Right above: Seen from the west from the British point of view, and also from the Arras-Cambrai Road, this is the re-constructed village of Monchy-le-Preux almost a century after the events of 1917 and 1918. – photograph from 1914)

At 12.30 a.m., 26-8-18, the 5th C.M.R. Battalion commenced to move forward to Assembly Positions, the Assembly being completed at 2.33 a.m... (Excerpt from Appendix 9)

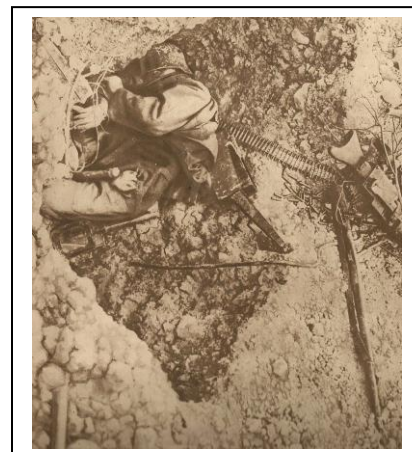
By twenty-minutes past eight on the morning of that August 26, the first two lines of trenches had been taken and the Battalion had apparently already begun the assault on Monchy-le-Preux which was captured later that same morning.

During the twenty-four hours following the taking of the village, the enemy retaliated with a very heavy artillery bombardment. But the objectives of the 5th Battalion had by then been achieved and it was now the turn of the 7th Brigade to pass through the troops of the 8th Brigade and to continue the advance. On the 27th, Private Peckham's unit spent its time... *in reorganisation and clearing the battlefield.*

Casualties during this two-day period had amounted to seventeen *killed in action* or *died of wounds*, one-hundred fifty-seven *wounded*, six *missing in action*, and nine *wounded* who had remained *on duty*.

But the fighting was not yet over. On the morrow the Battalion was to once again be called into battle.

(Excerpts from Appendix 9 of the 5th Battalion War Diary for the month of August of 1918) *Operation of August 28th, 1918 – The 43rd Cdn. Bn. and 5th C.M.R. Bn. with artillery support will attack front and support trenches...at 12.30 p.m. today with...43rd Bn. on right, 5th C.M.R. on left.*



(Right above: *A German machine-gunner who also gave his all – from Illustration*)

(Excerpts continued) *Artillery barrage opened on enemy's front and support lines. Owing to the length of time (30 minutes) the barrage played on these points and the short distance from the jumping-off point to the objective, the attacking companies did not "jump-off" until zero plus 20.*

At times the enemy opposition had been resolute, particularly by the German machine-gunners, but only forty-five minutes after the barrage had opened – and despite taking heavy casualties - at fifteen minutes past one o'clock, both objectives, the enemy front and support lines, were in Canadian hands.

Patrols were immediately sent out to follow the retreating Germans who responded to the assault, not with a counter-attack but with a heavy and prolonged artillery barrage supported by planes, some of which were bombers.

The casualties of the day's operation had totalled a further one-hundred thirty-nine.

Late on that same evening the 5th Battalion was relieved by a British unit and retired to an old trench system just east of Arras, before moving westward to Gouves on the next day.

(Right: *The city of Arras was to endure four years of shelling during the Great War; the Grand'Place (Grande Place) (to compare with the earlier picture of Arras in 1916) looked like this by March, 1917, and more was to follow. – from Le Miroir*)



(continued)

On September 2 the Battalion moved forward to Arras once more. (Excerpt from Battalion War Diary entry for September 2, 1918) *On the road we passed thousands of Hun prisoners, and heard the wildest rumours regarding a great advance by our own 1st and 4th Divisions. Later, information was received that we had broken through the DROCOURT LINE, obtained 4500 prisoners, and that our patrols were pushing on.*

(Right: *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: *The Canadian Memorial to those who fought at the Drocourt-Quéant Line in early September of 1918: It stands to the side of the main Arras-Cambrai road in the vicinity of the village of Dury and of Mount Dury. – photograph from 2016*)

At Arras, on September 4, the Battalion received orders to move forward on the following day as far as Vis-en-Artois. At the same time Private Peckham and his comrades-in-arms would have heard... *The news for our Armies on our right & left is very good, and especially that from our own Corps which is reported to have reached the Western bank of the Canal du NORD & to have taken 7000 prisoners since Sept 1st.*



The unit moved on the next day, September 5, as ordered and by that evening both officers and men were digging in on a site just to the south of Vis-en-Artois. It was apparently a busy place as the entire 3rd Canadian Division had chosen to congregate there. As might be expected, it was not long before the enemy guns began to shell this attractive target.

The unit remained in the vicinity of Vis-en-Artois – well protected in some deep tunnels – until September 11 when it was sent forward to relieve the Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion in support positions. By that evening it had done so, having received the attentions of some German artillery and incurred several casualties as a consequence.

(Right: *Within the bounds of Vis-en-Artois British Cemetery, Haucourt, lie well over two-thousand three-hundred Commonwealth dead of which some fourteen hundred remain unidentified. – photograph from 2017*)

By this time the War Diarist was also reporting that, not for the first time, the numbers of the Battalion were becoming depleted. On that September 11, they amounted to just five-hundred ten all told, about fifty per cent of normal battalion strength.



(continued)

On September 16 the 5th Battalion CMR was ordered into the front lines close to the *Canal du Nord* to relieve the 1st Battalion CMR. There it was to remain until the night of the 19-20 when it in turn was relieved. The casualty count for the tour had been some fifty in all, ten of whom had been killed or wounded by Canadian artillery firing *shorts*.

On foot, by train, and finally on foot once more, the Battalion withdrew to the vicinity Simencourt at a distance of some fifteen kilometres to the west of Arras. It was to continue to train there until September 26 when it marched and was transported to an area near to the community of Croisilles at a distance of ten kilometres to the south of the Arras-Cambrai Road.

On the following day the Battalion moved forward to the area of Inchy, itself just to the westward of the *Canal du Nord*, arriving there in the early afternoon. There it was ordered to remain but...*to be ready to move at a moment's notice*. By that time troops of the 1st and 4th Canadian Divisions had crossed the *Canal du Nord*, and *Bourlon Wood* on the eastern bank was reported as having been captured. Word was eventually received that the Battalion would move forward again on the next morning.



(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*)

(Right: *The same area of the Canal du Nord as it is almost a century after the Canadian operation to cross it – photograph from 2015*)



When it did so, at a quarter to seven, it crossed the *Canal* to an area west of the *Bourlon Wood* where it waited until three o'clock on the morn of the following day again. It then moved off and was at its assembly area three-and-a-half hours afterwards. As Private Peckham's unit was the reserve battalion for the attack, it was not reported as having been involved in the fighting of that day.



(Right above: *Two German field-guns of Great War vintage stand on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City, the one in the foreground captured during the fighting at Bourlon Wood – photograph from 2016*)

Nor was it to be involved on the next day either, being once again in reserve. However, news of two other events of some importance filtered down at least as far as the War Diarist: the British Army had adopted the twenty-four hour clock and Bulgaria, one of Germany's allies, had surrendered unconditionally.

(continued)

From this point on the going was to prove less easy. While the Canadian attack of September 27 crossing the *Canal du Nord* and capturing *Bourlon Wood* had been very successful, the advance towards Cambrai since then had met with a spirited enemy resistance, his artillery and machine-gunners in particular stalling the Canadian and British attacks on many occasions. And logistically, supplies were having a difficult time keeping up with the advance.



(Right above: *Some of the logistical problems encountered by the advancing Canadians after they had crossed the Canal du Nord in late September of 1918 – from Le Miroir*)

It was on the first day of October that the Battalion finally moved into forward positions in the so-called Marcoing Line – and pushed patrols as far as the *Canal de l'Escaut* which runs north-south through the western outskirts of Cambrai - although there was not to be any further infantry confrontation for the next few days.

On October 6 the Battalion was informed that instead of being relieved – a relief which was to be subsequently postponed until the night of October 9-10 - it was, on the contrary, to be a component of a further operation with the 3rd Canadian Division in another attempt to capture Cambrai.

The following note was received on that day by the Commanding Officers of both the 4th and 5th Canadian Mounted Rifle Battalions: *The Division on our right is putting on an attack tomorrow morning (7th). 2nd Cdn. Divn. Have been ordered to try and get the Canal crossings at RAMILLIES and PONT D'AIRE, and we have been ordered to try and get across the Canal on this front, should the Division on our right have success...* (Excerpt from 8th Brigade War Diary entry for October 6, 1918)

The attack by the division on the right, in fact, was postponed for twenty-four hours, and that of the 2nd Canadian Division and the two CMR Battalions therefore delayed until very early on the morning of October 9. In the meantime the enemy was continuously shelling the Canadian positions.



(Right above: *The advance through northern France by Canadian and British forces continues during the autumn of 1918. – from Illustration*)

It transpired that this German bombardment was intended to cover his retirement as, when the Canadian attack went in at one-thirty in the morning – and by the 5th Battalion at two-thirty, an hour later - *...it was obvious that the enemy had withdrawn from his forward positions and that little or no resistance was to be offered. No flares of any sort were sent up by the enemy. His M.G. fire was practically nil...and his shelling was almost negligible.*

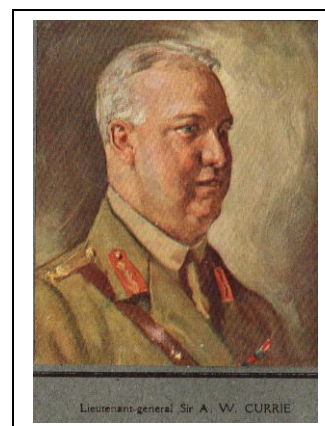
Later on that same day, October 9, troops of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade, including the 5th Battalion CMR, were moving through the almost abandoned city of Cambrai, taking possession of weapons and equipment that had been abandoned by the Germans during their retreat.

On October 10 the entire 3rd Canadian Division was relieved by the 51st Highland Division and moved back to the west of the Canal du Nord to the area of Inchy-en-Artois. The 5th Battalion CMR marched out of Cambrai at half-past-one on that afternoon and five hours later was reported as having arrived at its new billets.



(Right: *Captured artillery pieces were quickly turned and used against the retreating German forces. – from Le Miroir*)

It was during this period while the Battalion was still out of the line – and on the day that it was inspected by the Canadian Corps Commander Sir Arthur Currie – that Private Peckham was promoted, briefly, to the rank of acting sergeant...*to complete establishment...*and to the position of acting cook. This appointment lasted for eighteen days, until November 3, when he relinquished both of these roles. It is not recorded whether the quality of his cuisine had any bearing on Sergeant Peckham's reversion to the rank of private soldier.



(Right: *Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur William Currie, Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Corps – from Illustration*)

By the time that again-Private Peckham returned to duty with his unit on November 3 in the forward area, it was apparent to all that the *Great War* was likely to soon be drawing to its close. October had seen the 5th battalion CMR once more move to the pursuit of the retreating enemy, although for a while all contact with the Germans had been interrupted by them cutting the banks of the Escaut Canal, thus flooding the countryside and making any advance impossible.

On November 1 the pursuit recommenced with the 5th Battalion action in support of the 4th and 1st Battalions CMR. The action took place in the north-eastern outskirts of the larger centre of Valenciennes and by the day of Private Peckham's return to the 5th Battalion CMR, this unit was fighting in the outskirts of the community of Onnaing on the main Mons to Valenciennes road.

Private Peckham's Battalion continued the advance through Onnaing on the next day but the German resistance was strong and the early gains of the day had to be relinquished to the enemy during that evening. The same opposition was encountered on the following day again but the 5th Battalion outflanked the German positions and by the evening of yet the next day again, November 6 – thanks to bridgeheads over the Aunnel and Grand Honnelle rivers established by sister units of the 8th Brigade – had captured the community of Crespin. The unit was to remain head-quartered there until November 10.

It appears to have been on November 7 that the border into Belgium was crossed by smaller units of the 5th Battalion CMR, and on November 8 the frontier town of St-Aybert was entered and occupied without opposition.

(continued)

However, when Private Peckham's unit continued to advance in this same area, it was still to be against a resistance tenacious at times; further crossing-points on the *Escaut Canal* were established but this was despite the almost total destruction of the many bridges in the sector by the enemy.

On November 9, after having captured Thivencelle and Ville Pommeroeul, the 5th Battalion CMR was pulled back into Crespin. A British Battalion now took up the pursuit once having passed through the Canadian unit. Private Peckham and the other personnel of the 5th Battalion were now ordered to provide working-parties to construct and to repair roads.

Thus it was that the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, and Private Walter Peckham ended the *Great War*.

(Entry of November 11, 1918, from the Battalion War Diary) *Telegram received from Brigade stating that armistice had been signed, and would take effect at 1100.*

At 1100 hostilities ceased.

Information received from Brigade that the 3rd Cdn. Division captured MONS at 600 this morning. In the afternoon the Commanding Officer and all available Officers proceeded to MONS to witness the official entry of the Corps Commander. It proved to be a most impressive sight.*

**This attack at Mons was to become a very controversial operation.*

(Entry of November 11, 1918, from the 8th Brigade War Diary) *News was received that hostilities would cease at 1100 this date and that defensive precautions would be taken and troops would remain in their present locations until further orders. Corps Commander made formal entry into Mons, representatives from Battalions being present.*

On November 12 Private Peckham's 5th Battalion CMR received orders to proceed to Mons. *Battalion moved off at 1400 and arrived at MONS at 1830. The inhabitants of the city extended a very hearty welcome to the Battalion.* (Excerpt from Battalion War Diary entry for November 12, 1918)

(Right: *Rejoicing in the streets of Paris on November 11 at the news of the Armistice – from le Miroir*)

It must have been a strange sensation after all those months and years of warfare to no longer hear the thunder of the guns, to no longer walk in a stooped manner along the confines of the trenches, to realize that death was no longer to be a part of one's everyday routine. Perhaps it was all a bit of an anti-climax with personnel not quite sure what they were supposed to be doing.



The Canadian Corps, it was learned on November 13, was to play a role as a component of the Army of Occupation, and that some of its units were to make their way into Germany as early as four days later – but not Private Peckham's Battalion.

The days following the Armistice were devoted to... *Cleaning & Smartening Up*...to Church Parades, Inspections and the awarding of Decorations. Route marches and sports were added to the days' activities as it now was becoming necessary for all those now-unemployed troops to be kept busy.

On November 26 Private Peckham began a fourteen-day period of leave back to the United Kingdom although, with more time allotted for travel, he did not report back to duty until December 13. Where he had stayed during this period of absence does not appear to have been recorded although London, of course, was the likely destination.



(Right above: *The area of Marble Arch in London – in fact, in the City of Westminster – likely just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

By the time that he returned *to duty* with his unit, the 5th Battalion CMR was no longer in Mons. It had remained there until December 11 and had been busy: Albert, King of the Belgians had visited; there had been an organized street-dance for the troops and the population; the Divisional Commander had inspected; several march-pasts had taken place; educational courses had begun for the troops: English, French, a general course, and mechanics; daily drill had been re-instated; an elaborate Requiem Mass had been conducted; and three-thousand Christmas cards had been provided for the soldiery to send homewards.

On December 11 the Battalion had marched the twenty kilometres or so to Haine-Saint-Paul and had there been billeted before proceeding on the next day to Pont-à-Celles. (Excerpt from Battalion War Diary of December 12, 1918) *The route led through villages which had been previously deserted, wreaths and miniature triumphal arches of tree branches and flowers of all descriptions...*

It was to the Battalion at Pont-à-Celles that Private Peckham returned *to duty* on that December 13, perhaps in time for the rifle inspection undertaken on that morning or perhaps only for the afternoon of...*rest and recreation*...that the p.m. offered.

The 5th Battalion continued on its march on December 15 and by the 18th was encamped in the area of the *Battle of Waterloo* fought a century before*. There at Lasne-Chapelle and in nearby Moriensart the Battalion remained for what was described by the War Diarist as...*the best Christmas which the Battalion has spent in this country***, which is quite fitting since it will no doubt be the last which we shall enjoy together.

**On that occasion the Germans (Prussians) had been allies of Great Britain and it was the French who had been the enemy.*

***Of course it was only the second Christmas spent in that country – the Kingdom of Belgium – the other being that of 1915. Presumably the Diarist meant the area of the Western Front, both Belgium and France.*

(continued)

Two days later came confirmation that indeed this would be the last Christmas spent together. Excerpt from Battalion War Diary entry for December 27, 1918) *Information received from 8th C.I.B. that 3rd Canadian Division would march to 5th Army area prior to demobilization. Entrainment to commence at BAISIEUX on the 4th of January. The 8th Brigade group to commence move on 29th instant.*

The ten days beginning on December 29 were spent mostly in marching until, on January 8, Private Peckham's Battalion halted in the vicinity of the community of Wattlelos. The 5th Battalion had made a one-hundred eighty degree turn at Moriensart* and had marched back into northern France. There it was to spend almost an entire month, until being ordered to move from there to Willemse on February 6.

**It may be that, given the direction of its former route, the 5th Battalion had been on its way to serve in Germany before its orders were then countermanded. Other units which had served during much of the Great War also found their places in the Army of Occupation taken by troops more recently arrived on the Continent.*

It was there at Willemse that the personnel of the 5th Battalion of the Canadian Rifles, began to be dispersed when twelve officers and three-hundred ten *other ranks* were sent on leave to England after which they were to proceed to *Bramshott Camp*.

On February 8, a further nine officers and three-hundred seventy-nine *other ranks* were informed that they would be also granted eight days leave in England beginning on the following day. They too were to subsequently report back to *Bramshott Camp*. Those not designated for leave* were to also take a train on the morrow, but it was to be for transport to the Base Depot at Le Havre.

**They totalled just fourteen officers and one-hundred twenty-seven other ranks, the majority of the Battalion having been sent on leave by other routes to the United Kingdom.*

Thus Private Peckham temporarily left his unit, being one of those having received eight days leave back in the United Kingdom. And as the War Diarist was one of those to travel onwards to Le Havre, there is little information available of Private Peckham during those days before he was to report to *Bramshott*.



(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*)

In the meantime, however, the vestiges of the Battalion at Le Havre were to spend only four days there. At one hour before mid-night on February 13, they sailed out of the harbour there, leaving the Continent behind. The 5th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles had served in France and in the Kingdom of Belgium for three years, three months and thirteen days.

(continued)

The port of Weymouth was reached the next morning and the 5th Battalion was transported by train to Liphook where it arrived at three o'clock that afternoon. After tea and biscuits it marched to *Bramshott Camp* where it was now to await those returning from leave and to organize medical boards, registration, clothing parades and of course leave for those to whom it was still due.

In early March the 5th Battalion was informed that its personnel were to be repatriated on the 8th of that month, just three days later. To that end all documentation work was speeded up and on that date...*All the officers and other ranks were struck off strength and the Bn. ceased to exist as a Unit in England.* (Excerpt from Battalion War Diary entry of March 8, 1919)

The Battalion thereupon took a train from Liphook Station to Liverpool where the unit embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Carmania*. The vessel sailed that night to arrive in the harbour at Halifax on March 17, nine days later.



(Right: *The image of the Cunard liner Carmania is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)

Private Peckham, however, was not to suffer from the sea-sickness which a storm-tossed *Carmania* inflicted upon his former comrades-in-arms. For an apparently undocumented reason he remained in England and was *taken on strength* at first, on March 8, by the 3rd Canadian Division Pool before, subsequently, on March 12, by the Quebec Regimental Depot where he was then *taken on strength* by the 23rd Reserve Battalion (*Quebec*) based at Ripon in North Yorkshire.

There at Ripon he underwent the final medical examination submitted to by all military personnel prior to discharge. The report found...*no disability*. A final dental examination on April 11, also at Ripon, which found a number of deficiencies to be corrected once back in Canada.

This transfer to Ripon was to last some five weeks before he was transferred once again. On this occasion it was on April 19-20 and was from the 23rd Reserve Battalion to the *Canadian Concentration Camp* at Rhyl in North Wales.

The *Canadian Concentration Camp* of *Kimmel Park* was an area which had been established to house Canadian soldiers while they were awaiting berths on the repatriation transport ships. As the time passed, the troops were to become impatient at what they perceived to be, at best, official indifference to their confinement at Rhyl.

In particular they were not too pleased to hear the news – *true* as it happened – that much of the shipping, including the massive *Olympic*, was being used to take American troops – many of whom had been serving overseas for only months – back to the United States*.



There were unfortunate riots in the Canadian camp and several fatalities ensued. A further, and greater, number of deaths in the cramped conditions were due to the Spanish influenza epidemic which was raging at the time.

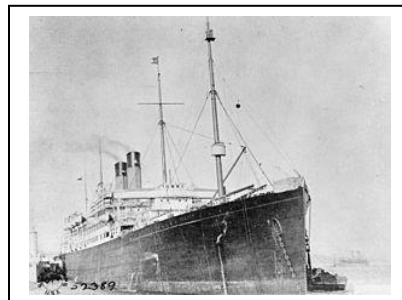
(Preceding page: *Bodelwyddan (St. Margaret) Churchyard, Flintshire, and some of the Commonwealth graves, mostly those of Canadian soldiers who died in the Kimmel Park Canadian Concentration Camp – photograph from 1913*)

**Another factor in the at-first slow rate of repatriation was the almost complete destruction of Halifax and its harbour facilities – the only major east-coast port available in Canada, the St. Lawrence River being closed by ice during the winter season - in the great explosion of December 6, 1917.*

(Right: *This is part of downtown Halifax days after the catastrophe. The lmo, one of the ships directly involved is to be seen beached on the opposite side of the harbour. Apparently, according to the caption on the original picture, the heap of wreckage in the middle represents much of what remained of the Mont Blanc. – from Illustration*)



Private Peckham was one of the luckier ones as he was to remain at Kimmel Camp for just eighteen days. He was then transported to the not-distant port of Liverpool where on May 7* he embarked onto the White Star Liner *Celtic* which was bound from there to New York via Halifax.



The ship landed its Canadian military passengers in the Nova Scotia capital city on May 15 of 1919.

**On that date he was struck off strength by the C.C.C. Kimmel Park and taken on strength by the Canadian Military District Number 7 which was to be his final destination.*

(Right above: *The photograph, taken in 1919, of the White Star liner Celtic is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)

By the following day Private Peckham was in Saint John, New Brunswick, whereupon he was *discharged from service* with a Class ‘A’ War Service Badge – Number 265701 - and *struck off strength* by the District Depot No.7.

Discharge Certificate 16/5/19 Dispersal Station Military Dist. No. 7

- 1) That discharge certificate must be carried when wearing uniform*
- 2) That uniform can be worn only thirty (30) days after discharge, or when duly authorized in writing and...*
- 3) That wearing of uniform renders him liable to usual military discipline as if on the strength of a unit*

(continued)

All that appears to be known about Walter Charles Peckham's whereabouts in the months following is that he had declared upon his discharge that his proposed residence was to be St. John's, Newfoundland, only for that to be crossed out on a demobilization paper, and replaced with *c/o Bank of Montreal, St. John, N.B**..

**On the same paper he declared his next of kin now to be his mother.*

The son of Matthew Peckham, butcher, and of Susanna (also *Susannah*) Peckham (née *MacLeod*) of 149 Gower Street, St. John's, Newfoundland – the couple married in Prince Edward Island where their first two children as listed below were born - he was also brother to James-Alexander, to Stephen-Rice-Jenkins, to Isabella May – witness at his first wedding*, to Benjamin-Franklin, Florence-West, Harriet-Maud and to Elsie-Christian**.

**See in the first pages above for the details of his two marriages.*

***His parents had latterly also adopted three other children, all by the surname of MacLeod: Norman Alexander, Ernest-Frederick and Neil-Charles.*

Walter Charles Peckham was reported as having *died of sickness*, of nephritis, in Lancaster Hospital, Saint John, New Brunswick, on September 29 of 1920. His remains were subsequently transported back to Newfoundland to be buried in a Commonwealth War Grave in the family plot where they lie to this day.

Walter Charles Peckham had enlisted at the apparent age of thirty-three years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, February 6, 1882.

Private Walter Charles Peckham 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.

