



Lance Corporal Edward Peters, Number 307047 of the 1/5th Battalion, The King's (*Liverpool Regiment*), British Expeditionary Force is buried in Pont du Hem Cemetery, La Gorgue: Grave reference VI.L.24.

It would seem that Edward Peters crossed the Cabot Strait from Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, to North Sydney, Nova Scotia, on December 16, 1909, to work in the mines there. He was to live with his uncle, Henry Fowler, his aunt Elizabeth, and his seven cousins on Stanley Street in the District of Cape Breton and North Victoria. Edward Peters was about thirty years of age at the time, his cousins much younger.

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On July 13 of 1913, a thirty-two year Edward Peters took ship in Montreal and arrived in Liverpool some two weeks later on the 16th. He had embarked upon the White Star Liner *Laurentic* (right), a ship to become known to Newfoundland history*.

**In January of 1917 she was to be sunk in the north-east Atlantic, likely by a mine; some three-hundred fifty of the four-hundred seventy-five on board would die, including more than twenty men of the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve and perhaps one of the Newfoundland Regiment.*

(Right: *The photograph of Laurentic is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)



It is not confirmed that indeed this traveller was the Edward Peters of this dossier neither is it documented what he did upon his arrival in Liverpool* but Liverpool was a large industrial port and finding a job as a labourer was surely not too difficult.

**This, however is the only likely candidate to be found among the Ancestry.ca files.*

There appears to be no record of the date on which Edward Peters enlisted into The King's (*Liverpool Regiment*) of the Liverpool Brigade, West Lancashire Division, Territorial Army*. All that is to be found a propos is an entry in the British Army Service Medal Roll of 1919 – which documents him as a private – Number 4686 of the 1/8th (*Irish*) Battalion of the Liverpool Regiment who was then apparently transferred to the 1/5th Battalion, also of the Liverpool Regiment, to be assigned the service number 307047.

The Liverpool Regiment's own web-site has him as Lance Corporal E. Peters, Number 307047. The Forces War Records web-site has the same number and rank, and confirms his unit as having been the 1/5th Battalion.

**Some of the battalions of the Liverpool Regiment were units of the Territorial Army, this force somewhat akin to the Canadian Militia with one important difference: whereas the Militia could not legally be despatched for service outside Canada, when a recruit joined the British Territorial Army, he specified whether or not he was willing to be despatched for service elsewhere than in the United Kingdom and Ireland.*

According to his Medal Index Card, Private Peters entered a theatre of war, France, on December 5, 1915.

By this time The King's (*Liverpool Regiment*) had undergone an immense transition from a peace-time to a war-time footing. But by January of 1916, things had stabilized and both the 1/5 Battalion and the 1/8th Battalion had become elements of the 55th (*West Lancashire*) Division.



After final organization in that January, the 55th relieved a French unit, the 88th Division, in the area of Wailly, some six kilometres to the south-west of Arras.

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The British had begun taking over responsibility from the French of the area of *the Somme* in 1915 and the personnel of the Liverpool Regiment Battalions – there were six of them to serve in the 55th Division in the period from January, 1916, until January of 1918 – now was to spend six months of the daily grind of trench warfare: its rigours, routines and its perils*.

(Preceding page: *A French cemetery alongside the Serre Road, about twenty kilometres to the south-west of Arras, an area transferred in 1915 to the British Expeditionary Force – photograph from 2010(?)*)

**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*)

During this winter period and the spring of 1916, the offensive operation undertaken by the 55th Division amounted to a single large-scale raid and a number of smaller ones, all on a local level. It nonetheless incurred more than eleven-hundred casualties all told during this *quiet* time, for the most part likely due to the enemy's artillery and to his ever-active snipers.

The records do not show the 55th Division involved in 1st *Somme* until July 25 – more than three weeks after the first attack on July 1 – when it was ordered south to the area of Guillemont. It notably fought in operations at Guillemont itself, at Guinchy, at Flers-Courcelette and at Morval before being withdrawn on September 28 to serve in *the Ypres Salient*.



The Division was to remain there in Belgium for almost a year*.

**Its first posting in the Salient was partially in the area of Railway Wood where the Newfoundland Regiment, as a unit of 29th Division, had served during the previous month.*

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(Preceding page: *Railway Wood almost a century later – but today recognizable as a wood: The monument barely perceptible commemorates the sacrifice of the twelve personnel of the Royal Engineers who were buried alive while tunnelling below. – photograph from 2014*)

(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*)

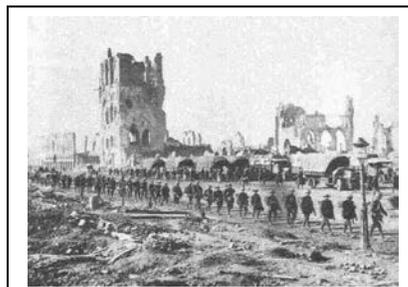
During the spring of 1917, the British, the Canadians and the French were busy in northern France, the French notably in the 3rd *Battle of the Aisne* and the British during the *Battle of Arras* – which included the Canadian capture of Vimy Ridge on April 9 – and later with Canadian operations in the area of the mining centre of Lens.



That is not to say that the British did not have plans for the *Ypres Salient*.

(Right: *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*)

The *Salient* had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. 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.



Like its predecessor of the previous year – 1st *Somme* – the battle was a lengthy expenditure of human life that gained very little, and even that little was to be only a temporary acquisition. *Passchendaele* was to cost the 55th Division almost six-thousand three-hundred officers and men *killed, wounded and missing*.



(Right above: *An unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

On or about September 23, the 55th Division was withdrawn from *Passchendaele* to prepare for its role in another offensive: the so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4.

The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained.

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Apparently the 55th (West Lancashire) Division did not perform well at *Cambrai*: *The Division faced the enemy counter attack on 30 November 1917; its effect was later examined by a Court of Enquiry, the front line defence apparently crumbling and then allowing the enemy to have a 'rapid and almost bewildering advance'... The division's reputation fell sharply in the eyes of the higher command. It was withdrawn from the area... for intensive training. (From The Long, Long Trail)*



(Right above: *The Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being one of the first objectives on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

(Right: *A tank of the period, this one at rest at its depot somewhere on the Somme – from Le Miroir*)



On February 15 of 1915, the 55th (West Lancashire) Division, only then returning to active service, relieved the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division in northern France in the sector of Givenchy and Festubert. In the month of March it faced several strong German incursions; but in the month of April worse was to come.

That spring, the Germans – by that time re-enforced by the divisions that victory over the Russians allowed them – launched *George*, the code-name for an offensive intended to split the Allied armies, to drive the British into the sea and to crush an already demoralized French war effort. It very nearly succeeded.

The drive began in the area of *the Somme* on the first day of spring, March 21. On April 9, it was the turn of the Allied troops in the north of France and in Belgium to face *Georgette*, a second German offensive.

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



On that day the 55th Division fought in the defence of Givenchy, apparently *the most famous action that the Division fought. 'It was afterwards stated by an officer of the German General Staff that the stand made by the Division of April 9th and the days which followed marked the final ruination of the supreme German effort of 1918.'* (From the 55th (West Lancashire) Divisional History)

A more local account cited the following: 9/4/1918 – *At 4.20 a.m. enemy bombarded our lines heavily with gas & HE shells. Morning very foggy. The enemy attacked about 7.30 pm. Two of the companies are missing and the foremost platoons of A Company in CALLIOUX Locality. The enemy captured the OB Line but our posts at FESTUBERT EAST and those in the VILLAGE LINE remained intact. (Excerpt from 1/5th Battalion War Diary)*

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The son of John Peters of Harbour Breton and Charlotte Peters of New Harbour – a second source has Burgeo - he was reported as having been *killed in action* on that April 9, 1918.

Edward Peters died at the age of thirty-eight years: date of birth, at Gaultois, Newfoundland, March 26, 1880.



The image of Private Peters is from the Newfoundland Grand Banks Genealogy web-site.

**The image presented here is likely of him as a private soldier. There appears to be no record available as to the date of his promotion.*

Lance Corporal Edward Peters was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).

