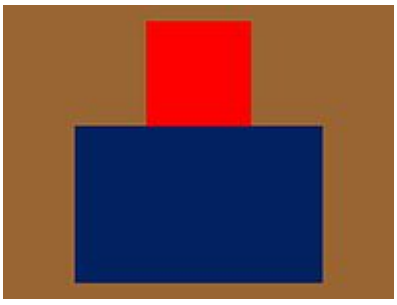
Private Joseph Richard Reid, (Number 469430 of the 26th Battalion (*New Brunswick*), Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery extension: Grave reference VIII.B.10..



(Right: *The image of the shoulder-patch of the 26th Battalion (New Brunswick) is from the Wikipedia Web-site.*)

(continued)

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a painter and also miner, Joseph Richard Reid, according to the 1911 Census, had left the Dominion of Newfoundland at the age of two or three years in the company of his parents and two older brothers, to take up residence in the Cape Breton port-town of North Sydney.

It was to be in North Sydney that, some seventeen years afterwards, on April 10, 1912, he was wedded to Miss Selina (known as *Lena*) Hanson*. The couple are recorded as having had two children (see below).

Hanson is the family name on the marriage record; however, Anderson has been documented on their children's birth files.

His first pay records show that the Canadian Army began to remunerate Private Reid for his services on August 16, 1915. There appears to be no record of where this enlistment took place but it has been noted on the same card that on this date he was *taken on strength* by the 64th Overseas Battalion.

Nine days later, on August 25, 1915, Private Reid presented himself for medical examination in the nearby industrial city of Sydney, a procedure which found him…*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*, but it was to be yet a further week, not until September 1, that he was attested and took his oath, also in Sydney, in front of a local Justice of the Peace or a magistrate.

Another three days were to pass before the formalities of his enlistment were brought to a conclusion on September 4 by the Commanding Officer of the 64th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel H. Montgomery Campbell, when he declared - on paper – that…*Joseph R. Reid…Having been finally approved and inspected by me this day…I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

Precisely where Private Reid was now to undergo his training is not clear. The 64th Battalion was head-quartered in Sussex, New Brunswick, but also apparently it also had access to training facilities in Halifax. To which venue he was originally posted is not recorded but it would seem that it was finally at Camp *Sussex* that the entire unit completed its training in the early spring of 1916.

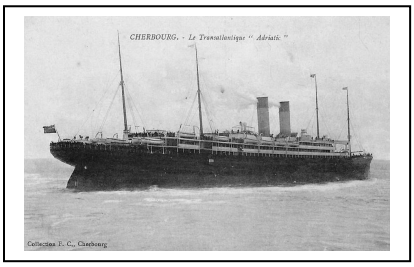
But wherever it was that he was stationed during this period of almost six months until departure for overseas service, it appears, according to those same first pay records, that he was to be in conflict with the Battalion authorities on two occasions for having been *absent without leave.*

The first episode is recorded as having been from nine o'clock in the morning of December 28 until seven in the morning of January 4 of the New Year, 1916. The second incident occurred from nine-thirty a.m. of February 13 until nine-thirty p.m. of the eighteenth day of the same month. It is not exactly clear what the penalty for the first misdemeanour had been; on the other hand, the second one appears to had cost him at least ninety-six hours of detention.

(continued)

Exactly six weeks after the second episode, Private Reid was recorded as having embarked on March 31 of 1916 onto the requisitioned *White Star Company* liner *Adriatic* in the harbour at Halifax - for passage overseas to the United Kingdom.

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



The officers and *other ranks* of the 64th Battalion were not the only military personnel passengers to be crossing the Atlantic on the vessel: the 73rd Battalion of Canadian Infantry, an unidentified draft of the Coburg Heavy Battery and the 8th Canadian Field Ambulance – which latter unit was to undertake the ship's medical services during the crossing – were to be Private Reid's fellow travellers, almost twenty-five hundred souls all told.

***Adriatic sailed* on April 1, one of a convoy of three troop transports – the others also ocean-liners now in the service of the King: *Baltic* and *Empress of Britain* – the trio escorted by the elderly cruiser *Carnarvon*.**

***Adriatic* docked in the English west-coast port of Liverpool at three o'clock in the afternoon of April 9. While some of the vessel's passengers – likely the artillery - were sent elsewhere, the 64th Battalion immediately left by train for the Canadian military establishment of *Camp Bramshott* – named for the adjacent village of that name - in the southern county of Hampshire.**

(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)

Hardly had he arrived at *Camp Bramshott* – and possibly during the period of isolation that incoming troops were apparently to undergo as a precautionary measure – Private Reid was admitted on April 26 into the camp's military hospital suffering from influenza. He was released from there *to duty* on May 6.

On June 24, Private Reid was transferred to the 12th Canadian (*Reserve*) Battalion based at *Shorncliffe* – just south of the Dover Straits and in the vicinity of the harbour and town of Folkestone in the county of Kent. There he was to prepare for a posting to *active service* on the Continent in the near future.

In fact, that *near future* was to be only days away.

(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)

(continued)

On June 28, 1916, Private Reid was bureaucratically, on paper, *taken on strength* by the 26th Battalion (*New Brunswick*) and during that night crossed the English Channel, likely from nearby Folkestone to Boulogne – although this is not confirmed - on the French coast, some two hours' sailing-time away.

(Right: *A view of the coastal town of Folkestone almost a century later as seen from the white cliffs of nearby Dover* – photograph from 2009)

(Right: *An image of the French port of Boulogne at or about the time of the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

From the ship on which he had taken passage, Private Reid was transported to the Canadian General Base Depot in the vicinity of the French industrial port-city of Le Havre on the estuary of the River Seine*. He was to remain there for two weeks awaiting further orders.

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

According to the Base Depot War Diary there were no arrivals on June 29, but on the following day the…'The largest draft that ever marched into Camp arrived from England'… four-thousand two-hundred fourteen 'other ranks'.

While the awaited orders apparently *did* arrive after two weeks and while other soldiers of the 64th Battalion were to be despatched to re-enforce various units in the field, Private Reid was again in need of medical attention; in this case remained behind and was admitted into the 7th Canadian Stationary Hospital at Le Havre on July 13.

The early diagnosis cites *boils* as his problem and that is probably so. In addition, however, he also had *sebaceous cysts* which, by the time that he was discharged back to the Canadian Base Depot on July 20-21, had been removed in the hospital. He was now to remain at the Canadian Base Depot for yet a further two weeks and a day.

On August 5 Private Reid was despatched to join the 2nd Entrenching Battalion* where he reported two days later, at *Halifax Camp* in the area of Ypres. This was the very first day of the unit's official existence and Private Reid was one of the draft of twenty-nine officers and eight-hundred eighteen men which arrived in Belgium from Le Havre on that day to form the nucleus of the Battalion.

These units, as the name suggests, were employed in defence construction and other related tasks. They comprised men who not only had at least a fundamental knowledge and experience of such work but who also had the physique to perform it. However they also came to serve as re-enforcement pools where men awaiting the opportune moment to join their appointed unit might be gainfully employed for a short period of time.

(Right below: *Canadian troops from an unspecified unit engaged in road construction, this also being a job to which entrenching battalions were to be assigned.* – from *Le Miroir* or *Illustration*)

Private Reid's tenure with the 2nd Entrenching Battalion was to be short-lived, however, as on August 9 – according to his personal papers – or August 10 – cited by the Entrenching Battalion's War Diary – he was one of a re-enforcement draft to leave *Halifax Camp* to report *to duty* with the 26th Battalion (*New Brunswick*). The draft thereupon arrived with its new unit on the same August 10, 1916.

The 26th Battalion at this time was undertaking a prolonged tour in the forward area (see further below), thus it is unlikely that the new-comers were thrust into the fray on the day of their arrival. Unfortunately, however, the relevant War Diary is yet to be made available from Canadian Archives and the immediate doings of Private Reid must remain uncertain.

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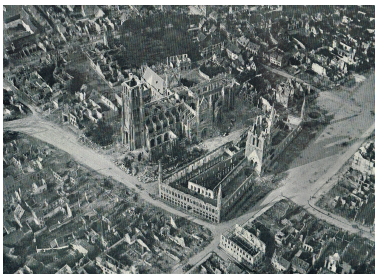


The 26th Infantry Battalion (*New Brunswick*) was an element of the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself a component of the 2nd Canadian Division, and it had been serving in the *Kingdom of Belgium* since September of 1915. After having landed in - and having been transported through – northern France, the Division had immediately been posted to a sector in-between the by-then battered city of Ypres and the Franco-Belgian frontier.

(Right above: *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*)

The Battalion was to spend the subsequent several months of the autumn of 1915 and the winter of 1915-1916 in the same area. During none of the winters of the *Great War* was there much concerted infantry action of any consequence on the *Western Front* and this one was to prove to be no exception. This period of relative calm had, however, allowed the unit personnel to adapt to the conditions – the rigours, routines and also the perils – 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 nearest to the forward area, the latter the furthest away.***

(continued)

Of course, things were never as neat and tidy as set out in the preceding format and troops could find themselves in a certain position at times for weeks on end.

(Right: *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*)

From March 27 up until and including April 17, 1916 – these the *official* dates - the 26th Battalion had been involved in the *Action of the St. Eloi Craters*. The craters had been formed when, on that March 27, the British had detonated a series of mines - underground galleries filled with explosives. The eruptions had been immediately followed with an assault by British infantry units.

The Canadians were to take over from the British to occupy the *presumed* newly-won territory; however, the damage done to the terrain by the explosions, the putrid weather which turned the just-created craters into ponds and the earth into a quagmire, plus a resolute German defence, greeted the newcomers who took over from the by-then exhausted British on April 5-6.

(Right above: *The occupation of a crater in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – perhaps in the St-Éloi Sector* – from *Illustration*)

This had been the first major encounter with the enemy that the Canadian 2nd Division was to experience and it likely came as a shock to the new-comers. After some three weeks of fighting in mud and water, at first the British – and then the Canadians who relieved them – had been held in check by the German defenders and had incurred a heavy casualty list.

It appears from the Battalion War Diary, however, that the 26th Battalion itself had been only very *marginally* involved. During the period of the Canadian action, the unit was… *standing by*, was… *in camp*, or for five days in a row… *Battalion in trenches, Large working parties working on trenches. Weather fine.* Apart from the casualties incurred due to his artillery, the Battalion appears to have had no contact with the enemy.

Then from June 2 to 14 had been fought the battle for *Mount Sorrel* and for the areas of *Sanctuary Wood, Railway Dugouts, Maple Copse, Hooge* and *Hill 60* between the German Army and the Canadian Corps. The Canadians had, it would seem, been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions which dominated the Canadian trenches when the Germans had delivered an offensive, overrunning the forward areas and, in fact, rupturing the Canadian lines, an opportunity which, fortunately, they were never to exploit.

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

The British Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, had reacted by organizing an impromptu counter-attack on the following day, an assault intended to, at a minimum, recapture the lost ground of June 2.

Badly organized, this operation was to prove a horrendous experience: many of the intended attacks were never to go in – those that had done so had gone in piecemeal and the assaulting troops had been cut to pieces - the enemy had remained where he was and the Canadians had been left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.

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

Then for ten more days there had been some desperate fighting, at first involving mainly units of the newly-arrived Canadian 3rd Division*, but soon the critical situation had drawn in troops from other Canadian formations.

Officially having come into service at midnight of December 31, 1915, and January 1 of 1916, the 3rd Canadian Division had trained for a period in tandem with the 1st Canadian Division in the Ploegsteert Sector before, in March and April of 1916, becoming responsible for a south-eastern area of the Ypres Salient.

The 26th Battalion had been engaged in relieving other battalions during the course of the encounter and it had been heavily shelled on occasion. However, it had not been in the forward area during much of the infantry activity and had been withdrawn altogether by the day of the final Canadian counter-attack.

By the time that the 26th Battalion had advanced to the front again on June 14, the action at *Mount Sorrel* and its vicinity had been all but over. During the preceding night of June 12-13 the Canadians had once again attacked and, thanks to better organization and a good artillery barrage, had been able to regain almost all of the lost ground. Both sides were now back much where they had been just eleven days earlier.

(Right above: *Maple Copse, the scene of heavy fighting in June of 1916, and its cemetery wherein lie numerous Canadians* – photograph from 2014)

(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)

(continued)

Thus, after having played its roll at *Mount Sorrel*, the 26th Battalion had been relieved and had withdrawn to *Camp "D"* on June 20.

(Right below: *Hill 60 as it remains a century after the events of 1916 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)

The second half of that following month of July had been spent at first in *Alberta Camp* and then further back again, at Brigade Reserve in the *Vierstraat Sector*. To compensate for this likely monotonous period, the 26th Battalion was then to be posted back into the forward trenches for twenty-two of the first twenty-four days of August.

And it was, as recorded in an earlier paragraph, during this time that Private Reid had reported *to duty* with the 26th Battalion.

*** * * * ***

Having retired again to *Alberta Camp* near Reninghelst on August 25, the 26th Battalion prepared to leave Belgium. The Regimental War Diarist noted in his entry of that day: *All ranks in the best of spirits anticipating the move and eager to effect all details in the number of days training, SOMME OPERATIONS.*

The training area for the 26th Battalion was to be at Tilques, back over the border in northern France and in the vicinity of the larger centre of St-Omer. It had required three successive days of marching for the unit to reach its billets at Éperlecques by August 28 before then having commenced training on the morrow. One of the first items on the agenda of December 29 was to be the replacement of the Canadian-made Ross Rifles by its British counterpart, the short Lee-Enfield Mark III*.

The Canadian-produced Ross rifle was an excellently-manufactured weapon; its accuracy and range were superior to that of many of its rivals, but on the battlefield it had not proved its worth. In the dirty conditions and when the necessity arose for its repeated use - and using mass-produced ammunition which at times was less than perfect - it jammed, leaving its user defenceless at a critical moment.

A week later Private Reid's Battalion marched to the railway-station in Arcques to entrain for the journey south to Conteville. A day spent resting in billets was followed by five more on foot *not* resting, by a march which terminated on September 11 at the *Brickfields* (*la Briqueterie*), a large military camp in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert.

(continued)

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

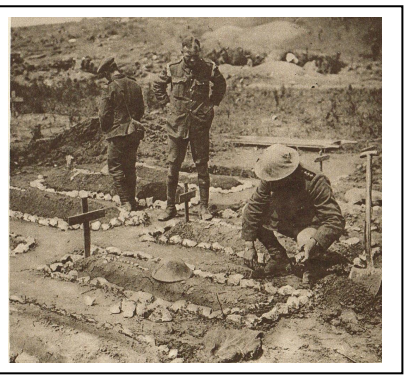
The *First Battle of the Somme* had by that September been ongoing for some two months. It had begun with the disastrous attack of July 1, an assault which had cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the short span of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

On that first day all but two small units of the attacking divisions had been from the British Isles, the 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 that July 1 at a place called Beaumont-Hamel.

As the Battle had progressed, troops from the Empire (*Commonwealth*) were to be brought in; at first it had been the South African Brigade (July 15), then the Australians and New Zealanders (July 23) before the Canadians entered the fray at the end of August and beginning of September, 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 above: *The Canadian Memorial which stands to the side of the Albert-Bapaume Road near the village of Courcelette* – photograph from 2015)

The 26th Battalion had arrived in the area four days prior to the attack at Flers-Courcelette – other units had reported there on only the day before – thus those interim days were spent in preparation. For the attack of September 15, the 26th Battalion was in reserve at the outset and, as such, did not move forward until five o'clock in the afternoon, twelve hours after the initial assault, at which time it re-enforced the efforts of the 22nd and 24th Battalions.



On the following day, the 26th Battalion, according to its War Diary, was moved to the supposed relative safety of a succession of shell holes, apparently staying there all day and… *where the most intense shelling was endured by the battalion throughout this entire day.*

(Right above: *Wounded troops being evacuated in hand-carts from the forward area during the First Battle of the Somme* – from *Le Miroir* or *Illustration*)

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

(continued)

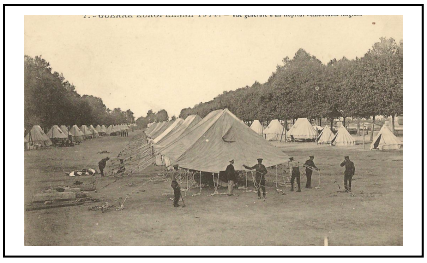
On the 17th the unit was moved once more and took up positions in a sunken road, to once again remain there all day. The only exception was 'B' Company which assisted in an attack delivered by the 24th Battalion before it *also* moved there. The attack in question… *met with considerable opposition and rifle and machine gun fire was very heavy.*

On September 28 the Battalion had been ordered forward once again, on this occasion to play a role in *the Battle of Thiepval Ridge*, more specifically on the right flank, in the area of *Regina Trench*. The operation had proved to be a further costly failure for the price of one-hundred eighty-two more casualties.

(Right: *Regina Trench Cemetery – Regina Trench was adjacent to Kenora Trench, another daunting German strong-point – and some of the ground on which the Canadians fought during that autumn of 1916* – photograph from 2014)

By October 5, the *Battle of the Ancre Heights* – a British-led offensive launched on October 1, and a part of the overall *First Battle of the Somme* – was still ongoing and was to continue for a further six days*. There had been two main advances, and both were to have as their objective the eradication of a German salient – on the *Ancre Heights* which dominated their surrounds - in order to allow for a larger, general British offensive in the middle of that same month.

There was to be a second, concurrent, attack, the Battle of Le Transloy, launched at the same time, but the Canadian Corps was involved at the Ancre Heights.



It was during this offensive that Private Reid was wounded, on that October 5. He was evacuated from the field and admitted later on that day to the 1st (*South Midland*) Casualty Clearing Station – there were two such-named casualty clearing stations - having incurred shrapnel wounds to his left side and arm. At the time the South Midland CCS had recently opened a section at Warloy, which is almost certainly to where he was despatched.

Unfortunately neither the relevant War Diary entry of the 26th Battalion, nor that of the 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade is available from the Canadian Archives at the time of writing.

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

The son of Richard Joseph Reid, fisherman, and of Lucretia Reid (née *White*) of Rose Blanche (also recorded as from *Petites*), Newfoundland – Richard Joseph perhaps from Marystown – he was also brother to Charles-William, George-Samuel, Albert-H., Percival and Frederick.

Private Reid was also husband to Selina (*Lena*) Reid (née *Hanson* or *Anderson*) – their address Lorne Street, North Sydney - and father of Joseph-Edward and to Alice-Elizabeth. To his wife, on April 1, 1916, he had allotted a monthly fifteen dollars from his pay and on May 8 of the same year, he had willed to her his all.

Private Reid was reported by the Commanding Officer of the 1st (*South Midland*) CCS as having *died of wounds* on October 5, 1916, the day of his admission.

Joseph Richard Reid had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-three years and six months: date of birth at Rose Blanche, Newfoundland, February 7, 1892 (from attestation papers) although *Ancestry.ca* cites 1893 as the year of his birth. The couple's marriage certificate - their wedding held in North Sydney on April 10,1912 - documents his age at the time as twenty years.

Private Joseph Richard Reid 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.