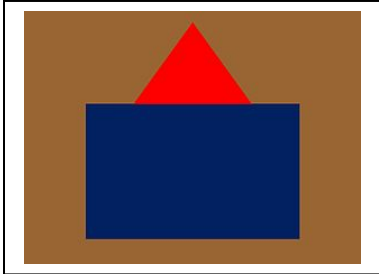




(Above: Private Bailey's memorial stone had been removed by the date of the author's first visit and has still been absent on his three return journeys. It normally stands in the row against the wall, to the left-hand side, and occupies the gap – see main photo – between what are, in fact, the existing first and third stones. The inscription on his stone apparently reads: known to be buried in the cemetery – photos from 2013)

Private Aaron Miller Bailey (Number 68405) 25th Battalion (Nova Scotia Rifles) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force is buried in the Voormezele Enclosures 1 & 2: grave reference, Special Memorial 2.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as being that of a labourer, he was possibly the young man of that name who is recorded in the passenger list of November 28, 1911, of the vessel *Ivermore* which sailed from Port aux Basques, Dominion of Newfoundland, to North Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada, on that date.



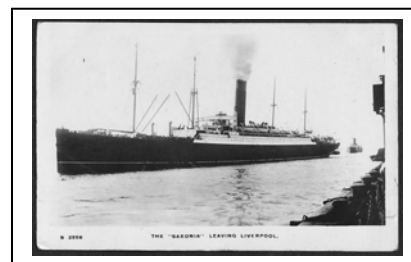
(Right: The image of the shoulder flash of the 25th Battalion (Nova Scotia Rifles) is from the Wikipedia web-site.)

(continued)

His first pay records document the Canadian Army remunerating Private Aaron Bailey – in Halifax at the time - on February 23 of 1915. The same paper also records him being *taken on strength* by the 3rd Contingent of the 40th Battalion (*Nova Scotia*) on the 28th, five days later. He then underwent a medical examination on March 12, before being attested, also in Halifax, on the day following. His papers record that while he was not married at the time of his enlistment, this was a status which he apparently soon altered as all succeeding documents report him as being a married man.

His attachment to the Army was officialised on March 25 when Lieutenant Colonel A.G. Vincent, Commanding Officer of the 40th Battalion declared (on paper) that... *having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of the Attestation.*

His papers have Private Bailey being transferred from the 40th Battalion – training at Camp Aldershot at the time - to the 25th Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*) on May 14, some two months after his enlistment. Six days later again, on May 20, 1915, he and his Battalion boarded His Majesty’s Transport *Saxonia* in the harbour at Halifax before sailing at six o’clock in the afternoon of the same day to cross the Atlantic.



The 25th Battalion was not alone in traversing the Atlantic on board *Saxonia*: also having taken passage was the 22nd Battalion of the Canadian Infantry, and the 2nd Division Ammunition Park from Fredericton.

The ship, perhaps having travelled in tandem with *Missanabie* which is reported as having sailed on the same day, docked in the English south-coast naval port of Plymouth-Devonport at ten minutes past four in the morning on the 29th of that same month.

(Right above: *Saxonia leaving Liverpool – from Old Ship Picture Galleries*)

The new arrivals apparently soon were on board trains which were to speed them across southern England to the large Canadian military establishment evolving at Shorncliffe in the vicinity of the English Channel port-town of Folkestone in the county of Kent. Private Bailey himself was posted to the subsidiary East Sandling Camp, and to “C” Company of the 25th Battalion.



(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*)

He was to remain at Shorncliffe until the middle of the month of September, although two weeks of that period – from June 30 until July 14 – were spent by Private Bailey in Ward 14 of the Moore Barracks Military Hospital in the Camp complex. Admitted because of pains in the back, he was diagnosed as suffering from lumbago.

On September 15, the 25th Battalion left Shorncliffe Camp in the late afternoon to march to Folkestone Pier where the unit boarded a transport ship for the short crossing to the Continent. Sailing at ten o'clock that same evening, the troops disembarked in the French port of Boulogne two hours later, at one o'clock in the morning* of the 16th.



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

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

In fact, there were many more ships, full of troops, horses and equipment traversing the English Channel during that month of September, 1915, as the Canadian 2nd Division was transferring to the Continent. It was following the (1st) Canadian Division* which had been already stationed on the Western Front since February of that year – at first in the Fleurbaix Sector just south of the border town of Armentières and then, having transferred in April, in the *Ypres Salient* in Belgium, just in time for the German offensive.



Both these Divisions, and also the Canadian 3rd and 4th Divisions, arriving later again, were to be stationed in Belgium until the late summer of 1916**.

**Before the formation of the Canadian Second Division, the 1st Canadian Division was designated simply as the Canadian Division.*

***There was also to be a 5th Canadian Division, utilized as a reserve force, which, once formed, remained in the United Kingdom during the entirety of the Great War.*

(Right above: *An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle of 2nd Ypres - which shows the shell of the medieval city, an image entitled Ypres-la-Morte (Ypres the Dead) – By the end of the conflict there was little left standing. – from Illustration*)

Later, on that same September 16, and after perhaps too few hours rest, the 25th Battalion marched to meet transport which was to take it into northern France, not far from the Franco-Belgian frontier, and to its temporary quarters in the proximity of the large centre of Hazebrouck.



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

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



(continued)

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

In the case of Private Bailey, on September 24 he was transferred to the 5th Brigade to serve in R & D (*Receiving & Departure – Transportation*). There appears to be no further documentation for a further six weeks until the day on which he reported back *to duty* with his unit – 25th Battalion – *in the field* on November 4.

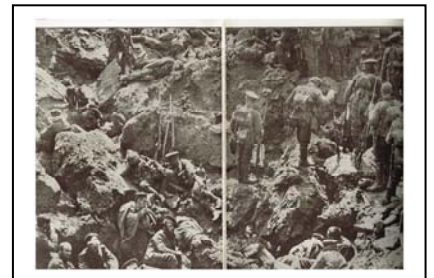
A further entry on his personal file then records him as being admitted into an unidentified field ambulance three days later again for medical attention, on this occasion to a case of rheumatism. The date of his discharge from the field ambulance seems not to be among his files.



(Right above: a *British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some* – from a vintage post-card)

In early April of 1916, the 2nd Canadian Division had undergone its baptism of fire in a major infantry action, the *Action of the St-Éloi Craters*. It was at a place to the south of Ypres – unsurprisingly St-Éloi - where, at the end of March, on the 27th, the British had detonated a series of mines under the German lines and then attacked. The newly-arrived Canadian formation had been ordered to follow up on the presumed British success, to hold and consolidate the newly-won territory.

However, the damage done to the terrain by the explosions, the putrid weather which had 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. Two weeks later the Germans had won back the lost territory and had inflicted severe losses on the Canadians.



Towards the end of that confrontation the 25th Battalion had relieved another battalion and subsequently had incurred a total of some eighty-five casualties, a greater toll than the unit had known on any single occasion up until that date.

(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*)

**One event that was noted in the same Diary during this winter period occurred on February 20. Up until this time the British Army Administration – and this also affected the Empire (Commonwealth) troops which were governed by it – had not seen fit to equip its soldiers with protection for the head – but then neither had any other army – and the troops had thus incurred numerous wounds, particularly from shrapnel. The Battalion War Diary entry on this date notes the arrival of four-hundred fifty steel helmets.*

(continued)

(Right: *By the summer of 1916, Canadian troops were not only equipped with the new steel helmets but most also by then had a British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III rifle, to replace the unreliable Canadian-made Ross Rifle. – from Le Miroir*)



In a more personal vein, there is a short report in the files of Private Bailey on March 10 ...*Stopp. of pay for one Iron Ration lost by neglect value 2 Francs*

The Battalion War Diarist then writes the following short entry for April 27: *3 OR wounded by shell fire. 1 OR killed, all possible troops(?) devoted to improving front line trenches, dugouts, wiring etc.*

A further casualty report in Private Bailey's personal file cites: *Killed by shell-fire while relieving a machine-gun detachment in a support trench*

(Right: *Troops, in this case the Liverpool Regiment in trenches in the Ypres Salient. These are still the early days of the year as witnessed by the lack of steel helmets which came into use only in the spring and summer of 1916. – from Illustration*)



The son of Garrett George Bailey, and of Martha Mary Bailey (née *Miller*) of Old Bonaventure, Trinity Bay, he was husband of Irene Bailey (née *Thomas*), of – at the time just after his enlistment – 2, Gladstone Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia. By August of 1921 she had become Mrs. E.F. Mitchell, of 2143 Bronder(?) Street, Los Angeles, California, U.S.A..

Private Bailey was also brother to Keziah, Herbert-Arthur, Garrett-Cecil (reported as, but seemingly not *recorded* as being in the Newfoundland Forestry Corps), William (perhaps Private, Number 4424, of the (*Royal*) Newfoundland Regiment), and Bingley-Garland (Number 1509x of the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve).

Private Bailey was reported as having been *killed in action* in Belgium on April 24 of 1916.

Aaron Bailey had enlisted at the apparent age of twenty-two years and ten months: date of birth in Whale's Gulch, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, May 23, 1894.

Private Aaron Miller Bailey 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).

