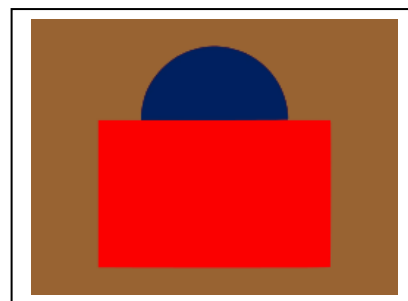




Private Horatio Baldwin
(Number 1054601) of
the 14th Battalion (*Royal
Montreal Regiment*),



having no known last resting-place, is commemorated
on the stone of the Menin Gate, Ypres (today *Ieper*):
Panel reference 24-26-28-30.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder patch of the 14th Battalion (Royal Montreal Regiment) is from the Wikipedia Website.*

His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of an *elevator man*, Horatio Baldwin appears to have left no record of his early years in the community of Pouch Cove, or of his immigration from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Québec. All that may be said with any certainty is that by November of 1916, he was a working resident of 233, Drolet Street, in the city of Montreal, for that was when and where Horatio Baldwin was to enlist.

(continued)

The date of that enlistment *for the duration of the war*, November 6 of 1916, was also the day on which he presented himself for medical examination and attestation. The venue for all three exercises was Montreal – which is also where it appears that he underwent a second medical screening, for no documented reason although it may well have been for vaccinations, on December 5.

His first pay records, which confirm his enlistment on November 11, also show that Private Baldwin was *taken on strength* by the 244th Battalion (*Kitchener's* Own*) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force on that same day.

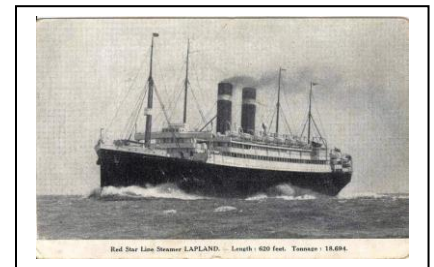
**Kitchener had been the Minister for War for Britain – and for the Empire - until June 5 of 1916 – the day before which the 244th Battalion was authorized - when he had been drowned on his way to Russia. The town of Kitchener, Ontario, which was named thus during the time of the Great War, had previously been called Berlin.*

On the day following Private Baldwin's first visit to the recruiting centre, November 7, the Commanding Officer of the 244th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel E.M. McRobie, brought the formalities of the enlistment to a close when he declared – on paper – that...*Horatio BALDWIN...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of the Attestation.*

It was some four-and-a-half months later that Private Baldwin and his Battalion – although understrength -, after training in Montreal at either the Westmount or Peel Street Armoury, were on their way for *overseas service* to the United Kingdom. Having embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Lapland* in Halifax on March 25, 1917, the unit landed in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool on April 7.

The 244th Battalion had not taken passage to the United Kingdom alone on board *Lapland*. Apart from Private Baldwin's unit, also travelling on the vessel had been the 149th and the 186th Battalions of Canadian Infantry.

(Right above: *The photograph of the SS Lapland is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website.*)



From Liverpool, Private Baldwin's contingent was sped southwards by train to the Canadian military establishment in the vicinity of Shoreham-on-Sea in the county of West Sussex. On that same April 7, once at *Shoreham Camp*, the entire personnel of the 244th Canadian Infantry Battalion was absorbed by the 22nd Canadian (*Reserve*) Battalion. Only seventeen days later again, on April 24 – although the *official* date was apparently May 9-11 - Private Baldwin and his comrades-in-arms were once more transferred, on this occasion to the 23rd Reserve Battalion.

**Before the end of the Great War, Canada was to have despatched overseas just over two-hundred fifty battalions – although it is true that a number of these units, particularly as the conflict progressed, were below full strength. At the outset, these Overseas Battalions all had aspirations of seeing active service in a theatre of war.*

(continued)

However, as it transpired, only some fifty of these formations were ever to be sent across the English Channel to the Western Front.

By far the majority remained in the United Kingdom to be used as re-enforcement pools and those were gradually absorbed, particularly after January of 1917, by units that had by then been designated as Canadian Reserve Battalions.

It was the practice to encourage the writing of a will by soldiers leaving on overseas service or active service, even though many of the less well-off soldiers had precious little to bequeath. Like many of his comrades-in-arms, Private Baldwin had done so, he on March 13, 1917, while still in Canada. A copy shows that he had decided to leave his everything to his father, Edward.

It was also the practice to encourage the allotment of a certain daily, weekly or monthly amount from a soldier's pay to a beneficiary of his choice. As of April 1, 1917, Private Baldwin, by this time in England, had elected to allocate a monthly fifteen dollars to his mother, Alice.

He remained at *Shoreham Camp* for altogether just over six weeks before being posted to the Continent. On May 22 he was nominally *taken on strength* by the 14th Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*) which was at the time already serving in France. Likely having sailed from England on the night of May 23-24 from Southampton to the French port-city of Le Havre, Private Baldwin was forwarded to the nearby *Rouelles Camp* in close proximity to Le Havre itself.



There he reported *to duty* on May 24.

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

While Private Baldwin and his draft may have been anticipating some days of final training and organization at Le Havre, it may not have transpired thus: the Canadian Base Depot of *Rouelles Camp* was at the time being re-organized and its location changed. On May 30 the 1st (Divisional) Infantry Base Depot War Diarist, the Depot itself now based in the vicinity of the coastal town of Étapes, recorded the arrival of its first new tenants from *Rouelles Camp*... *The numbers all were 31 Officers and 1748 Men.*

Private Baldwin apparently now remained at the new Base Depot for ten days before being despatched on June 9 to the 1st Entrenching Battalion where he was reported as having been *taken on strength* on the 12th of that same month. It was to be a further twelve days yet again before he was to report on June 24, 1917, *to duty* to the 14th Battalion at the time out of the line and billeted near to the community of Mont St-Éloi*.



(continued)

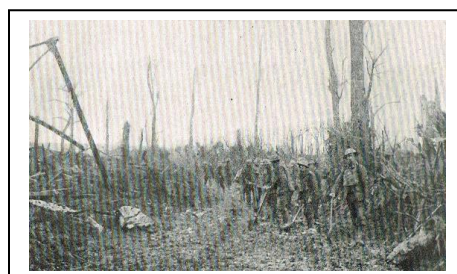
****Not to be confused with St. Eloy (St-Éloi) in southern Belgium where Canadian forces also served (see below), Mont St-Éloi is to be found to the north-west of the city of Arras in northern France and was, at the time, well behind the lines.***

(Preceding page and right: The village of St-Éloi at an early period of the Great War and a century later - The ruins of the Abbey St-Éloi – destroyed in 1783 – are visible in both images. – from Le Miroir and (colour) from 2016)



(Right below: Canadian sappers building a road – work also done by entrenching battalions - somewhere... ‘in liberated territory’ – from Le Miroir or Illustration)

Entrenching Battalions - It having been found that it was more efficient to have specialized formations – of strong physique and experienced in such work in civilian life – rather than regular battalions for the task of digging trenches and the like, the entrenching battalions came into being. Held behind the line to be ready for duty wherever and whenever necessary, they were often used as a unit to which re-enforcements could be attached temporarily until the moment was right for these drafts to report to the units to which they had been despatched.



* * * * *

The 14th Battalion (Royal Montreal Regiment) had by that time been serving on the Continent since February of 1915 as an element of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, itself a component of the (1st) Canadian Division*. After its arrival from Canada via England, it had at first served in northern France in the Fleurbaix Sector just south of Armentières, before having been ordered into the Ypres Salient in April of that same 1915.



****Before the advent of the 2nd Canadian Division it was often simply designated as the Canadian Division.***

(Right above: An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle - showing 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)



Only a bare two months after its arrival on the Continent, and only days after it had moved into a north-eastern sector of the Salient*, the Canadian Division had distinguished itself during the Second Battle of Ypres in the spring of 1915.

**In fact, certain units were still not in position on the day of the first German attacks.*

(Preceding page: The Memorial to the 1st Canadian Division – the Brooding Soldier - just to the south of the village of Langemark, stands where the Canadians withstood the German attack at Ypres (today Ieper) in April of 1915. – photograph from 2010)

On April 22 of that year 1915, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the Germans had released chlorine gas in front of French colonial troops at the northern end of the *Ypres Salient*. The gas had then reportedly caused some six-thousand casualties in a very short space of time and had provoked a rout of the stricken defenders.

The Canadians, in the line just to the right, not having been affected to the same degree, had been ordered to fill the void left by the retreating French troops and to forestall a German break-through.



(Right: Entitled: Bombardement d'Ypres, le 5 juillet 1915 – from Illustration)

For its part, the 14th Battalion was to be called into action on April 22, the first day of the German attack, and had thereupon taken up defensive positions to the north-east of the city at *Wieltje**.

**Up until this date the Battalion War Diary had been a neat, detailed, type-written journal; as of April 22 it is a hastily-scribbled effort scratched in pencil, promising that the details will be appended at a later date. But, if nothing else, it shows the desperate situation of the next few days.*

Companies of the 14th Battalion then had made a stand with the 13th Battalion at *St-Julien (Sin-Juliaan)* for the next two days before having been obliged to retire by the force of the German artillery activity. On several more occasions on the following days the Battalion – and the Canadians in general with some British forces – were to retire to a series of reserve trenches.

(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)

However, as history has recorded, the front had eventually been consolidated and the 14th Battalion was to be able to retire on the night of May 4-5 – a second document in the same source has 3-4. Only two weeks later it was to be in action once again.

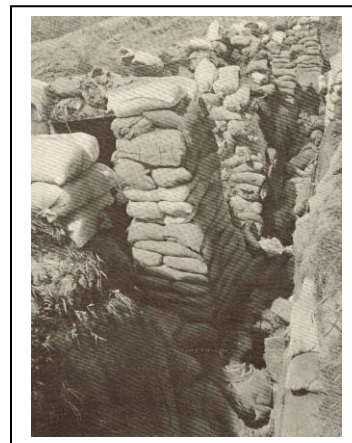


At the beginning of May the British had responded to a French request for support during their operations in the *Artois* region, and the Canadians had been ordered further southwards* in mid-month to the area of *Festubert* and, in June, to *Givenchy-les-la-Bassée*.

**Most of the Canadian units had already been in northern France in the area of Bailleul – resting, re-organizing and re-enforcing after Second Ypres - when the orders had arrived.*

(Right below: German trenches nick-named the Labyrinth – complete with corpses - captured by the French during their Pyrrhic victory at Notre-Dame de Lorette – Over one-hundred thousand French troops became casualties during this campaign in the Artois. – from Illustration)

At Festubert the British gains were to be negligible, an advance of some three kilometres, and in the ten days during which the action had lasted, the British High Command was to contrive to divest itself of what had remained after the *Second Battle of Ypres* of its small, professional Army. There had also been a lot of good will lost between that High Command and the Indians and Canadians, both of which had also incurred heavy casualties* – the Canadians particularly so after their losses during the aforementioned *Second Ypres*.



**The Meerut Division losses totalled twenty-five hundred and those of the Canadian Division some twenty-two hundred. Those of the 14th Canadian Infantry Battalion had been reasonably light, however, sixty-seven all told.*

After Festubert some of the Canadian forces had moved north almost immediately, into positions in the *Ploegsteert Sector* on the Belgian side of the frontier. There they were to remain until September and October of the following year when once again their services were to be required in France.

(Right: A one-time officer in the Indian Army pays his respects to the fallen at the Indian Memorial at Neuve-Chapelle. – photograph from 2010(?))



The 14th Battalion, on the other hand, was to be posted in June to the area of *Givenchy-les-la-Bassée**, a small village not far distant south of Festubert.

Having been ordered into the forward trenches on two occasions during that month to support British efforts – and having endured the same sort of losses, although fewer in number, from repeating the same mistakes - by July 1 the unit had been back north in billets in the area of the Franco-Belgian border with the other battalions of the 1st Canadian Division in the *Ploegsteert Sector*.

**Since the place is oft-times referred to simply as Givenchy it is worthwhile knowing that there are two other Givenchys in the region: Givenchy-le-Noble, to the west of Arras, and Givenchy-en-Gohelle, a village which lies in the shadow of a crest of land which dominates the Douai Plain: Vimy Ridge.*



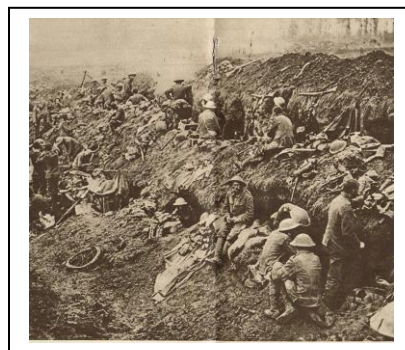
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(Preceding page: *Some of the farmland in the area of Messines, Ploegsteert Sector, a mine crater from the time of the 1917 British offensive in the foreground – photograph from 2014*)

During the period of 1915-1916 now to be spent in Belgium, there were to be only two occasions on which units of the Canadian Divisions would be required to fight concerted infantry actions – the first to be the *Action at the St-Éloi Craters* and the second, the confrontation at *Mount Sorrel** – otherwise there were to pass some fourteen months of the routines and rigours – and perils - of trench warfare**.

**In only the second of these engagements was the 14th Battalion to any extent engaged.*

***During the Great War, British and Empire (later Commonwealth) battalions had their time more or less 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.*

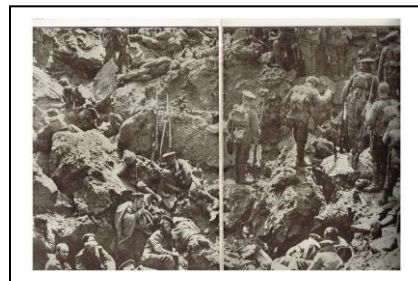


Of course, things were never as neat and tidy as set out in the preceding format and troops could find themselves in a position at times for weeks on end.

(Right above: *A photograph of Canadian troops in support positions somewhere on the Somme in the autumn of 1916, by that time equipped with steel helmets and Lee-Enfield rifles – from Illustration*)

The *Battle of the St. Eloi Craters* – the action to involve troops of the 2nd Canadian Division – was to officially take place from March 27 until April 17 of that spring of 1916. St. Eloi (*St-Éloi, Sint-Elooi*) was – and is - a small village some five kilometres to the south of the Belgian city of Ypres and it was to be there that the British would excavate a series of galleries under the German lines. These tunnels were then to be filled with explosives which had been detonated on that March 27.

After an initial success the attack had soon bogged down and by April 4 the Canadians were to be replacing the exhausted British troops. They had had no more success than their British comrades-in-arms, and by the 17th, when the battle had been called off, the Germans were to be back where they had been some three weeks previously and the Canadians had incurred some fifteen-hundred casualties.



(Right above: *Advancing in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine – from Illustration*)

Some six weeks later it was to be the turn of the 3rd Canadian Division to undergo *its* first major confrontation.

From June 2 to 14 was to be fought the battle for *Mount Sorrel* and also for the area of *Sanctuary Wood, Maple Copse, Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* between the German Army and the Canadian Corps*.

The Canadians had apparently been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions dominating the Canadian trenches when the Germans had delivered an offensive, to overrun the forward areas and, in fact, to rupture the Canadian lines, an opportunity which fortunately they had not exploited.

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



**It was an area of the Ypres Salient which had recently become the responsibility of the newly-arrived 3rd Canadian Division – officially in existence since New Year’s Day, 1916, but not entirely operational until March of that year - that the Germans attacked. However, the situation soon became serious enough for units of the other Canadian Divisions to become involved.*

(Right: *The Canadian memorial which stands atop Mount Sorrel just to the south-east of the city of Ypres (today Ieper) whose spires and towers may be perceived in the distance – photograph from 1914*)



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

The British Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, had reacted – perhaps a little too precipitately - by organizing a counter-attack for the following day, an assault intended to, at a minimum, recapture the lost ground. Badly organized, the operation had been a more than sobering experience: many of the intended attacks had not gone in – those that *had* done so, had gone in piecemeal and the assaulting troops had been cut to shreds - the enemy had remained *in situ* and the Canadians had been left to count an extremely heavy casualty list.



As for the 14th Battalion, on the day of the German attack, June 2, the unit had been serving in Divisional Reserve. However it had soon been called forward to the area of Zillebeke to where, during the night of June 2-3, it had advanced in individual companies and details. Having then advanced again on the following day the unit had recorded very heavy casualties – three-hundred seventy-nine *all ranks*.



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

On June 4 the 14th Battalion had been relieved and had retired, leaving behind two officers and fifty *other ranks* – all volunteers – to bury the dead. For the week that had followed the unit was to remain in the rear area.

The 14th Battalion War Diarist also recorded the following: *A large reinforcement of 150 men arrived on June 6th, and these were largely drawn upon to make up working parties of 150 sent out the following day. The part of the parties was to assist-in consolidation after the assault then pending. Before the assault took place the Regiment received a further 300 reinforcements and was again called upon to furnish large parties for difficult and dangerous jobs...*

On the evening and night of June 12, Canadian attackers had moved forward into assembly positions and had gone over the top hours later, before dawn of the 13th. The 14th Battalion had not been a component of the attacking force but it was to accompany the attackers during the assault.

Its tasks had been many and varied: carrying small arms ammunition and bombs; stretcher-bearing and evacuation of wounded to dressing-station; supplying rations and water; wiring and carrying wire; and providing entrenching material – all of this to be accomplished while under fire.

The casualties are recorded in the War Diary: *nineteen killed in action; twenty-two wounded; twenty-eight missing in action.*

(Right: *A century later, reminders of a violent past close to the site of Hill 60 – it had even resembled a hill until a British mine blew the summit to smithereens in the first week of June, 1917 - to the south-east of Ypres, an area today protected by the Belgian Government against everything except the whims of nature – photograph from 2014*)



Then the drudgery of trench warfare was now to once again become the soldier's everyday lot – but perhaps after *Mount Sorrel*, for many it would have been a welcome respite.

For the 14th Battalion things were to remain thus until August 11 when it had marched directly from the lines to the area of Steenvoorde, a commune in northern France some twenty kilometres slightly to the south-west of Ypres. On the following morning the entire 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade – in a column almost ten kilometres long – had begun the trek towards the training area of the British 2nd Army.

(Right: *Canadian troops likely in trenches built for training purposes – they are too prim and proper to be the real thing when compared to the photographs of the real thing – and here equipped with Short Lee-Enfield Mark III rifles*, during the late summer or early autumn of 1916 – from The War Illustrated*)



(continued)

****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.***

By the summer of 1916 the Canadian units were exchanging it for the more reliable British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III, a rifle that was to ultimately serve around the globe until well after the Second World War.

The 14th Battalion had arrived at the training area on the morning of August 13 and had remained there in intensive exercises for two weeks. Then, on August 27, it had marched to the larger centre of St-Omer from where it was then to entrain for the journey southward to Conteville. Having arrived in *that* community at eleven-twenty in the evening, there was yet a three-and-a-half hour march to undergo before it reached its billets.



Perhaps the numerous four-hour route marches of the previous weeks had not been for nought. The 14th Canadian Infantry Battalion (*Royal Montreal Regiment*) was well on its way to *the Somme*.

(Right above: The once-impressive railway station at St-Omer, today in sore need of revitalization, through which the 14th Battalion of Canadian Infantry, passed on August 27, 1916 – photograph from 2016)

By 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, an assault which was to cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the short span of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

On the first day of *First Somme*, all but two small units had been troops from the British Isles, those exceptions having been 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, other troops, from the Empire (*Commonwealth*), were to be brought in; at first it had been the South African Brigade (July 15), the Australians and New Zealanders (July 23) before the Canadians then entered the fray on and about 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 Courcellette.

(continued)

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

It was to be five days after having left St-Omer, on September 1, before the 14th Battalion would march – as it had done for the last four of those five days - into the large British military camp at *the Brickfields (la Briqueterie)*, in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert – and also within range of the German artillery.

Bivouacking there for a single night, on the morrow the unit had again marched, to billets in Albert itself.

The following afternoon, September 3, had seen the 14th battalion move into reserve positions at *la Boisselle* and on the following day again, into the front-line trenches of *the Somme*.

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

The unit had been ordered to relieve troops of other units in the proximity of *Mouquet Farm* on September 6 and to physically improve the positions then occupied, a task undertaken with a greater or lesser degree of success. The relievers had incurred heavy hostile shell-fire and infantry attacks, and had suffered considerable losses before having been relieved in turn on September 7. The casualty count – *all ranks* - for the two days had amounted to: *forty-five killed in action*; *one-hundred twenty-one wounded in action*; and *thirty-three missing in action*.



On September 9 the 14th Battalion was to begin a fifteen-day period during which it was not to be involved in any infantry action: the afore-mentioned offensive of September 15 was to be undertaken by units other than the 14th Battalion. It, and a goodly number of other troops of the 1st Canadian Division, were to go on a multi-day march.

It was to be the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions, serving in the British Reserve Army, which would play a role at *Flers-Courcelette* on September 15 and on the days following.



(Right above: *Seen from the north, the village of Courcelette just over a century after the events of the First Battle of the Somme – photograph from 2017*)

(Right: *One of the tanks employed during the First Battle of the Somme, here withdrawn from the field and standing in one of the parks where these machines were overhauled and maintained – from Le Miroir*)

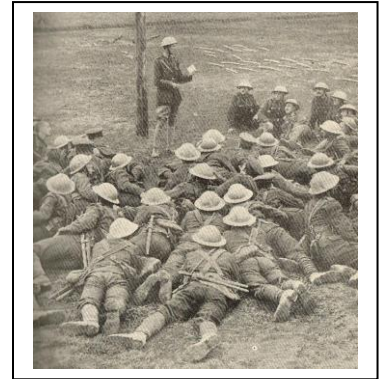
**Some of the first tanks ever to be used in battle had apparently been a positive element during the fighting of mid-September on the Canadians' Front.*



It was likely to free up billeting space for the new formations now arriving in the immediate area of Albert and Brickfields, that the 14th Battalion would march as far afield as Warloy, Hérissart, Montrelet – where four days of training was to take place – La Vicogne, Vadencourt – for two more days of training – before returning into reserve at *Brickfields Camp* where it was to remain until September 24-25.

Since the offensive of September 15-17 there was now, alas, much more billeting space available for the returnees of the 14th Battalion.

(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, mid-September 1916. – from The War Illustrated*)



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

Over the course of the three days of September 26, 27 and 28, the Battalion was to storm the position by the name of *Kenora Trench*. It or parts of it were taken on three occasions, but for a number of reasons – not least of all German artillery and counter-attacks – the survivors of these assaults were to be obliged to pull back from the gains that they had made.



By the time that the 14th Battalion was relieved it had been involved in continuous action for some forty-three hours – and had been back much in the place from where it had first advanced*.

**This action had been a part of the larger operation known to history as the Battle of Thiepval Ridge.*

In the War Diary Appendix to this operation it is noted that the 14th Battalion had incurred a total of three-hundred seventy-four casualties: *killed in action, wounded in action, died of wounds, gassed, shell-shocked and missing in action.*

This number, added to the one-hundred ninety-nine incurred earlier in the month, on September 6-7 at *Mouquet Farm*, plus smaller losses at other times, had rendered this three-week period a more than expensive one for a unit which, on August 1, had numbered seven-hundred sixty-nine *all ranks*.

From the front lines the 14th Battalion had passed back through Albert to report to the reserve area at Warloy. An interlude of several days was now to elapse and it was not to be until October 6 that the Battalion would be once more even in Brigade Support, this to be followed by Close Support, although even while in these fairly safe positions further casualties had been inevitable.

And thus the 14th Battalion's role in the *First Battle of the Somme* was to draw to a close.

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

By October 10 the unit had been back at *Brickfields* and in bivouacs; October 14 and 15 had been spent in supplying working-parties in Brigade Support for one last time; then on the morrow, October 16, the Battalion had begun to march to the westward and away from the sound of the guns.

At first to the west, then northwards by a semi-circular route, the Battalion had circumnavigated the city of Arras and marched beyond. At five twenty-five in the evening of October 27 it had arrived at its destination, Brigade Reserve in the area of Berthonal, to the north-west of Arras. It had been on the march for nine of the previous eleven days.

Having been one of the first Canadian units to serve at *the Somme*, the 14th Battalion had also been one of the first to retire from it. The sectors to which the entire Canadian Corps was now eventually to be posted would be those running roughly down the *Western Front* from Béthune in the north almost as far as Arras in the south.

(Right above: *The remnants of the Grande Place (Grand'Place) in Arras which had already been steadily bombarded for more than two years by the end of the year 1916 – from Illustration*)

In-between these two poles was the large mining centre of Lens and myriad smaller communities, their existence before the *Great War* also mainly dependent on the coal seams passing underground.

It was to be December of that 1916 before the final Canadians retiring from *the Somme* were to make their way, as always mostly on foot, to this area which by that time had been becoming more and more a Canadian responsibility.

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

In the trenches the 14th Battalion had once more settled into the rigours and the routines – and tedium - of trench warfare – perhaps, however, a welcome respite for those who had experienced *the Somme*; infantry action for the most part was to be on a local scale – patrolling and raids – with only occasionally the latter having been delivered at battalion strength.

(continued)



(Preceding page: *A carrying-party loading up – one of the duties of troops when not serving in the front lines: The head-strap was an idea adapted from the aboriginal peoples of North America. – from Le Miroir*)

Casualties for the most part had been due to enemy artillery – shell-fire apparently to be responsible for some two-thirds of *all* casualties on the *Western Front* - with snipers also having taken their toll; but in fact, during this period it was to be myriad sicknesses and, perhaps surprisingly, more than that, dental problems which would keep the medical services occupied during this time.

During the winter months of 1917 the War Diaries had reported an increase in the time spent by the Canadian units in reserve positions, be they Corps, Divisional or Brigade. In reserve there had been the usual attractions of lectures, musketry, physical training, church parades, inspections – by politicians and officers of rank - training, courses, working-parties and carrying-parties. But there had also been sports to be played and even the occasional concert to enjoy.



(Right above: *Canadian troops in front of a temporary theatre peruse the attractions of an upcoming concert. – from Le Miroir*)

Towards the end of March, however, there had been more than the usual training, there had been more construction under way, and officers and NCOs were to be withdrawn to attend special lectures. Something had apparently been in the offing.

For the 14th Battalion, intensive training had begun for individual detachments: rifle-grenade and bombing sections; machine-gun and Lewis-gun sections; intelligence and signals personnel; and for others drill, musketry and bayonet practice.

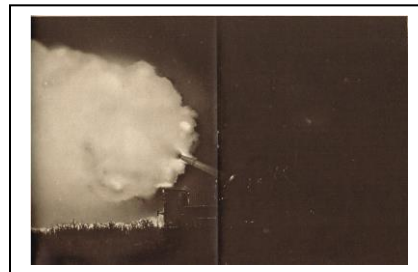
But there was to be more: this was to be a programme of sometimes novel exercises undertaken by most, if not all, of the battalions of the Canadian Corps before the upcoming British offensive: learning the topography of the ground to be attacked; the use of the enemy's weapons which, when captured, were to be turned against him; the by-passing and thus isolation of strong-points instead of the costly assault; the coaching of each and every soldier as to his role on the day; the increased employment of aircraft in directing the advance; the concept of a machine-gun barrage; and the exchange of information between the infantry and artillery so as to co-ordinate efforts...

...and at *Vimy Ridge* and elsewhere, the use of tunnels and underground approaches to mask from the enemy the presence of troops and also to ensure the same troops' security.

As those final days before the offensive were to pass, the artillery barrage had been growing progressively heavier; on April 6, Good Friday, the War Diarist of another battalion was to describe it as...*drums**. By this time, of course, the Germans had *also* been well aware that...*something was in the offing*...and their guns in their turn had by then been throwing retaliatory fire onto the Canadian positions - and their aircraft had been very busy.

(Right below: *A heavy British artillery piece spews its venom into the middle of the night during the course of the preparatory bombardment before the First Battle of Arras. – from Illustration*)

**It should be said that a great deal of the artillery used in the assault on Vimy Ridge was British and that a British Division also participated. Almost fifty per cent of the personnel who had been employed for that day were British, not to mention those whose contribution – such as those who dug the tunnels - allowed for it to happen.*



On April 6 the 14th Battalion had moved into front-line trenches in the *Thelus Sector* and had remained there.

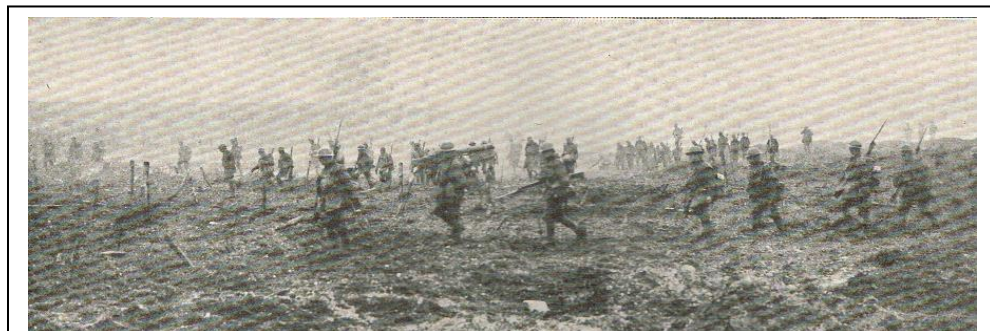
On April 9 the British Army had launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, one of the few positive episodes having been the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, *Easter Monday*.



While the British effort would prove an overall disappointment, the French offensive of *Le Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

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

(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4th or 3rd Division, equipped 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*)



On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions, for the first time having operated as a single, autonomous entity – the 2nd Canadian Division with a British brigade under its command – had stormed the slopes of and about *Vimy Ridge*, by the end of the next day having cleared them almost entirely of its German occupants.

Several kilometres of those tunnels had been hewn out of the chalk under the approaches to the front lines of *Vimy Ridge*, underground accesses which had afforded physical safety and also the element of surprise during the hours – and in some cases, days – leading up to the attack. But whether the 14th Battalion was to avail of their protection is not clear.

Excerpt from Battalion War Diary Appendix for April 9: *At Zero Hour, 5.30 a.m., the assault on my Battalion Sub Sector was made with No 3 Company on the right flank, furnishing the two leading waves, No 1 Company 3^d wave and “Mopping Up” Parties, No 4 Company on the left flank and No 2 Company in similar position to No 1 Company on the right. Simultaneously the 15th battalion on my right and 16th Battalion on left flank, advanced.*

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

The 14th Battalion had been confided the responsibility of prising three objectives from the grasp of the enemy: the first, *Eizeker(?) Trench*, had been strongly defended by the Germans but was to be finally cleared; the *Black Line* had been taken with less trouble than expected; and the *Red Line* had been captured by ten past seven in the morning of that first day, apparently thanks to a well-delivered artillery bombardment of the position.

Thus the 14th Battalion had been able to retire to a less-exposed position rearwards on *Vimy Ridge* at 9.40 a.m....*in accordance with orders.*

The 14th Battalion had gone to the attack numbering seven-hundred one *all ranks* in the field at *Zero Hour* on that April 9, 1917; at the end of the day its total casualty count had been two-hundred eighty-eight, some forty per cent of its strength.

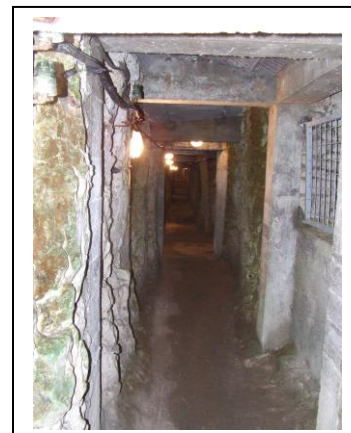
The Germans, once having lost *Vimy Ridge* and the advantages of the high ground, had then retreated some three kilometres in front of the Canadians whose further offensives were to be less successful than that of Easter Monday*; while some progress at times was to be made – at Arleux-en-Gohelle, for example - German counter-attacks had at times re-claimed ground from the British and Canadian troops – as at Fresnoy in early May.

**The positions to which they had retired had apparently been prepared, and some historians feel that the enemy had already anticipated withdrawal from the Ridge which was not, in fact, the ultimate defensive position that had been supposed.*

(Right above: *A memorial to the fallen of the 1st Canadian Division stands in a field on the outskirts of the re-constructed village of Thélus. It was set there during Christmas of 1917. – photograph from 2017*)

After the official conclusion of the *Battle of Arras*, on or about May 15, some of the Canadian battalions had been re-posted not far to the north, to the mining area of the city of Lens and other communities. Others had remained *in situ*, among them the 14th Battalion.

(continued)



The 14th Battalion had remained in Divisional Reserve for the following eight days, then had marched to *Thelus Cave*, on the southerly flank of *Vimy Ridge*, by then in Canadian hands. There the unit was to relieve the 3rd Canadian Battalion and to act as Brigade Support, having subsequently supplied working-parties for bearing materials to the front line and for constructing dug-outs.

And it had been during this period, of course, that Private Baldwin and his draft from the 1st Entrenching Battalion had reported *to duty* with the 14th Battalion on June 24 of that 1917 while it had been posted to the area of St-Éloi.

* * * * *

Private Baldwin's Battalion then apparently remained in the rear area until July 4 when it was then ordered moved forward to relieve companies of the 16th and 15th Battalions in the front lines. For his unit, it had been a welcome rest.



(Right: *Canadian troops advancing to the front lines loaded with equipment for upcoming operations – from Le Miroir*)

The period from then until mid-July was to comprise little concerted infantry activity: there would be the usual patrolling at night, the occasional local raid – by both sides – and wiring parties working in No-Man's-Land. And of course there was the ever-constant artillery duel, the cause of a number of casualties. On the 12th day of that month the 14th Battalion was to be in turn relieved, and then withdrawn to *Fraser Camp*, having been ordered into Divisional Reserve.



(Right above: *Canadian soldiers perusing the upcoming program at a make-shift theatre in a camp somewhere behind the lines – from Le Miroir*)

The 14th Battalion then remained in Divisional Reserve for some three weeks – much of the time in training and in becoming familiar with varied new equipment - although it was obliged to change camps – on foot – on two occasions.

On the afternoon of August 3 it transferred to Brigade Reserve and moved south to the mining community of Mazingarbe, arriving there later in the day. It was now to play a role in an upcoming offensive operation.

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 as well - from that area, it had ordered operations to take place at the sector of the front running north-south from *Béthune* down to *Lens*.



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

One of the primary objectives was to be *Hill 70* in the outskirts of the mining centre of Lens.

(Preceding page: *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 under artillery fire in the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)



Those expecting *Hill 70* to be a precipitous and ominous elevation are to be surprised. It is hardly prominent in a countryside that is already flat, the highest points being the summits of slag heaps which date from the mining era of yesteryear.

Yet it was high enough to be considered - by the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie – to be the key feature in the area, its capture more important than the city of Lens itself.

(Right: *This gentle slope rising to the left is, in fact, Hill 70. A monument to the 15th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry stands nearby in tribute. – photograph from 1914*)



Objectives were limited and had for the most part been achieved by the end of August 15. Due to the dominance of *Hill 70* over the entire area, it was expected that the Germans would endeavour to retrieve it and so it proved; on the 16th several strong counter-attacks were launched against the Canadian positions, positions that by this time had been transformed into defensive strong-points.

(Right: *The portrait of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie is from Illustration.*)



These defences held and the Canadian artillery, which was employing newly-developed procedures, inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. *Hill 70* remained in Canadian hands.

(Right: *A Canadian 220 mm siege gun, here under camouflage nets in the Lens Sector, being prepared for action – from Le Miroir*)



The 14th Battalion was relieved on the night of August 19-20 by the 5th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles – *dis-mounted* since 1915 – and moved back into Brigade Reserve at Les Brébis. Days later, it moved further back again.

(continued)

During the entire episode the unit had incurred a total of one-hundred fifty-one casualties – perhaps fewer than in other battalions because of it being held in reserve on August 15 itself.



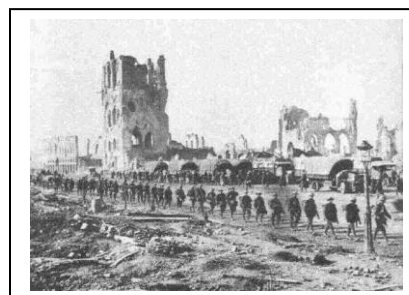
(Right: *Canadians soldiers in the captured rear area of Hill 70 during the days after the battle – from Le Miroir*)

A note to be found in the War Diary Appendix Number 7, concerning the action at *Hill 70* and the Battalion's losses there, is of interest: *A most regrettable feature of the operations is the fact that the majority of the bodies, including that of one Officer, could not be discovered, notwithstanding the fact that the Battlefield was rigorously searched for same. It is presumed that they were either destroyed by shells, after they had fallen, or were covered over with earth and debris.*

The Lens-Béthune campaign having been ordered drawn to a close at the end of August*, it was to be only some six weeks afterwards that the Canadians were ordered to join the ongoing battle in Belgium, to the north-east of Ypres.

Officially designated the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, having adopted that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.

**The Canadians apparently expected, and had planned, further action in the area but the British were running out of reinforcements and the ongoing Battle of Passchendaele was not proceeding according to expectations. The Canadians were to be asked to provide the necessary man-power.*



(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*)

(Right below: *Somewhere, perhaps anywhere, on the battlefield of Passchendaele during the autumn 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 which 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 the 2nd Division finally entering the remnants of Passchendaele itself.



For Private Baldwin's unit, the fighting at *Passchendaele* was not to come about until the end of October. In fact, from the end of August until October 19, the 14th Battalion spent its time in one reserve area or another. And when it was ordered to be transferred, entailing some four days of marching, it was to the area of Staple close to the Belgian frontier where, from the 23rd to the 30th of the month, it was yet again placed in reserve.

(Right: *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*)

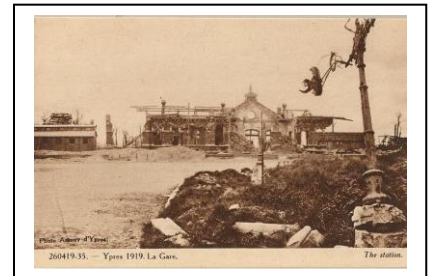


On October 31, the Battalion was ordered into Belgium: *The Battalion left Staple at 6.30 a.m. Strength- all ranks - 747. They entrained at EBBLINGHEM at 7.45 a.m. arriving at YPRES at 11.45 a.m. and marched by Platoons, 50 yards interval to ST. JEAN and WIELTJE... and occupied old trenches in that vicinity.*

A raiding Squadron of hostile aeroplanes dropped 15 bombs near the Battalion close to Wieltje. 3 O.O. (sic, likely 3 O.R.) of this Battalion were slightly wounded... (Excerpt from the 14th Battalion War Diary) Apparently the unit was bombed again during the night.

(Right below: *The remnants of the railway station just outside the ramparts of Ypres where the Battalion detrained – the image is from 1919 – from a vintage post-card*)

By November 2 the unit was in the front line and remained either there or in close proximity until the 10th. Spasmodic infantry action took place but it was the enemy artillery – which by this time was using gas shells - that was by far the greatest cause of the Battalion’s losses during that period.



The War Diarist kept count: one-hundred fifty-two all told.

(Right: *During a lull in the battle, Canadian soldiers using a shell-hole as a wash-basin to perform their ablutions during Passchendaele – from Le Miroir*)



In contrast to much of the narrative written about those days, the War Diary entry for November 5 makes sparse reading: *On November 5th, 1917, the day passed fairly quietly and at night No. 3 Company came out of the support position and joined the Battalion.*

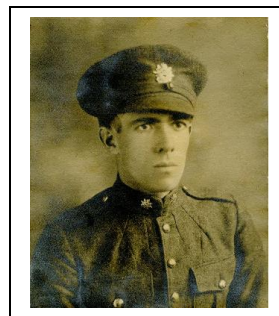
Nevertheless, it was on November 5 that Private Baldwin was one of those to be reported as a casualty of the day.

The son of Edward Baldwin, fisherman, and Alice Baldwin – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of eighty cents from his pay, and to whom on August 10 of 1916 he had willed his all - of Pouch Cove, he was also brother to Uriah*, to James**, to William, to David, to George and Mary-Louisa, to John, to Fanny-Amelia, to Selina and to Edward.

Private Baldwin was reported as *missing in action* on November 5 of 1917; some eight months later, on July 13, 1918, he was officially *presumed dead*.



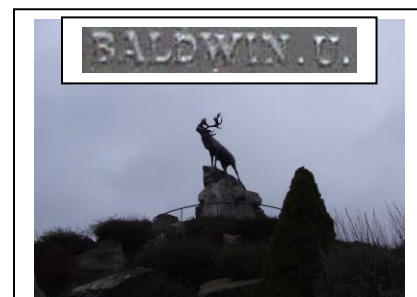
(Preceding page: *The sacrifice of the three Baldwin brothers is honoured on the central stele of the War Memorial in the community of Pouch Cove. – photograph from 2010*)



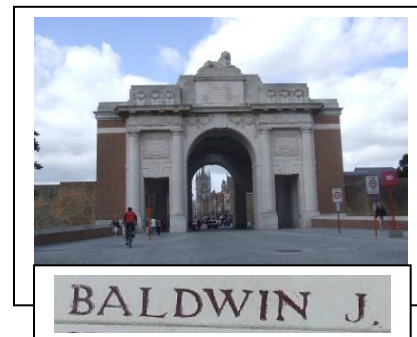
(Right: *The photograph of Private Horatio Baldwin is by courtesy of the Provincial Archives.*)

**Private Uriah Baldwin (Regimental Number 1846) was reported as having been killed in action on October 9, 1917, while serving with 'B' Company of the Newfoundland Regiment in the fighting at the Broembek, Belgium, during the battle of Third Ypres: Passchendaele.*

He has no known last resting-place and as such is commemorated in the Newfoundland Memorial park at Beaumont-Hamel on the bronze beneath the Caribou.



***Corporal James Baldwin, Number 6299, of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Victoria's (Royal Irish Fusiliers) was reported as having been killed in action on May 11, 1915, during the fighting of Second Ypres. Having no known last resting-place, he is commemorated in the stone of the Menin Gate, Ypres: Panel 42.*



(Right: *The Menin Gate honours 54,395 dead of the Great War – photograph from 2010*)

Horatio Baldwin had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-one years and two months: date of birth at Pouch Cove, Newfoundland, August 18, 1895.

Private Horatio Baldwin 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 23, 2023.

