



Major Frank Harvey Bowring (9th Battalion, The King's (*Liverpool Regiment*)) is buried in St-Martin Calvaire British Cemetery, St-Martin sur Cojeul – Grave reference II.B.1.

Frank Harvey Bowring was born into a family of St. John's merchants. In 1892 he, accompanied by four of his siblings and his mother, boarded the *Allan Line* vessel *Nova Scotian* and sailed to Liverpool. He was never to return.

(continued)



(Right below: *An elderly ship, Nova Scotian was scrapped in 1893. – from Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site*)

In England Frank Harvey Bowring attended Shrewsbury School until 1908, proving himself to be a very good cricket player while he was there – and for years afterwards*. He subsequently entered Christ Church College, Oxford, where he studied for his Bachelor of Arts Degree with which he was presented in 1902.



**He also apparently played football for a team known as the Northern Nomads.*

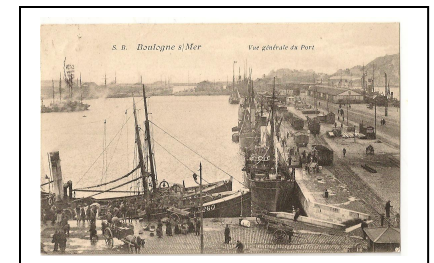
Frank Harvey Bowring thereupon went on to become a solicitor at Chislehurst, Sefton Park, Liverpool, the family address in England. By the time of the outbreak of the Great War in August of 1914 he was also a member of the Liverpool Stock Exchange.

Frank Harvey Bowring was appointed by King's Commission into the 17th Service (1st City) Battalion of The King's (Liverpool Regiment), on November 3, 1914, as a *temporary lieutenant*; on December 12 of that same year he was promoted to the rank of *temporary captain* in the same unit.

There is now a discrepancy in his records: While his Medal Index Card records him as having entered a theatre of war for the first time on December 8 of 1916, in his obituary it is stated that by that time he already had been wounded and returned to England*. While there appear to be no details available of the incident in question, after his convalescence in the United Kingdom he was – once more according to his obituary – on May 28 of 1916 - promoted, being appointed as Major and Second-in-Command of the 21st Reserve Service Battalion, also of The King's (Liverpool Regiment)**.

**The 17th Service Battalion is recorded as having disembarked in the French port of Boulogne on November 7, 1915, to serve with the 89th Brigade of the 30th Division until June of 1918.*

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



***This unit became the 67th Training Reserve Battalion in September 1 of 1916, presumably while Major Bowring was still one of its officers.*

The discrepancy presented in the preceding paragraph poses the question of the medals to which Major Bowring was entitled. If he had sailed with his 17th Service Battalion in November of 1915, then he would have been eligible to receive the 1914-1915 Star. However, the Medal Index Card records the awarding of only the British War Medal and the inter-Allied Victory Medal. The problem remains thus far unresolved.

(Right: *The medal to which Major Bowring may have been entitled for his service with the 17th Service Battalion – the 1914-1915 Star.*)



When he crossed the English Channel for the first/second(?) time on December 8, 1916, he had by then been transferred again to another unit. There is no War Diary of the 2/8th Battalion of The King's (*Liverpool Regiment*) available for the year after February of 1917 when it landed on the Continent to serve with the 171st Brigade of the 57th (2nd West Lancashire) Division so one cannot know if *this* was his new unit...

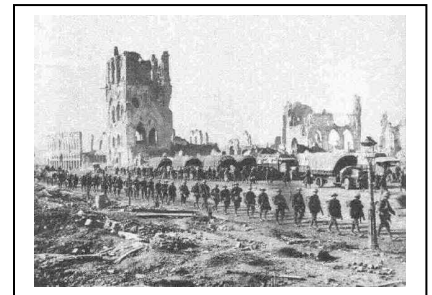
...but there *is* a record for the 1/8th Battalion. It makes no mention of a Major Bowring until April of 1918, some two months after the 2/8th Battalion had been absorbed by the 1/8th. As officers are often made mention of in the war diaries of the day it is curious that his name does not surface for some fourteen months. It is thus maybe not unreasonable to assume* that he was to serve at first with the 2/8th, and then with the 1/8th when the two amalgamated as the 8th, before being transferred to the 9th on or about June 6, 1918, to act as its second-in-command – these latter transfers and dates *are* documented.

**Not unlikely perhaps, but it is speculative.*

The units of the 57th Division traversed from England to France during the month of February of 1917. Nevertheless, it would not have been unusual for several officers to have preceded the main formation in order to arrange its affairs before arrival. Once again this is speculation, but it is a plausible reason for Major Bowring to have landed in France two months prior to the 2/8th Battalion.

However, on the off-chance that he went to the 1/8th once he was in France, a brief history of both these battalions is included in the following pages.

The 1/8th Battalion, as suggested above, by that time was an element of the 164th Brigade*, an element of the 55th (*West Lancashire*) Division. The Division, after having fought at *the Somme* in 1916, had been withdrawn and posted to the *Ypres Salient* where it relieved the 29th Division – of which the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was a unit – in early October. It was to remain in the area of the *Salient* for almost an entire year.



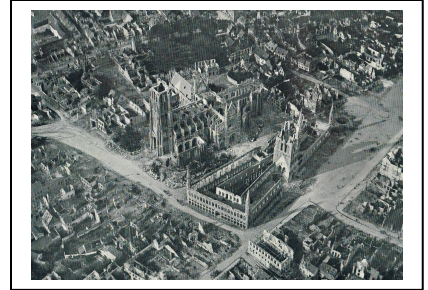
**Other sources have it as a battalion of the 165th Infantry Brigade at this time – January 1916 until January 1918; however, the original 8th Battalion War Diary Appendices record it as a unit of the 164th Infantry Brigade. Both of these brigades were components of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division.*

**Its first posting in the Salient was partially in the area of Railway Wood where the 1st Bn., Newfoundland Regiment, as a unit of 29th Division, had served during the previous month.*

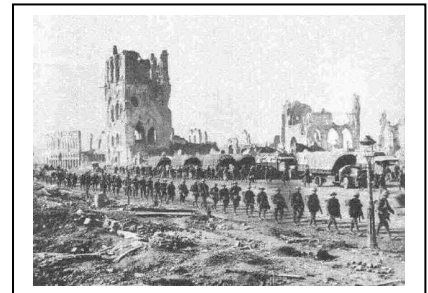


(Right: *Railway Wood almost a century later – but today recognizable as a wood: The monument barely perceptible commemorates the sacrifice of the twelve personnel of the Royal Engineers who were buried alive while tunnelling below.* – photograph from 2014)

(Right: *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, 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.



The British High Command had decided to fight the *Battle of Arras* only under pressure to help the French in their efforts on the Aisne. Douglas Haig already was harbouring plans for a summer offensive in *the Ypres Salient*.

(Right above: *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 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 was to be only a temporary acquisition.



(Right: *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.

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 the 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 below: *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*)

On February 15 of 1918, 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. But by that time, as of – *officially* – January 31, the 1/8th and the 2/8th Battalions had joined forces, the resulting single unit to be designated as simply the 8th Battalion, The King's (*Liverpool Regiment*). This consolidated unit was attached forthwith to the 172nd Infantry Brigade of the 57th Division.



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In the meantime, the 2/8th had arrived on the Continent some eleven months earlier, on February 23, 1917, as a battalion of the 171st Infantry Brigade, itself an element of the 57th (*2nd West Lancashire*) Division. At the outset of its service on the Western Front, the Division had been stationed in the area of Le Tilleloy, to the east of the city of Amiens, where it took responsibility for a sector formerly held by the II Anzac (*Australian and New Zealand Army Corps*) Corps, apparently coming under the command of that formation.

How long it remained there is not clear, but the 57th Division appears not to have been involved in the *Battle of Arras* which was fought during that spring of 1917 or, if so, only in a peripheral role – *Arras* does not figure among the Division's Battle Honours.



The first of the unit's major confrontations with the German Army was to be during the *Third Battle of Ypres: Passchendaele* where it fought from October 26 until November 7. After that date it retired from the field.

(Right above: *Canadian soldiers on the Passchendaele Front using a shell-hole to perform their ablutions: the Canadians served there at the same time as did the 57th Division. – from Le Miroir*)

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Three months later the 1/8th and the 2/8th Battalions were by then one and the same and, according to the then-8th Battalion War Diary, it would appear that Major Frank Harvey Bowring was the unit's second-in-command up until at least some time during that following April*.

**The War Diary entry for April 7 cites Major Bowring as returning from leave, a certain Captain Jones thereupon relinquishing the post of second-in-command. The Forces War Records also document Major Bowring as having temporarily held the rank of lieutenant-colonel – although the exact dates are not shown.*

That spring, the Germans – now re-enforced by the divisions that victory over the Russians allowed them – had 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 had begun in the southern area of *the Somme* on the first day of spring, March 21. On April 9, it was to be the turn of the Allied troops in the north of France and in Belgium to face *Georgette*, a second German offensive.

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

The months of February and March of 1918 were spent by the 8th Battalion in northern France, adjacent to the Franco-Belgian frontier. The critical battles ongoing at *the Somme* during the latter days of March had instilled a sense of urgency in the High Command thus, in the early days of April, Major Bowring's unit marched to the south to the area of Warlincourt to the south-west of Arras, a sector at the northern extremity of the still-ongoing German operations.



During those days of the German offensives, it is true that on several occasions the unit was put on... *one hour's notice to move...*, ...*ready for immediate defence...*and...*manning of line in event of enemy attack...* but it would seem that the fighting was to be elsewhere: the 8th Battalion was not to be involved. By the end of the month of that April, *George* was running out of steam and the Allies were able to hold the line. The Germans had overrun a great deal of ground but they had gained nothing of great importance militarily.

Such had also been the case of *Georgette* along the Franco-Belgian frontier. By early May the crises of that spring were over and the 8th Battalion retired from the forward area.

The remainder of that month was spent by the 8th Battalion withdrawn from Warlincourt and posted to the north-west of Arras, to areas such as Chateau de la Haie and Gommecourt where training appears to have been the order of many of the days. On May 13, Major Bowring was recorded as having been appointed commander of 'B' Company.



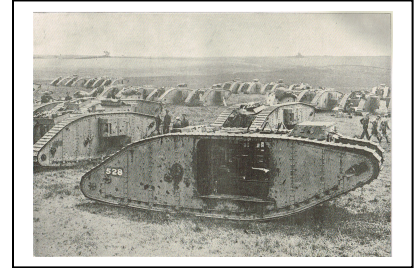
(Right above: *The remnants of the Grande Place (la Grand'Place) in Arras early in the time of the Great War – from Illustration*)

Major Bowring was then transferred during the month of June to become temporary Second-in-Command of the 9th Battalion; it may have been as early as June 6, the date on which the current Commanding Officer was reported as sick and invalided to England. When another officer, Lieutenant Colonel Lord H.O. Seymour, D.S.O. of the Grenadier Guards, was appointed to command on July 17, Major Bowring remained *in situ* as an officer of the 9th.

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For the month of July and into the next, the 9th Battalion remained in and about the sector just to the north of the city of Arras. For Major Bowring's unit it was an unexceptional period and was to remain so until the end of August.

Elsewhere, however, things were evolving on a massive scale. Beginning at the very end of July, the entire Canadian Corps had been transported and had also marched from the sectors of Arras and as far north as Béthune to join with British, French, Australian and New Zealand Divisions – and the newly-formed Royal Tank Corps - in front of Amiens. By August 8 they were ready to go on the offensive and to nullify the German gains of four months before.



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

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

This combined assault was a success: whereas advances in earlier battles had been measured in metres or yards – if at all – the Allied progress was some eleven kilometres on the first day, August 8, alone. The advance inevitably slowed, but it did not stop; the French were to continue the advance after having taken over from primarily the Canadians in the third week of the month.



This offensive was only the first; a second to the east of Arras and a third* were now to be undertaken in quick succession in the British and Commonwealth sectors, advances which were to continue until the Armistice was signed at five o'clock in the morning of November 11, it to come into effect six hours later.

**The third was to be launched from the Ypres Salient at the end of September.*

During the latter part of August, the Canadian Corps and other troops were to be transported and to march once more, on this occasion back whence they had come, to the afore-mentioned area east of Arras. It was from there, on August 26 – where the 9th Battalion was stationed – that this second offensive was now to be hurled at the enemy.

Four days prior to this date, on September 22, the 9th Battalion had begun to move forward from the rear area. Much of this movement, as it had been in front of Amiens a month previously, had been undertaken after dusk and with as little noise as possible. The element of surprise had worked well at the 3rd Battle of the Somme; it was hoped that it would succeed also in what was to become known to history as the 3rd Battle of the Scarpe.

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It was to be British and Canadian units which spear-headed the attack of September 26. On that day Major Bowring's 9th Battalion... *was equipped with Bombs, Rifle Grenades etc. ready for proceeding into Battle. All men's packs etc. were stacked at Q.M. Stores. At 11 p.m. the Battn paraded and moved via FICHEUX, BLAIRVILLE, to vicinity of MARGATEL where they bivouacked. The Battn rested during the day until 5 p.m.*

During that night of September 26-27 the unit moved up and by four o'clock in the morning had taken over trenches from troops of the 52nd Division. It was planned that having once more moved forward later that same morning, the Battalion would go in at zero hour, half-past mid-day.

Orders of the Day, August 27, 1918 (Excerpts from *Battalion War Diary*): *In front of Hindenberg Line – Verbal orders were received at 6 am on the 28th inst. That the Battn. would attack during the day. Zero hour, to be at 12.30 pm, the Battn. was to be on the right.*

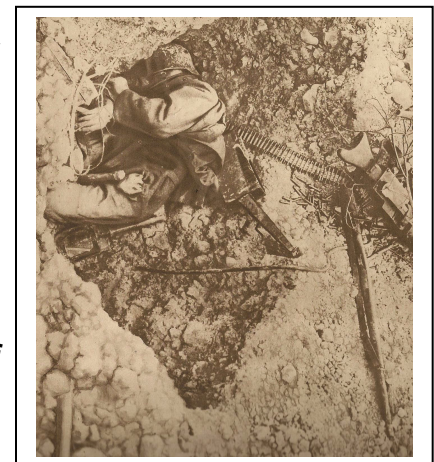
The leading attackers began to move forward at the appointed hour as soon as the barrage had lifted. Problems were encountered with wire, with shell-holes and particularly with enemy machine-guns. However, the attackers persevered and several of these weapons were soon put out of action and their crews made prisoner. The War Diarist continues...



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

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

At about 1.50 pm. the Batt'n continued the advance from the first objective and swung left in the direction of Hendicourt. Heavy M.G. fire was encountered from the direction of SPANIEL ALLEY in U. 16 b. Major BOWRING together with about 10 men outflanked and captured an M.G. also capturing or killing the crew... A little further on Major BOWRING was killed.



The 9th Battalion incurred moderately-heavy casualties during the attack: eleven officers and two-hundred thirty-one other ranks *killed, wounded and missing*. Major Bowring was the only officer to be *killed in action*.

The son of Charles Bowring (deceased January 31, 1890) and Laura Annie Bowring (née Warren), after St. John's, Newfoundland, of Chislehurst, Sefton Park, Liverpool, he was also brother to Louisa-Warren (died in infancy), to Charles-Warren, to Louisa-Harriet (died young), to William, to Ethel-Laura, Winnifred (died young), Harold, Eric-Aubrey and to Cyril.

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Major Frank Harvey Bowring was reported as having been *killed in action* on August 28 of 1918 – although the 9th Battalion War Diary entry suggests August 27.

He died at the age of thirty-nine years: date of birth, at St. John's, Newfoundland, December 10, 1878.

Major Frank Harvey Bowring was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal)*.

**See above in this dossier for discrepancy in records and the 1914-1915 Star.*



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 – February 18, 2023.