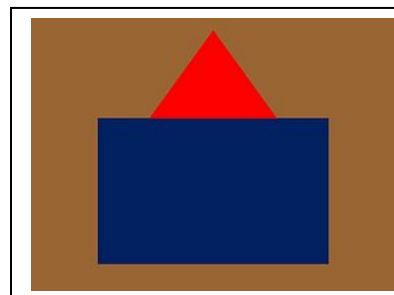




Bugden, Lance Corporal Jesse Llewellyn Bugden (Number 715187) of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*) Canadian Infantry, is buried in Fosse No. 10 Communal Cemetery Extension, Sains-en-Gohelle: Grave reference II.D.42.

(Right: *The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Nova Scotia Rifles) shoulder flash* from the *Wikipedia Web-site*.)

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a steelworker, there is only tenuous documentation a propos his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Dominion of Canada\*. He nevertheless *is* recorded as being in Sydney, Nova Scotia, on November 15, 1915, to enlist and attest, and then to undergo a medical examination on the following day, November 16.

*\* There is a record of a J. Bugden, born about 1891, who took ship on board the SS Kyle in Port aux Basques and who arrived in Louisburg, Cape Breton, on April 13, 1915, en route to Sydney, Nova Scotia. However, his religious denomination is cited as being Methodist whereas the military file of Lance Corporal Bugden records Church of England.*

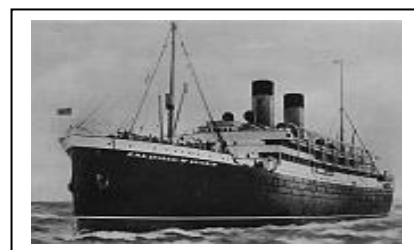
Some two months after his enlistment, Private Bugden was promoted directly to the rank of corporal, receiving his stripes on January 21, 1916.

Upon recruitment he had immediately been attached to 'D' Company\* of the 106<sup>th</sup> (Overseas) Battalion (Nova Scotia Rifles) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, although it appears to have been almost a further four months, not until March 8, that the Commanding Officer of the Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Innes, declared – on paper – that... *having finally been approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

*\*Two companies were based at Truro and one each at Springhill and Pictou; unfortunately, where 'D' company was has been thus far difficult to discover.*

Before leaving Canada, on July 9 of 1916 Corporal Bugden was prevailed upon to register a will - in it he left his everything to his mother. Less than a week afterwards he was on board ship.

The vessel was the Canadian Pacific steamship the SS *Empress of Britain*. The 106<sup>th</sup> Battalion embarked in Halifax harbour on July 15 of 1916, sailing on the same day. After an apparently bumpy trans-Atlantic crossing, the ship docked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool on the 25<sup>th</sup>, some ten days later.



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

Corporal Bugden and his Battalion did not take passage for the United Kingdom alone; on board *Empress of Britain* were also the following units: the 5<sup>th</sup> Draft of the Royal Canadian Dragoons; the 93<sup>rd</sup> Battalion and the 105<sup>th</sup> Battalion of Canadian Infantry; and the 8<sup>th</sup> Draft of 'C' Battery of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery.



Upon its arrival the 106<sup>th</sup> Battalion was transferred immediately by train to the large Canadian military establishment at *Shorncliffe*, adjacent to the English-Channel town and harbour of Folkestone in the county of Kent.

(continued)



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

Shorncliffe Camp was a large Canadian military complex which comprised a number of subsidiary establishments, among them one by the name of *Lower Dibgate*. It was while stationed there that on August 1 he was recorded as having been promoted to the rank of acting corporal\*.

***\*This of course poses questions and/or problems vis-à-vis his previously-recorded promotion to this same rank some seven months previously – nor do his pay records shed any light on the question.***

**(Right below: 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)**

History – or possibly legend – has it that when Julius Caesar invaded Britain in those far-off times, he established his first camp within sight of those famous white cliffs – Dover is just to the north of Folkestone. During the autumn of 1916, the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia*) was encamped there and it was to *Caesar's Camp* – and also to the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion, that Corporal Bugden was transferred on October 5.



***\*The 106<sup>th</sup> Battalion was never to see service on the Continent but was used as a source of re-enforcements for other units. The Battalion would eventually be dis-banded and it was apparently to the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion that the majority of its remaining personnel was attached.***

Some three months later, on January 4, 1917, Corporal Bugden was provisionally *taken on strength* by the 26<sup>th</sup> (*Reserve*) Battalion and he found himself back at nearby Dibgate. There he was just in time to move with his new unit to *Camp Bramshott*, a large Canadian Army Camp in the southern county of Hampshire where he reportedly arrived on January 8. At *Bramshott* the Battalion prepared for its eventual transfer to the Continent.



**(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)**

Only days before that transfer was to be effected, on April 16, Corporal Bugden, still at *Bramshott*, *reverted to the ranks* and once again became a private soldier. This was apparently done at his own request; there appears, however, to be no reason for it documented in his papers\*.

***\*In certain similar cases this was a request made by NCOs and officers who wished to go to the front but who had been selected to remain behind for a variety of reasons. In the case of Private Bugden this is, of course, only speculation.***

A re-enforcement draft from the 26<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Battalion at *Camp Bramshott* left the United Kingdom for France on or about April 20, 1917. The contingent most likely passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton to disembark at le Havre and to travel to Étapes where the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Base Depot had by then been established\* - this is where Private Bugden is recorded as being on April 21.



He was also then *taken on strength* by the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*) at this time, leaving the Base Depot to report *to duty* with that unit on April 24.

*\*Whether the four new Infantry Base Depots at Étapes were in operation by then – officially they was not to be so until the end of May – or whether he reported to the Base Depot at Le Havre is not clear.*

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

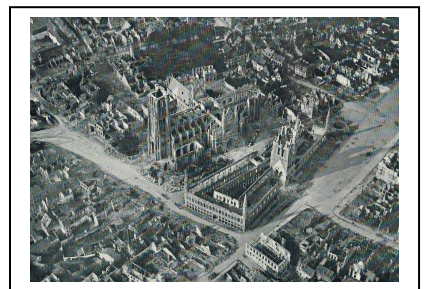
Where Private Bugden was for the following twelve days appears not to be recorded, as it was not until May 6 of that 1917 that he is documented as having joined the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion\*.

*\*It may have been that he was posted temporarily to one of the Entrenching Battalion which were often used as re-enforcement pools, thereby gainfully employing this available manpower until the appropriate moment for the newcomers to join their new units.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion (*Nova Scotia Rifles*) of the Canadian Expeditionary Force had already been serving in France and Belgium for more than eighteen months by this time, since September of the year 1915. The Battalion was a unit of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, itself an element of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division, and had been in service on the Continent continually since its arrival on the Western Front - almost exclusively in the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first year and, since that time, in France.

In early April of 1916, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division had undergone its baptism of fire in an action on a large scale. It had been near the village of St-Éloi, to the south of Ypres, where, at the end of March, the British had detonated a series of mines under the German lines and then followed this up with an infantry assault. The newly-arrived 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division was to support and to re-enforce the presumed British success, to hold and consolidate the newly-won territory.



(Right above: *An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915 – just after the battle of 2<sup>nd</sup> 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*)

(continued)



However, the damage done to the terrain by the explosions, the putrid weather which turned the newly-created craters into ponds and the earth into a quagmire, and 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.

(Right: *An attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – from Illustration*)



Then in June the Battalion had been involved in the fighting in the area of *Hooge, Mount Sorrel, Sanctuary Wood, Hill 60 and Maple Copse*, all just to the south-east of the city of Ypres.

The Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> Division had been the main recipient of the enemy's offensive thrust but the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division had played a role sufficiently important – it had manned the front lines at Zillebeke during three days - for the name *Mount Sorrel* to become the first battle honour to be won by the unit during the Great War.

(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*)



From the middle of June up until August 27 of 1916, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been in reserve well to the rear, so well to the rear, in fact, that it had been deemed safe enough for His Majesty the King and his son the Prince of Wales to pay a visit on August 14.

Some two weeks later, it had been withdrawn into northern France to the vicinity of Steenvoorde, to the village of Moule. There the following week was spent in becoming familiar with the British Lee-Enfield Mark III rifle which was replacing the Canadian-made Ross rifle, and in training for a Canadian role in the British summer campaign of 1916, an offensive which to that date had not been proceeding exactly to plan.

By that 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 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 of *1<sup>st</sup> Somme*, all but two small units of the attacking divisions had been troops from the British Isles, those exceptions being the two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and the eight-hundred personnel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment which had lost so heavily on that July 1 at Beaumont-Hamel.

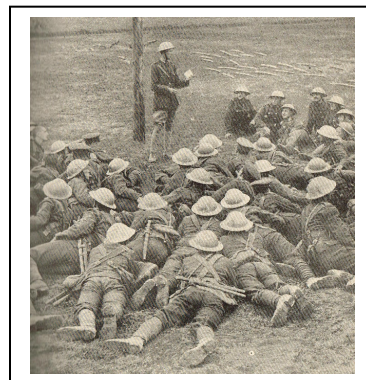


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(Preceding page: *The Canadian Memorial which stands to the side of the Albert-Bapaume Road near the village of Courcelette – photograph from 2015*)

As the battle had progressed, other troops, from the Empire (*Commonwealth*), were 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 on 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 Courcelette.

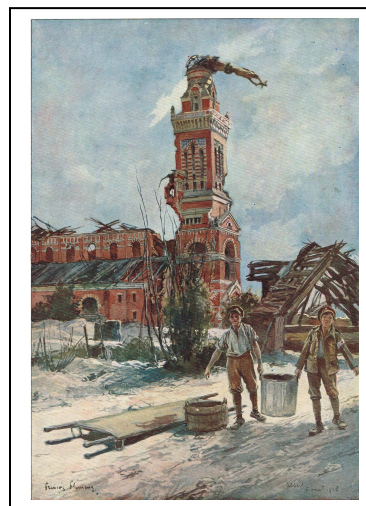
(Right: *An image purporting to be that of a Canadian officer giving instructions to those under his command prior to the attack at Flers-Courcelette (see below), September 1916. – from The War Illustrated*)



Meanwhile, by the evening of September 10 the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion was at the large military camp which had been established at the *Brickfields (La Briqueterie)* in close proximity to the provincial town of Albert.

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

On the morrow the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been ordered forward into dug-outs in assembly areas. On the next morning, September 15, the Canadians were to be going to the attack.



(Excerpt from 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for September 15, 1916): *5<sup>th</sup> Brigade attacked and captured the Town of Courcelette... the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved forward as though on General Inspection the young soldiers behaving like veterans, going through very heavy artillery barrage without a quiver...*

Of the six-hundred ninety personnel who went over the top on the day of the assault, the War Diary recorded thirty-six dead, one-hundred ninety-one wounded and seventy-seven as *missing in action*\*.

*\*It seems likely that some of the missing later returned to duty as a later Diary entry records two-hundred fifty-eight casualties all told.*

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



On October 1 the Battalion – its operational strength by then apparently reduced to two-hundred all ranks and twelve machine-guns – received orders to attack and capture “at all costs” enemy trenches known as *KENORA* and *REGINA*...

(continued)



**“B”, “C” and “D” Companies... were to proceed over KENORA up to REGINA, which they did, but by the time they had got to the wire the casualties had been so heavy that only one officer was left... and about thirty men...**

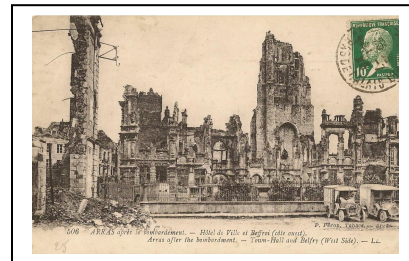
The attack was a failure and the survivors had been obliged to fall back to *Kenora Trench*. Total casualties during the action had been a further one-hundred twelve.

(Right: *Ninety-eight years later, the land on which the action was fought, as seen from Regina Trench Cemetery – photograph from 2014*)



On the night of October 1-2 the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had retired from *the Battle of* - and from the area of - *the Somme* and had made its way on foot westwards and then northwards behind the shattered city of Arras, and to the region of the coal-mining centre of Lens.

(Right: *The remnants of the City Hall and its clock-tower in Arras soon after the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



The winter of 1916-1917 was one of that everyday grind of life in and out of the trenches. There was to be little if any concerted infantry activity apart from the constant patrolling and the occasional raids by both sides. This latter activity was encouraged by the High Command who felt them to be a morale booster which also served to keep the troops in the right offensive frame of mind – in general, the troops who were ordered to carry them out loathed these operations.



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

The 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion remained in the area and in the trenches of places such as Bully-Grenay, Angres and Bruay for the next four months or so before returning southward to Neuville St-Vaast. One of the neighbouring communities, in German hands at the time, was the village of Vimy.

On April 9 the British Army 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 daily count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it was to be the most expensive operation of the War for the British, one of the few positive episodes being the Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.



While the British campaign proved an overall disappointment, the French offensive of *Le Chemin des Dames* was to be a disaster.

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

On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions, for the first time acting as a single, autonomous entity – there was even a British brigade serving under Canadian command - stormed the slope of *Vimy Ridge*, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.

From April 2 until April 7, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been in intense training on ground that had been re-arranged so as to resemble the terrain to be attacked. On April 8 it had moved forward – although *not* via those well-known tunnels, kilometres of which had been excavated for reasons of both surprise and safety.

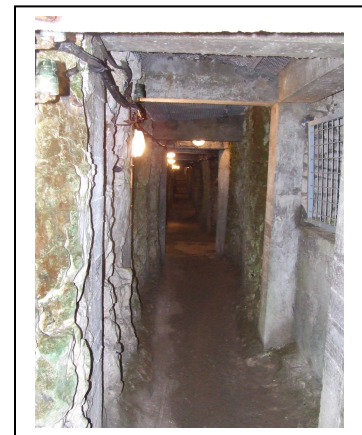
(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>d</sup> Division, equipped – or burdened - with all the paraphernalia of war on the advance across No-Man’s-Land during the attack at Vimy Ridge on either April 9 or 10 of 1917 - from Illustration*)



The Canadian 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was not responsible for the capture of Vimy Ridge itself; the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion on those first two days of the battle had been involved in the clearing of the community of Thélus, further down the slope and on the right-hand – the southerly - side of the attack.

On April 10 the Canadians finished clearing the area of *Vimy Ridge* of the few remaining pockets of resistance and began to consolidate the area in case of the expected German counter-attacks. There had on that day been the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted breakthrough – but such a follow-up on the previous day’s success had proved impossible. Thus the Germans closed the breach and the conflict once more reverted to one of inertia.

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



The remainder of the relatively short, five-week long, *Battle of Arras* was not to be fought in the manner of the first two days and by the end of those five weeks little else had changed and the Germans had recovered from the initial Canadian success.





On May 6 a re-enforcement draft of eighty-eight *other ranks* arrived at the Battalion Details Camp at Mont-St-Éloi\* while the main body of the unit was serving in Brigade Reserve in the area of Vimy Railway Station. On the following day it moved into a rest area at aux Reitz (today *la Targette*) where it remained for the next three days.



It was likely at Mont-St-Éloi that Private Bugden was attached to one of the Battalion's fighting companies.

*\*Mont St-Éloi is not to be confused with St. Eloy (St-Éloi) in southern Belgium where Canadian forces had also served in the spring of 1916. The community is to be found to the north-west of the city of Arras in northern France and it was, at the time, well behind the lines.*

*(Preceding page and right above: 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)*

\* \* \* \* \*

After the official conclusion of the five-week *Battle of Arras*, the Canadians had been ordered posted not far to the north of where they had just been serving, to the mining area of the city of Lens and other communities. There they once more took up the routine of life in 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 the forward area, the latter furthest away.*



*Of course, things were never as neat and tidy as set out in the preceding format and troops could find themselves in a certain 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 – from Illustration)*

The months of May – on the 24<sup>th</sup> of which Private Bugden was promoted to the rank of lance corporal – June and July, and then the first two weeks of August followed much the above pattern with the Battalion undergoing prolonged periods of training at camps withdrawn well behind the lines. Casualties sustained during this period were mostly due to enemy artillery activity and snipers.

Then, on August 14, things changed for Lance Corporal Bugden's Battalion.

(Right below: *A Canadian carrying-party – some of the work done by troops when in support and reserve – on the Lens front during the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)



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 also his reserves - from this area, it had also ordered operations to take place at the sector of the front running north-south from Béthune to Lens.



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

(Above right: *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 under fire in the Lens Sector during the late summer of 1917 – from Illustration or Le Miroir*)



(Right: *A former German gun-shelter now in the hands of the Canadians. – from Le Miroir*)



By August 14, the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion – a total of six-hundred eleven *all ranks* - was back in the forward area, near the mining-pit communities of *St-Pierre* and *St-Edouard* in the north-west and northern outskirts respectively of Lens itself.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> the unit was involved in the attack on *Hill 70*, a German-occupied position just to the north of Lens. 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 16<sup>th</sup> several strong counter-attacks were launched against the Canadian positions, positions that by this time had been transformed into defensive strong-points.



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

(continued)



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



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 apparently 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.

By August 18, Battalion strength was reported as amounting to just three-hundred eighty all told, approximately forty per cent of full battalion numbers.

On the 19<sup>th</sup>, the unit was engaged in salvage work and in burying the dead.

The Battalion War Diary entry for August 20 reads as follows: *Situation much quieter. Some shelling on COB Trench and CATAPULT Trench. Preparations to relieve 22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in front line... Estimated Casualties (for this tour?) 3 officers and 200 – O.R.*

Lance Corporal Bugden was reported as having been wounded on August 20 – a second source records August 19. Taken at first to an advanced dressing station, he was the evacuated to the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Ambulance at Fosse 10, Sains-en-Gohelle, where it had been established only two days previously.

On the first day, one hundred thirty-seven patients were treated; on the second day, the 20<sup>th</sup>, there were one-hundred twenty-five - of whom Private Bugden was one.

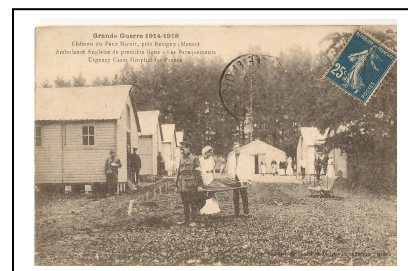
On the following four days the casualty admissions became increasingly more numerous.

**(Right: *Canadian troops escorting prisoners and badly wounded towards the rear – from Le Miroir*)**



Report on Lance Corporal Bugden from the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Ambulance: *His left leg was blown off by enemy shell fire, and he succumbed to his wounds at No. 5 Canadian Field Ambulance, the same day.*

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



(continued)

The son of Jesse Bugden and Charity Bugden (née Cooper) - to whom he had allotted a daily ten dollars from his pay – of Petley, Britannia (formerly *Britannia Cove*), Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, he was also brother to twelve siblings: Absalom, James (*Jimmy*), Mary-Margaret, Arthur, Elizabeth, Emily, William, Annie-Cooper, Etta-May, William-Henry, Maggie and Anne.

Lance Corporal Bugden was reported as having *died of wounds* in the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Ambulance at Fosse 10\*, on August 20, 1917, and as having been buried in the adjacent cemetery.

*\*The French word 'fosse', among other things, means, as in this particular case, a mine-pit.*

(Right: *The photograph of Corporal Bugden is from a web-site entitled – A Short History and Photographic record of 106<sup>th</sup> Overseas Battalion C.E.F.*)



Jesse Llewelyn Bugden had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-four years and five months: date of birth, June 30, 1891.

Lance Corporal Jesse Llewelyn Bugden 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 26, 2023.