

# 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade

## WAR DIARIES 1915 -1919

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### Introduction

This War Diary has been transcribed in order that military and family historians and future generations can study the history of the regiment. To preserve the historical significance of these documents, typographical errors in the original documents have been maintained. Square brackets [ ] surround information using *italics* added by the transcriber where it was felt that clarification was required, or where names and/or service numbers were misspelled. Question marks ? were used where the characters/words could not be discerned. Where possible, the formats of the appendices have been kept as close to the original as possible.

Many abbreviations are used in the War Diaries. Quite a few have been typed out in full between brackets and using *italics*. Not all though. The reader can look up any abbreviation used in this transcription at the CEF Study Group [Acronyms & Abbreviations](#).

The original documents were downloaded from the web site of the [Library and Archives Canada](#).

Michael Thierens

# 1915

**Wed, Dec 22, 1915 to Fri, Dec 31, 1915, inclusive.**

**FRANCE**

### PREFACE

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The 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade was formed in France on the 22nd December, 1915. The units comprising the Brigade being:- The Royal Canadian Regiment, (Lieut. Colonel A.H. Macdonell D.S.O.) 35 Officers and 999 other ranks.

Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, (Lieut. Colonel H.C. Buller, D.S.O.) 31 Officers and 974 other ranks.

42nd Battalion, (5th Royal Highlanders of Canada) Canadian Overseas expeditionary Forces (Lieut Colonel G.C. Cantlie) 34 Officers, and 1011 other ranks.

49th Battalion, Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Forces (Lieut Colonel W.A. Griesbach) 33 Officers 984 other ranks.

Lieut. Colonel A.C. Macdonell [inserted: C.M.G.] D.S.O. Officer Commanding Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) was appointed Brigade Commander with the temporary rank of Brigadier General, and took over the Command of the 7th Brigade on the 22nd December, 1915. General Macdonell has seen considerable fighting, being present at the actions at Festubert, Givenchy, and Cuinchy besides which he had previously seen active service in the South African War, in Command of Canadian Mounted Rifles.

The Brigade Staff are:- Brigade Major, A.H.B. Foster, Kings Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, from Staff Captain 75th Brigade, 25th Division, British Expeditionary Force. Active Service in South African War 1899-1902 and active Service in France since September, 1915.

Staff Captains:- Captain A.C. Critchley, Adjutant, Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians). Active service in France since May, 1915.

Lieut. F.C. Rush, Quartermaster, Lord Strathcona's Horse, (Royal Canadians) Active service South Africa 1899 – 1901. Active service in France since May 1915.

Orderly Officer, Lieut. H.M. Wallis, 13th Canadian Infantry Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada) 1st Canadian Division, Canadian Expeditionary Force. Active service in France since Feb., 1915.

Brigade Machine Gun Officer Captain H.T. Cock, Royal Canadian Regiment.

Veterinary Officer, Captain D.T. Tamblyn, Army Veterinary Corps.

Brigade Clerk, Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant, A.D. McNeill, Lord Strathcona's Horse (R.C.)

Q.M.S., Corpl. Endacott, Lord Strathcona's Horse, (R.C.)

Clerks :- Private Rice, 4th Battalion.

„ Lynas, P.P.C.L.I.

„ Baker, Royal Canadian Regiment.

Grooms :- Boyer, Lord Strathcona's Horse.

„ Penrose Do Do

Batman :- Harding, Do Do

Matthey, Do Do

The Royal Canadian Regiment was raised as a unit of the Canadian Permanent Force in December 1883 under the name of the Infantry School Corps, being raised primarily for the purpose of instructing the Canadian Militia, but its establishment being increased it took over the garrisoning of places occupied by Imperial Troops. A detachment took part in the Expedition in North West Canada, 1884-1885, and bears that honour, and Saskatchewan, in 1899 2nd Battalion was raised for service in the South African War 1899-1900 and was present at the battle of Paardeburg. A 3rd Battalion was raised to garrison Halifax, Canada. Both these Battalions were disbanded after the South African War.

The Regiment bears the Badge of the Imperial Cypher V.R.I. and Imperial Crown granted by Her Majesty Queen Victoria in 1894. On the outbreak of the European war the Regiment was mobilized at Halifax, Nova Scotia and occupied the defences at that station, with detachments at defensive points throughout Nova Scotia.

Having been brought up to War strength by recruits from the Canadian Expeditionary Force Camp at Valcartier [*Valcartier*] P.Q. the Regiment sailed for Bermuda on September 10th 1914

And relieved the 2nd Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment. On being relieved by the 38th Battalion Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force it proceeded to England via Halifax leaving Bermuda on August 13th 1915, arriving in England September 5th 1915.

It was rearmed and equipped at Shorncliffe, casualties being filled by drafts from Canada and volunteers from the other Canadian Battalions at Shorncliffe. The Regiment landed in France on November 1st and proceeded to Bailleul, being billeted around Meteren and forming part of Corps troops of the Canadian Corps. A week later it moved to Westhof and went into the trenches for instruction in trench warfare with the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade at Ploegsteert [*Ploegsteert*] The Regiment then moved to LaClytte – 2nd Canadian Divisional Area – on November 19<sup>th</sup> where after supplying working parties for front line trenches and supports for about a month it moved to Boeschepe and became part of the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade on the 22nd December 1915.

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#### PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY.

Among the many Regiments serving in France and elsewhere on the side of the Allies few have been inaugurated under more favourable auspices than The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Owing to the untiring energy and generosity of Major A. Hamilton Gault D.S.O. authority was granted, one week after the war was declared, to raise one Battalion to form part of the Canadian Expeditionary force. To facilitate recruiting depots were established at Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Calgary and Edmonton Alberta. In each of these cities prominent citizens were invited to collect recruits, besides which notices were inserted in various Canadian Newspapers, calling for recruits and stating terms of enlistment.

Lieut. Colonel Farquhar D.S.O. Coldstream Guards was given command, and Headquarters were established in the city of Ottawa, the Capitol of the Dominion of Canada. Recruiting commenced on the 12th of August 1914, and by the 26th August the Regiment was up to strength, fully equipped and ready to proceed overseas. One of the conditions of enlistment was that every recruit have previously belonged to some regiment of the British Army, and it is interesting to note that 50% of the recruits had previously seen active service, and that every regiment of the British Army was represented, with the exception of the Inniskilling Dragoons. One Platoon was composed entirely of ex-Guardsmen. The Regimental colour is almost an unheard of fact in the field, during the present war, but it is one of the proud boasts of every member of this regiment that the colour has been with them since the 13th August 1914. From Canada to England and thence to France. It has always remained at Battalion Headquarters, whether the Regiment was in Billets or on duty in the trenches. The colour itself is a Camp Colour and was the idea of H.R.H. Princess Patricia of Connaught. It was designed and made by Her Royal Highness, and presented to the Regiment in Ottawa prior to leaving for England.

The Battalion sailed from Quebec on September 28th, 1914, and after a somewhat slow voyage, arrived at Devonport on the 16th October 1914, and went to Amesbury where they remained until the 17th November 1914, when they moved to Winchester and joined the 27th Division, being Brigaded with the 2nd Battalion Kings Own Shropshire Light Infantry,

3rd and 4th Battalions Kings Royal Rifles, Corps, and 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade, to form the 80th Brigade.

Arriving in France on the 22nd December, 1914, the Battalion was located at Blaringham [*Blaringhem*] and employed in digging trenches until the 3rd of January 1915 when it marched to Meteren enrou [*en route*] for Dickebusch, and took over the trenches at Vierhoek- Bois Carre Sector, from the French on the 15th January, 1915. From this date the Battalion was engaged in trench warfare taking part in an attack on the German sap near Shelby Farm on the 28th February 1915, (where Where Major A Hamilton Gault was wounded) and the counter attack at St. Eloi on the 15th March 1915. On March 21st 1915 Lieut. Colonel H.D. Farquhar was killed and Lieut Colonel H.C. Buller, Rifle Brigade took Command of the Battalion. On the 5th April 1915 The Battalion took over the trenches in Polygon Woods and remained in the Ypres Salient, without being relieved, until the 3rd May – 25 days – when they moved to the Bellewarde [*Bellewaerde*] Line. On the 4th May there was a heavy bombardment of this line by the enemy and 25 men were killed and 96 wounded, they were relieved here during the night by the 2nd K.S.L.I. and held the G.H.Q. line at Ypres. Lieut Colonel H.C. Buller being wounded during the shelling of that place on the following day the 5th May 1915, when the Germans made a general attack. Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry losing 16 Officers and 450 other ranks, killed and wounded, during the engagement. On being relieved from the first line trenches on the 9th May 1915 they formed a composite Battalion with the 4th K.R.R.C. and took part in the counter attack at Hooze on the 24th May 1915, when they again had a heavy casualty list. On the 28th May 1915 the 80th Brigade moved to the Armentieres District and relieved the 6th Division at L'Epignette, and the Battalion remained in that vicinity until 14th September 1915, when the Brigade took over an area in the Somme District where they remained until the 25th October 1915, during part of this period the Battalion was in the trenches continuously for 23 days. Leaving the 8th Brigade, 27th Division on 9th November, 1915 The Battalion was attached as Instructional Battalion to the 3rd Army School of Instruction until the 25th November 1915, when it entrained for Castre and joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force, becoming part of the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade on the 23rd December 1915.

#### 42ND BATTALION, (5TH ROYAL HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA).

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42nd Battalion (5th Royal Highlanders of Canada) Canadian Expeditionary Forces (Lieut Colonel G.C. Cantlie) joined the Brigade on its formation at Mont-des-Cats, having been for a period of nearly three months on Active Service in France. Recruited and mobilized in the City of Montreal, Province of Quebec in February 1915, and after five months training in Canada sailed for England, where further training in musketry was undergone until the 9th October 1915 when the Battalion came over to France. After being held in reserve as Corps troops [deleted: for] to the Canadian Corps for about three weeks, the Battalion was then attached for duty in the trenches to the 1st Canadian Division in the Ploegsteert Neuve Eglise area, unit joining the 7th Canadian Infantry Battalion.

#### 49th BATTALION (CANADIANS).

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The 49th Battalion (Lieut Colonel W.A. Griesbach) mobilised in Edmonton, Alberta, the majority of the members of the Battalion being railway men, miners and farmers – about 35% being Canadian and the remainder British born, and recruited from the Northern portion of the Province, from Edmonton Peace river District and the east territory north and west of the Capital City of the Province, a large percentage of the men being of Scotch descent. Mobilisation started on the 4th January 1915 and after a period of hard training the Battalion

arrived at Shorncliffe England, on the 13th May 1915, undergoing at this station further training until the 9th October 1916, when it left for France in Company with the 42nd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Forces. The fortunes of these two Battalions were such alike with the exception of that the 49th

Battalion only remained with the 1st Canadian Division for three weeks, when it was attached to the 2nd Canadian Division and employed as a Labour Battalion on the La.Clytte Wyschaete [Wyschaete] line until joining the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade on the 23rd December, 1915.

The Brigade being composed as it is of well disciplined and seasoned troops there seems no reason why it should not be able in a short while to hold its own with the other Brigades of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. All feel that the good opinion already formed after a careful inspection of the units, will not be misplaced, and that when the records of this campaigns are written, the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade, will not have failed to carry out its duties in a sound soldierly manner.

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**Wed, Dec 22, 1915 SHEET 28. R.20c.5.4., FRANCE**

Cloudy & Rain. Brigade Office opened. R.C.R. in billets H.Q. at R.16.B.?8. P.P.C.L.I. stationed at La Clytte providing working parties on the Kimmel Defences. 42nd Batn. In Billets H.Q. at R.33.A.2.3. and 49th Batn. In Billets, H.Q. at R.33.B.9.0. With the exception of the P.P.C.L.I. regiments were carrying on work of instruction in all its branches.

**Thu, Dec 23, 1915 LOCATION**

Cloudy. Regiments located as above, route marches, musketry, etc. carried out, P.P.C.L.I. supplying working parties on Kimmel Defences.

**Fri, Dec 24, 1915 LOCATION**

Fair. Locations as above, Inspections and route marches in morning, Musketry in afternoon, P.P.C.L.I. supplying working parties on Kimmel Defences.

**Sat, Dec 25, 1915 LOCATION**

Fair. Morning, Inspection and lectures by O's C..

**Sun, Dec 26, 1915 LOCATION**

Cloudy. Church Parade. P.P.C.L.I. furnished working parties on Kimmel Defences.

**Mon, Dec 27, 1915 LOCATION**

Light rain. a.m. Physical training, Inspection of arms, ammunition, Lectures on Trench Duties etc. by all units except P.P.C.L.I. who furnished usual working party. P.m. Practice Bomb throwing and bayonet fighting.

**Tue, Dec 28, 1915 LOCATION**

Cloudy. a.m. Inspections and drill, route march in drill order, p.m. Musketry, rapid fire practice, Drill with Gas helmets and goggles. M.G. sections, Signallers, Grenadiers etc. drilling under own arrangements. P.P.C.L.I. furnished usual working party .

**Wed, Dec 29, 1915 LOCATION**

*[Note transcriber: there is no entry for this date.]*

**Thu, Dec 30, 1915 LOCATION**

Cloudy Light rain. a.m. Inspections of arms. Equipment, gas helmets etc. and General Fatigues. Drill with Gas Helmets. Platoon and Company Drill, Rifle exercises, Practice in rapid loading. p.m. Route marches. P.P.C.L.I. usual working party.

**Fri, Dec 31, 1915 LOCATION**

Fine. P.P.C.L.I. were relieved by the Lord Strathcona's Horse (B.C.) at La Clytte when the regiment moved to billets with H.Q. at Q.35.B.3.2. the relief being completed by 1.30 p.m. . Other Battalions carried out Drills etc. similar to above.