

# **Walter Francis Lunn – A Fallen Soldier of The Great War: His Story**

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August 2018

## **Introduction**

It was late September 1918. The push was on by the British, French and their allies to bring the Great War to an end. A soldier in that effort, Walter Francis Lunn, age 24, died on a fall Friday morning on a battlefield in France. He was some 4900 km from his home in Nova Scotia, Canada. Not long after, and because of that Allied push, the Armistice signing of 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 ended the fighting in France and along the Western Front. It led to the end of the First World War.

My father was born two months after his uncle Walter Francis' death. My grandfather, Lewis Lunn, thought it proper to name his newborn son "Walter", in memory of his brother. It was because of this tribute, that in researching my family history, I have been drawn to Walter Francis Lunn. This story is my part to continue the Lunn remembrance of Walter Francis, and of men and women like him, who served their country in a tragic war - one that almost destroyed a generation of young people and impacted communities, countries and continents around the world. It is a story that portrays the range of conditions that Walter must have experienced in the trenches of France, from lingering monotony to no doubt sheer terror, and his many days spent in English hospitals recuperating from wounds and illness.

## **Walter's Family and Early Years**

Walter Francis Lunn was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1894 to Arthur and Sarah Lunn of Newport Station, Hants County, Nova Scotia. His family roots in Nova Scotia originate with John Lunn, a soldier who arrived from England in 1778 with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Hamilton's Regiment of

Foot. John served with the Royal Garrison Battalion at Halifax from 1780 to 1783 and then settled in his new homeland of Nova Scotia.<sup>1</sup>

Walter was the third child and second son of Arthur and Sarah.<sup>2</sup> Arthur was a plaster quarryman at a local gypsum mine. Tragically, he died in a quarry accident when Walter was nine years old. His mother passed away six years later in 1909.<sup>3</sup> None of the children's names appear in the 1911 census. Why are they missing? They are not recorded as having lived with relatives, such as their grandparents, three of whom were still alive in 1911. Did the children stay together as a family? It is not known at this time of writing. What is known about Walter before the Great War is that he had been schooled, was a bachelor, and worked as a labourer.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps he was a worker in agriculture, logging, sawmilling or gypsum mining, which were main industries to Newport and Hants County.

### **1915 - Enlistment**

Canada, as part of the British Commonwealth, had been at war with Germany for eleven months when Walter travelled to Halifax and enlisted as a Private in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force

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<sup>1</sup> Spencer and Spencer 1990: 5-10.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Hedley Lunn (1869-1903) was born at Wentworth, Hants County, Nova Scotia. Sarah Jane (nee Shanks) (1872-1909) was born at Three Mile Plains, Hants County. Their other children were: Lewis Elone (1889-1983), Sophia Ann (1891-1990), William Godfrey (1896-1960), Sidney Arthur (1896-1980), Hedley Weston (1898-1996), Henry Havelock (1900-1982) and Alexander (1902-1904). Library and Archives Canada, Statistics Canada, RG31, "1901 Census", Hants, 34, St. Croix, M1, page 19, Microfilm T-6452, Item 1280819; Spencer and Spencer 1990: 32-34; Winston Churchill Lunn, personal communication, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Spencer and Spencer 1990: 32.

<sup>4</sup> Library and Archives Canada, Statistics Canada, RG31, "1901 Census", Hants, 34, St. Croix, M1, page 19, Microfilm T-6452, Item 1280819; Library and Archives Canada, Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Attestation Paper.

(CEF). It was the 12<sup>th</sup> June 1915.<sup>5</sup> Before signing up, Walter had been with the 81st Hants Regiment (militia), evidently in preparation to enlisting in the regular army.<sup>6</sup> Why did Walter enlist? Perhaps it was the call for duty from Canada and the British Commonwealth, a desire for world adventure, or the chance for a new life and regular paycheck. Walter was assigned Regimental Number 84013.<sup>7</sup> He enlisted along with Percy McDonald Lockhart from Falmouth, a probable friend, and Percy's brother, Stanley William Lockhart.<sup>8</sup> Walter's uncle, Harry Henry Lunn, and a brother, Sydney Arthur, also enlisted in the CEF about four and six months later, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

In signing his enlistment Attestation Paper, Walter agreed  
*... to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force,  
 and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for  
 the term of one year, or during the war now existing  
 between Great Britain and Germany should that war last  
 longer than one year, and for six months after the*

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<sup>5</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Attestation Paper.

<sup>6</sup> The 81<sup>st</sup> Hants Regiment began 16<sup>th</sup> February 1914 in Windsor, with the authorization of an eight-company regiment of infantry in Hants County. National Defence and the Canadian Forces 2010: 2-2-165.

<sup>7</sup> Block number 84001-84500 was assigned for enlistments to the Draft Composite Battalion, Military District 6, Maritime Provinces, Halifax. Library and Archives Canada n.d.

<sup>8</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5705-34, Item 534824, Percy M. Lockhart Attestation Paper, and RG150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5705-46, Item 534836, Stanley W. Lockhart Attestation Paper. See also Library and Archives Canada n.d. re sequential regimental numbers and friends enlisting together.

<sup>9</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-43, Item 53808, Sydney A. Lunn Attestation Paper, and RG150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-29, Item 538794, Harry H. Lunn Attestation Paper.

*termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.*<sup>10</sup>

For his service, Walter was paid fifteen dollars per month. He identified his sister, Sophia Ann Fielding of Newport Station, as next-of-kin.

### **Training in England and Then to “The Field”**

Not long after his enlistment, Walter shipped out to England, sailing from Halifax to probably Portsmouth-Devonport. On 24<sup>th</sup> June 1915, he was taken on strength with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Reserve Battalion stationed at Dibgate Plain, Shorncliffe.<sup>11</sup> Shorncliffe, near Folkestone, was the CEF’s base in England and Dibgate Plain was its isolation barracks.<sup>12</sup> As a reserve battalion, the 23<sup>rd</sup> was a training, reinforcement and depot unit.<sup>13</sup> It provided soldiers to Canadian battalions in the “Field” that were increasingly suffering battle and illness casualties, and which required replacements to maintain battalion strength.

What was Walter’s time at Shorncliffe like? “From many of the primary accounts of their experiences most Canadians appear to have enjoyed their training period, with little thought to what lay ahead of them once they joined the front lines”.<sup>14</sup> Yet the war was not far from

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<sup>10</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Attestation Paper.

<sup>11</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Record of Service, and Miscellaneous Service Record Index Card.

<sup>12</sup> Newly arrived troops were kept at Dibgate Plain for a period of twenty-eight days to minimize the chance of exposing the rest of the Shorncliffe garrison to disease brought from Canada or the transport ships. Beaupré n.d.

<sup>13</sup> Duguid 1965.

<sup>14</sup> Beaupré n.d.

them. "A soldier could eat breakfast in Folkestone and be fighting in the trenches by lunchtime".<sup>15</sup>

With his infantry training completed at Shorncliffe, Walter was transferred on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1915 to the 13<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Battalion.<sup>16</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion was formed from the Royal Highlanders of Canada, originally from Montreal. It was a kilted battalion.<sup>17</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion was part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division of the CEF.

The very next day, 29<sup>th</sup> August, Walter was in France, first at the Canadian General Base in LeHavre, then in the "Field" with his new unit. This was 77 days after enlisting. Walter's first day was in the trenches near Messines, in West Flanders, Belgium. There is a written account of reinforcements joining their new unit; Walter was very likely among them.

*On the following day [30<sup>th</sup> August] the Highlanders took over Trenches 135- 137 for another five-day tour. Here a draft of 265 men was received from the 23rd Reserve Battalion in England. How welcome these men were may be judged by this extract from an officer's letter. "We received a draft of 265 men yesterday, which helps us a lot. For nearly four months we have been under strength, doing the work of a full battalion and, as there has been a devil of a lot of work to do, it has been mighty tough on the men. However, they have been most wonderfully willing and cheerful and, besides their fighting record, have earned the reputation with the Engineers of being the best working Regiment in the Division." On arrival, the draft was placed temporarily under the command of*

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<sup>15</sup> George, M and M George 2004 in Beaupré n.d.

<sup>16</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Miscellaneous Service Record Index Card.

<sup>17</sup> Meek 1971: 27.

*Lieuts. Aitchison and Bott, who themselves had just reported from the Cadet School at G.H.Q. Later the newcomers were evenly divided between the companies.*<sup>18</sup>

The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion spent much of the ensuing months in the front trenches 135-137 or in reserve at Messines, Aldershot Camp, Lindenhoeke, or Ploegsteert.<sup>19</sup> That fall and winter, conditions on the front were wet with "incessant rain"; trenches collapsed from the wet or were impassable with mud, and work to maintain them was hard and monotonous.<sup>20</sup>

## **1916**

New year 1916 began with the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion continuing to alternate with the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion between the front line trenches and reserve in the Messines area. There was more enemy action now with heavier artillery, rifle and machine gun fire, and trench mortar shelling.<sup>21</sup>

In February, the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion was moved from the front to Bailleul, France, for three weeks rest, as well as some training. There, the entire battalion, including grenade section, machine gunners, stretcher-bearers and signalers, practiced trench attacks.<sup>22</sup> Later that month and into March, the Battalion resumed its position at trenches 136-140.

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<sup>18</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 70.

<sup>19</sup> Trenches 135-137 "... occupied that part of the [Western Front] line which lay between the Wulverghem-Messines Road on the north and the Ploegsteert-Messines Road on the south. The front ran through the water-logged valley of the Douve and acted as a drain for Messines Ridge, occupied by the enemy, and Hill 63 to the British rear" Featherstonhaugh 1925: 72.

<sup>20</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 72.

<sup>21</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 79.

<sup>22</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 78 and 79.

The monotony of trench tours on the Messines Front came to an end in mid-March. The Canadian Corps "...began to move north and exchange places with the British V. Corps, which was holding the southern curve of the Ypres Salient. This move was completed 8<sup>th</sup> April.<sup>23</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion located to front line trenches at "The Bluff", a long mound of earth, thrown up during the construction of the Ypres-Comines Canal.<sup>24</sup> This sector saw considerable shelling, sniper activity, and ground attacks from the Germans. In May, the Battalion was located to the Dominion Line and Trenches 45 to 51, an active sector in the area of Mount Sorrel. They alternated between the front line and reserve.

### **Battle of Mont Sorrel/Hill 62**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, the Germans attacked the Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> Division along the Ypres Salient, causing major destruction and many casualties to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Canadian Battalions that occupied this portion of the front. The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Battalions, in a forced march, moved up from a reserve position to support the beleaguered 4<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion was then tasked for about a week with trench digging, and maintaining and defending this front in the face of wet, lousy weather, and "brisk" enemy gunfire and shelling.<sup>25</sup>

The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned to a reserve position on 8<sup>th</sup> June and began preparations for a counter offensive against the German lines, scheduled to take place on the morning of 13th June. For the next several days Walter and others of the 13<sup>th</sup> had rifles and gas helmets inspected and, if necessary, repaired or replaced. Shrapnel helmets, grenade aprons, and other equipment were also inspected in preparation for the counter-attack on the Germans.

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<sup>23</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 81.

<sup>24</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 85.

<sup>25</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 95-99.

### **13<sup>th</sup> June 1916 –Wounded, Return to England**

On the night of 12<sup>th</sup> June, the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion advanced to the trenches south of Maple Copse in preparation for the counter-attack. The attack had four objectives: firstly, taking the present enemy front line (called "Halifax"); secondly, taking the former reserve line of the Allies ("Montreal"); thirdly, taking the Allies former support line ("Winnipeg"), which would then serve as the front line; and lastly, the taking of the former Allied front line ("Vancouver"). The following account illustrates what Walter Lunn likely faced the next day.

*At 12.45 a.m. on June 13th the blackness of the night was split by a great sheet of flame, which belched from the muzzles of hundreds of guns. It was a marvelous sight and the deep-throated roar that went with it was music to the ears of the waiting battalions. Guns of all calibres, from 18-pounders to 12-inch, were employed and the German positions were torn and rent in a manner comparable to that in which the 3rd Division's front had been treated ten days earlier. As soon as this tornado was unloosed the German artillery, in response to S.O.S. signals from their infantry, laid down a counter barrage on the Canadians front and communication trenches. Accurately placed, this counter barrage battered in some of the parapets and inflicted a number of casualties in the crowded jumping-off trenches. Accordingly the men were not sorry when the hour for the assault arrived and they were ordered forward into the open.*

*Climbing over the top at the zero hour, 1.30 a.m., the four waves of the Royal Highlanders began their advance. The condition of the ground was very bad and, in the darkness, the men slipped and slithered into shell holes, often eight or ten feet deep. The weather, too, was most unfavourable and rain fell heavily at intervals, but the men pushed forward most determinedly and maintained their direction surprisingly well. One feature that helped matters was that the preliminary bombardment had effectively cut the enemy*

wire. Here and there uncut wire was encountered, but not in quantity sufficient seriously to impede the advance.

... After capturing the "Halifax" line, [Major G. E.] McCuaig led the attacking waves against "Montreal" and "Winnipeg." By this time the opposition had stiffened appreciably and the Battalion was fighting hard to maintain the speed of its advance. On the left a strong machine gun post threatened at one time to hold up that flank altogether, but was silenced by a grenade party, who, creeping from shell hole to shell hole, outflanked it and bombed its stout hearted crew into submission. With this and some similar strong points disposed of, the attack swept forward. Bitter hand to hand fighting occurred at many points in the maze of trenches, shell holes and muddy ditches through which the attackers bombed and bayoneted their way.

... Bit by bit, in spite of minor checks, the Battalion forced its way towards the "Winnipeg" line, where, except for bombing and blocking parties, the advance was to halt.

Almost on scheduled time the attack reached its objective.... On the flanks the other battalions were equally successful. The whole Corps, therefore, rejoiced in the fact that what had threatened to be a German triumph had been turned by the counter attack into a Canadian victory.

Victories, however, are not won without loss and in the 13th the losses were severe, though not out of proportion to the results achieved.... [Six officers were killed and five wounded.] Amongst the other ranks casualties amounted to approximately 300, of whom 67 were killed and 32 missing, presumed killed, the balance being listed as wounded.<sup>26</sup>

Walter was among the wounded. Exactly when and where he was wounded on that rainy Tuesday is not known. He received a severe

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<sup>26</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 102-105.

gunshot wound to his right buttock (thigh and back).<sup>27</sup> Walter was taken to a casualty clearing station and, on 16<sup>th</sup> June, transported to England aboard the hospital ship HMHS *Cambria*.<sup>28</sup> From the Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre (CCAC) in Folkestone, Walter was transferred on that same day to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Western General Hospital on Leicester Road, Broughton, Manchester.<sup>29</sup> He had “a complete hole through the Rt. Buttock through the Glu maximus. Syringe through easily & freely: no nerve or bone lesion”.<sup>30</sup>

By 28<sup>th</sup> June, Walter’s condition was reported as improved. On 10<sup>th</sup> July, he was transferred to Heaton Mersey Auxiliary Hospital, Manchester, for further recovery. There his wounds were reported as healthy looking and granulating and was being packed and dressed with Boric gauze. By 23<sup>rd</sup> September, Walter’s wounds were deemed “firmly healed” and he was fit to be discharged to a convalescent hospital.<sup>31</sup> On 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> October, he was transferred to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital at Woodcote, Epsom.<sup>32</sup> At convalescent hospitals soldiers, like Walter, would stay for about six weeks to

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<sup>27</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Casualty Form, Hospital A&D Card.

<sup>28</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Casualty Form.

<sup>29</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> West General Hospital was apparently established in a municipal secondary school, a “huge building”. Correspondence in Great War Forum n.d..

<sup>30</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Severe Medical Case Sheet.

<sup>31</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Medical Case Sheet.

<sup>32</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Hospital Movement Card, Hospital A&D Card. The Canadian Army Medical Corps staffed Woodcote. After August 1916, the Canadian Corps, because of the high casualty numbers sustained from the Somme offensive, used the entire hospital. With 3800 beds, Woodcote became the largest convalescent hospital in the United Kingdom. Lost Hospitals of London n.d..

further recover from a wound or illness, but also train and exercise to be readied again for active duty.<sup>33</sup>

On 13th October, the Medical Board at Woodcote recommended Walter as fit for duty, having recovered from his wounds.<sup>34</sup> A week later, he was discharged from Woodcote and sent to the CCAC, "[?] Reinf" [Reinforcement] Depot at Shoreham. He was then attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Corps Training Battalion (CCTB) at Hastings.<sup>35</sup>

### **1917 - Return to the Front**

On 29<sup>th</sup> January 1917, Walter was struck off strength from the CCTB and taken on strength with the 20<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalion at Shoreham. By about 22<sup>nd</sup> March, Walter arrived back in France at the Canadian Base Depot, and was reassigned to the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion. This was nine months after being wounded. On 17<sup>th</sup> April, Walter was deployed back to the "Field", where he arrived four days later.<sup>36</sup>

At this time, 21<sup>st</sup> April, Walter would likely have met up with the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion somewhere between the Lens-Arras Road and the Old British Front Line. There the battalion provided work parties to repair dugouts and made them into billets.<sup>37</sup> That summer and fall, Walter's battalion served on the front as well as in reserve, and participated in three major battles.

### **The Battle of Arras - Third Battle of the Scarpe**

The Battle of Arras, from 9<sup>th</sup> April to 16<sup>th</sup> May, was a British and Commonwealth offensive against German defences near Arras. It was

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<sup>33</sup> Lost Hospitals of London n.d.

<sup>34</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Proceedings of a Medical Board.

<sup>35</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Record of Service.

<sup>36</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Casualty Form-Active Service.

<sup>37</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 175.

part of a larger French offensive to break through the German line along the Western Front within two days. At Arras, the British and Commonwealth force was to recapture Vimy Ridge from the Germans, advance towards Cambrai, and divert German reserves from the French front.<sup>38</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> April, the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved up to the front line near Bois de la Ville, to support the capture of Arleux. From 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> May, it took part in the taking of Fresnoy from the Germans.<sup>39</sup> The following account illustrates the conditions Walter may have faced.

*All day on the 29th and again on the 30th, the companies of the 13th were subjected to heavy shelling, but, while this was unpleasant for all, "D" Coy., owing to its exposed position, and "B" Coy. in support got much the worst of it. In "D" Coy. casualties were numerous, while, as a result of concussion, such men as were otherwise uninjured were dazed and shaken almost beyond endurance, this condition being accentuated by the fact that no food or water could be sent through to them....*

*Later that same night [1<sup>st</sup> May] an Engineer officer arrived at the front and, under his supervision, the 13th prepared jumping off trenches several hundred yards in advance of their position and close to Fresnoy. From these, units of the 1st Brigade, which relieved the 13th early on the morning of May 1st, launched the assault which brought Fresnoy into Canadian hands two days later.*

*After relief by the 1st Brigade, the 13th moved back to the Red Line of the Vimy Battle, Battalion Headquarters being in a dugout, called "Wittelsberger" or "Wittelsbacher" Haus. Working parties cleaned up this area on May 2nd, but on the following day unexpected orders took the Battalion forward to the Brown Line once more, the advance being made in small parties to*

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<sup>38</sup> Ashworth 2000: 55-56, Keegan 1999:348-352 in Wikipedia. Walter arrived at the front after the Canadian successful assault on Vimy Ridge.

<sup>39</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 175-179.

*escape enemy shelling.*

*After holding this new position for 24 hours, during which time the artillery on both sides displayed activity, the 13th was relieved by the 1st Devons of the 95th British Infantry Brigade. This unit had suffered severely in the recent fighting and was in no shape to take over an important part of the line. Morale was good, but the unit was very weak numerically, consequently it was no surprise to the Canadians, though a great disappointment, when news was received that the Germans had counter-attached and retaken ground which the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade had bought so dearly.*

*With this one day tour in the Brown Line, the part played by the 13th Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada, in the so-called Battles of Arras, 1917, comes to an end.<sup>40</sup>*

Much of the remainder of May was spent in Corps reserve, part of the time at Vimy Station. On 25<sup>th</sup> June, the battalion returned to the front line and in early July was back to reserve again near Vimy Station.<sup>41</sup>

## **Hill 70**

To divert German reinforcements away from Passchendaele where the Allied offensive was stalled, the Canadian Corps was ordered to attack Lens to the south.<sup>42</sup>

*Instead of attacking the heavily fortified city [of Lens] directly, [Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Arthur] Currie, after studying the ground, convinced his British superiors that a better plan would be to capture Hill 70, directly to the north. If this dominating hill could be taken, the Germans would have no choice but to counterattack. Currie planned for artillery and machine-guns*

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<sup>40</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 176-179.

<sup>41</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 183.

<sup>42</sup> Canadian War Museum.

*to smash these German concentrations, thereby weakening their hold on the entire sector.*<sup>43</sup>

From 24<sup>th</sup> July until the end of the month, the 13th Battalion trained to capture Hill 70.

*The Canadians attacked on 15 August and captured many of their objectives, including the high ground. They then held their positions against 21 determined German counterattacks over the next four days. Canadian probing attacks against Lens on 21 and 23 August were unsuccessful, but Currie's forces had inflicted severe casualties on the enemy and gained the high ground overlooking the city.*<sup>44</sup>

A roll call of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion after Hill 70 showed that approximately forty percent of those who had gone into the attack were casualties. Walter, however, was not among them.

### **Passchendaele**

*In July [1917], the British commander, Sir Douglas Haig, launched a disastrous drive in Flanders designed to break through the front and capture German submarine bases along the Belgian coast. For the next four months, British soldiers struggled against strongly-fortified German defences, but made only limited advances. Early in October, the Canadian Corps was ordered to the sector to prepare for the capture of Passchendaele.*

*In a series of attacks beginning October 26, the Canadians inched their way under heavy fire from shell-crater to shell-crater over the muddy battlefield. Then, on October 30, with two British divisions, they began the assault on Passchendaele itself. They gained the ruined outskirts of the village during a violent rainstorm and for five days they held on grimly, often*

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<sup>43</sup> Canadian War Museum.

<sup>44</sup> Canadian War Museum.

*waist-deep in mud and exposed to a hail of jagged steel from German shelling. On November 6, when reinforcements arrived, four-fifths of the attackers were dead. Passchendaele had become a cruel ordeal for the Canadians, who suffered 15,654 battle casualties.*<sup>45</sup>

While the 13th Battalion did not participate in the assaults on Passchendaele, it provided significant support building and repairing corduroy roads to bring supplies to the forward lines while exposed to artillery fire. After the battle, the battalion occupied the captured crest of a hill at Wieltje where they experienced enemy shelling, and later occupied the front line in the Avion-Lens sector.<sup>46</sup> Christmas and New Year were spent at billets behind the front lines at Guoy-Servins and Petit Servins.<sup>47</sup>

### **1918 – Illness**

In mid-January 1918, Walter was granted fourteen days leave in England. Three days into his leave, on 28<sup>th</sup> January, he was admitted to the Endell Street Military Hospital in Covent Garden, London. He was diagnosed with tonsillitis.<sup>48</sup> His condition was reported as "Throat L. tonsil very enlarged while thick memb. [?] on it. Uvula also affected where in contact with ulcer.... Swab.... On R. leg [?] is small healing ulcer".<sup>49</sup> Walter was subsequently diagnosed with diphtheria.<sup>50</sup> He

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<sup>45</sup> Veterans Affairs Canada 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 208-215.

<sup>47</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 218,219.

<sup>48</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Hospital Movement Card.

<sup>49</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Medical Case Sheet.

<sup>50</sup> Diphtheria is a bacterial infection caused by *Corynebacterium diphtheria* and is spread from an infected person through respiration. Toxins produced by the bacteria form a thick film in the throat as the disease progresses. Untreated, this leads to difficulty breathing, and ultimately suffocation. Spread of the toxin can also

was transferred to the North Eastern Hospital on St. Anns Road, Tottenham, a hospital specifically for treating fevers and diphtheria.<sup>51</sup> There, Walter was struck off strength from the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion and taken on strength with the 1<sup>st</sup> Quebec Regiment Depot (QRD) at Bramshott.<sup>52</sup>

Walter was discharged from the North Eastern Hospital and transferred on 28<sup>th</sup> March to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital at Bear Wood. He was assigned to Hut 12 for diphtheria convalescence. Described as "Feels fairly fit", Walter was discharged on 5<sup>th</sup> April and assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Convalescent Depot (CCD), Bramshott<sup>53</sup>. On 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> May, he ceased to be attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> CCD, was struck off strength from the QRD, and placed with the 20<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalion, Bramshott, for "graduated training".<sup>54</sup>

### **Return to The Front – The Hundred Days**

On or about 11<sup>th</sup> September 1918, Walter proceeded from the 20<sup>th</sup> Reserve Battalion to the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion Overseas. He arrived at the Canadian Base Depot, France, on 12<sup>th</sup> September, and at the

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affect the heart and other vital systems. In World War I, the CEF reported 1701 cases of diphtheria, eighteen resulting in death. MacPhail 1925: 268.

<sup>51</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Hospital Movement Card. The North Eastern Fever Hospital was opened by the Metropolitan Asylums Board in 1892 to treat patients with fever and diphtheria; National Archives, London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, H32/SA – St. Ann's Hospital Tottenham.

<sup>52</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Casualty Form-Active Service, Hospital Movement Card, Index Card.

<sup>53</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn, Hospital Movement Card, Hospital A&D Card. Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Casualty Form-Active Service.

<sup>54</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn, Record of Service, Medical History.

Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp on 16<sup>th</sup> September.<sup>55</sup>

By September the war was turning in favour of the Allied forces. A major offensive, to be known as the Hundred Days, was planned to break the Germans' last hold, as well as their spirit, on the Western Front.<sup>56</sup>

*Ultimately it was decided that as soon as possible ... four convergent and simultaneous offensives should be launched by the Allies as follows:*

*'By the Americans west of Mezieres.*

*By the French west of Argonne, in close co-operation with the American attack and with the same general objectives.*

*'By the British on the St. Quentin-Cambrai front in the general direction of Maubeuge.*

*'By the Belgian and Allied forces in Flanders in the direction of Ghent.*

*'The results to be obtained from these different attacks depended in a peculiarly large degree upon the British attack in the centre. It was there that the enemy's defences were most highly organized. If these were broken, the threat directed at his vital systems of lateral communications would of necessity react upon his defences elsewhere<sup>57</sup>.*

The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion's role in the offensive was to support the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> British Armies' attack in the centre. They would cross the Canal du Nord, capture Bourlon Wood and the high ground to the northeast of it, and thereby protect the left flank of the attack. The 11<sup>th</sup> British

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<sup>55</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn Casualty Form-Active Service; Record of Service.

<sup>56</sup> Borys 2011: 23.

<sup>57</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 272

Division and 7<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion were attached to the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion for this operation.<sup>58</sup>

On 19<sup>th</sup> September, the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion prepared to move to positions for the offensive and marched from Dainville to Tilloy. The strength of the Battalion was increased by the arrival of a draft of replacements.<sup>59</sup> That draft more than likely included Walter.

### **27 September 1918 - Battle of Canal du Nord – The Ultimate Sacrifice**

The following account comes from the War Diary of the 13<sup>th</sup> Canadian Battalion.

*The original intention was for this unit [the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion] to cross the CANAL DU NORD two hours after the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion had attacked.... This however was altered at the last and the battalion assembled on a one company front at 4:00AM on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The assembly was made under perfect conditions in the meadows to the SW of PANILAND WOOD. The situation was quiet though INCHY to the South was being quite heavily shelled.*

*At zero hour, 5:20AM the visibility was absolutely suitable for our purpose, and we had no difficulty in following the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion forward.*

*About 100 yards ahead of our assembly position runs a stream 15 to 20 feet wide which was to have been bridged previous to zero. This had not been done so our day began by wading across with the water up to the armpits under quite heavy shell and machine gun fire. It was a sight to remember to see the men's kilts floating around them, while Piper G.B. Macphersin played them across, to the tune of "Blue Bonnets Over the Border". The water was cold, and naturally wet but quite unable to damp the ardour of our*

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<sup>58</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 272.

<sup>59</sup> Featherstonhaugh 1925: 273.

men in this event, resolute and determined. Following just behind the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion in order to get through the enemy's barrage, a halt was made East of the Canal (found to be quite dry) to reorganize, but this had to be abandoned owing to heavy machine gun fire from SAINS which caused us considerable casualties, unfortunately mostly NCOs.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion made good all its objectives on time and we then had to wait over an hour before the advance could be continued so the enemy, who had been thoroughly disorganized, had ample opportunity to [rebuild?] himself together. By this time a large proportion of Officers and NCOs had become casualties.

The right flank, "B" Company, was to attack first, going due East, and gained its objective, a mile ahead, after obstinate fighting. Captain Johnston, in command, and Lieut. Reausne[?], led splendidly, the latter, with half a dozen men, taking over 75 prisoners.

"C" Company attacked next, fighting due North from "B" Coy's left flank and being met with heavy machine gun fire from the rise up to the AL[?]O-CAMBRIA ROAD. Objectives were only attained after very stiff fighting.

"D" Coy then started its advance on MARQUION but at once ran into heavy belts of wire, quite untouched by shell fire. Four "TANKS", which on paper were to have been with us from the start, now appeared and matters looked much brighter, but the "TANKS" merely advanced to the wire, turned around and departed in the direction of SAINS, despite the "Come to [our?] help" signal from the Company, and personal requests from Lieuts. R.A.C. Young and [?] Christie. As the barrage had passed, well in advance of the Company, the German gunners were able to shoot down many of the men, while cutting their way through the wire, and one tank, going in advance through the wire, would have cut our casualties to a quarter. Both our Stokes guns had been knocked out previously and the enemy machine guns were up a bare slope out of range of our rifle

*grenades. Lieuts. R.A.C. Young and [?] Christie had been wounded, and Lieut. G.W. Megan killed, but Lieut. Appelby (who had twice previously received slight wounds) led his Company on up the right flank of KEITH WOOD. Opposition now very firm, and the farthest the men could crawl forward was the belts of wire running West from CHAPEL CORNER, and along the South of Marquion. Field guns could have cleared up this situation at once, but we had no Liaison Officer with us. The first Artillery Officer seen reported after 1:00PM and he was not in direct communication with his battery.*

*Throughout the day, 4 enemy balloons were up continuously in front of our position, with splendid observation....*

*"A" Company weakened by numerous casualties, was brought forward, and the [right?] Company of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, coming up at this point, a joint attack was about to be made, when a battalion of the Manchester Regiment of the 11<sup>th</sup> Division came up and the whole line went forward in one general wave. The German defence was now broken and little further opposition was encountered in capturing the village. This completed the operation and only consolidation and reorganization remained to be done. Three German battalions ... had been defeated, and an advance of a mile made on a front of fully two miles, with two guns and a large number of machine guns captured.*

*.... In spite of very heavy fire, the whole Battalion behaved as if carrying out a field-day practice.<sup>60</sup>*

Casualties sustained by the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion from 25<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September were one officer and 29 other ranks killed, one officer and four other ranks died of wounds, eleven officers and 169 other ranks wounded (including shell-shocked), and eight men missing. The majority of these casualties were sustained in the

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<sup>60</sup> Royal Highlanders of Canada 1918: 27-32.

27<sup>th</sup> September "Bourlon Wood Operation".<sup>61</sup>

Walter Francis Lunn was killed in the Bourlon Wood Operation.<sup>62</sup> The Circumstances of Death register records that "When at the final objective near Marquion, he was killed by enemy machine gun fire".<sup>63</sup> Based on where he was killed, near Marquion on the final assault, Walter may have been with A or D Company and the assault on Chapel Corner. Chapel Corner figured prominently in the German's final desperate stand at Marquion. "From Chapel Comer, south-east of Marquion, the German opposition, which had wavered before the initial rush of the 14th, rallied with heavy fire to stop the 13th Battalion, which was following up the initial assault. It took a joint effort by the 13th and 15th Battalions with tank assistance to clear Marquion".<sup>64</sup>

Canal du Nord has been described as the Canadian Corps' greatest tactical achievement even though it has been overshadowed by the better-known successes at Vimy Ridge in 1917 and at Amiens and the Drocourt-Quéant line earlier in 1918. "The Canal du Nord operation was a sophisticated combined-arms assault in which engineer, artillery and infantry units were seamlessly integrated".<sup>65</sup> The battle at Canal du Nord and The Hundred Days campaign led to Germany calling for peace negotiation and the Armistice of 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

## **Remembrance**

Walter is buried at Quarry Cemetery (Plot 1, Row C, Grave 13), located one kilometre southeast of the village of Marquion, on the

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<sup>61</sup> Royal Highlanders of Canada 1918: 32.

<sup>62</sup> The Lunn family history, Spencer and Spencer 1990: 33, incorrectly identifies Walter as having been killed at Vimy Ridge.

<sup>63</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, Circumstances of Death Registers, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/314, Vol. 208, Walter F. Lunn.

<sup>64</sup> Nicholson 1962: 447.

<sup>65</sup> Borys 2011: 23.

main road between Arras and Cambrai.<sup>66</sup> It was a battlefield cemetery constructed in a limestone quarry by Canadian soldiers and used until October 1918. Sir Edwin Lutyens later designed the Quarry Cemetery for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Along with Walter's grave, there are 67 other burials. The cemetery has been described as a "secluded" "sacral area", "that calls to mind a chapel in the open air".<sup>67</sup>

Walter's next of kin, Sophia Ann Fielding of Newport Station, Nova Scotia, and Lewis Elone Lunn, of Kingsley, Manitoba, were notified of Walter's death in early October 1918. Because Walter never married and both his parents were deceased, Lewis, his eldest brother, received Walter's war medals and decorations, as per government protocol. These included the 1914-1915 Star, the British War Medal, and the Victory Medal. In 1921 Lewis received the plaque and scroll honouring Walter's sacrifice from the Government of Canada.<sup>68</sup> The scroll read:

*He whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom.*

*Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.*

Walter's brother Sydney Arthur survived the war, but was wounded twice.<sup>69</sup> His uncle Harry served in Canada with the Canadian

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<sup>66</sup> Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

<sup>67</sup> Geurst 2010:388

<sup>68</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-48, Item 538813, Walter F. Lunn, Medal Index/Memorial Cross Card.

<sup>69</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-43, Item 538808, Sydney A Lunn, Medical Examination Upon Leaving the Service of Officers and Other Ranks who have No Disability.

Garrison Regiment, Halifax.<sup>70</sup> Both returned to civilian life. Percy Lockhart, believed to have been Walter's friend, died from pneumonia in July 1918 at a military hospital in England.<sup>71</sup>

On 9<sup>th</sup> October 1923, Sophia Ann and others of the Lunn family were likely at the unveiling of the Hants County War Memorial, at Victoria Park, Windsor, Nova Scotia. They would have worn a small bow of white ribbon on their left breast to denote them as next and near of kin. The memorial was "erected in the memory of the men of Hants who gave their lives in the Great War 1914-1918, and in honour of all who served".<sup>72</sup> Walter's name (with the mistaken middle initial of S, not F) is inscribed on the list of "The Heroic Dead" from St. Croix.

Walter's name appears in the First World War Book of Remembrance, page 452, found at the Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower on Canada's Parliament Hill<sup>73</sup>.

Walter died in a war that was supposed to end all wars. Not to be. His namesake, my father, enlisted as a Lance Sergeant with the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps and served in the European Theatre of World War Two. He, though, was fortunate to survive that war. He married his war bride, my mother Laura Richardson, a Lance Corporal in the British Auxiliary Territorial Service and together they raised a family in peace; a life that Walter Francis Lunn would not experience.

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<sup>70</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5794-29, Item 538794, Harry H Lunn, Discharge Certificate.

<sup>71</sup> Library and Archives Canada, CEF, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 5705-34, Item 534824, Percy M. Lockhart, Casualty Record Card. Percy was medically discharged from the CEF about a month after enlisting with Walter and was returned to Canada. He reenlisted in December 1915, was found fit for service and sent again overseas. Percy's records indicate he had health problems throughout his service.

<sup>72</sup> Hants County War Memorial Unveiling 1923.

<sup>73</sup> My wife and I were surprised to also discover Walter's name in the Roll of Honour at the Scottish War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle, Scotland.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you foremost to my wife Linda for encouraging me in my family history research. I would like to thank Carole Morris-Underhill and the Hants Journal for assisting in my search for information and a photograph of Walter. <sup>74</sup>

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(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/robmcrorie/8291737426/in/photostream/>)



13<sup>th</sup> Battalion marching from Hill 70, August 1917. (Featherstonhaugh 1925)



13<sup>th</sup> Battalion soldiers in the trenches Near Lens, France, December 1917.  
(Featherstonhaugh 1925)



Canadian Convalescent Hospital Bear Wood, where Walter convalesced after getting diphtheria in 1918. (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/robmcrorie/8648070371>)





Quarry Cemetery , Marquion, France. Burial site of Walter Francis Lunn. (Copyright Werner Van Canegham)



Medals that Lewis Lunn would have received from left to right: 1914-1915 Star Medal, British War Medal and Victory Medal.