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# **“There is no Alternative”**

## **The Diary of Harry H. Coombs**

### **9th Battalion, CEF**

#### **August 1914 – January 1915**

**Barbara M. Wilson**

Harry H. Coombs was born on 6 March 1883, grew up in Simcoe, Ontario and, as a young man, served in the 39th Norfolk Rifles of the Active Militia. He left Simcoe for surveying work in the Peace River Country of Alberta and, after war broke out in 1914, travelled to Edmonton to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). At Camp Valcartier in Quebec, he became a private in the 9th Battalion, a unit in the First Contingent of the CEF. He remained a private with the 9th in England during the winter of 1914-1915, and in May 1915, the then Corporal Coombs was drafted to the 1st Battalion in France. He was wounded on 24 June and promoted to the rank of sergeant a few days later. Selected for officers' training, he received his commission on 25 January 1916, returning to France as an officer in the 3rd Battalion, CEF. He was wounded twice more, attained the rank of captain, and was awarded the Military Cross. Gazetted on 13 February 1917, the latter, according to the citation, was for “conspicuous gallantry in action. Although severely wounded during a raid he continued to command and encourage his men. He has on many previous occasions done fine work.” Coombs survived the war and died in Jefferson County, Kentucky in 1939.

Harry Coombs kept a diary from 12 August 1914 until 31 January 1915, which is now in the Canadian War Museum. The first part, from 12 August to 27 September 1914, was, he



wrote, “made from memory and may be slightly wrong.” The remainder was kept daily. The diary’s entries provide an invaluable first-hand account, from the point of view of an observant member of the rank and file, of the conditions of service in the nascent First Contingent of the CEF, from its early days at Camp Valcartier, to its voyage to England, to training on Salisbury Plain. The diary clearly illustrates the ‘teething’ problems that the CEF faced in this early formative period and illustrates how far it had to go before becoming forged into the elite formation that helped lead the way to victory in 1918.

Confusion, inefficiency, and a combination of ineptitude and haughtiness on the part of the officers were frequent objects of Coombs’s scorn. That Coombs himself was later to show both initiative and courage as a commissioned officer suggests that his observations are to be treated as something more than the customary grouching from the other ranks. Lack of discipline was a continuing sore point with him. His account of training at Valcartier, perhaps, evokes the least critical commentary, although there are references to sloppy turn-outs on parade. However, he was clearly disdainful of the lax discipline shown as the troops were boarding ship to head for England and this only increased during the voyage itself. There were, for example, daily complaints about the quality of the food served to the men, climaxing with the appearance

of tainted fish. The regimental officers, according to Coombs, were of little use in the face of these difficulties. And an incident described by Coombs when the officers watched and taunted the men as they endured a compulsory disinfectant communal bath is a blistering indictment of the state of their professionalism at this point in their service. Coombs felt this behavior was due to a lack of experience on their part in handling men, a criticism that he applied to the sergeants as well.

After arriving on Salisbury Plain, Coombs complained that training was confined to drill and route marches, including one march upon which the soldiers were ordered to pick up paper found along the way. On 2 November, he wrote that he wished they could "get down to field work." He soon got his wish. The battalion's war diary in November recorded that, by then, training consisted of physical drill, bayonet exercises, musketry instruction, and skirmishing. There were, in addition, lectures on discipline, interior economy, care of rifles, protection, entrenchments, equipment, and night manoeuvre. On 27 November the battalion participated in a 4th Brigade scheme, which consisted of a night advance "with view to occupying position, to await dawn to make an assault on enemy's trenches."

The monotony and discomfort during the training on Salisbury Plain is clearly conveyed, which, according to Coombs, the prevailing military system did little to mitigate. His entry for 6 January, for example, made after an officer had been shot in the head and killed while on the rifle ranges, elicited the following scathing comments: "Altogether during the last month things have been run for the furtherance of lice, filth and sickness and the much vaunted system of English army rules which we had dinned into us previous to our arrival has failed to materialize." This was relieved somewhat for Coombs by a two-day leave spent in Salisbury and Bournemouth, but the appalling conditions finally caught up with him, for he was ill for several days in December. But he was well enough by 22 December to begin a longer leave which he spent with friends in Perth, Scotland.

We cannot be certain what caused Coombs to give up his diary. Possibly it was simply the

increasing pressure of his military duties. He had approximately three months training left in England with the 9th Battalion. On 29 April, however, this battalion's status was changed from an infantry battalion destined for France to a component of the new Canadian Training Depot at Tidworth, which was intended to train and supply reinforcements. As noted, Coombs transferred in May to the 1st Battalion in France. The acuity of his commentary makes one regret that Coombs did not continue his diary throughout his military service. It would be fascinating to see what Coombs had to say as his military career lengthened and as the Canadian Corps grew more professional. As it stands, however, the diary provides an interesting, if, possibly, somewhat contrarian, view of the conditions and the quality of service in the CEF in its very earliest days of existence.

### **To Valcartier, 1914**

**Aug. 12.** Have got business matters in pretty fair shape and hope that they will grow while I am away. This is quite a gamble. I am leaving everything I have to go to a war from which I do not know whether I will come back or not. If I come back OK I do not know whether I will be independent or busted. If I come back crippled up and find myself broke I will be in a hell of a fix. But I am one of four and as I am the only one of that four who can go, there is no alternative. Left the Crossing at three o'clock. Slept at Frank Stewart's. Billy Smith is taking me to Grouard.

**Aug 13.** On trail. Night out on Peavine Prairie. Met Nelson Pinder at Heart River.

**Aug 14.** Arrived Grouard 10.30am. Left by NTC [Northern Transportation Company] steamer at 10pm. Night on lake [Lesser Slave Lake].

**Aug 15.** Arrived Sawridge [*sic* – actually Sawbridge] early morning. Left Sawridge by first thru ED & BC train [Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway] to Edmonton at 1pm. Night on train.

**Aug 16.** Arrived Edmonton 8am. Room at Yale Hotel. Tea at HPB with LMW.

**Aug 17.** Edmonton. 19th Dragoons filled up. [Recruits for the First Contingent enlisted in units

of the Active Militia – of which the 19th Dragoons was one – but signified their willingness to serve overseas.] Dinner with AWH. New baby on the job.

**Aug 18.** Edmonton. Pantages with MW

**Aug 19.** Edmonton. Staying at JHS

**Aug 20.** Enlisted in 101st [101st Edmonton Fusiliers, another Active Militia unit] E. Co. Expected to get turned down on a/c of teeth but kept them hid in the rush.

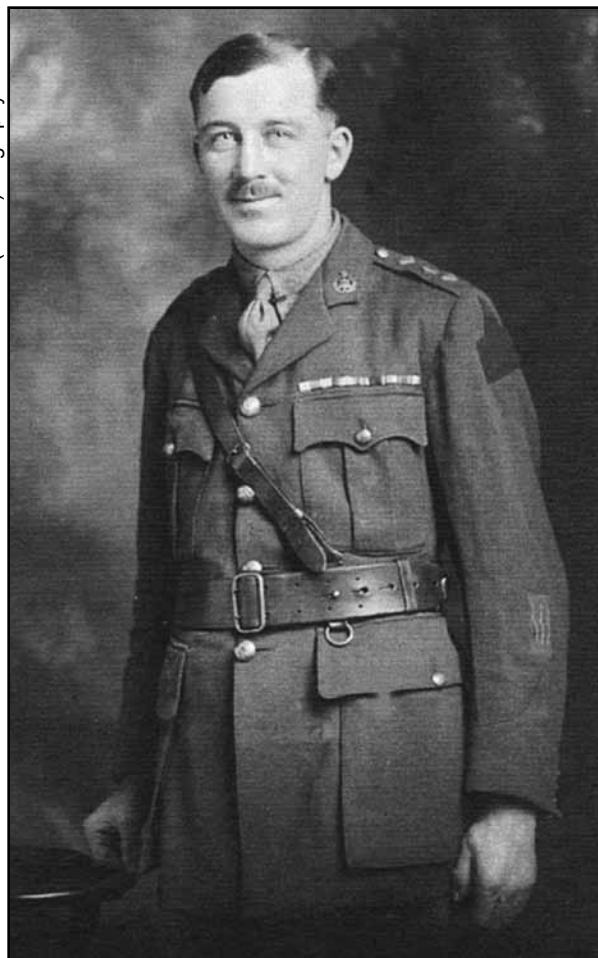
**Aug 21.** Drilling all day. Had rotten night. MW refused to come out because I enlisted. Battalion paraded at Parliament Bldgs. Big crowd. Sifton, McNamara and others talked.

**Aug 22.** Left Edmonton about three o'clock. Streets packed with people. Big send off. Regiment in two sections. Cos. B, C, D and E in first train, A, F, G, and H in second. Travelling CPR. Headed for Valcartier, Que. Train all sleepers. We have a berth to each man and things are looking bright for a good trip. A few drunks, some of whom have been pinched. We have every nationality in the world represented. It's a toss whether to call it Cox's Army or the Foreign Legion. I hope they are better than they look. All the little towns along the way are turning out to give us the "once over" and a cheer.

**Aug 23.** On train. Was inoculated for typhoid. Was optional but, as am not passing up anything, took a shot of it in the arm. Nothing to it. Crossing Sask. today and the cheers are still with us. Yorkton was out in force and gave us cigars etc. We got paid today. \$8.80 was mine. Some bum book keeping somewhere but I should worry.

**Aug 24.** That inoculation has not "nothing to it." This train looks like a plague relief train. I am sore even to my eyebrows but still able to eat two meals a day they give us. Some of the fellows are "hors de combat" right. If you look hard at a man's left arm he seems to make starboard signs free. The bridges have armed guards and also the elevators at Fort William and Port Arthur. There are signs of war ok.

**Aug 25.** Passed North Bay today and had a big reception and send off. Loyal town. My arm is ok and the germs have quit scrapping in my vitals. Thought I might get leave to run down home from

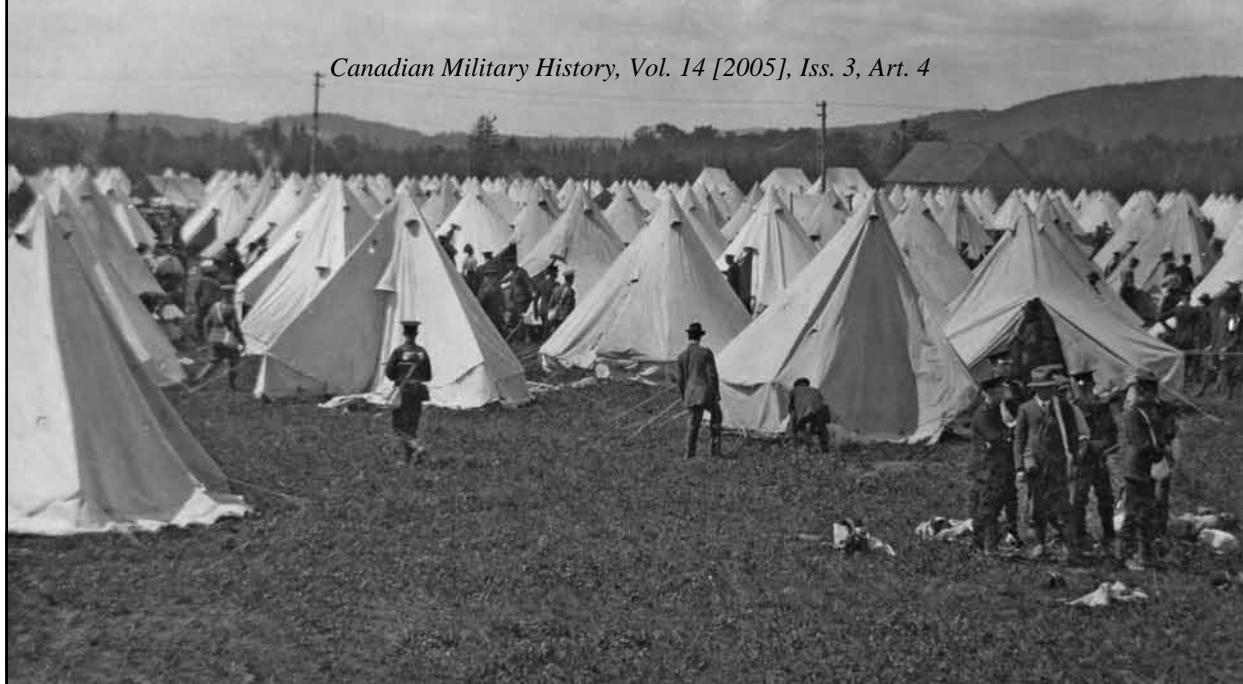


Canadian War Museum (CWM) biography file

Captain Harry Coombs, ca. 1918

here but nothing doing. We are like animals in cages. Have been out of the cars just twice since leaving Edmonton and dry towns much to the chagrin of several.

**Aug 26.** Passed thru Smith's Falls, the freight yards of Montreal, Quebec and arrived at the camp siding about seven o'clock pm. Today passed thru the French farming country where the farms look like a bunch of dominoes. Every man seems to have his allotted six foot of ground and no more. They also seem to use one horse for all kinds of work. At Quebec station we had considerable amusement flipping silver coins on the ground for the dirtiest little frog-eaters a man ever lamped [contemporary slang for "saw"] to scrap over. Mud was no detriment. Money mad, same as the rest of the world. Several of the fellows gave bystanders a dollar to bring them a bottle of booze. The officers intercepted them on their return and took the booze. Good system –



Tent lines, Camp Valcartier, 1914

for the officers. The siding at Valcartier is about a mile from camp and our lines are about a mile and a half farther. It was dark when we got in and we marched down the main stem of the camp with the previous arrivals looking us over. There were cheers and sarcastic remarks, one of the most popular being "You —, You'll never get rich, you're in the army now". We were issued three blankets and a rubber sheet each. In our tent are Acting Color Sgt. Delaney, Sgt. Mount, Samwell, McAlpine, Barrow, Starley, Edneron, Mickle and myself. We are in the 12th Battn.

### Valcartier 1914

**Aug 27.** This is a great camp. There is one long graded street, on both sides of which face the lines. There is a row of stand pipes and shower

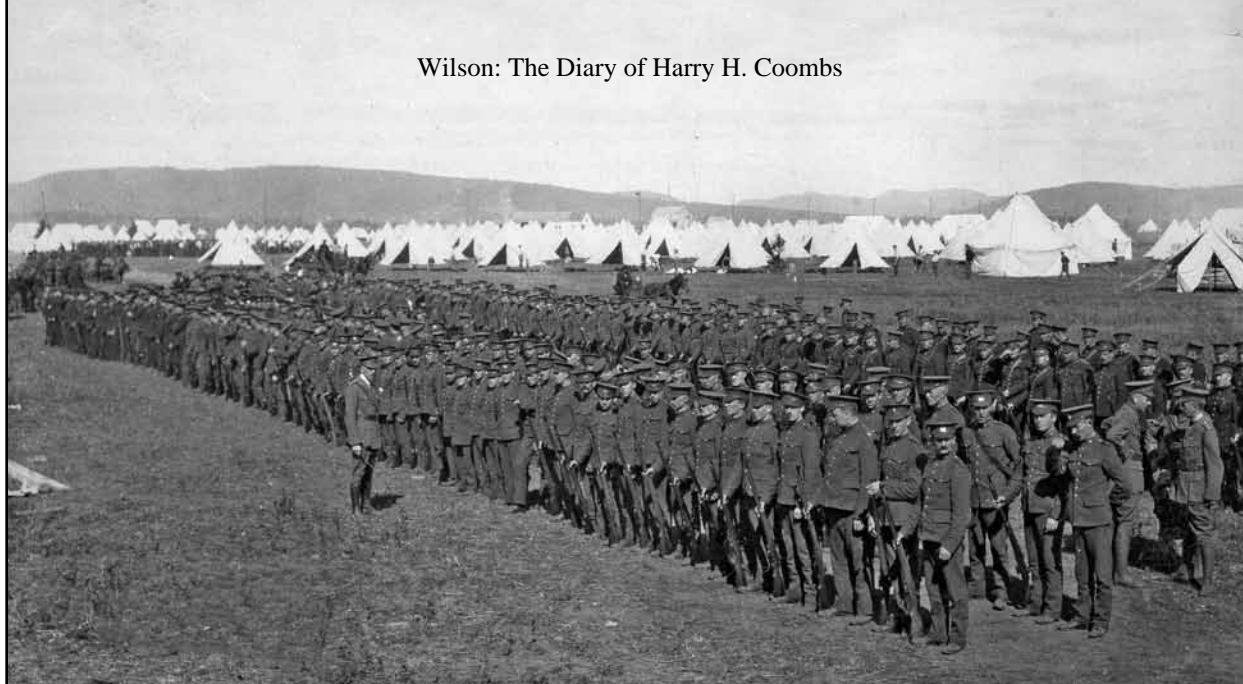
baths on each side of it. Also electric lights. The campground is surrounded by the Laurentian Mountains. The soil is pure sand with a thin growth of moss. Back of the lines of tents are the parade grounds where we undoubtedly get ours. There are said to be about 25,000 men here with more coming. And not a woman in camp. Have not got very well acquainted with the layout yet. No drill today.

**Aug 28.** Were all down for a swim in the Jacques Cartier River today. There were over 3000 naked men in at the same time. Water nymphs. On the way back we stopped at the canteens of which there are only three in camp. Strictly dry. You have to fight your way in to get to the counter. Always about twelve deep of willing customers. The YMCA is on the job with a writing tent. More troops are coming. No drill today. Some more canteens are opening up.

Target practice at the butts, Camp Valcartier, 1914



CWM 19810649-030



Troop assembly, Camp Valcartier, 1914

**Aug 29.** Drill today. Getting down to work. Reveille at 5.30am. Physical drill 6-6:45. Breakfast 7:00. Company drill 8-11.30. Dinner 12.00. Battalion and Company Drill 2-4:30. Lights out 10:15. Everybody in at 9:30. There is quite a lot of fun watching some of the visiting women coming through camp in automobiles when some hundreds of naked men are standing under the showers. The poor "loidies" do not see much of the camp but should remember the bottom of the machines well as that is all they dare look at, except a few who have nerve enough to look around and they get cheered roundly.

**Aug 30.** Sunday, nothing doing.

**Aug 31.** At the ranges today. There are 1400 targets stretching for 31/2 miles at the foot of the mountains. We fired at 100 yds. I made 41 out of 50. Using the Ross Rifle .303 with peep sight.

It is a good target rifle but I think will not stand much rough usage.

**Sep 1.** Routine. We are getting outfitted slowly, a piece or so each day.

**Sep 2.** Rifle ranges. Made 43 out 50 and 18 out of 25 rapid fire. Letter from father saying mother ill.

**Sep 3.** Routine. Applied for leave to go home. Was turned down. Inoculated second time.

**Sep 4.** Routine. Applied for leave again and turned down with a few kind words of sympathy.

**Sep 5.** Moved lines. We are in Ninth Battn. now.

**Sep 6.** Got grabbed for picket duty on the remounts for all night. Fifteen [?] of the company had to go. I hit it lucky, being on from 1:30 to 3:30, all of the other watches getting two times on.

The dry canteen, Camp Valcartier, 1914

CWM 19810649-030



**Sep 7.** Just after getting back to our lines from picket duty was grabbed again to go back as the Army Service Corps had not arrived yet. It rained all day and I was soaked proper as have no great coat yet. This was the day of the big review which I missed. But it was a miserable day and the whole works stood out in the rain until they were soaked. The Duke of Connaught [the Governor General] and Col. Sam [the Minister of Militia and Defence, Colonel Sam Hughes] looked the bunch over and said they were proud of them. The artillery and cavalry were a peevish outfit when they came back. The pickets dinner was to be sent out to them. All the other companies got theirs except E. We waited until 1:30 and then hit out to a canteen some 400 yds away. The canteens are closed on Sunday but this fellow took a chance on slipping out pies to about half of the fellows and then got cold feet and refused to sell any more and locked the door with himself on the inside. Outside were several packing cases. One bright individual tore off a board and found pies. The case was immediately carried in to the bush and in order to punish the canteen keeper for selling goods on Sunday thereby breaking rules laid down by the Hon. Sam, to whom we are all loyal, the case was emptied. The prop could not open his trap under the circumstances. About four o'clock I got tired of packing posts to build picket lines and beat it for camp with no after results.

**Sep 8.** Rain. No parades.

**Sep 9.** On cook fatigue today.

**Sep 10 – 11.** Ranges

**Sep 12.** Ranges. Skirmishes and advancing on target in open order. Firing one round about every twenty-five yards and ten rounds at 100 yards. I got five extra rounds at the 100 yards and my rifle was so hot it sizzled. [Note this reference, as it was a portent of things to come when the Ross Rifle got into action on the Western Front.] Got to camp about 2 o'clock, had 30 minutes for dinner and beat it back for a review but we got there too late.

**Sep 13.** Nicest day since arriving. The camp has been crowded all day with visitors. The Adjutant sent for me this afternoon and told me I could have leave for a week to go home. Left at nine o'clock. The train was packed with weeping women who had been to camp to say farewell

to their men folks. Think I realize the war idea more now than I have before. Left Quebec 11:40 by CPR. Upper berth. Arrived Montreal 6:30am.

**Sep 14.** Left Montreal 9:00 am. Arrived Toronto 6:00. Left Toronto 6:10. Arrived Hamilton 7:13. Arrived Simcoe 9:05. Twenty-four hrs from Valcartier. Slept at home without Mother knowing I was in the house.

**Sep 15 – 17.** Simcoe

**Sep 18.** Left Simcoe 4:35pm. Laid over in Toronto until 11:40pm. Went to Hippodrome. Rotten shows.

**Sep 19.** Had half day in Montreal. City full of fellows turned down at Valcartier. Girl in PO [Post Office] stamp window indignant because American told her the US would annex Canada after she refused to accept US note. Arrived Valcartier 11:45.

**Sep 20.** Big review today pm. Duke of Connaught, Col. Sam, Borden [Robert L., the Prime Minister of Canada] Princess P [Princess Patricia, daughter of the Duke of Connaught] and Duchess [wife of Duke of Connaught]. The whole works on parade. About thirty-two thousand troops. Most I have ever seen. We marched past in columns of half battalions. We were not quite as rotten as most of the others. The dresses of the Highlanders saved them from looking like H. Church parade in morning with over twenty preachers.

**Sep 21.** We are getting the rest of the equipment. Expect we may go tomorrow.

**Sep 22.** Still here and more stuff is being issued. Everybody is anxious to go.

**Sep 23.** More equipment. Shirts, sox, underclothes and every doggone thing. My kit bag is full now.

**Sep 24.** Everybody peavish [sic] at being kept here. Expect to go every day and nothing doing.

**Sep 25.** Cook fatigue today. This is Frank's birthday. [Harry's brother, Frank E.L. Coombs, a veteran of the South African War]. I peeled potatoes in celebration of it.

**Sep 26.** The company had photo taken today. Took about an hour for the officers to decide what

shape they wanted it in. Have been appointed company scout.

**Sep 27.** Have got everything now and our kit bags are packed full. Some of the battalions have pulled out and expect we will go tomorrow sure.

### To England, 1914

**Sep 28.** Left camp about 12 noon. Great coats on. Haversack, water bottle, two blankets and rubber sheet, belts, scabbard, pouch, mess tin and kit bags. Some load for some of the fellows. Entrained at camp siding. Arrived at docks in Quebec about 4:30 and embarked on board *Zeeland*. Our company is in third class compartment second from forward. *Zeeland* is a Red Star liner. Usual run from Antwerp to New York – 12,000 tons. Get our meals at tables and do not have to wash our dishes, thank heaven. Was grabbed to go and bring up officers' luggage. The officers have more junk than all the men. Looks like the mess a "monies" (Cree for green horn) takes on his first survey. He gets all over that stuff the second trip. These fellows will look like hell doing a marathon with that stuff tied to them.

**Sep 29.** The whole company was on fatigue all morning loading ammunition. There are several million rounds going in to this boat. Fifty men had to go back after dinner but I dodged. The men are grousing over our sleeping accommodation as some of the others have second class cabins but somebody had to have these so what is the sense of worrying. There are liners on all the docks loading up. Some have pulled out and I understand will wait somewhere down the St. Lawrence from where all will pull out together with an escort. There seems to be considerable booze sticking around.

**Sep 30.** Ammunition has been loaded and gun carriages, wagons etc. went in all day today. We are all loaded up now and expect we will pull in the morning. The meals on boat are being impressed on my mind. Most of the fellows seem to think they have a halter on and must grab all they can get their claws on. Some have lovely long arms. As there is plenty of grub for all it must be habit learned at free lunch counters. We do not know where we are to land. We are not allowed to leave the boat but I walked off this morning

and went up town and got back without being stopped.

**Oct 1.** Two insignificant little tugs, one at each end, took hold of the *Zeeland* this morning about 6:15 and dropped it out in the river. We have been travelling down the St. Lawrence all day. There are some lovely stretches of country and some otherwise. Passed a sunken steamer. Believe it was a government boat which went down in a collision. Perfect weather. The night was great. Makes one lonesome.

**Oct 2.** Arrived Caspin Bay [*sic* – actually Gaspé Basin] about noon. This is a great sight. Caspin Bay is a small bay in Quebec on the lower St. Lawrence. Here the boats are all gathered. We make number twenty-nine. They are stationed in three rows. There are four cruisers: the *Eclipse*, *Talbot*, *Charybdis*, and *Diana*. We hear there are five more cruisers and four battle ships outside. I do not expect to forget this scene tonight. Full moon and all these liners in a bunch. I believe this is the largest fleet of transports ever been together. The *Arcadian* just pulled in. That makes thirty. All day the fisher folk have been running around us in their gasoline auxiliary fishing boats. I suppose they will tell their grand children of this sight. They have all the rest of Canada beaten a mile for a look at the troops all together. When the anchor was let down it made such a noise that some of the fellows eating just below in the forecabin beat it for the deck, thinking a shot had been poured into us.

**Oct 3.** About 3:15 this afternoon one of the cruisers steamed out and the liners followed. After ten had gone another cruiser left and ten more followed her while the first string travelled slowly allowing the second to come up abreast. Then, another cruiser and the third string of boats. We are the third boat in the third string as we left at 4:35. We were in position to see all of the others pull past us. The *Arcadian* is first ahead of us and the *Corinthian* behind. The fourth cruiser is bringing up the rear. Another moonlight night and we can count the whole thirty-four boats. They are black spots on the water. The water is like a mill pond. Weather warm. There are four hundred of the engineers on board besides the Ninth Battalion making about 1700 all told. Wrote two short letters today to Mother and F. but am not sure they went.

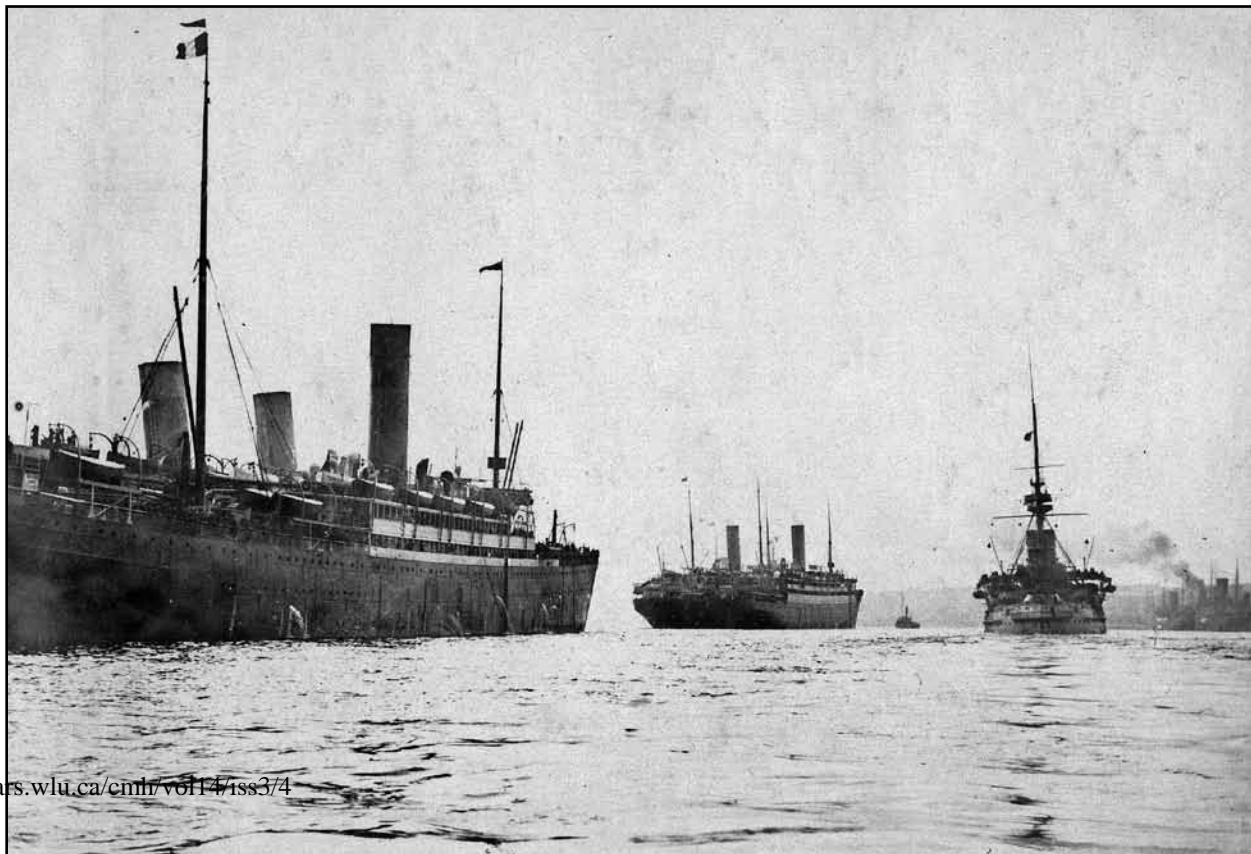


**Oct 4.** Sunday and lovely weather. When I went on deck this morning the full moon was just above the horizon in the west and the big red sun in the east. We are travelling the south route around Newfoundland. Were in sight of land all day the port side and about half of the day on the starboard. Some of the boats lagged behind and the flagship sent back a message saying that it was imperative that all keep up in their positions. We had voluntary church parade this morning in the first class dining room. Nearly all of our company went. Some in order to get a look at the good part of the ship as we are barred from seeing any of it except the steerage and front deck. I look with longing eyes on the promenade deck. Did not expect to travel third class first time I crossed the water. There have been only a very few cases of sea sickness so far. No sox have come through yet. There are tugs of war, skipping, leap frog and horse play of different kinds going on all the time. Boat drill started today. Our company has a collapsible outfit. We are assigned to boats 14, 14A, 14B. It is at the back end of the boat and we have a long trip back to it. A liner westbound passed to the north of us this afternoon. We made 185 miles up to noon today.

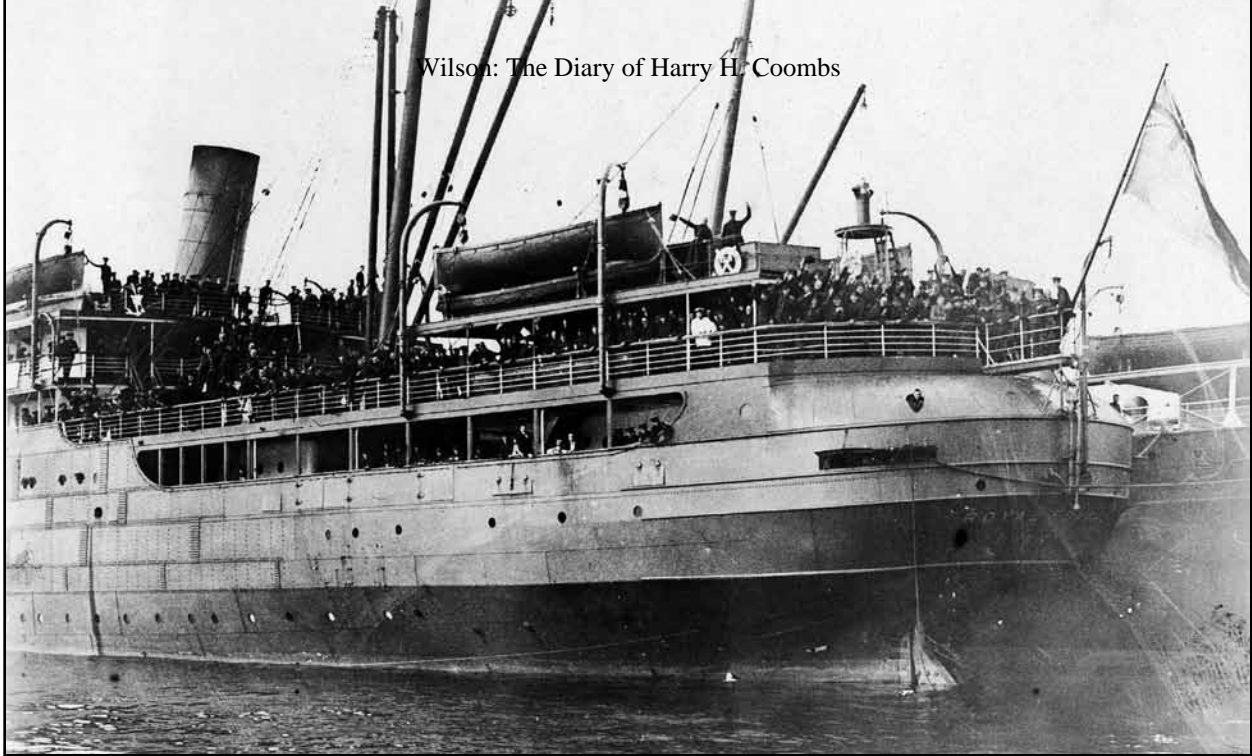
**Oct 5.** A gunboat is with us now, away off to starboard. It showed up this morning. Believe it is the *Gloria*. We were all excited this morning when the *Royal Edward* turned around in the second

column and the cruiser ahead of us came back at full speed. We thought something had happened to one of the liners. "Man over-board" was the trouble. He was picked up OK and will have to go on doing physical drill and fatigues. Some fellows are sure unlucky. Two new boats are in our line today, making 32 liners. Do not know what these two are. They may be troops from Newfoundland or merchantmen. Our middle cruiser is several miles out in the lead. Just before dark our left cruiser beat it away off to the left. A short time after I saw a thin streak of smoke on the horizon. It did not come any closer. The actions of the cruisers are very interesting to me. They certainly seem to be watch dogs. Another message came from the flagship today saying it was imperative that the boats keep in their correct positions to aid immunity from attack. We are to have two hrs. physical drill a day from now on. This morning while we were trying to touch our toes without bending our knees a wave broke against the side and came on over to have a look at us. It had full effect on the backs of half of the company, including the Col. Sgt. and Lt., much to the remorse of those of us who were not touched. It has been another beautiful day, though somewhat windy. The wind is increasing and may be chasing along considerable waves by morning. The port holes in our luxurious third class cabins are tight and so is the air. We have to be below by nine. I stay up to the last minute and come out first thing

Canadian transports arriving at Devonport, England, October 1914.



CWM CEF Photo Album No. 7 M301a



Canadian transport at dock, Devonport, England, October 1914.

in the morning. All the boats are without any top lights. They have a front and back light low down to prevent collisions. The cruisers are dark all over. Made 230 miles up to noon. G. Co. started to carry a pan of mulligan to the officers' mess today but were talked out of it by the officer of the day. There are grub troubles every day.

**Oct 6.** Cloudy all day and a rather stiff wind. The sea is getting along quite nicely. No more sea sickness yet. The left hand cruiser was back on the job again this morning. We were vaccinated today. That is the third time our left arms have been punctured for the benefit of our country. It was a painless operation – so far. There has been considerable comments of a rather uncomplimentary character regarding our grub from time to time. This morning our Company E were served some fish. These fish were caught in the North Sea twelve years ago. They have been around the Horn six times, were dumped out as useless in Buenos Aires, loaded on again for ballast the following spring, travelled through the Suez Canal, were sold to Russia and kept at Port Arthur for emergency rations, were not used as no one could get close enough to them. During the cold weather they were sent to Antwerp. When warm weather came on they were put on the *Zeeland* to be dumped at sea. When the *Zeeland* got out in the ocean there were no nose protectors on board so they could not be touched. They were still on this boat when we left Quebec and we were served with them for breakfast this morning. A dish full of them was taken up and placed on deck. A snare drum was

procured and an Indian pow-wow was started around the deck. The noise was good. It was so good that the Col. and some other officers came to look on and they put the whole show on the bum. No moon tonight, nor stars. The liners are ghostly figures keeping us company. Only a few of them are visible at all.

**Oct 7.** Two thin wreaths of smoke appeared this morning, one off our starboard bow away out ahead. The other straight out to starboard. The former did not come any closer and think it must be one of the guard. The latter was a freighter loaded with lumber. She fell in behind us and set a sail in order to keep up but gradually fell behind. Our middle cruiser goes out in front almost to the horizon every morning and drops back at night. There is a boat off to port behind us which shows up once in a while. Think this is one of the guard. They put up a big canvas sheet today for a bath but no one seems to want to use it. Cloudy but clear. Quite a sea running. The *Arcadian* just ahead of us is rolling badly there is a lot sea sickness on her. She has the 19th Dragoons. Fire alarm was rung today and we all beat it to our boat stations with life belts on.

**Oct 8.** The *Royal George* pulled out this morning and took up position ahead to starboard. Another of the fast liners took a similar position to port. Apparently to act as scouts. We are now in army advancing formation. Scouting boats out in the lead. Then a connecting line and then the main body. Was on butcher's fatigue today. Do not know what the idea was. Another lad and myself

were on. We went down in the lower regions of the ship and found the butcher shop by the smell. We looked it over and then went visiting in the lower part of the vessel. Saw the engines, the cold storage and then back to our end of the ship. Some of the fellows had to scrub the floors in the first cabin. I think it was a dirty low down deal that our fellows have to do such work. But of course it is the only chance some of these pen pushers will ever have of making a man work under them. They have not the brains to get above anyone in the ordinary walks of life. Another cruiser went through our lines today, the *Essex*, and disappeared astern. She is one of the protectors of merchantmen. We all chipped in for our steward [sic] today. He is a good head and gets us what he can.

**Oct 9.** Had good breakfast this morning. Real eggs. Cloudy sky but clear. The fleet is in same position as yesterday. The two scouting liners come back to the main body at night and go out again in the morning.

**Oct 10.** Rain today. Sea quiet. We have a dreadnought with us now. Showed up this morning and took up the position on the left flank. Also another cruiser. We now have eight war vessels in sight. This morning a five masted schooner without sails and towed by a steamer went past going west. Said to be oil boat. One of the cruisers followed them down through the lines until they were clear. Name of the dreadnought is *Lion*. Several boxing bouts were arranged and a schedule drawn up. This afternoon one of the contestants got knocked cold and the Col. stopped all further fistic arguments. K. Co. has the itch and are isolated in the forward part of the ship. A bath with disinfectants has been prepared and everybody is compelled to go in. The bath is just ahead of the promenade around the first cabins and the officers about forty strong are hanging over the rail and having fits of asinine laughing at the men being soused in the cold water. No arrangements have been made for us to bathe and now they compel us to get in this canvas tank and perform for their amusement. We have been sneaking through to the bath tubs of the 2nd cabin part and paying a steward [sic] 50 cents and risking getting pinched. Now they hand us this deal. I expect there will be a mild form of mutiny tomorrow if they continue. K Co. is composed of the foreigners and misfits who

were culled out of the other companies. Had kit inspection today.

**Oct 11.** Sunday and a beautiful day. Just a nice easy swell on the sea. Chicken, plum pudding and ice cream for dinner. Church parade this morning and had a very nice sermon. The bath parade was put off until this afternoon as part of F Co. refused to go in. There are about 30 of them in clink. The matter was argued and a screen put around the promenade deck and not an officer was allowed to look on except those in charge and they kept a straight face. Have not space to explain the details of this bath argument. The main difficulty is the lack of experience of the officers in handling men. They have apparently had no experience in handling men and they depend absolutely on their authority to make the men do their bidding. That policy goes about so far but it will be certain to take an awful bump. There does not seem to be the least personal regard for the officers by the men and the officers are entirely to blame. Many of the sgts. are in the same position. It is very dark tonight. The *Charybdis* sent messages back to the *Talbot* and all of the boats to close up. There are three extra lights ahead to starboard. Meals were good today.

**Oct. 12.** a.m. No boats where the lights were last night. Said to be more cruisers which are all around us. Very warm and cloudy. We have two mascots on board. A little yellow kitten and a small black and tan dog, both brought from Valcartier. Both are doing well. The dog has an antipathy to everyone not wearing a uniform and is continually snapping at the boat's crew. Had breast inspection this morning. Stripped to our waists and the doctor looked us over. Also were given our pay books. These books are for keeping a/c of all moneys received and contain signature, nearest kin and will, if you wish to make one. In the place of our middle cruiser, *Diana*, there is a gunboat this morning. This afternoon the captain of our Co. gave us each a package of tobacco and some good advice. There were five boxing contests this afternoon and E. Co. took three of them, beating men from K, C and G. Very dark tonight. A white painted boat passed to port of us this afternoon. Morrison, Peckenold and Lacombe won in boxing.

**Oct. 13.** High wind and choppy sea and flying spray today. One hour of physical drill this

morning and games took up the rest of the morning. Cockfight causing much laughter. No drill. p.m. Too much water flying across deck. Captain, Lts. and non-coms made speeches down below. Also Maj. Anderson. Dark night.

**Oct. 14.** High wind and choppy sea. Sighted land at 10 am to port. Lots of boats passing today. Two four-masted wind jammers and a number of coasting steamers. A troop steamer nearly collided with one last night coming within twenty feet of us. We turned around and got behind and then came up in position with some extra speed. This morning a number of the boats pulled out ahead and have left us. They probably are going to a different port. We do not know where we are headed for yet. A bunch stretched out on deck this morning having a snooze. Got a beautiful bath when a wave broke over. At the dinner table Corp. Donald presiding rises and says "Boys, what did we have for breakfast?" "Mulligan." "What have we got for dinner?" "Mulligan." "What will we have for supper?" "Mulligan." "Spell Mulligan." "M\_u\_double l\_i\_g\_a\_n, that's us." "Cheers good men" and the meal is gone on with. We arrived at Westward Ho about 3 pm and anchored inside breakwater about eight o'clock. [The reference to Westward Ho is mistaken as it is in North Devon, whereas his ship was headed for Plymouth in South Devon.] Saw the famous Eddy-stone Light. It shows five secs, off five, on five off 30. It is too dark to see much of the land. There are search lights on both sides and in the middle and they light up the whole entrance. All around outside the harbour there are destroyers going in all directions. Also several battleships. Saw one big dreadnought practising shooting at what was apparently an old ship. This is officers' night on board (!)

### England, 1914-1915

**Oct. 15.** Am. Here we are in famous old Plymouth Harbour. Boats of all kinds are going in every direction. This is my first view of a fortified harbour. The tug *Rover* took us in tow and brought us to Devonport. I believe about four miles above Plymouth. This stretch of country is the most interesting I have ever seen. Have not space to attempt to describe it. There are the old stone forts and buildings, guns mounted etc. etc. Out of the windows of one large bldg., apparently

an hotel, the girls were waving bed sheets. It was one cheer all the way. Megaphone calls of "are we downhearted?" to which we answered. Certainly a hearty welcome so far. The stewarts on the boat are taking a farewell rap at us. They are asking 15¢ for cigarettes which cost 1d – Woodbines. There was a young mutiny over the supper tonight, the fellows not taking kindly to macaroni and water.

[two lines indecipherable]

Saw a submarine today.

**Oct. 16.** Some of the boats unloaded during the night. We are still tied up alongside of the horse transport *Manitou*. Two dead horses were taken off of it today. That makes 13 lost on trip. Good grub today. There are more boats running around on this little river than vehicles in most towns. The *Royal George* unloaded today by tugs. Believe they were the PPCLI [Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry]. Excursion boats loaded with waving hands have been looking us over all day. In a dry dock just in front of us is a cruiser being fixed up after it was damaged by the Germans in North Sea.

**Oct. 17.** A bunch of blue jackets are unloading the ammunition from the hold. They are reserves with nearly all different ships' names on their caps. The ammunition is being loaded into small sail boats and towed away. A number of the fellows got away and went up town. There are gates to be passed to get out of the dock yards. Some of the fellows fell in like a picket and marched out without being caught. Last night there were over forty fellows pinched when they tried to get back on the boat. We moved up to another dock today and are now lying next to the *Tiger*, one of the biggest and fastest war vessels in the world. I have been told off for guard tonight on the docks.

**Oct. 18.** Big day today. I was up all last night on guard on the docks. No relief. No trouble. Just a few drunks coming in. This morning we went on a march. I went as I did not know how long we would be kept on the vessel and wanted to see the town. We marched through Devonport and over to Plymouth. Had service in the park there and marched back. All the way the people threw us apples and gave us great reception. When we got

back they gave each man a pint of beer, the first since leaving Edmonton. Then the order came to disembark. Our blankets were baled and we undid them and each rolled up two. Then we baled them again and no one seemed to know what to do. Finally we got started and marched to one station at the bottom of a long hill and found we were wrong and had to go back up the hill. Found the right station about 6:20 pm. The people certainly gave us a great reception. Some of the girls kissing the outside fellows. Left Devonport for our first ride in the English cars. At Newton Abbot we had a great time. The prettiest girls we have ever seen yet were there. They looked so good to some of the fellows that they tore the buttons off of their tunics and gave them. At Exeter a cruel policeman would not let the people through the gate so we talked at long distance. Arrived at Lavington at 11:30 pm and detrained. It was very dark marching through the narrow roads lined with trees. Just a glimpse of thatched cottages. Arrived at our camp on Salisbury Plain at Pond Farm about one o'clock with our kit bags on our backs. Made about forty-four hours straight for me. We were issued two blankets and everything OK.

**Oct. 19.** No parade today. Starley, Barrow and self, while walking down road this afternoon, met a wagonette, driver of which offered to take us to Devizes for half a crown. We got in expecting

to get stopped by sentries but saw none. Arrived in Devizes about four o'clock and stayed in town until 8:30. Had a great time. Had my first English tea and dinner at the Bear Hotel. At the dinner table an English officer asked us if we had leave. We dodged that question twice and the third time we were forced to lie but he did not ask to see it. Arrived back at camp at 9:30 and got into our tents OK after our eight mile trip. My first afternoon in an English town was very pleasant.

**Oct 20.** Had bare foot parade this morning. Some stunt doubling around the grass wet with dew and an occasional thistle showing up. Nice day.

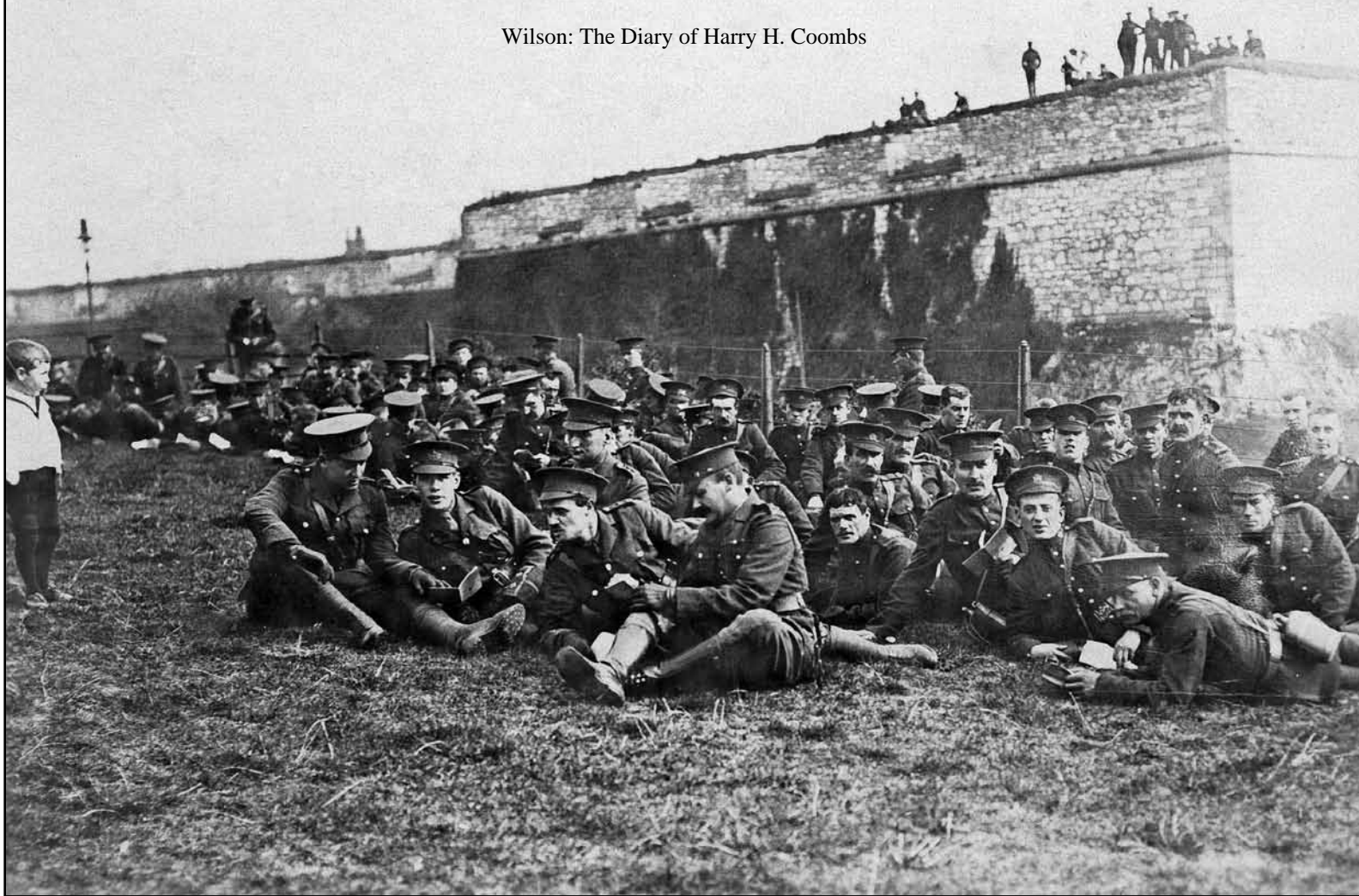
**Oct. 21.** Col. Sgt. Lock of K Co. died today of heart failure. Parade in afternoon for inspection by General Alderson, commander of Canadian Contingent. He made a good impression in talk, especially when he said we were to have a wet canteen.

**Oct. 22.** No early parade on a/c of rain showers all day. Aeroplanes are in sight nearly steady.

**Oct. 23.** Showers all day. Col.Sgt. Lock was buried today. Full military funeral. The big YMCA tent was so crowded tonight that I had to come back to the tent to write. The Y tent is about 200 ft long with three rows of tables to write on. There is a piano at one end. They furnish free writing

Canadian troops arriving at Salisbury Plain, England, October 1914.





Coombs' 9th Battalion relaxing after church parade, Plymouth, England, October 1914.

materials and keep stamps and other small things for sale. The concerts each night are good with talent drawn from several thousand men.

**Oct. 24.** Rain all day. Commenced on new drill today. I am now in Section 13, Platoon 16, Co. 4. The battn is now in 4 cos. instead of eight. Our rations are for breakfast, tea and mealy bacon; noon, mulligan and no tea; supper, just tea. Also 1 lb. butter, jam and cheese.

**Oct. 25.** Until further notice will say nothing about the weather as the rain is always with us. Church parade this morning while the rain gently fell, the Chaplain General gave us a nice interesting talk after the regular service. High wind at night blew down canteen tent. Letters JB and AHC.

**Oct 26.** Something wrong with the weather factory. Sun out all day. New drill this morning. Much better than old stuff. Route march in afternoon. Starley and Barrow away on four day leave. Had leave to go to Devizes but didn't use it. Letter CSC.

**Oct 27.** Another nice day. Co. drill am. Route march pm. Route marches are great stuff here. Series of ridges and hollows. Had a view from top of hill into valley where towns of Lavingford [probably Lavington], and Devizes are. Certainly pretty with all different coloured leaves. Went to Devizes after parade and had a great time. The Canadians are having things all their own way in Devizes. Canadian and U.S. girls may be bold but this bunch can give them half of the deck and still be in the lead. Missed fire drill by being in town. Frosty mornings now and shivers during early parade. Wet canteen opened tonight and was fittingly celebrated.

**Oct. 28.** Will always remember that we had two bright days in England. The rain is with us again and it is disagreeable in the tents. Letter MW.

**Oct. 29.** More rain. About 200 men are on piquet around the different villages with mallet handles and orders to put any who resist into the hospital. This was caused by so many getting drunk and staying away from camp for days. When arrested



Canadian troops assemble for review by King George V, Salisbury Plain, England, November 1914.

by the ordinary police they resisted. Was in Devizes again tonight and had quite a fair time.

**Oct. 30.** Rained hard all last night. The whole camp ground is getting worked up into a mass of mud. Went for a long route march this morning through Market Lavington, Isserington and back by the Devizes road. Letter JCK

**Oct. 31.** Rain. No drill. pm: The noises coming from the wet canteen are good and are with us each night. The big marquee tent. Rows of tables with benches. Mud six inches deep on the floor. At one end a counter behind which are tubs and barrels of beer. No glasses are washed. A howling drunken mob shivering and having one H of a time.

**Nov 1.** Church parade in the rain this am. Short fatigue to carry boxes of rifles. For church parade men were divided into Anglicans, RC, Presbys, and Methodists etc. Usual canteen celebration tonight. Letter CSC.

**Nov 2.** Marched about two miles and formed up for a practice review as king and queen are to be here tomorrow or Wednesday. Stood in downpour of rain from 8:45 am until 1:30 pm. General Alderson and another "higher up" officer looked us over. Nothing doing this pm. Wish they would cut out this ceremonial stuff and [get] down to field work. It is 9:30 pm now and still raining easily. FCLC and AHC.

**Nov 3.** The whole company was on picket duty today. We "fell in" in am and dismissed and told to keep ready. After dinner "fell in" again and picked up paper all along road from camp to Devizes-West Down road. "Fell in" again at five o'clock

and marched to Market Lavington. This place is about three miles from camp and the resort of all the "French Leavers" with a big thirst. Co. was told off into pickets. I was acting corporal of the guard in the "clink" and we had one peach of a time with the prisoners, nearly all of whom had been drinking booze with boxing gloves in it. Arrived back home about 1am with some thirty-five prisoners. HAG. Rain.

**Nov 4.** Reviewed by King and Queen, Lord K [Field Marshal Lord Herbert Kitchener, the British Minister of Defence] and Bobs [Field Marshal Lord Frederick Roberts, age 82, who was to die only a week later while inspecting Indian troops in France], etc. today. No rain until night. When the whole brigade moved off after review it was a great sight; infantry, cavalry, transport, Red Cross, etc.

**Nov 5.** Turned out for drill but rain chased us back. Camp ground is one big mud puddle. JHS, ES, Mrs. JHS. Lecture pm by Sgt. Maj., best head in the battalion.

**Nov 6.** Quarter Master fatigue today. Rain as usual. Was down to Div. Hdqtrs. Awful mess of mud there. Letter LA. All Germans in battalion arrested tonight. Believe 32 of them. [Note: At this time, the Canadian government was beginning to take action with regards to enemy aliens or non-naturalized Germans who had made into the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The 1918 *Canadian Annual Review* records that, on 11 December 1914, a shipment of 38 such men arrived at Halifax from Europe. "They were stated by the press to be Germans and Austrians and not naturalized citizens; but published lists did not show the majority of names to be German.

Those supposed to be German spies were at once interned on Government order." The 9th Battalion's War Diary records that, contrary to Coombs's figures, only 13 were arrested in that battalion.]

**Nov 7.** Pm off. Am 1 hr drill rest of time adjutant read military crimes and penalties. Also orders from General that all passes stopped on a/c of drunks, etc. which is giving Canadians bad reputation. Much grouches. Letters AHC and FCLC. No rain up to 7 pm.

**Nov 8.** No rain. Packed our kit bags for moving to Bulford and carried them to quarter master's stores tent. Several visitors in camp. Not at church parade as most of company on fatigue and guard.; 46 prisoners in clink. Letter ASC.

**Nov 9.** Nice day. Moved from Pond Farm camp to huts at Bulford. Was a hard march. Carried great coats, three blankets and rubber sheet, rifles and full equipment. A few of the men fell out. Distance about fourteen miles. The whole brigade moved and made a long string of men. The 9th was the only battalion to carry their blankets. Our co. qtr. mstr. sgt. [company quarter master sergeant] fell out as usual after making a talk about "staying with it". He has not finished a march yet. Passed through the villages of Durrington and Bulford. The former is a lovely place with pretty cottages. This is an immense camp. Do not know how many thousand troops are here. There is every branch of the service and from New Zealand, Canada and England. The huts are made of corrugated iron, about fifty feet long and hold about 60 men each. Bunk on the floor. Are dry and comfortable. These huts extend as far as one can see and more are being built.

**Nov 10.** Rain. pm: bayonet and rifle exercise. am: fixing up. pm: instruction from Sgt. Maj. re kits in barracks. Letter and pie AHC, card and pie AP.

**Nov. 11.** Bayonet and rifle drill am. Rain pm with high wind. Lecture in pm by Lt. McDermott. Cards, IG, AC, WHC, LL, HPK, CS, EH, Mrs. JP, HPB

**Nov 12.** Drills am and pm with open order work. Night march from 6:30 pm to 11 pm. Card CSC, LA

**Nov 13.** Special fatigue today. AM: went by motor truck to Tidworth and brought back load of blankets. These are blankets made of suitings and every imaginable kind of cloth. Nothing pm. Tidworth is a barrack town. Red brick barracks for row after row. Rain and wind. Letter AHC. HAG.

**Nov 14.** Drill am. Got leave from 12:30 to 9:30 Sunday. Went by auto to Salisbury with Starley's people (brother, 2 sisters, sister-in-law) and Barrow. Swell ride. Had an excellent dinner at Angel Hotel with Mrs. J. Starley as hostess. It was intended for whole party to go to Bournemouth by auto but on a/c of lateness of arrival at Salisbury, Starley, Barrow and I went by train arriving at Bournemouth about 10 pm. Jumped into a taxi and beat it on the double to the Winter Garden. People were just coming out. We picked up P & P. Went for a taxi ride along the Under Cliff. Then to the girls' home for a few minutes. Then Starley, Barrow and I took another taxi ride along Under Cliff. We walked back to the Salisbury Hotel.

**Nov 15.** Breakfast at Salisbury. Taxi ride around Bournemouth, Boscombe and West Bournemouth. About noon picked up P & P and went to Under Cliff. Sat in pavillion for a time and then P & P and V and "we sons" went to Grand for lunch. Had a swell time at luncheon. Caught train at 3:39 for Salisbury. Dinner at Angel Hotel in Salisbury. Arrived at Bulford at 9:20 and waded through mud to camp. Certainly enjoyed the trip. Bournemouth is the most beautiful town I have ever seen and is "jake" [a contemporary colloquialism for "all right"] to have a good time in.

**Nov 16.** Usual drills. Rifle physical drill with band accompaniment is being pulled off. It is good. One hr night drill.

**Nov 17.** Usual drills. Lecture at night by Lt. Malhoit. Returned to old company drill. CSC.

**Nov 18.** Usual drills am. Long route march by brigade pm – 1:30 to 5:00. Letter LA, JHS

**Nov. 19.** Rain. PM: outpost work in rain. Scheduled lecture called off at night. Grub box from LA.





Troops passing down flooded lane, Salisbury Plain, England, November 1915.

**Nov 20.** Usual drills am and pm. One and half hours outpost at night.

**Nov. 21.** Drill am. Got palleas [sic – paliasse, or straw mattress] today. Nothing pm. Platoon from 9th Batt. beat New Zealanders today in drilling contest, winning silver cup. 9th Batt. beat New Zealanders 9-1 in soccer.

**Nov 22.** 9th Batt. And New Zealanders 3-3 in rugby. Played my first game of English rugby. Letter CSC

**Nov 23.** Four parades a day scheduled from today until Friday: one between “show a leg” and boiled bacon and one between boiled bacon and mulligan, one between mulligan and tea, one between tea and blankets. Spasmodic rains.

**Nov 24.** Usual parades. Spasmodic rains.

**Nov 25.** More spasmodic rains. No parade pm. Lecture at night

**Nov 27.** Usual am parades. Trenching pm. Four

hours night attack. More sporadic rains. Got turned down for pass.

**Nov 28.** No early parade. Chronic rain. No pm parade.

**Nov 29.** Straight from the shoulder talk on wine and women by chaplain. More chronic rain.

**Nov 30.** Rain. Usual parades.

**Dec. 1.** Lovely day. Trenching pm. Night attack from 6:30 to 10:00. Rain at night.

**Dec. 2.** Parade am. Route march to flying sheds and back. Heavy rain at night.

**Dec. 3.** On Brigade Headquarters guard. Nice day.

**Dec. 4.** Nothing am. Rain pm.

**Dec. 5.** Hut fatigue today thereby missing half holiday. Rain.

**Dec. 6.** Church parade in Y. Rain.

**Dec. 7.** Trenching. Rain.

**Dec. 8.** Company drill, rain.

**Dec. 9.** Quarter Master's fatigue. Missed another half holiday. Moving pictures of musical drill.

**Dec. 10.** Company drill. Moving picture films taken of charges etc. of E & C Cos.

**Dec. 11.** Big field day. Walked 7 miles for divisional field work. Rain put things on the bum and we were soaked proper.

**Dec. 12.** Rain as usual. Co. drill am.

**Dec. 13.** Co. missed church parade and had to clean up around huts until service was over. Rain.

**Dec 14.** Bad cold. Laid off field day

**Dec 15 – 20.** Laid up.

**Dec. 21.** Feeling a little bit better.

**Dec. 22.** Got pass and free ticket to Perth. Arrived London 10:30 pm. City as dark as Waterford. Stopped at Picadilly Hotel.

**Dec. 23.** Called on Manns. Left London at 11:40 for North. Trains packed by soldiers and sailors.

**Dec. 24.** Got ditched at Newcastle after slow trip. Caught excursion train to Edinburgh. Two hours there. E. is a lovely city. Like it better than London. Crossed Forth Bridge arriving Perth 3:30 pm. Stopped at Cuthbert's. Ate first full meal for eleven days. Weather much better here. Cold and dry. Am feeling nearly OK. Knocking around Perth. Picture show with CC.

**Dec 25.** Theatre, David Garrick – with CC, NS & JC.

**Dec 26.** Climbed Kinnsull [*sic* – actually Kinnoull] Hill with CC and we went to theatre at night. Big day.

**Dec 27.** Left Perth 4:10. Two hours in Edinburgh..

Dec. 28 Arrived London 7 am. Knocking around city am. Alhambra pm. Left at 9 pm. Arrived Bulford and the rain and mud 11 pm and waded through the mud to camp.

**Dec. 29.** Rain all day.

**Dec. 30.** On canteen picket at civilian canteen.

**Dec. 31.** Rain am. Shooting pm.

## 1915

**Jan 1.** Hut orderly today. Pouring rain all day.

**Jan 2.** Parade am. Attacking wood. Nothing pm  
No rain until night.

**Jan 3.** No church parade as chaplain failed to show up. Rain.

**Jan 4.** Hut orderly again. Whole Co. on fatigue. Rain.

**Jan 5.** Shooting. No rain until night.

**Jan 6.** Shooting. Lt. Briscoe killed by bullet in the head while he was in butts. Nothing pm. Rain at night. This camp ground is sure a peach. Mud and water to your knees. We had sidewalks built and some brainy individual had them torn up and white chalk put in their place. Now we are walking through white soup. The floors of the huts have to be shoveled out twice a day. We have two taps for a thousand men to wash at. No light except candles which we buy ourselves. Once in a while we get some coal oil. No bathing arrangements unless we walk a mile and a half to Mrs. Park's home and pay for it. Countermanded orders from three to ten times a day. Out of coal occasionally. No place to dry clothes as orders forbid them to be hung in the hut. Had to scrub floor of huts every day for a while until Doctor objected. Over 90% of the men were laid up with a real chesty cold. Altogether during the last month things have been run for the furtherance of lice, filth and sickness and the much vaunted system of English army rules which we had dinned into us previous to our arrival has failed to materialize. Valcartier was a bonanza of system and sanitary excellence compared with this.

**Jan 7.** About 200 of us were brought to Lark Hill to assist in building huts. The mud here is worse than Sling Plantation, if possible. Wagons gave us a lift through the flooded area this side of Bulford. After arrival had to stand for an hour in the mud as they were not expecting us.

Finally got in huts and were told we should have brought rations for 24 hrs. More system. Quarter master fixed us up OK Spasmodic. rain.

**Jan 8.** Carrying lumber along a railroad track about five hundred yards. Two men with a push car could have moved twice as much as the twenty of us did. More system.

**Jan 9.** Clearing up some leavings at one of the camps. When we arrived there after a four mile walk foreman said he did not need us and we should not have been sent there. Is this system or graft? We each get an additional 1/6 a day. Fooled around until afternoon and then went to Stonehenge. Rain at night.

**Jan. 10.** Church parade am in flying shed. Rain.

**Jan 11.** Unloading lumber cars. Showers.

**Jan 12.** Hut orderly today. Showers.

**Jan 13.** Building sidewalks am. Put on as horse orderly on transport of Sir John Jackson Ltd. who are building the huts and other camp work for the War Office.

**Jan 14.** This job is "jake". Have a saddle horse and am looking after the wagons hauling material. Horse is taken care of, saddled and everything. Kind of a walking boss job.

**Jan. 15.** Same job

**Jan 16.** Nothing pm

**Jan 17.** Had to work today. Rest of company failed to go on church parade and are warned for orderly room.



CWM Biography File

Harry Coombs in hospital convalescent dress, England, ca.1918.

**Jan 18 – 21.** Chasing teams.

**Jan 22.** Snowed all last night and this am, No work. Co. on guard today.

**Jan 23 & 24.** Worked am. Got pass until Sunday night and with Starley, Barrow, Wells and Pecknold went to Bournemouth. Expected to go by car through New Forest but could not get car so went by train. Stopped at Bourne Hill Hotel. Dinner there with – and GW. Winter Gardens. Taxi rides Sunday luncheon at Canford Cliffs Hotel with Wells, Starley, the two girls and I. Taxi ride to Sand Banks. Tea at Haven. Taxi to Poole and back. Girls at Southampton. Motor bus home from Salis[bury].

**Jan 25.** Work. Row with Jenkins Manning, a foreman.

**Jan 26.** Work ... Micheloff [?] pulled a knife in hut. Big row. Entire hut of 12th punished.

**Jan 27.** Work.

**Jan 28.** Work. Micheloff got off without sentence. Some discipline.

**Jan 29.** Work

**Jan 30.** Work am. Bridge pm

**Jan 31.** No church parade. Mostly bridge

Barbara Wilson, retired archivist from the National Archives of Canada, edited and wrote the introduction to *Ontario and the First World War: a Collection of Documents* (Champlain Society, 1977), and is the co-author, with C.P. Stacey, of *The Half-Million: the Canadians in Britain, 1939-1946* (Toronto, 1987). She presently volunteers in the Archives of the Canadian War Museum.