

30: Edwin Evans DCM

Basic Information [as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC]

Name as recorded on local memorial or by CWGC: Edwin Evans [Recorded as Company Sergeant Major Edward E Evans on <http://www.findagrave.com/>]

Rank: Sergt. Major DCM Recorded by the CWGC as a Company Sergeant Major

Battalion / Regiment: 13th Bn. Canadian Infantry

Service Number: 24902 Date of Death: 27 September 1918 Age at Death: 32

Buried / Commemorated at: Sains-Les-Marquion British Cemetery, Sains-les-Marquion, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

Additional information given by CWGC: The son of Job and Annie Evans of Neston

Edwin Evans, born 2 April 1886, was the second son of Neston collier Job and Ann(ie) Evans and he was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 11 July 1886.

[illegible]

1891 census (extract) - Gladstone Road, Neston

Job Evans	54	coal miner	born Halkyn, Flintshire
Ann	46		born Little Neston
William Evans	20	coal miner	born Mostyn
John Cottrell	19	stepson, labourer at a bakery	born Neston
William Cottrell	15	stepson, general labourer	born Neston
George Evans	6		born Neston
Edwin	5		born Neston
Albert	3		born Neston

Widower Job Evans had married widow Ann Cottrell at Christ Church, Chester, in late 1883 and their first child, George, was baptised at Neston Parish Church on 12 July 1885 when Job was recorded as a labourer. Albert Evans, the third son of Job and Ann, was baptised at Neston on 17 February 1888 when Job was then recorded as a collier.

Job Evans had previously married Harriet Jones at Holywell in July / September 1886 but Harriet died, possibly around the time of the birth of their son William, in July / September 1868 when she was 28.

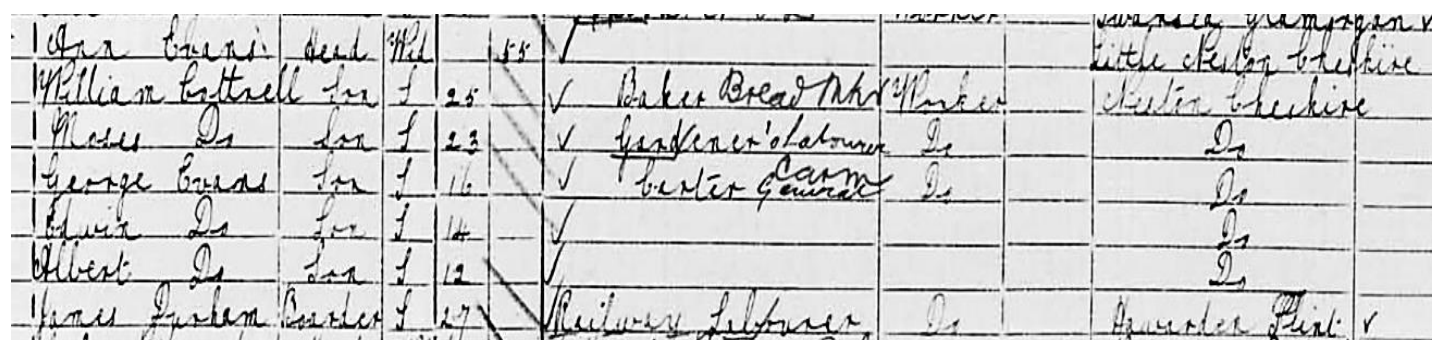
Ann (née Taylor, born Little Neston) had previously been married to grocer/baker & flour dealer William Cottrell of Great Neston and they had at least seven children:

Maria	baptised at Neston 7 August 1868
Sarah	baptised at Neston on 22 December 1869
John	baptised at Neston on 2 November 1873
William	baptised at Neston on 6 June 1875, buried at Neston 12 September 1902 (aged 26 years)
Moses	baptised at Neston on 9 February 1877
Mary	baptised at Neston 12 January 1879, buried at Neston 23 February 1880 (14 months)
Annie	baptised at Neston 12 January 1879, buried at Neston 3 September 1880 (1 yr 9 months)

William Cottrell snr died, aged 39, on 27 January 1879 and was buried at Neston on 30 January. Ann(ie) Cottrell, described as a grocer, was a widow, aged 34, living on Neston High Street at the time of the 1881 census.

Ann Evans was widowed for a second time when Job died, aged 52, and was buried at Neston on 17 April 1891 - this was less than two weeks after the date of the 1891 census, 5 April. William Evans, Job's son by his first marriage, married Martha Jane Smith of Neston at the Parish Church on 21 November 1891. William, 21, was a collier and Martha's father, William Smith, was a labourer.

So, at the time of the 1901 census, widow Ann Evans was living on Neston High Street with unmarried children from both her marriages:



Ann Evans	55	widow	born Little Neston
William Cottrell	25	baker, bread maker	born Neston
Moses Cottrell	23	gardener's labourer	born Neston
George Evans	16	carter, general	born Neston
Edwin Evans	14		born Neston
Albert Evans	12		born Neston
James Durham	27	boarder, railway labourer	born Hawarden

1901 census (extract) – High Street, Neston

Ann Evans	55	widow	born Little Neston
William Cottrell	25	baker, bread maker	born Neston
Moses Cottrell	23	gardener's labourer	born Neston
George Evans	16	carter, general	born Neston
Edwin Evans	14		born Neston
Albert Evans	12		born Neston
James Durham	27	boarder, railway labourer	born Hawarden

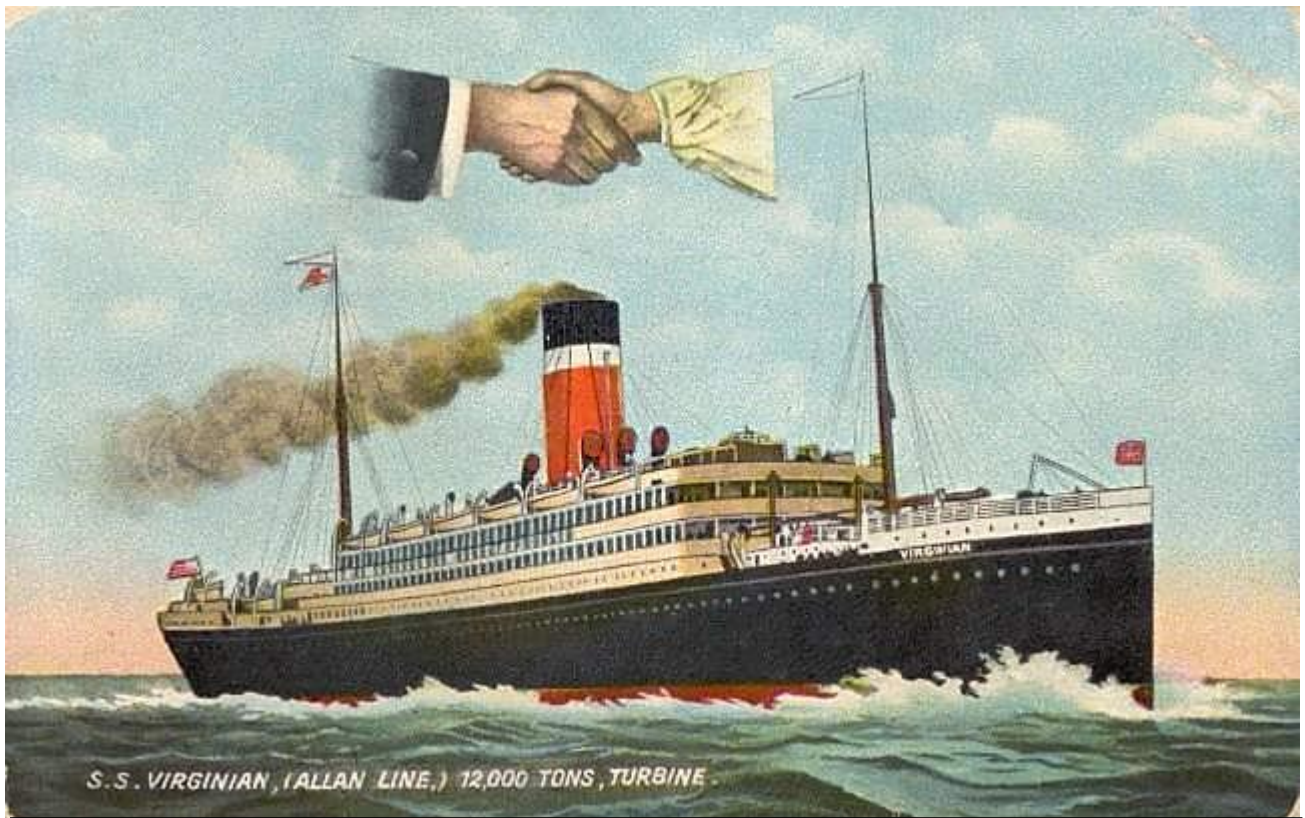
John Cottrell, Ann's eldest son, had married Sarah Bartley of Willaston, in Liverpool in late 1898; in the 1891 census John, a railway platelayer, and Sarah were living on Leighton Road with their 11-month-old daughter Edith Mary.

By the time of the 1911 census (2 April) Ann, George and Albert had moved the short distance from Neston High Street to Raby Road:

1911 census (condensed) – 1 Raby Road, Neston			
Ann Evans	66	widow	born Neston
George	26	baker, baker & flour dealer	born Neston
Albert	23	general labourer, blacksmith	born Neston
Daniel Cottrell	31	paraffin oil dealer, hawker	born Neston
Of Ann's 11 children, seven were still living.			

The Great War Forum [<http://1914-1918.invisionzone.com/>] comments that he served in the Cheshire Militia (6 years) before emigrating to Canada, where he enlisted in the 5th Battalion Volunteers (for 3 years). He enlisted in the 5th Royal Highlanders of Canada (Black Watch) on 23 September 1914, later serving with the 13th Battalion.

It is understood that both Edwin and Albert Evans worked at Neston Colliery; Albert is certainly recorded there as he is listed as having suffered a number of injuries between December 1915 and September 1922. It is possible, although by no means certain, that the blacksmith employing Albert at the time of the 1911 census was working for the colliery. It is believed that George, Edwin and Albert all went to Canada in search of employment although George and Albert both returned later to Neston (no passenger list has been found for them). It appears that Edwin, 23, first went to Montreal from Liverpool on the *Empress of Britain*; the passenger list is dated 9 July 1909 and his occupation is given as *striker* – presumably a blacksmith's striker, the assistant who wielded a heavy hammer to form the iron. He seems to have returned to Liverpool from Montreal on the Allan Line ship *Virginian* (a vessel with a connection to *Titanic* – see following page) landing on 13 July 1912 (when he was recorded as a permanent resident of Canada) but sailed back to Canada again that year (the passenger list is dated 27 September 1912 and he was then aged 26) when his occupation was *blacksmith* and he is listed as a *Returned Canadian*. It is not known where Edwin was in 1911 – although, presumably, he was in Canada - as he has not been found in either the UK or Canadian census returns for that year. However, it is believed that Edwin settled in Montreal and that after Albert returned to Neston he, at least initially, worked at the colliery.



The SS *Virginian* was built in Glasgow and launched on 22 December 1904 and mainly sailed between Liverpool and Montreal. *Virginian* had a long and industrious career. She performed faithfully for several employers, serving as a troop carrier in the Great War and as a Red Cross repatriation vessel during the Second World War.

On 15 April 1912 – just three months before Edwin Evans sailed on her – the ship was sailing eastbound, Halifax to Liverpool. At 12:40 a.m., picked up distress call from *Titanic* by way of Cape Race. Immediately tuned in to *Titanic* and passed on details of the disaster to other ships. Although she was 178 miles to the north, was erroneously reported to have *Titanic* in tow.

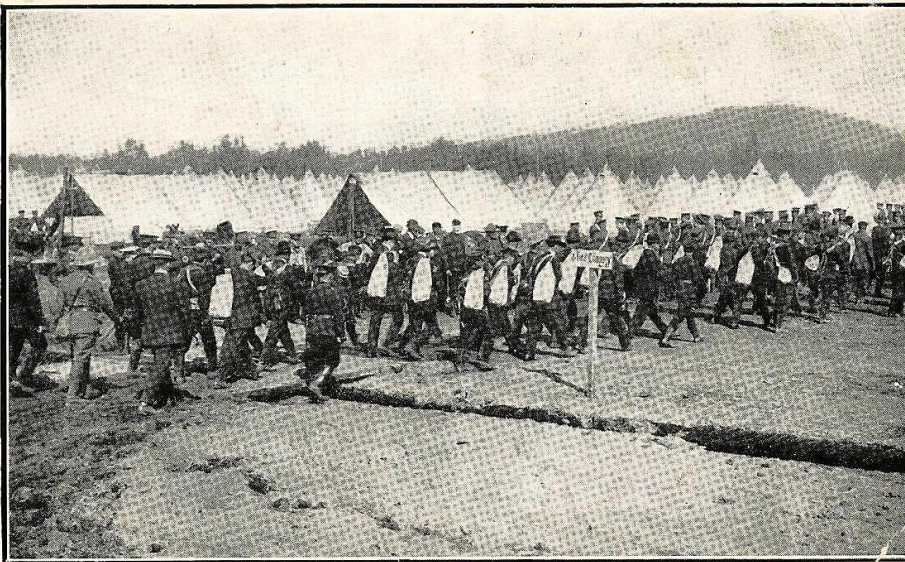
In August 1914 the *Virginian* operated as the troopship for the Canadian Expeditionary Force and, on 13 November 1914 she was requisitioned as an armed merchant cruiser, 10th Cruiser Squadron.

[Source of picture and quotations: Titanic Inquiry Project
<http://www.titanicinquiry.org/ships/virginian.php>

At his attestation at Camp Valcartier, north-west of Quebec City, in September 1914 Edwin recorded his occupation as blacksmith and it was noted that he was single. It was also recorded that he was aged 28 years 8 months, was 5ft 9½ins tall, had a 36½-inch chest, had a swarthy complexion, grey eyes and light brown hair.

The 13th Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada), Canadian Expeditionary Force, was authorised on 1 September 1914 and embarked, through Montreal, for Britain on 26 September 1914, disembarking in France on 16 February 1915, where it fought as part of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, 1st Canadian Division in France and Flanders until the end of the war.

When Edwin arrived in the UK from Canada he managed to visit his mother, who was then ill (she died in late 1917) in Neston, and this visit was reported in the *Cheshire Observer* (see following page).



Valcartier Camp—Canada. Arrival of Western Contingent

Canada declared war at the same time as Britain and Valcartier Camp was constructed (about 25km north of Quebec City), in just 4 weeks, in August 1914 to train Canadian troops in a wide range of disciplines. At the time that the camp was being constructed the Canadian Army totalled just 3110 men but, just two months later, around 32 000 troops were being sent to Europe in 32 transport ships. Valcartier Camp was large, but basic – no baths or showers were provided and the men were expected to use the local ponds and lakes to bathe.

The Daily Casualty List of 22 June 1915 reported that Edwin, now a Sergeant in the 13th Bn. (5th R. Highlanders), attached to the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Canadian Division, had been wounded.

On 1 January 1918 he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and his DCM citation reads:

'For conspicuous gallantry, devotion to duty and consistent good service at all times. He invariably displayed great courage and resource and set a fine example of devotion to duty

to all ranks. 17.04.1918'. [Supplement to The London Gazette, 17 April 1918].

NESTONIANS IN CANADA'S ARMY VISIT THE OLD TOWN.

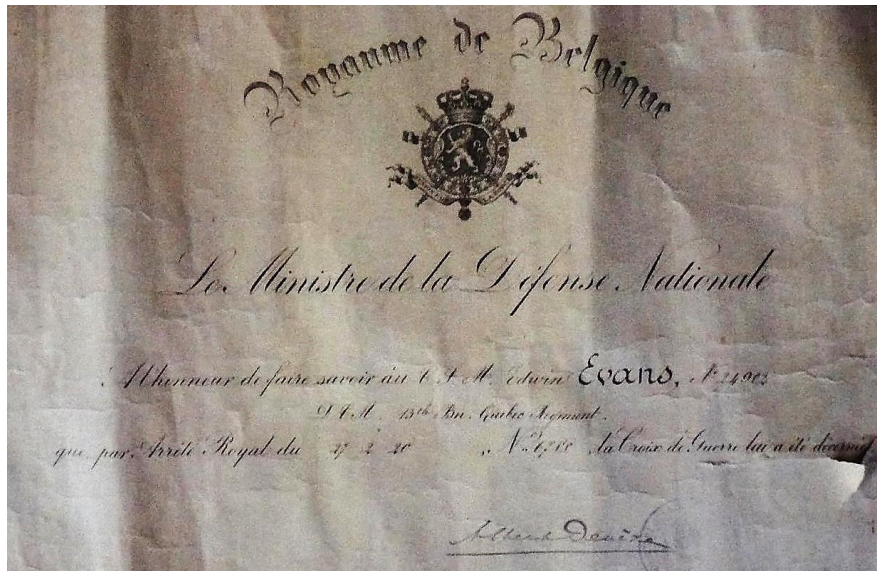
Great joy has flooded the home of a widowed mother in Raby-road. For weeks, which have crept into months, Mrs. Evans has been lying upon a sick bed, but although an invalid for years, she is buoyed up with a wonderful cheeriness of disposition, and has lately been anticipating the visit of her absent son Edwin in Canada. He came during the week-end, a fine, bronzed and proud member of the Canadian Royal Highlanders, the crack regiment of Canada, formerly attached to the Black Watch as the 5th Battalion. He is a corporal, and with him were other Nestonians, Jack and Dick Anderson, of the same regiment, sons of Captain Anderson. Their appearance drew flattering comments from the townspeople. Corpl. Evans vividly described the magnificent send off from Montreal. The whole city turned out, and the occasion was of a remarkable character. Thirty-three thousand sailed for England in 32 vessels, guarded by seven cruisers. It was originally

intended to bring over 25,000, but the remainder strongly objected to being left behind, and were included. They are all desperately anxious to get at grips with the Germans, and their equipment is so complete that they require only food and camp from the English Government. In the opinion of Corporal Evans, who has been in Canada some five years, the young Colonials would shame the idea of conscription from England. One hundred thousand would train there immediately, and offer their services. He was previously associated with the 1st Cheshires at Birkenhead. The journey of twenty days over the ocean included a chase, watched with keen interest by those on board. The cruisers sighted a ship on the horizon. She failed to answer their signals, turned, and sped away. So also did a cruiser in pursuit, and after a day's absence brought her into the fold. She was examined and found to be a British merchant ship, who evidently meant to run no risks with cruisers of any description. Corporal Evans brought good news of Mr. and Mrs. Robinson and family (veterinary surgeon), who emigrated to Canada, and the friends of these splendid fellows, who attracted much attention with their kilts and fine bearing, wish success to their arms, and a safe and speedy return from the conflict.

Cheshire Observer - Saturday 14 November 1914

It is understood that, in this action, he and his men captured a German machine gun post.

Edwin died on 27 September 1918, the first day of the combined Allied assault on the Canal du Nord. The Canadian Circumstances of Death Registers note that Edwin Evans was *"Killed in action" While organizing the posts on the Company's objective, during operations near Marquion, he was killed by enemy machine gun fire.* The record notes also that Evans was awarded, in addition to the DCM, the Belgian Croix-de-Guerre.



The Croix de Guerre certificate issued to Edwin Evans. The award was 'gazetted' in the *Supplement to The London Gazette* on 6 April 1919.

The World War I Croix de Guerre was established by royal decree on 25 October 1915 as an award for bravery or other military virtue on the battlefield. It was only awarded to individuals. The Croix de Guerre was not only awarded for bravery but also for three years or more of service on the front line, or for good conduct on the battlefield.

The Battle of Canal du Nord was part of a general Allied offensive against German positions on the Western Front during The Hundred Days Offensive of World War I. The battle took place in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France, along an incomplete portion of the Canal du Nord and on the outskirts of Cambrai between 27 September and 1 October 1918. The Canal du Nord defensive system was the German's last major prepared defensive position opposite the British First Army and a significant obstacle as the Germans had incorporated the unfinished canal into their defensive system. The attack on the Canal du Nord was to begin on 27 September 1918, a day after the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, one day before the offensive in Flanders and two days before The Battle of St. Quentin Canal. The British First Army was operating in a framework whereby its main task was to secure the northern flank of the British Third Army. The British Third Army was tasked with securing the Escaut (Scheldt) Canal so as to be in a position to support the British Fourth Army during The Battle of St. Quentin Canal. On the British First Army front, the Canadian Corps would lead the attack,

crossing the largely dry canal on a front of only 2,700 yards (2,500 m) between Sains-lès-Marquion and Mœuvres. Once over the canal the corps was to capture the Marquion Line, the villages of Marquion and Bourlon, Bourlon Woods lastly secure a general line running from Fontaine-Notre-Dame to Sauchy-Lestrée.

In an attempt to make the Germans second guess or question the location of the main assault, XXII Corps was instructed to engage German positions along the Canal du Nord between Sauchy-Lestrée and Palluel. Likewise, VII Corps and the remainder of XXII Corps were instructed to carry out minor attacks north of the Scarpe River to prevent the Germans from moving units from that area to the location of the main attack. If the Canadian Corps was successful in its advance the intention was to immediately and quickly exploit the territorial gain with the support of the British Third Army's XVII, VI and IV Corps. It was during this advance that Edwin Evans was killed.

The Operation Order for the 13th Battalion Canadian Infantry, dated 25 September 1918, laid out details for the forthcoming action although the date was undisclosed:

Map. Ref.
51 C. N.E.
1/20,000.

OPERATION ORDER NO.203
13th Canadian Battalion.
THE ROYAL HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA.
SECRET.
COPY No.....
26th Sept.1918,

INTENTION. 1. On a date and time to be notified later the 3rd Bde. will attack across the CANAL DU NORD as part of an operation by the Canadian Corps. The Corps attack will be to form a defensive flank facing North East to protect a major attack by the 3rd and 4th Armies.

The 3rd Bde will attack on a one Battalion (14th R.M.R.) front. The 13th (R.H.C) will in turn attack (North & East) through them, and the 15th (48th R. of C) and the 2nd C.I. Bde will leap-frog the 13th Bn., attacking North and North East respectively. The 16th Bn. (Canadian Scottish) will be in Brigade Reserve.

ASSEMBLY. 2. On Zero- 1 night the battalion will move up behind the 14th Bn., and assemble for the attack in positions to be prepared in V.25. "B" Coy will be the leading Coy and the others behind in the order C-D-A.

MOVE. 3. At Zero hour the 14th Bn. will attack across the CANAL on a 500 yd front immediately South of Lock No.3 (W.26.c.9.2. to E.2.a.9.0.). As they advance, the 13th Bn. will follow close behind them on a one company front - Coys to be on a two platoon front with sections or half platoons in file.

LEAP-FROG. 4. The 13th Bn will take up the attack through the 14th Battn., on the Red Line, which runs right to left from W.28.c.3.8. through 28.a.3.9. and 21.b.3.0. to the Canal at W.21.a.1.6.

Barrage. 5. The barrage map will be issued separately but the general idea is as follows:-
General rate of progress - 5 mins. per 100 yds.
Barrage Halts 45 mins at RED LINE (with exception of area included in DOTTED RED LINE), and 30 mins at GREEN LINE.
A standing barrage will be held on the Eastern Outskirts of SAINS until the RED LINE is captured.

ATTACK. 6. "B" Coy., which will move quickly across the canal will then get into attack formation and follow comfortably close behind the 14th Bn. On the 14th capturing the RED LINE, "B" Coy will prepare to pass through the RED LINE at ZERO minutes, following behind the barrage, and attacking to the Green Line (W.23.d.3.0. along road to 23.b.5.0., thence due North to 17.d.5.0.) making good all ground between the right boundary and the light railway on the left. On this being done, the O.C. Coy will put up a signal of three white very lights.

- 2 -
OPERATION ORDER NO.203.

ATTACK (Cont'd) 6.
The exact GREEN LINE must be held by each Coy, by a line of posts, though the main line of consolidation may be placed to the rear of this at the O.C. Coy's discretion.

"C" Coy., keeping in touch with "B" will pass through "B" Coy's left flank and attack due North behind the barrage, establishing the GREEN LINE on their right flank and front (through W.17.d.5.0., 17.a.4.1. and 11. a.0.0. to 10.b.7.3.). They will make good all ground between GREEN LINE and their left flank (straight line cutting CAMBRAI RD at right-angles at W.16.b.3.5.). On making their objective, they will immediately organize for defence, as well as placing Lewis Guns to cover the low ground to the North of MARQUION, to assist and protect "D" Coy.

On completion of the capture of its area "C" Coy will also put up a signal of three white very lights.

"D" Coy (plus No.1 Platoon of "A" Coy) following close on "C" Coys left rear, in order not to lose the barrage, will attack the Town of MARQUION from the South-East. They will attack through the Town to the GREEN LINE (from W.10.b.7.3. at the junction of with "C" Coy west to 9.a.6.3. on the canal bank).

No 1 Platoon will follow close-in and be responsible for Mopping-Up all the Town to the South of the ARRAS-CAMBRAI Rd. On this being completed, it will be withdrawn to its own Company area.

Signal for "Operation Complete" will again be three white very lights.

"A" Coy. The remaining three platoons of "A" Coy will follow up "D" Coy to the area just West of CHAPEL CORNER (16.d.4.6) where two platoons and Coy H.Qs. will take cover from shell-fire and act as Battalion Reserve. The third platoon will at once move Eastward through KEITH WOOD towards the Canal, dealing with any possible trouble from that area, to sweep North to the ARRAS-CAMBRAI Rd, and then rejoin its Coy. This Coy must see that all prisoners go out via the XXX R.A.P. to act as Stretcher-Bearers.

EQUIPMENT. 7. The following equipment will be carried by the Coys., (a) to be distributed amongst the rank and file and (b) to be carried in bulk by the Coy Tump Line Sections.

Material.	"A"	"B"	"C"	"D"	Total.
Mills No.23(a)	12 boxes.	12 boxes	20 boxes	12 boxes	56 boxes.
" (b)	10 "	10 "	8 "	10 "	38 "
Mills No.36(a)	12 "	12 "	12 "	12 "	48 "
Grenade No.27(a)	60	60	60	60	240
S. A. A. (a)	170 per man.170	170	170	170	170
" (b)	4 boxes	2 boxes	4 boxes	4 boxes	14 Boxes.

- 3 -
OPERATION ORDER NO. 203.

EQUIPMENT. 7.	"A"	"B"	"C"	"D"	Total.
(Cont'd)					
Grnd. Flares (a)	120	120	120	120	480
Shovels.	40	20	20	40	120
Picks	20	10	-	20	50
Very Lights)					
White L. /	12+	12+	12+	12+	48+

All the above stores will be picked up at a place to be notified later when en-route to the assembly position. In addition a dump of 250 filled water bottles and 20 packages of 1 " White Very Lights will be left in the jumping-off position, to be brought up later if any necessity exists. Every officer will carry a 1 " Very Pistol and 3 or more signal cartridges but only the senior officer in the Coy will fire the signal when the occasion arises.

COMMUNICATION. 8. Owing to both the 'lay of the land,' and to the long distances, communication must be altogether by visual methods. Stations will therefore be established on the high ground JACK at W.23.c.8.3. and JILL at W.16.b.8.0. as soon as these points are captured, and must be in constant communication with Brigade and Battalion H.Q.s and each other. Brigade O.P. and Signal Station will be at V.24.c.8.7.

Attached to the above stations will be observers, who must keep their station well posted as to the progress of the attack on the low ground to their front.

Reports sent in by observers independent of Coys will be signed with Station name.

Companies must send in frequent reports throughout the operation.

SCOUTS & SHIPERS. 9. Two Battalion Scouts will be attached for the operation to each of "B" - "C" & "D" Coys, and Two Snipers to "B" & "C" Coys.

TRENCH MORTARS. 10. One gun of 3rd Cdn. T.M.Bty., will be attached at the start of the operation, to each of "B" & "C" Coys. On "D" Coy passing through, "B" Coy's gun will join "D" Coy and go forward with that Company. Each Coy concerned will detail 5 O.R. of their reserve platoons to carry Stokes ammunition. On the 15th Bn passing through both guns will be attached to that Battalion for consolidation purposes.

FLARES. 11. It is absolutely necessary that the front line should be marked out by ground flares, whenever called for by our contact 'planes.

- 4 -
OPERATION ORDER NO. 203.

MEDICAL 12. Medical Personnel will move forward with "A" Coy and ARRANGEMENTS. establish an R.A.P. in approx. W.22.c.

I F. C. SMITH, Lieut. & Adj. for O.C. 13th Cdn. Battalion.
Issued at 3.00 P.M. by runner.

DISTRIBUTION:-

Copy No. 1 - Comdg. Officer.
2 - 6 - A.B.C.D & H.Q.s Coys.
3 - 3rd C.I. Bde.
8 - 3rd Cdn. T.M. Battery.
9 - 14th Cdn. Bn. (R.M.R.).
10 - 15th Cdn. Bn. (48th H. of C).
11 - 16th Cdn. Bn. (Cdn. Scottish).
12 - Office.
13 - War Diary.

Operation Order No 204.
13th Canadian Battalion
The Royal Highlanders of Canada.

Secret.
Copy No 11
25th Sept 1918.

L. Map. The 13th Battalion will move into BOMBY SMITH on the night of 25/26 Sept 1918, relieving elements of the 18th Can Bn. from the Breche Southern Boundary to the Railway in V. 24.c.

II. Equipment. Companies will parade at Battle Strength, and in full battle equipment. Blankets will not be carried. Emblems will be rolled and carried at back of belt. As the men are parading with battle equipment, special care must be taken that none of this is lost - serious to 3rd Bn.

III. H.Q. Companies will pass Bn. Hqs in platoons at 50 yds interval in the order HQ, B, C, D and A. Leading unit to pick up guide at Battalion H.Q. at 3.40 p.m.

IV. Route. Units will proceed to V. 21.b. 50.50 where guides for each company will be supplied by 18th Can Battalion.

V. Personnel. Scouts, Snipers and Observers will be attached to Units commencing this afternoon until completion of tour.

VI. Lunch. Lunch stores will be taken over on relief.

VII. Communication. Units will report completion of relief by runner to Battalion Hqs. (Location to be notified later.)

F. C. Smith, Lieut. & Adj.
for O.C. 13th Canadian Battalion.
The Royal Highlanders of Canada.
Issued by runner at 1.15 p.m.

Distribution.

Copy No 1 to 5 - All Companies. No 8 & 9 Cdn. Hq.
6 - Comdg. Officer. 10 Office.
7 - R.S.M. 11 War Diary.



Crossing the dry section of the Canal du Nord
<http://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/battles-and-fighting/land-battles/arras-and-canal-du-nord-1918/>

13th Battalion Canadian Infantry – transcription of War Diary entry for 27 September 1918

(Note : illegible words are indicated by [?]. Original spelling and punctuation is retained and some small segments of text, considered as irrelevant, have been omitted. Some footnotes have been inserted for clarification.)

BATTN HQ Sep27 *The original intention was for this unit to cross the CANAL DU NORD two hours after the Near KEITH WOOD 14th Battalion had attacked. This, however, was altered at the last and the Battalion assembled on a one-Company front at 4.00am on the 27th. The assembly was made under perfect conditions in the meadows to the SW of PAVILAND 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 14th Battalion forward.

About 100yards ahead of our assembly position was a stream ^a 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. Macpherson played them across to the tune of "Blue bonnet, over the Border" ^b. The water was cold, and naturally wet but quite unable to damp the ardour of our men. In they went resolute and determined. Following close behind the 14th Battalion in order to get through the enemy's barrage, a halt was made east of the canal (found to be quite close) to reorganise, but this had to be abandoned owing to heavy machine gun fire from SAINS ^c which caused us considerable casualties, unfortunately mostly NCOs.

The 14th Battalion made good all its objectives on time and we then had to wait over an hour before the advance could be continued to the enemy, who had been thoroughly disorganised, had ample opportunity to pull himself together. By this time a large proportion of Officers and NCOs had become casualties.

The right flank of '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 [?] led splendidly, the latter, with half a dozen men, taking over 75 prisoners.

'C' Company attacked next, fighting due North from 'B' Coys left flank and being met with fierce machine gun fire from the [?] up to the ARRAS – CAMBRAI 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' made advance to the wire, turned around and departed in the direction of SAIN, despite the "Come to help" signal from the Company, and personal requests from Lieuts R. A. C. Young and J. E. Christee. 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 ^d had been knocked-out previously and the enemy machine guns were up a [?] slope out of range of our rifle grenades. Lieuts J. Young and J. E. Christee had been wounded, and Lieut G. W. Megan killed, but Lieut Appleby (who had twice previously received slight wounds) led his Company on up the right flank of KIETH WOOD. Opposition now very firm, and the furthest the men could crawl forward was the heavy belts of wire running up 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 soon reported after 1.00pm and he was not in direct communication with his battery.

[Continued on following page]

Footnotes

a : This stream was, presumably, the Agache.

b : 'Blue Bonnets Over the Border' is a famous Scottish ballad which refers to Bonnie Prince Charlie's march into England in 1745. A blue bonnet or beret was a traditional piece of highland dress and due to the large highland composition of the Jacobite Army became associated with their faction. This was taken one stage further by affixing a white cockade to it, which was an official emblem of Jacobite affiliation. Today the march is still a popular military anthem, although it is especially favoured in Canada. [<http://digital.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/16598>]

c : Sains is Sains-lès-Marquion. The small settlement was wholly destroyed but rebuilt after the war.

d : The Stokes gun was actually a mortar used extensively by the Allied forces during the later stages of the war. This 3-inch trench mortar was a smooth-bore, muzzle-loading weapon for high angles of fire developed in early 1915. The Stokes mortar could fire as many as 25 bombs per minute and had a maximum range of 800 yards firing the original cylindrical un-stabilised projectile. British Empire units had 1,636 Stokes mortars in service on the Western Front at the Armistice.

Throughout the day 4 enemy balloons were up continuously in front of our position, with splendid observation. Our O.C. Major J. M. K. Sinclair MC has recommended that a special balloon 'strafe' be staged by our air service on the morning of any attack.

'A' Company, weakened by numerous casualties, was brought forward and the right Company of the 15th Battalion coming up at this point, a joint attack was about to be made, when a battalion of the Manchester regiment 11th 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 reorganisation remained to be done. Three German battalions (of the [?] and 139th Regiment) had been defeated and advance of a mile made on a front of fully two miles with two guns and a large number of machine guns captured.

Communication throughout the day between Company's and Battalion HQs was quite satisfactory both by runner and visual. From BHQ to the guns, the only communication found possible was by pigeons of which six were released.

The Commanding Officer wishes to express the admiration of all ranks of this battalion on the magnificent way with which the Manchester attack went forward. In spite of very heavy fire, the whole battalion behaved as if carrying out a field day practice.

Our casualties for the whole operation from the 25th to 30th September inclusive are as follows:

1 Officer killed	1 Officer died of wounds	10 Officers wounded
4 Officers Not Yet Diagnosed / Shell Shock	29 Other Ranks killed	4 Other Ranks died of wounds
169 Other Ranks wounded	8 Other Ranks missing	

The majority of these casualties were sustained in the attack on the 27th September 1918 – 'BOURLON WOOD OPERATION'

The Rear Detail moved forward during the afternoon from the DROCOURT QUEANT LINE ^e to the outskirts of CAGNICOURT, east side, together with the Transport and QM Section. The weather was fine, clear, cool and bracing.

Trophies captured on Sept 27th in the BOURLON WOOD operations were as follows

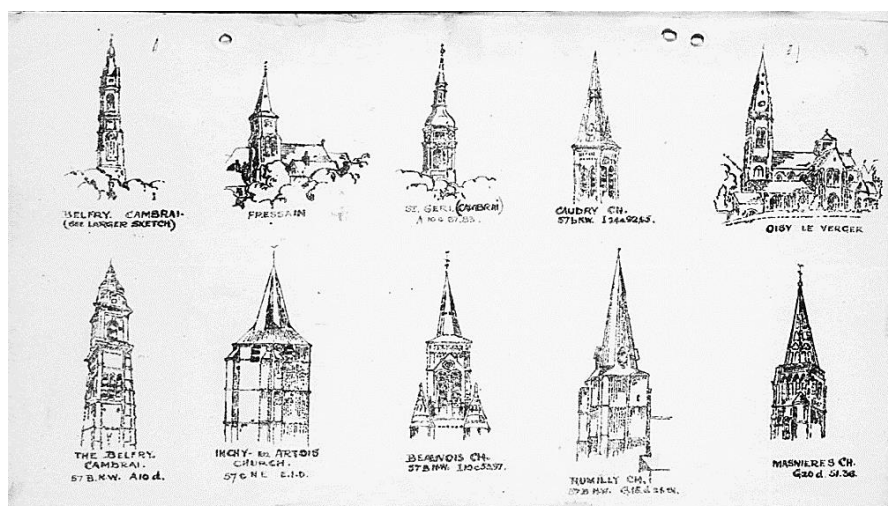
<u>MACHINE GUNS</u>	<u>LIGHT TRENCH MORTARS</u>	<u>ANTI-TANK GUN</u>	<u>77mm FIELD GUNS</u>
19	2	1	2

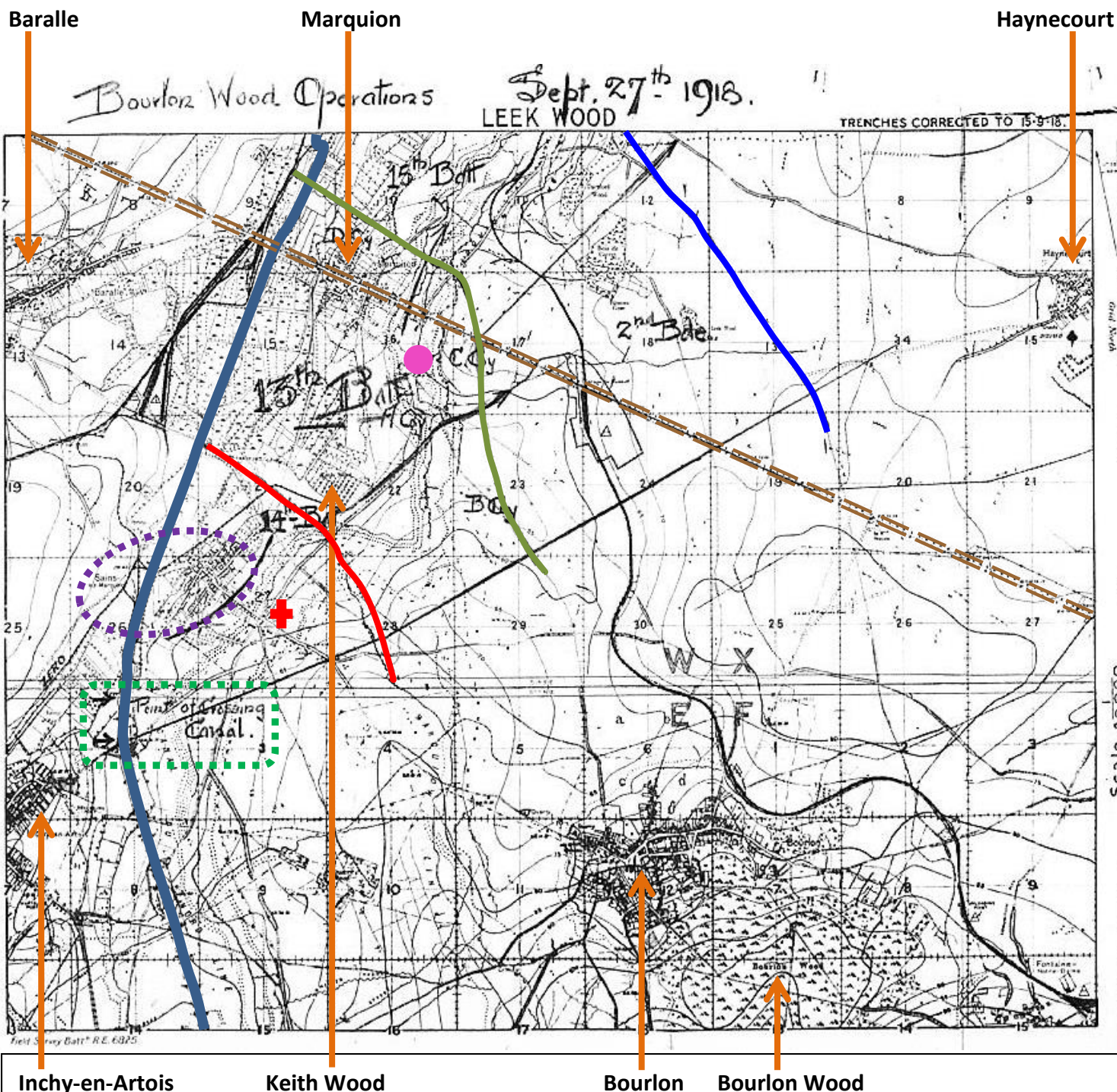
Footnotes

e : The Drocourt-Quéant Line (Wotan Stellung) was a set of mutually supporting defensive lines constructed by Germany between the French towns of Drocourt and Quéant during World War I. This defensive system was part of the northernmost section of the Hindenburg Line, a vast German defensive system that ran through north-eastern France. It was attacked and captured by Canadian and British troops in the closing months of the war as part of Canada's Hundred Days of successful offensive campaigning that helped end the war.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Drocourt-Qu%C3%A9ant_Line]

Accompanying the War Diary there are several maps and aerial photographs which assist in interpreting the area north of Bourslon Wood at this time and some of these are reproduced on the following pages. The battalion was also issued with several sheets of illustrations of prominent church spires to aid orientation.





An annotated version of the map in the War Diary showing some of the settlements and features mentioned in the Diary and Orders. The Canal du Nord, trending north-south, is shown in blue and the Arras – Cambrai road (Arras is off the map to the north-west and Cambrai is off the map to the south-east) is shown by the dashed brown line.

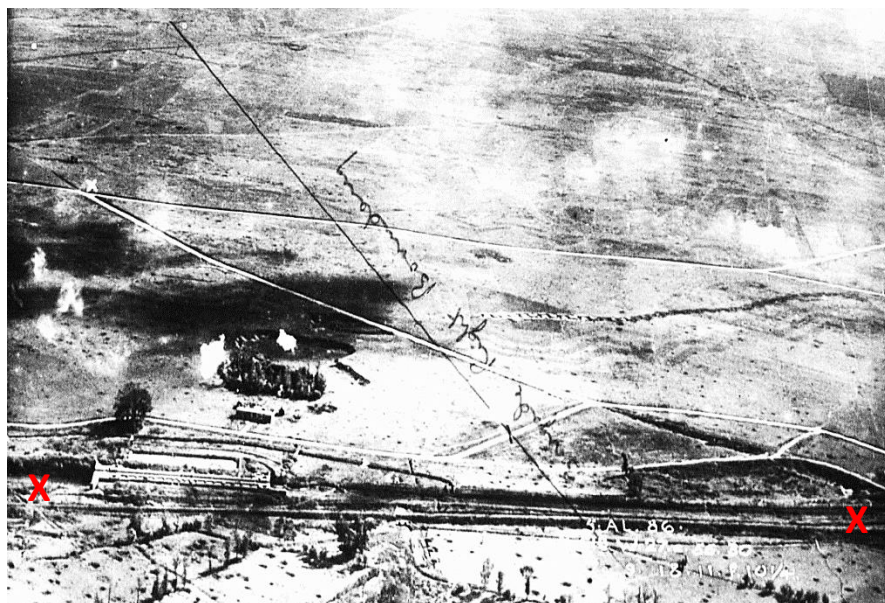
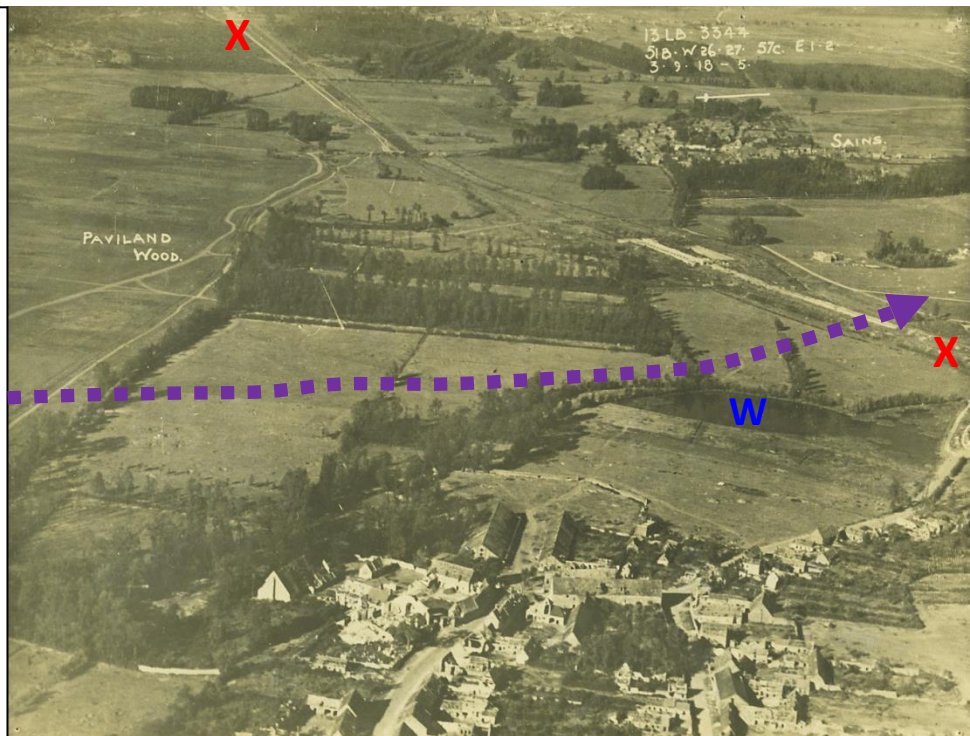
The location of Sains-lès-Marquion is encircled in purple and the area in which the troops moved eastwards across the canal is encircled in green. The pink dot is the location of Chapel Corner. The red cross, on the Sains-lès-Marquion to Bourlon road, indicates the site of Sains-lès-Marquion British Cemetery where Edwin Evans is buried.

The First Objective of the troops, the Red Line, is indicated as is the Second Objective, the Green Line and the Third Objective, the Blue Line. On this map these Objective Lines have been represented only in the area of immediate interest to the Canadian battalions; the objectives actually extended much further south than shown here.

[<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>]

Oblique aerial photograph of Paviland Wood and Sains (upper right) taken by the Royal Flying Corps on 3 September 1918 at 5:00 pm. The line of the Canal du Nord has been identified (X – X) and the line of advance of the Canadian troops on 27 September 1918 has been superimposed as a dashed purple line. The settlement at the bottom of this photograph is Inchy-en-Artois. The body of water, marked **W**, south of Paviland Wood, was a restriction to the troops approaching the canal.

[<http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/islandora/object/macrepo%3A5125>]



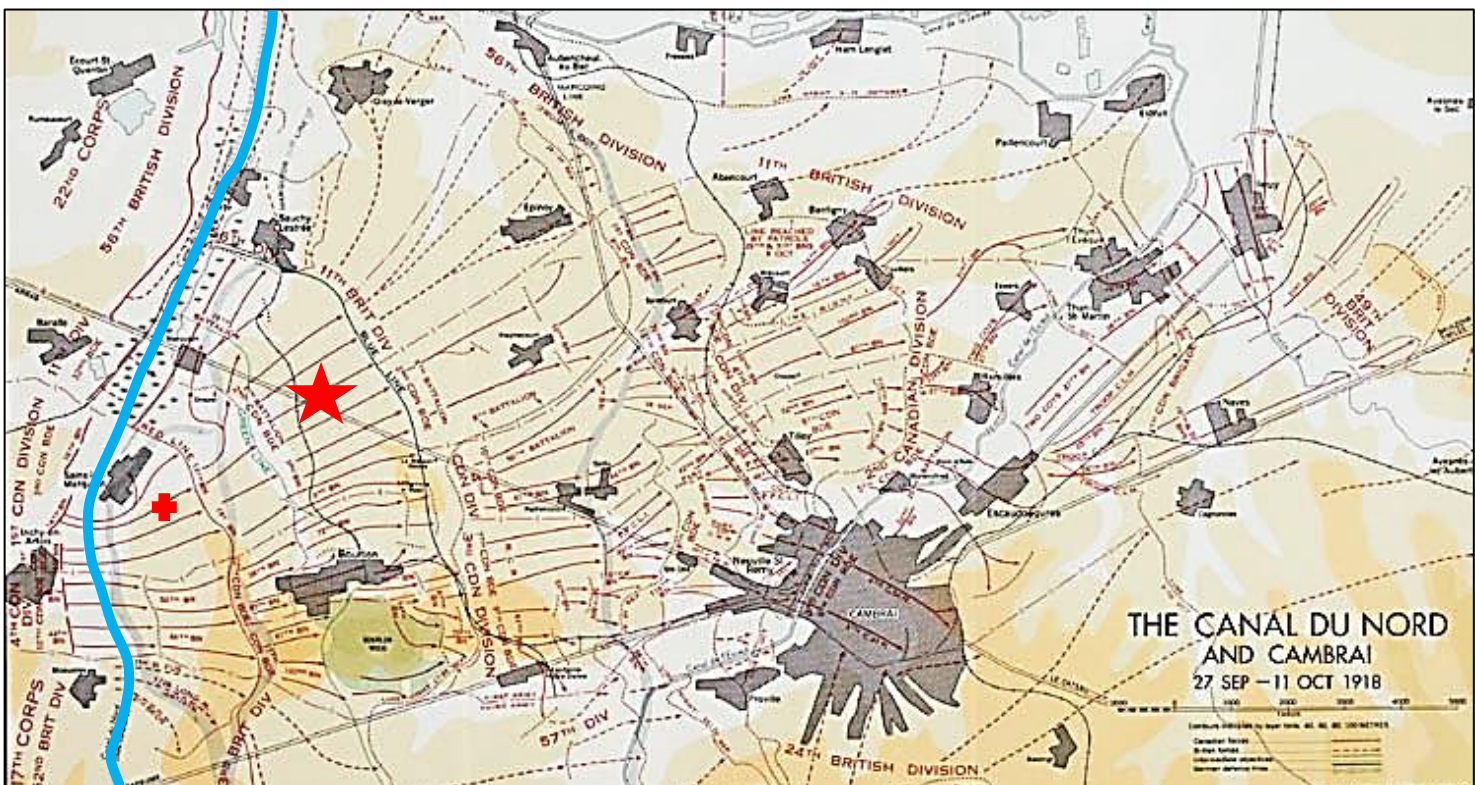
Looking eastwards across the Canal du Nord (X – X) and Lock N°3 (lower left). The diagonal line superimposed on the photo has the words 'Brigade Right Boundary' written against it.

It was just to the south (right) of Lock N°3 that the Canadian troops crossed the canal.



Vertical aerial photograph looking at the dry section of the Canal du Nord south of Lock N°3 (at **L**). A comment written on the reverse of the photograph states *Bridges over the AGACHE may possibly be cut by our own barrage. All crossings had better be done to the south of X (encircled).*

View looking east over the Canal du Nord to the north of Sains-lès-Marquion (upper right of photo). [Source of the three b&w photographs: <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca>]



The Canal-du-Nord and Cambrai 27 September - October 11, 1918.

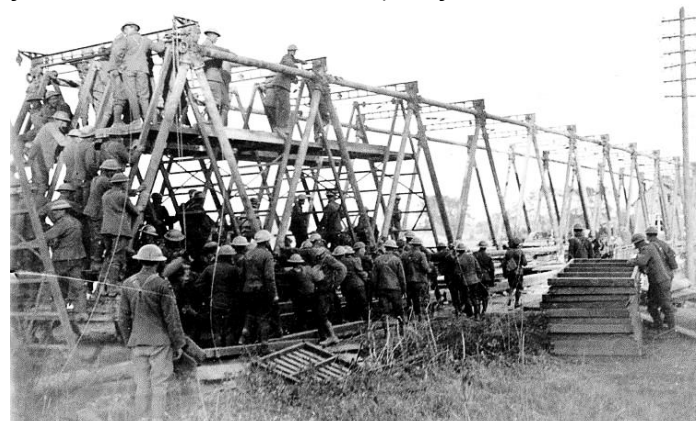
A generalised map of the area of assault. The red star shows, very approximately, the area in which Edwin Evans may have been killed and, to the west of Cambrai, the N – S route of the Canal du Nord. The red cross, on the Sains-lès-Marquion to Bourlon road, indicates the site of Sains-lès-Marquion British Cemetery where Edwin Evans is buried.
[Source: www.collectionscanada.gc.ca]

The battle towards Cambrai dealt a mortal blow to a weakened, but resistant, enemy in the course of the last 100 days of the Great War. The operation began on September 27, 1918, with a hair-raising rush across a dangerously narrow canal passage. It continued with harrowing counterattacks coming from enemy troops concealed in woods, firing from bridgeheads, and lurking around the corners of myriad small village roads. It ended in triumph on October 11, when the Canadians, exhausted after days of unremitting fighting, finally drove the Germans out of their most important remaining distribution centre, Cambrai. Historians see this triumph as the highly professional execution of a daring and inventive strategy. For many of the soldiers, however, success was the result of a great esprit de corps, of great spirit.

Cambrai is surrounded by an elaborate system of canals providing links to the Steeple and Scheldt rivers to the northeast and drainage of marshy lands. West of Cambrai lies the Canal-du-Nord, whose construction at the outbreak of war had been left incomplete, a serious obstacle to Allied troops advancing from the west. The enemy had flooded the already swampy area and there was only a 4,000-metre southward stretch in which the ground was firm and the Canal-du-Nord (itself 35 metres wide) was dry. If this passage could be crossed, Bourlon Wood and the high ground to the north could be captured. The enemy placed machine-gun posts close to the canal's flanks and other units were locked into natural defences. The main German defences at the Marquion Line were only a mile past the canal. The problem was to quickly move the whole Corps, with heavy artillery, through that narrow defile before the enemy attacked.

[Source and photo:

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>]



Canadian troops building a bridge across the Canal-du-Nord, September 1918.

It is believed that George Evans might have enlisted but that he was possibly exempted from war service on the grounds of poor health. He may have died in April / June 1943 aged 62.

Albert Evans served in WW1 and, as previously noted, returned to work in Neston at the colliery. Albert married Emily Thackwray in a Civil Marriage on Wirral in early 1912 and they had at least six children:

Albert E	born July / September 1912
Edwin	born mid-1913, possibly in Ormskirk
Emily	born early 1915
William	born early 1917
Mildred	born April / June 1921
John	born early 1925

Albert Evans may have died in early 1949 aged 61.

Emily Thackwray was the older sister of John William Thackwray who, serving with the 10th Battalion Cheshire regiment, died in action in France on 3 September 1916 having suffered gas-related injuries during the middle stages of the 1916 Battle of the Somme [see [83: John William Thackery \(Thackwray\)](#) in this work].

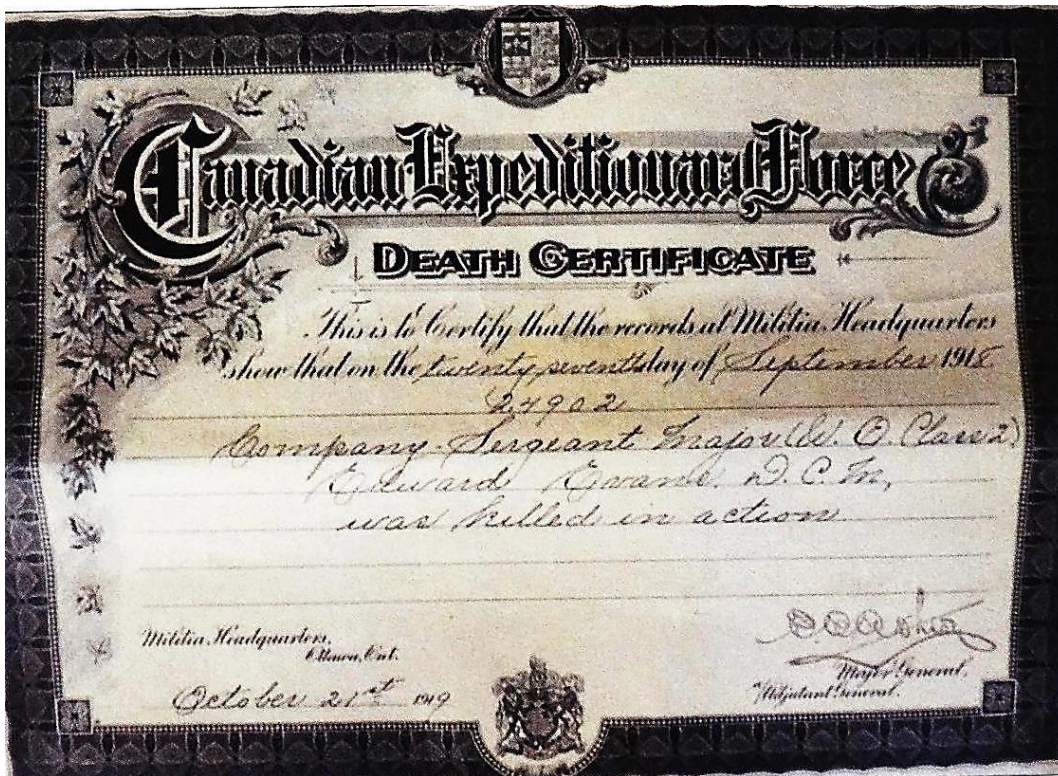
Edwin Evans and John William Thackwray, both of whom died in action, were therefore brothers-in-law.



Edwin Evans

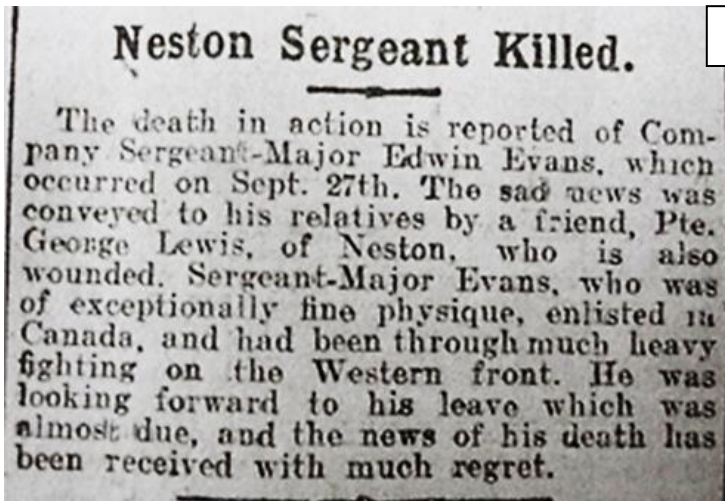


Edwin, Albert and George Evans



Issued on 21 October 1918, the Canadian Expeditionary Force Death Certificate recorded that Edwin Evans was killed in action on 27 September 1918.

Edwin Evans died on the same day, and in the same conflict, as **56: Raymond Frederick Lawton MM** although Raymond was serving with the 46th Battalion Canadian Infantry.



Birkenhead News – Saturday 12 October 1918

1. NO.	2. RANK OR RATING	3. SURNAMES	4. CHRISTIAN NAMES
24902	Company Sergeant Major	EVANS (D.C.M.) & (Belgian Croix-de-Guerre)	Edwin
5. UNIT OR SHIP	6. DATE OF CASUALTY	7. H.Q. FILE NO.	8. RELIGION
13th Battalion	27-9-18	649-B-146	Church of England
9. CIRCUMSTANCES OF CASUALTY		10. NAME, RELATIONSHIP AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN	
"Killed in Action" While organizing the posts on the Company's objective, during operations near Marquion, he was killed by enemy machine gun fire.			
11. LOCATION OF UNIT AT TIME OF CASUALTY			
NOTE—Boxes 11, 12 and 13 are not to be completed until grave is permanently located.			
12. CEMETERY	13. LOCATION OF CEMETERY	14. GRAVE LOCATION	15. REGISTERED NO. OF GRAVE
Sains-les-Marquion British Cemetery,	11 1/2 miles South of Douai, France.	Grave: _____ Plot: _____ Row: _____	
16. PHOTOGRAPH OF GRAVE TAKEN	17. EXPOSURE NO.	18. PHOTOGRAPH OF GRAVE AND CEMETERY SUPPLIED TO	
19. FURTHER PARTICULARS ON REVERSE SIDE OF SHEET.			



Circumstances of Death Registers, First World War : Library and Archives Canada

The war grave of Edwin Evans at Sains-Les-Marquion British Cemetery, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

The 1939 Register provides some additional details of the siblings of Edwin Evans:

William Evans (born 25 September 1870) was living at 69 Mayfield Gardens (off Liverpool Road) with Mary E Evans (born 6 April 1914). William had been widowed (details of his marriage and children are unknown) and he was now an Old Age Pensioner. Mary was married and two lines of the entry, probably the details of her children, have been redacted. Mary may have been a daughter-in-law of William.

George Evans, a labourer of Raby Road, married Madeline Frances Edwards at Neston Parish Church on 29 June 1918. George Evans' father, Job, had died in early April 1891 and Madeline's father, farmer John Edward Edwards, had also died. A John Cottrell, possibly George's step-brother, was a witness:

1918 Marriage solemnized at <u>Neston</u> in the Parish Church of <u>Neston</u> in the County of <u>Cheshire</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
120	June 29 th	George Evans	33	Bachelor	Labourer	Raby Road, Neston	Job Evans	Miner (deceased)
	1918	Madeline Frances Edwards	28	Spinster	—	16 Gladstone Road, Neston	John Edward Edwards	Farmer (deceased)

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by John Cottrell after license by me W. M. Harris

This Marriage was solemnized between us, George Evans and Madeline Frances Edwards in the Presence of us, John Cottrell and Annie Theresa Candlish

In the 1939 Register George (born 8 February 1885, a builder's labourer, incapacitated) and Madeline (born 15 August 1889) were living at 76 Mayfield Gardens; they probably had at least three children (two lines of the Register entry have been redacted) and, in the Register, daughter Marjorie (born 11 October 1920, an apprentice confectioner) was living with them. On 16 June 1960 Marjorie married Edmund Clapham in Birkenhead. It is not certain when George and Madeline Evans died.

In September 1939 Albert Evans (born 5 January 1888, a general labourer), Edwin's younger brother, was living at 'Casita' on the Burton Road, Neston. As noted previously, Albert married Emily Thackwray in early 1912 and they had at least six children. In the 1939 Register three of the unmarried children are recorded (and a further line, probably with the details of John who was born in 1925, has been redacted):

Edwin born 24 July 1913 journeyman plumber

Emily born 23 January 1915 unpaid domestic work

Emily married Herbert Henry Boyd at Neston Parish Church in late 1941

Mildred born 16 March 1921 unpaid domestic work

Mildred married Alfred Stuart Rossiter at Neston Parish Church in late 1940 and it is believed that they had at least four children, including Peter G Rossiter born in early 1942.