
Norman Williamson's World War I Service History and Transcribed Pocket Diary



November 2025



Norman Williamson about January 1916 after enlistment.

Summary

While serving with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War I in France and Belgium, Norman Williamson kept a soldier's pocket diary for much of his time. Norman's diary has been transcribed here, with notes added for additional detail and context from various World War I sources as well as from the history documented for the 54th Kootenay Battalion by Major John Beswick Bailey.

While with the 54th Battalion, among other areas, Norman served near Ypres including the historic battle at Passchendaele in late 1917.

Norman was with the 54th Battalion in the front lines at many battles throughout 1917 and 1918. In addition to Passchendaele, these included The Salient, Liévin, Amiens, Mericourt, Oppy-Gavrelle, Gentelles Wood, Beaucourt-en-Santerre, Chaulnes, Arras, Drocourt-Queant, Bourslon Wood, Cambrai, Canal du Nord, Cambrai-Douai, Cuvillers, plus others.

World War I broke out in the summer of 1914 with the United Kingdom entering the war on August 4, 1914. Because Canada was a Dominion of the United Kingdom, it automatically entered the war with the United Kingdom and it too, declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914. Canada initially sent a Canadian Expeditionary Force of 30,617 in October 1914. Additional troops were sent through 2015 but by early 1916, this was realized as being inadequate given the magnitude of the war. Canada recognized that it would need to send up to 500,000 troops so additional volunteers were sought.

Norman Williamson enlisted with the 226th Battalion at Dauphin, Manitoba in early January 1916, trained at Camp Hughes (now Shilo, Manitoba), travelled to Halifax around late October 1916 and trained further for another two months. Norman embarked for England in mid-December 1916 on the *Olympic* and arrived in Liverpool, England on December 26, 1916. Training continued in England at Bramshott Camp and later at Shorncliffe. In spring, 1917, the 226th was disbanded with half, including Norman Williamson, being assigned to the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion. The 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion provided reinforcements and replacements for the 16th, 43rd and 44th battalions. Because Norman Williamson was identified as an excellent marksman, he was pulled from his battalion and sent to sniper school in England,

returning to France on September 23, 1917. Shortly after, on October 15, 1917 ⁽¹⁾, the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion was disbanded and absorbed into the 11th Canadian Reserve Battalion - while Norman was away, the 14th or the battalions it supported, suffered many casualties, leaving it no longer of viable strength. Norman Williamson was then assigned to the 54th Kootenay Battalion of the Fourth Canadian Division, where he remained for the duration of the war.

Norman Williamson served as a Private for much of the war but was promoted to Sargeant on November 21, 1918. On promotion to Sargeant, his rate of pay was raised to “*one dollar thirty per day*”!

Of significance, Norman Williamson was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery in the Field on November 4, 1918. Despite efforts with the National Archives of Canada by Norman's daughter-in-law, Ramona Williamson, it could not be discovered what the act was for which Norman was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery. Norman, similar to other Canadian soldiers, also received the British War Medal (or Service Medal) and the Victory Medal.

On November 11, 1918, the Armistice was signed, bringing to an end World War I.

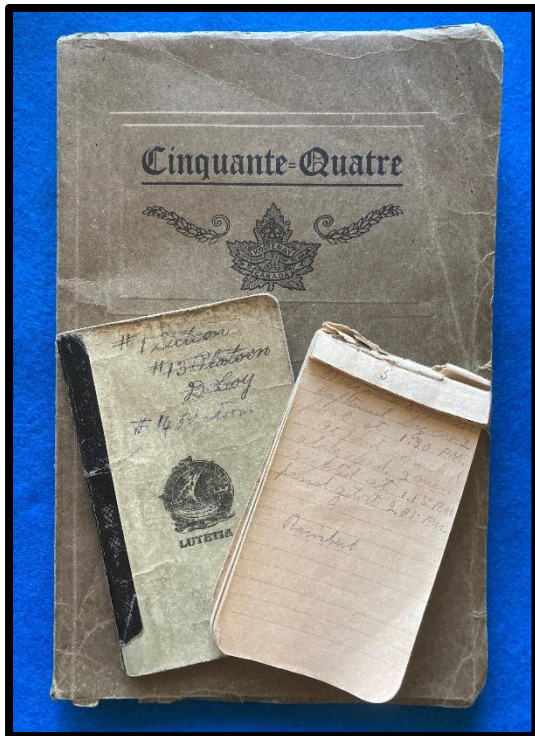
Shortly after the Armistice was signed, all four Canadian Divisions including Norman Williamson's 54th Battalion took part in the Allied Army's continued move to the Rhine River and into Germany and served as part of the Army of Occupation - essentially to maintain good order in the previously German-occupied areas until civil governments could be restored. Norman Williamson's 54th Battalion served in this capacity in Belgium until April 28, 1919 when the Battalion left France for England to begin the return journey to Canada.

Neither Norman Williamson's pocket diary nor the 54th Battalion's written record expresses the full and unimaginable horror of their experiences in the fields and villages of France and Belgium in World War I. These truly horrible conditions included the constant shelling inflicting seemingly random casualties, attacks by poison gas, wet and cold conditions for much of the time in the trenches with little or no shelter, trenches overrun with rats, and fighting occurring over previous battlefields which constantly uncovered the remains of soldiers missing in action from

¹ Information compiled from various internet websites referencing the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion.

both the German and Allied armies, and of course, the constant witness of the death or dismemberment of friends. With regard to the 1917 battle at Passchendaele, the 54th Battalion's records stated that *"It is impossible to describe adequately the hard conditions of this tour ..."* and the soldiers in the front line will *"...always remember them as some of the worst days of their lives. Terrible mud and rain; very heavy shelling from three sides...."*

Norman Williamson passed away in 1980 but is still well-remembered by his grandchildren.



Norman Williamson's World War I pocket diary, notebook, and history of the 54th Kootenay Battalion by Major John Beswick Bailey.

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The Start of World War I and Canada's Involvement

Tensions among countries and among regional alliances in Europe and eastern Asia had been high throughout much of recorded history including the 1800s and early 1900s. Borders had shifted often as the result of armed conflict - the Napoleonic wars from 1803 to 1815, the Revolution of the German States in 1848 to 1849, the First Italian War of Independence in 1848 to 1849 also involving Hungary, Serbia, Austria, and Slovakia, the Crimean War of 1853 to 1856, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 to 1871 (where the treaty ending the war gave Germany most of the French region of Alsace and Lorraine), plus others.

Prior to 1914, Germany had risen in power and increased its military capabilities while the Ottoman Empire (which included parts of the Balkan states, Turkey, northern Africa, plus others) had declined, thus disturbing the long-standing balance of power in Europe. There was also increasing economic competition between countries due to industrialization and expanding colonialism, creating further tensions.

On June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb, assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Austria blamed Serbia and declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. Russia came to the military defence of Serbia, then Germany declared war on Russia and France (Russia and France had an alliance in which if one was attacked by Germany, the other would come to its aid). Belgium wanted to remain neutral during the conflict, Germany sought Belgium's permission for its army to pass freely through Belgium territory to strike France, but Belgium refused. The United Kingdom guaranteed Belgium's neutrality through the First Treaty of London. Germany declared war on Belgium, then invaded. After Germany invaded Belgium, the United Kingdom came to Belgium's defence and on August 4, 1914, declared war on Germany. The Ottoman empire entered the war in support of Germany and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and others joined the war in 1915 in support of the United Kingdom and the Allies.

Germany's strategy was to quickly defeat France, then move the bulk of its armies to the east to confront Russia. However, by September 1914, Germany's army had been essentially halted with the western front consisting of a near-continuous line of trenches from the English channel to Switzerland. The United States joined in April 1917.

The British declaration of war on Germany automatically brought Canada into the war since Canada was a legal Dominion of the United Kingdom - all foreign policy decisions of a British Dominion were the legal responsibility of the British parliament. Still, the Canadian government could determine the level of its involvement in the war. Canada also declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914.

Although Canada had its own Militia, it decided to assemble a separate Canadian Expeditionary Force. Despite pressure from the British government to place the Canadian recruits into British units, Canada insisted that its forces would go into battle as separate Canadian battalions. Initially, the Canadian forces were commanded by British commanders, but later in the war, Canadians were led by Canadian-born leaders.

Canada's minister responsible for its war efforts, Sam Hughes, initially requested 25,000 volunteers but got 33,000 instead. These were trained at Valcartier, Québec. Canada sent its first contingent of 30,617 men to England on October 3, 1914. By the end of 1914, the target for volunteers was 50,000, by summer of 1915 it was 150,000, and by New Years 1916, it was 500,000 - Canadian Prime Minister Borden saw that the magnitude of the war was enormous and, therefore, Canada committed to send more troops.

Ultimately, the Canadian Expeditionary Force was comprised of about 620,000 people with 67,000 killed and 173,000 wounded - a casualty rate of 39 %.

Many detailed accounts have been written about the battles in which the Canadian forces participated during World War I including those in which Norman Williamson played a role and especially Passchendaele. The conditions were truly and unimaginably horrible. Nevertheless, the Canadian soldiers bravely and courageously did as commanded. Among the Allied forces, the Canadians were recognized as being especially effective.

Canada was recognized for its significant contributions and sacrifices at major battles pivotal to the defeat of the German and the Austrian-Hungarian armies - the battles of the Somme, Ypres, Passchendaele and later, "*Canada's Hundred Days*", sometimes called the "*100 Days Campaign*" or "*100 Days Offensive*". Canada's contributions to World War I changed Canadian history, establishing it as a strong, internationally-recognized independent nation.

Norman Williamson's Enlistment, Training and Assigned Battalions

Norman Williamson (1000758) enlisted at Dauphin, Manitoba on January 26, 1916 with the 226th Overseas Battalion, North-Western Manitoba. The 226th was authorized in 1915 and was formed in early 1916 and by April 1, 1916, had reached its target strength of 1300⁽²⁾. Recruitment was largely from the central agricultural region of Manitoba. Norman Williamson was assigned to "A" Company along with recruits from Dauphin, Swan River and Russell. The 226th Battalion was known by a number of names including "Grizzly Bears", "Men of the North", and occasionally, the "Riding Mountain Volunteers".

The recruited soldiers were moved to Camp Hughes (now Shilo, Manitoba, located south-east of Brandon) on June 1, 1916 for training, although it appears that some training was occurring near their home towns while Camp Hughes was being constructed. Apparently, an additional two months of training occurred in Halifax in November and December 1916.

The 226th Battalion sailed to England from Halifax on December 16, 1916 on the troop ship *Olympic* and arrived in Liverpool on December 26, 1916. Training continued in England at Bramshott Camp and later at Shorncliffe. Much to their disappointment, on April 7, 1917, the 226th was absorbed into other units to replace casualties. The battalion was divided among the 14th Reserve Battalion and the 16th, 27th, 44th, 78th, and 433rd battalions with half going to the 14th Battalion. According to Norman Williamson's paybook⁽³⁾, he had been assigned to the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion. The 14th was part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force's First Division. The 226th was disbanded on July 27, 1917⁽⁴⁾.

In World War I, reserve battalions were formed to provide reinforcements to replace casualties in other battalions and were mainly comprised of men from the same military district. The 14th Reserve Battalion was a Manitoba unit which had been organized at Shorncliffe, England on January 4, 1917. It was formed by absorbing the 108th, 179th, and one-half of the 226th (Norman

² "226th Overseas Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force, North-Western Manitoba", a document retained by Norman Williamson and now located in Volume 2, "Norman Williamson's World War I Heirloom Items".

³ Norman Williamson's "Canadian Pay Book for use of Active Service".

⁴ Information compiled from various internet websites referencing the 226th Battalion.

Williamson's original battalion) and later, it also absorbed the 174th Battalion. The 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion reinforced and provided replacements for the 16th, 43rd and 44th battalions.

Because Norman Williamson was recognized as an excellent marksman, he was pulled from his battalion and sent to sniper school in England, returning to France on September 23, 1917. Shortly after, on October 15, 1917 ⁽⁵⁾, the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion was disbanded and absorbed into the 11th Canadian Reserve Battalion - while Norman was away, the 14th or the battalions it supported, suffered many casualties, leaving it no longer of viable strength.

Norman Williamson was then assigned to the 54th Kootenay Battalion, 11th Infantry Brigade of the Fourth Canadian Division, where he remained for the duration of the war.

It is noted that other than the booklet describing the 226th ⁽¹⁾, Norman Williamson had no other material in his collection that was retained from his service with the 226th, the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion, or the battalions with which he may have served briefly that were supported by the 14th. As well, the portions of his soldier's diary that may have contained information about his training or his service with the 14th and the battalions it supported, had been removed - probably due to security reasons since he likely carried his diary in the field. Pages retained in his diary begin on September 23, 1917 when he left England for France presumably after completing sniper school and then assigned to the 54th Kootenay Battalion.

Norman Williamson served as a Private for much of the war but was promoted to Sargeant on November 21, 1918 (as noted in his "Army Book of Canadian Pay Book for Use on Active Service"). On promotion to Sargeant, his rate of pay was raised to "*one dollar thirty per day*"! Norman Williamson was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery in the Field on November 4, 1918 (as noted on page 40 of the book *Cinquante-Quatre*, documenting the record of the 54th) and, similar to other Canadian soldiers, received the British War Medal (or Service Medal) and the Victory Medal. Despite efforts with the National Archives of Canada by Norman's daughter-in-law, Ramona Williamson, it could not be discovered what the act was for which Norman was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery.

⁵ Information compiled from various internet websites referencing the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion.

Although not in his diary, there were a few anecdotes that Norman passed along to his family over the years:

- The ship-ride from Halifax to England on the *Olympic* was extremely rough with just about everyone including Norman and the many horses on-board suffering terribly from sea sickness for virtually the entire trip.
- Norman had mentioned that he, like many other soldiers during this period, suffered from painful “trench-foot” arising from having cold, wet feet for many, many days.
- Norman said that there were extended periods on the front lines when they could not be reached with food rations, were quite hungry and, for a time, were very happy to live off rusted cans of “bully beef” (now generally called “corned beef”) that had been discarded by British soldiers that had occupied the same trenches before them.
- As well, Norman noted that his only physical injury during the war was a broken nose - this he suffered in a baseball game!

Norman Williamson's Transcribed Soldier's Pocket Diary

Even though soldiers in World War I were not supposed to keep diaries for security reasons, many did in any case - some were fairly extensive while others were just a few words describing daily events. Norman Williamson maintained a pocket diary with brief entries for most days beginning Sunday, September 23, 1917 on his return to France, it is believed, after he completed sniper school in England. His diary with daily brief entries continued to July 31, 1918 at which point, the allied armies were beginning preparations for the “*100 Days Offensive*” which began on August 8, 1918 and ended with the Armistice on November 11, 1918. Preparations for their role in this offensive by Norman's 54th Kootenay Battalion involved days of secret night-time moves, orders against soldiers congregating in large groups, etc. It is suspected that orders may have been re-issued against the keeping of soldier's diaries during this sensitive time.

Norman's pocket diary also served as a notebook in which he included notes taken during sniper school, machine and Lewis gun classes, sighting information related to corrections for wind and elevation, plus other items. In addition, there are a few diary-type entries scattered throughout his pay book, field bible and a second field notebook and, along with his pocket diary, are transcribed as best as possible below.

Place names that were abbreviated in his pocket diary are reconciled wherever possible with the official battle record of the 54th ⁽⁶⁾ and notes are provided from the battle record to provide greater context. Some of Norman's place names in his diary appear to be spelled phonetically, which was the only alternative if sign posts or maps were not immediately available, and these are reconciled with the Battalion's record wherever possible. In other cases, Norman uses the Battalion's unique vernacular such as reference to “bath mats” when most other records refer to these as “trench mats”, “duckboards” or “trench boards” (although Pierre Burton, in his book titled “*Vimy*”, also used the term “bath mats”, so this may be a Canadian term).

Norman included his name on the inside of the back cover of his pocket diary and it shows “*E Company, 14th Reserve Battalion, Shorncliffe*”.

⁶ “*Cinquante-Quatre*”, sub-titled “*Being a Short History of the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion*” and written by John Beswick Bailey.

Throughout, Norman Williamson referred to battle lines as the front, supports and occasionally, reserve. There were typically three lines on the Allied army's battlefield: the front - a line of trenches immediately facing the enemy; the support - a second line somewhat back from the front; and the reserve - often a third line back from the support line. After moving between the front and support or reserve lines, the Battalion would normally move to a rest camp before heading back to the front.



Map showing the general region of France and Belgium where Norman Williamson served with the 54th Battalion in World War I.

No Diary Entries - Enlistment to September 22, 1917

As mentioned above, the first part of Norman Williamson's pocket diary had been removed, potentially for security reasons in the event of capture. The missing pages could not be located with his World War I memorabilia. During the early part of Norman's service after arriving in England in December 1916, he was with the 14th Canadian Reserve Battalion which provided reinforcements and replacements for the 16th, 43rd and 44th battalions. During this period, it is not known where Norman Williamson served.

Diary Entries - September 23, 1917 to July 31, 1918

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Sunday, September 23, 1917	• <i>Left England for France</i>	•
Monday, September 24, 1917	• <i>Marched from B. to E.T.</i>	• The British Army's most important base in France was at Étaples and its main port was Boulogne. It is likely the "B." meant Boulogne and "E.T." meant the camp at Étaples. On returning to France from probably sniper training in September 1917, Norman Williamson likely landed at Boulogne.
Tuesday, September 25, 1917	• <i>Had gas masks tested</i> • <i>Medical exam</i>	
Wednesday, September 26, 1917	• <i>Went to bull ring, took gas.</i>	• The term "Bull Ring" referred to a notorious training camp at Étaples where soldiers underwent weapons and assault training - treatment was brutal and conditions were harsh leading to much dissatisfaction including rebellion. • In early September 1917, just before Norman would have arrived, there was widespread disobedience over the training conditions at the "bull ring" and ultimately, one New Zealand soldier was executed. A similar rebellion had occurred sometime in 1916 as well which also involved an execution.
Thursday, September 27, 1917	• <i>Went to bull ring, did fatigues.</i>	• "Fatigues" refers to the exhaustive workouts that occurred in training at the "Bull Ring".
Friday, September 28, 1917	• <i>Prepared to move.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Saturday, September 29, 1917	• <i>Came up line to Cologne.</i>	• It is uncertain, but "Cologne" is thought to be near "Cologne Farm", the site of a significant battle near the Somme in April 1917. It was part of a larger series of battles in the Hargicourt region along the Hindenburg Line.
Sunday, September 30, 1917	• <i>Fatigue work</i>	• Refers to heavy training.
Monday, October 1, 1917	• <i>Left Cologne</i>	
Tuesday, October 2, 1917	• <i>Joined Battalion at rest camp</i>	• The Battalion would be the 54th Battalion to which Norman Williamson was now attached. • The Battalion had been near the Avion Front and was preparing for an assault on Lens. Around October 2, 1917, the Battalion was relieved and returned to Chateau de la Haie (p. 18 of Reference #5), which is where Norman Williamson would have joined the Battalion. The Chateau de la Haie is near Carency, France and is located near Arras, in the north of France. • Arras was about 10 kilometres from the front line, and a series of battles took place around the city and nearby, including the Battle of Arras (1914), the Battle of Arras (1917), and the Second Battle of the Somme component of 1918's Hundred Days Offensive.
Wednesday, October 3, 1917	• <i>Over the tapes</i>	• After returning to rest camp at Chateau de la Haie, the Battalion's record for this date shows that "...<i>hard training was indulged in, practice over the tapes, etc.</i>" (p. 18 of Reference #5). • One internet reference indicated that "<i>Over the tapes</i>" refers to practicing the taking of an objective that had been identified or arranged from aerial photographs. Additionally, Pierre Burton in his book "<i>Vimy</i>", indicated that in training for the Vimy assault in April 1917, the enemy's trenches, machine gun posts, etc., were marked with tape on the training ground including the objective being marked in red - the men were drilled for the upcoming battle using tape on the landscape as reference markers. • The Battalion's record (p. 18, Reference #5) indicated that while all the details had been obtained for the attack on Lens, this was cancelled and the Battalion was warned that an immediate move would be made to The Salient. The Salient was an eastward bulge in the front line around Ypres where many significant battles were fought for much of the war.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Thursday, October 4, 1917	• <i>Started on march</i> • <i>Stopped at Verdill</i>	• This was the start of the march which would take the Battalion to The Salient. • It is not certain where "Verdill" is located and different spellings have been tried with no success. In Norman Williamson's diary, the initial entry read "unknown destination" but this was later crossed out (using a different pencil) and replaced with "Verdill".
Friday, October 5, 1917	• <i>Continued march, stopped at Maisnil</i>	• Maisnil is a small community in the north-west of France.
Saturday, October 6, 1917	• <i>Rained, still at Maisnil</i>	
Sunday, October 7, 1917	• <i>At Maisnil. Had service in a barn.</i>	• The "service" would probably have been a church service.
Monday, October 8, 1917	• <i>At Maisnil. On parade until noon. Afternoon rained.</i>	
Tuesday, October 9, 1917	• <i>Bath parade</i>	
Wednesday, October 10, 1917	• <i>Rained all day</i>	
Thursday, October 11, 1917	• <i>Moved. Stopped for night at village.</i>	
Friday, October 12, 1917	• <i>Marched about 14 miles. Stopped for night in country barn.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 18, Reference #5) indicated that the "...the Battalion commenced their trip north on the 4th. The journey was made partly by road and partly by train, and Terdeghem, in Flanders, was reached on the 12th, where a halt of six days was made preparatory to the operations for the taking of Passchendaele."
Saturday, October 13, 1917	• <i>Rained</i>	
Sunday, October 14, 1917	• <i>Fine. Still in rest billets.</i>	
Monday, October 15, 1917	• <i>Fine. Got paid. In rest billets.</i>	
Tuesday, October 16, 1917	• <i>In rest billets. Weather fine.</i>	
Wednesday, October 17, 1917	• <i>In rest billets. Weather fine.</i>	

Thursday, October 18, 1917	• <i>Moved to Ypres.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 18, Reference #5) stated that <i>"Early in the morning of the 18th, word was received that the Battalion was to be ready to proceed in busses to the front by 10 a.m. All was bustle and confusion, as time was short and the busses were to be picked up some distance away. However, all companies and headquarters arrived on time and after a quick embussing started off for the new scene of operations, which was learned to be at Podijze (spelling on a current map shows "Potijze" rather than "Podijze"), just east of Ypres. The transport proceeded independently. Ypres was reached about midday and there the Battalion had to wait until guides were forthcoming to act as conductors to the destination. While waiting at Ypres, we were given the first taste of [the enemy's] bombers, a fleet of big bombing machines flying over, but luckily not dropping any of their "eggs" near us. After a long wait our guides arrived and we reached Podijze about 4:30 p.m. and were shown ... our billeting area...a very muddy field with a few tents pitched about. We were also informed that the bombing was very bad, 40 men in an adjoining camp having been killed that day, and that all tents had to be struck at reveille and not put up again until dusk - a pleasant prospect with all the mud and rain."</i> • Ypres occupied a strategic position of high ground during World War I because it stood in the path of Germany's planned move across the rest of Belgium and into France from the north. The German army surrounded the city on three sides (The Salient), bombarding it throughout much of the war. British, French, and allied forces made costly advances from The Salient at Ypres into the German lines on the surrounding hills. • There were three main battles that occurred in the Ypres area. Canadian soldiers played a major role in the Second Battle of Ypres and in the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). (1) In the First Battle of Ypres (October 19, 1914 to November 22, 1914), the Allies captured the town from the Germans. (2) In the Second Battle of Ypres (April 22, 1915 to May 25, 1915), the Allies captured high ground east of the town. The Germany army launched a gas attack (chlorine or mustard gas) during this battle against Canadian, British, French, Senegalese and Algerian soldiers. (3) The Third Battle of Ypres, also called the Battle of Passchendaele, was the largest and most well-known (July 31, 1917 to November 10, 1917). At great cost of lives and terrible suffering, the Allies captured the Passchendaele Ridge east of the City of Ypres. Nearly 16,000 Canadians were killed or wounded at Passchendaele. Norman's life-long friend, Clifford Story, was one of those killed.
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<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Friday, October 19, 1917	• <i>Put on working party. Heavily shelled.</i>	• The Battalion's record (pp. 18 and 19, Reference #5) indicated that the 54th was sent ahead of the remainder of the 4th Division to furnish working parties. The 54th was the "...first Canadian unit to arrive on the scene of operations. The following day all hands turned to ... and in an incredibly short space of time had constructed comfortable little dugouts, mostly roofed by salvaged corrugated iron from the old trenches around. The weather at this time, and during the whole tour, was very wet, and all the new hands in the Battalion had a good breaking-in to the Flanders mud." • The Battalion's record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that "Large working parties were ordered out, the work chiefly consisting of laying bath mats to the front line." Although the 54th Battalion referred to them as "bath mats", these were most commonly called "trench mats", "duckboards" or "trench boards". This is a photograph from the internet of soldiers laying trench mats over the mud at Passchendaele in November 1917, which would have been similar to conditions experienced by Norman Williamson and the 54th Battalion at Passchendaele in late October and November 1917.
Saturday, October 20, 1917	• <i>On working party. Slightly shelled.</i>	
Sunday, October 21, 1917	• <i>On working party. Very quiet.</i>	
Monday, October 22, 1917	• <i>Working party. Heavily shelled. Moved to rest camp.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Tuesday, October 23, 1917	• <i>In rest camp.</i> <i>Weather wet.</i>	
Wednesday, October 24, 1917	• <i>In rest camp.</i> <i>Weather wet.</i>	
Thursday, October 25, 1917	• <i>In rest camp.</i> <i>Weather fine.</i>	
Friday, October 26, 1917	• <i>In rest camp.</i> <i>Rained.</i>	
Saturday, October 27, 1917	• <i>Moving back to Ypres.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that "After a few days of this the Battalion was relieved and moved back to huts at Brandhook for a short time, again moving up to Podijze on the 27th of October for more working parties. During this tour the camp was bombed several times and some casualties were suffered."
Sunday, October 28, 1917	• <i>On working party.</i>	
Monday, October 29, 1917	• <i>On working party at night. Shelled with gas shells.</i>	
Tuesday, October 30, 1917	• <i>Didn't go out.</i>	
Wednesday, October 31, 1917 and Thursday, November 1, 1917	• <i>On working party in morning, stretcher party afternoon until 6:30 Thursday morning.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that "During this period the Battalion laid almost all the bath mats right up to the front line. This meant very large working parties and very strenuous work on the part of all ranks, and also numerous casualties. It was a fine performance." • The Battalion's record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that "We also furnished several large stretcher parties, which had to work all over the front line." According to his diary, Norman was on a stretcher party beginning in the afternoon and extending overnight until 6:30 the next morning.
Friday, November 2, 1917	• <i>On working party in morning.</i> <i>Moved to rest camp.</i>	
Saturday, November 3, 1917	• <i>Moved to billets near Hazebrouck.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that "On the 3rd of November the division was relieved and we moved back to billets near Hazebrouck, carrying on training and reorganization."
Sunday, November 4, 1917	• <i>In rest billets.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Monday, November 5, 1917	• <i>Inspected by Corps Commander.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that "We all thought we had finished with Passchendaele, but at a sudden inspection by the Corps Commander it was announced that we had to go back and hold the line there, which we accordingly did, moving away on the 10th and relieving a battalion of the 2nd Division on the night of the 12th."
Tuesday, November 6, 1917	• <i>Drilled until noon. Showery.</i>	
Wednesday, November 7, 1917	• <i>Weather wet.</i>	
Thursday, November 8, 1917	• <i>Still in rest billets. Fine weather.</i>	
Friday, November 9, 1917	• <i>Preparing to move.</i>	
Saturday, November 10, 1917	• <i>Moved to Toronto Camp.</i>	
Sunday, November 11, 1917	• <i>Moved to No. 7 Camp. Battalion moved to Ypres.</i>	
Monday, November 12, 1917	• <i>Joined Battalion and went in line.</i>	• This would be back in the front line at Passchendaele.
Tuesday, November 13, 1917	• <i>In the line.</i>	
Wednesday, November 14, 1917	• <i>In the line.</i>	
Thursday, November 15, 1917	• <i>In the line.</i>	
Friday, November 16, 1917	• <i>In the line.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that "It is impossible to describe adequately the hard conditions of this tour, and those who had to undergo the few days forward will always remember them as some of the worst days of their lives. Terrible mud and rain; very heavy shelling from three sides and no accommodation in the line."
Saturday, November 17, 1917	• <i>Came out of line.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Sunday, November 18, 1917	• <i>Moved to Poperinge.</i>	• “Poperinge” is spelled “Poperinghe” in the Battalion’s record but current maps of the area show the spelling to be “Poperinge”. The Battalion’s record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that “<i>After five days the Battalion was relieved, having suffered fairly heavy in casualties, and finally landed up at a tent camp at Watou, near Poperinghe, where three days were spent.</i>” • The Battalion’s record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that total casualties for this period at Passchendaele were 20 killed and 77 wounded of which 6 later died.
Monday, November 19, 1917	• <i>In rest camp.</i>	
Tuesday, November 20, 1917	• <i>In rest camp.</i>	
Wednesday, November 21, 1917	• <i>Moved by bus to Merville.</i>	
Thursday, November 22, 1917	• <i>Marched to Gonnehem.</i>	
Friday, November 23, 1917	• <i>Marched to Ourton where we stayed until December 18th.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that “<i>This time it was a real move from the rotten old Salient, and partly by bus and partly by marches. Ourton was reached on the 23rd, where it was announced that a welcome stay of a month would be made.</i>” • The Battalion’s record (p. 19, Reference #5) stated that “<i>The good people of Ourton were very pleased to see their old friends again and the Cinquante-Quatre were made as comfortable as possible.</i>” • The Battalion’s record (pp. 19 and 20, Reference #5) indicated that little of interest happened at this time other than a visit by the Corps Commander, an aerial flight over the village, and voting in the Dominion of Canada election. Games were freely played, there was lots of training, and there were several concerts.
Saturday, November 24, 1917	• No entry	
Sunday, November 25, 1917	• No entry	
Monday, November 26, 1917	• No entry	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Tuesday, November 27, 1917	• No entry	
Wednesday, November 28, 1917	• No entry	
Thursday, November 29, 1917	• No entry	
Friday, November 30, 1917	• No entry	
Saturday, December 1, 1917	• No entry	
Sunday, December 2, 1917	• <i>Weather turning cold.</i>	
Monday, December 3, 1917	• No entry	
Tuesday, December 4, 1917	• No entry	
Wednesday, December 5, 1917	• No entry	
Thursday, December 6, 1917	• No entry	
Friday, December 7, 1917	• No entry	
Saturday, December 8, 1917	• No entry	
Sunday, December 9, 1917	• <i>Rained all day.</i>	
Monday, December 10, 1917	• No entry	
Tuesday, December 11, 1917	• No entry	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Wednesday, December 12, 1917	• No entry	
Thursday, December 13, 1917	• No entry	
Friday, December 14, 1917	• No entry	
Saturday, December 15, 1917	• No entry	
Sunday, December 16, 1917	• No entry	
Monday, December 17, 1917	• No entry	
Tuesday, December 18, 1917	• <i>Marched from Ourton to Esta Courhai.</i>	• “Esta Courhai” is probably “Estrée-Cauchy” which is nearby to the march from Ourton. • The Battalion’s record (pp. 19 and 20, Reference #5) states that “<i>It was hoped that we should be able to spend Christmas Day out of the line, but orders were received that we were to move on the 18th preparatory to going in on the old front at Lievin.</i>”
Wednesday, December 19, 1917	• <i>Moved to Cubic Camp.</i>	
Thursday, December 20, 1917	• <i>Went in support.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (pp. 19 and 20, Reference #5) states that “<i>At the last moment the front was changed and the Battalion relieved the 26th Battalion in support on the Mericourt front on the night of the 20th of December. The weather at this time was very wintry, snow being on the ground and hard frost. The trenches were, however, in excellent condition, with a quantity of good dugout accommodation, and this, combined with quietness on the part of the [enemy], made a fine contrast to Passchendaele.</i>” • There were four main types of trenches in WW I: (1) front line trenches; (2) support trenches, the second line of defense and located a few hundred metres behind the front line; (3) reserve trenches, located behind the reserve trench; and (4) communication trenches - these interconnected the trenches to allow communication from one trench to another.
Friday, December 21, 1917	• <i>To support line.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Saturday, December 22, 1917	• <i>To support line.</i> • <i>Very quiet.</i>	
Sunday, December 23, 1917	• <i>To support line.</i> • <i>Very quiet.</i>	
Monday, December 24, 1917	• <i>Very quiet.</i>	
Tuesday, December 25, 1917	• <i>In support.</i> • <i>Very quiet.</i>	• The Battalion's record (pp. 19 and 20, Reference #5) states that "<i>Christmas Day, 1917, passed off quietly, the divisional and brigade commanders paying us a visit. Ten days were spent in support by arrangement with the 102nd Battalion, we having Christmas in support and the 102nd the New Year...</i>".
Wednesday, December 26, 1917	• <i>In support.</i> • <i>Very quiet.</i>	
Thursday, December 27, 1917	• <i>In support.</i> • <i>Very quiet.</i>	
Friday, December 28, 1917	• <i>In support.</i> • <i>Very quiet.</i>	
Saturday, December 29, 1917	• <i>In support.</i> • <i>Very quiet.</i>	
Sunday, December 30, 1917	• <i>Going into front line.</i>	• The Battalion's record (pp. 19 and 20, Reference #5) states that "<i>...and on the night of the 30th we moved forward and took over the front line from the 102nd Battalion.</i>"
Monday, December 31, 1917	• <i>Pretty quiet.</i>	• The Battalion's record (pp. 19 and 20, Reference #5) states that "<i>The passing from the Old to the New Year was thus spent in the front line.</i>"
Tuesday, January 1, 1918	• <i>Heavily shelled</i> • <i>Trench raid, 4 men lost.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 20, Reference #5) stated that "<i>The beginning of this memorable year of 1918 opened none too quietly for us, occasional heavy strafes by the [enemy] being the order of the day. On the night of the 1st a large enemy raiding party entered our front line trench under a heavy barrage and unfortunately succeeded in "swiping" one of our forward posts, four men being taken.</i>"
Wednesday, January 2, 1918	• <i>Raid by enemy. One man killed.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Thursday, January 3, 1918	• <i>Stood to fifteen hours.</i>	• The term “stood to” or “standing to” refers to the period when soldiers must remain vigilante in expectation of an attack. On this date, it would have been necessary because of the trench raids by the Germans conducted during the previous two nights with the expectation of more raids to come.
Friday, January 4, 1918	• <i>Relieved by A Coy.</i> • <i>Moved back to support.</i>	• “A Coy” would have been “A Company”.
Saturday, January 5, 1918	• <i>In support.</i>	
Sunday, January 6, 1918	• <i>In support.</i> • <i>Not much doing.</i>	
Monday, January 7, 1918	• No entry.	
Tuesday, January 8, 1918	• No entry.	
Wednesday, January 9, 1918	• <i>Moved back to Chateau de la Haie.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (p. 20, Reference #5) stated that “On the 9th we were relieved and moved back to the Chateau de la Haie, staying there for a few days, and from there moving to the Lievin front. After this move large working parties were call for owing to the sudden thaw, which made bad work of the trenches.”
Thursday, January 10, 1918	• No entry.	
Friday, January 11, 1918	• No entry.	
Saturday, January 12, 1918	• No entry.	
Sunday, January 13, 1918	• <i>Church parade.</i>	
Monday, January 14, 1918	• No entry.	
Tuesday, January 15, 1918	• <i>Moved up to Hill Camp.</i>	
Wednesday, January 16, 1918	• <i>Pay parade.</i> • <i>Working party.</i>	
Thursday, January 17, 1918	• <i>Moved to Shushay.</i> • <i>Working party.</i> • <i>Clucas trench</i>	• “Shushay” would have been “Souchez: • There is a reference on the internet to a “CLUCAS Trench” near the village of La Culotte, which is nearby Souchez. This apparently was one of the first trenches given a name.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Friday, January 18, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i> • <i>Clucas trench</i>	
Saturday, January 19, 1918	• <i>Nothing doing.</i>	
Sunday, January 20, 1918	• <i>Moved to Leivin.</i>	• The spelling should be "Liévin".
Monday, January 21, 1918	• <i>In support</i>	
Tuesday, January 22, 1918	• <i>In support</i>	
Wednesday, January 23, 1918	• <i>Sick</i>	
Thursday, January 24, 1918	• <i>Sick</i>	
Friday, January 25, 1918	• <i>Too sick to go in front line.</i> • <i>Came out to transport.</i>	• Although Norman was out sick, the Battalion's record (p. 20, Reference #5) stated that "<i>The 25th of January saw us back again in the front line, taking over the right front, the same as we held last September. Much active patrolling was done by ourselves and the [enemy], and there were numerous encounters between both parties.</i>"
Saturday, January 26, 1918	• <i>Sick</i>	
Sunday, January 27, 1918	• <i>Sick</i>	
Monday, January 28, 1918	• <i>Feeling better.</i>	
Tuesday, January 29, 1918	• <i>Feeling pretty good.</i>	
Wednesday, January 30, 1918	• <i>Moved to Gouey</i> • <i>Battalion came out of line.</i>	• "Gouey" is Gouy-Servins. • The Battalion's record (p. 20, Reference #5) stated that "<i>On the 30th, we were relieved and moved back to Gouy-Servins, and for the next month alternated between there, Souchez, Chateau de la Haie and Houdain, carrying on with training and inspection.</i>"
Thursday, January 31, 1918	• <i>Bath parade.</i>	
Friday, February 1, 1918	• <i>Moved back to transport lines to go to Brigade school.</i>	
Saturday, February 2, 1918	• <i>Parade until noon.</i> • <i>Half holiday.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Sunday, February 3, 1918	• <i>Church parade in Y.M.C.A hut.</i>	• The Y.M.C.A. was active in World War I and provided a network of recreation huts along the front lines, providing entertainment, education, and spiritual support.
Monday, February 4, 1918	• <i>Drilled all day.</i>	
Tuesday, February 5, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Wednesday, February 6, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Thursday, February 7, 1918	• <i>Raining.</i> • <i>Marched to Gouey for Xmas dinner.</i>	
Friday, February 8, 1918	• <i>Rained all day.</i> • <i>No parade.</i>	
Saturday, February 9, 1918	• No entry.	
Sunday, February 10, 1918	• <i>Moved to Alberta Camp.</i>	
Monday, February 11, 1918	• <i>Working party on Hill 65.</i>	• Hill 65 is located near Liévin.
Tuesday, February 12, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Wednesday, February 13, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Thursday, February 14, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Friday, February 15, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i> • <i>Moved to Chateau.</i>	• “Chateau” would be Chateau de la Haie.
Saturday, February 16, 1918	• <i>Went to ranges.</i>	
Sunday, February 17, 1918	• <i>Church parade.</i>	
Monday, February 18, 1918	• <i>Went to ranges.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Tuesday, February 19, 1918	• <i>Moved to Houdain.</i>	
Wednesday, February 20, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Thursday, February 21, 1918	• <i>Practiced for review.</i>	
Friday, February 22, 1918	• <i>Reviewed by Gen. Currie.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 20, Reference #5) stated that "On the 22nd of February the 11th Brigade was inspected by the Corps Commander..."
Saturday, February 23, 1918	• <i>Drilled until noon.</i>	
Sunday, February 24, 1918	• <i>Bathing parade.</i>	
Monday, February 25, 1918	• <i>Gas parade.</i>	
Tuesday, February 26, 1918	• <i>Drilled until noon.</i>	
Wednesday, February 27, 1918	• <i>Inspection.</i>	
Thursday, February 28, 1918	• <i>Reviewed by Sir D. Haig.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 20, Reference #5) stated that the 11th Brigade was inspected on the February 28, 1918 "...by the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, who expressed himself as being extremely pleased with the brigade."
Friday, March 1, 1918	• <i>Ranges.</i>	
Saturday, March 2, 1918	• No Entry	
Sunday, March 3, 1918	• <i>Moved to Noeux-Les-Mines.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 20, Reference #5) stated that "At the beginning of March the Battalion moved to Noeux les Mines for a few days, chiefly spent in working parties and digging and wiring new trenches behind the lines."
Monday, March 4, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Tuesday, March 5, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Wednesday, March 6, 1918	• <i>Parade.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Thursday, March 7, 1918	• <i>Parade.</i>	
Friday, March 8, 1918	• <i>Bath parade.</i>	
Saturday, March 9, 1918	• <i>Firing machine gun.</i>	
Sunday, March 10, 1918	• <i>Church parade.</i>	
Monday, March 11, 1918	• <i>Moved to Shushaz.</i>	• “Shushaz” would be “Souchez”. The Battalion’s record (p. 20, Reference #5) stated that “On the 11th a move was made to Souchez and from there, on the 12th, into support on the Liévin front...”
Tuesday, March 12, 1918	• <i>Moved to Lievin.</i>	
Wednesday, March 13, 1918	• <i>Pretty quiet all day.</i>	
Thursday, March 14, 1918	• <i>On Anti-Aircraft work.</i>	
Friday, March 15, 1918	• <i>Very quiet all day.</i>	
Saturday, March 16, 1918	• <i>Gas guard.</i>	
Sunday, March 17, 1918	• <i>Moved up to supports.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (p. 20, Reference #5) stated that “finally relieving the 102nd Battalion on the left front on the 17th. During this period the enemy showed a considerable amount of activity and subjected our trenches to numerous strafes, for which he was amply repaid by our own artillery...”
Monday, March 18, 1918	• <i>In supports.</i>	
Tuesday, March 19, 1918	• <i>In supports.</i> • <i>Rained all day.</i>	
Wednesday, March 20, 1918	• <i>In supports.</i> • <i>Rained.</i>	
Thursday, March 21, 1918	• <i>In supports.</i> • <i>Gas attack.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (pp. 20 and 21, Reference #5) stated that “...for which he was amply repaid by our own artillery, and also on the night of the 21st by a heavy gas bombardment by us. This gas was thrown over by projectors, a record amount of 6,000 projectors being sent”
Friday, March 22, 1918	• <i>Moved back to Lievin.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (p. 21, Reference #5) stated that “On the 22nd the Battalion moved back into support in Lievin, where they remained until the 27th, when they moved to Coupigny by light railway.”

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Saturday, March 23, 1918	• <i>Went out to Carency for bath.</i>	
Sunday, March 24, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Monday, March 25, 1918	• <i>Stood to all night.</i>	• “<i>Stood to</i>” means staying at a high level of alertness in preparation for an expected attack.
Tuesday, March 26, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Wednesday, March 27, 1918	• <i>Moved out to Hurson-Capeny.</i>	• “<i>Hurson-Capeny</i>” is likely Hersin-Coupigny.
Thursday, March 28, 1918	• <i>Moved to Mount-St.-Éloi</i>	• The Battalion’s record (p. 21, Reference #5) stated that “...on the 21st of March, 1918, the [enemy] made his big attack on the Amiens front, pushing in a long way until he was checked some little distance from Amiens. He also attacked on the Arras front, but was successfully withstood. Owing to the tactical situation a composite brigade was hastily formed under Brigadier-General Odium, of which this battalion (that is, the 54th) formed part, and we were on the 28th rushed up into the line of the Oppy Front, relieving on the 29th three Imperial units who had fought very finely in the recent attack against Arras.”
Friday, March 29, 1918	• <i>Moved to front line. Oppy.</i>	• “<i>Oppy</i>” refers to the Oppy Front.
Saturday, March 30, 1918	• <i>Moved back. Working party.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (p. 21, Reference #5) stated that “On the morning of the 30th our trenches were very heavily shelled and a fresh attack was expected, but did not materialize.”
Sunday, March 31, 1918	• <i>Water and Ration party.</i>	• Probably moving water and food rations to soldiers towards the front.
Monday, April 1, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	• At this time, it was noted in the Battalion’s record (p. 21, Reference #5) that it was expected that the enemy would renew its attack along the Arras front and therefore, it was vitally important to gain intelligence from the capture of live German soldiers. The 54th was the first unit to satisfy this request.
Tuesday, April 2, 1918	• <i>Went in front line.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (p. 21, Reference #5) stated that raiding parties were sent out and, in spite of heavy opposition, captured two prisoners. Within 6 hours of the capture, the entire front was expanded, each unit covered a larger area, and reserves were released to cover other areas.
Wednesday, April 3, 1918	• <i>In front line.</i>	
Thursday, April 4, 1918	• <i>Moved out to rest camp.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (p. 21, Reference #5) stated that “On the night of the 4th of April the Battalion was relieved and moved back to Flanders Camp, Ecurie, where a few days’ cleaning up was indulged in.”

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Friday, April 5, 1918	• <i>In rest camp.</i>	
Saturday, April 6, 1918	• <i>In rest camp.</i>	
Sunday, April 7, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Monday, April 8, 1918	• <i>Rained.</i>	
Tuesday, April 9, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Wednesday, April 10, 1918	• <i>Working party</i>	
Thursday, April 11, 1918	• <i>Went in front line - Marycourt</i>	• “Marycourt” is “Mericourt”. • The Battalion’s record (p. 21, Reference #5) stated that “A Battalion sports day was arranged for the 11th and the combatants and spectators had just assembled when a wire was received saying that we were to move into the line that night, relieving the 4th C.M.R. on the Mericourt front, the same holding as we had previously occupied on New Year’s Day.”
Friday, April 12, 1918	• <i>In front line.</i>	
Saturday, April 13, 1918	• <i>In front line.</i>	• The Battalion’s record (p. 21, Reference #5) indicated that active patrolling occurred during the night including a brush with the enemy on the 13th but did not capture any German soldiers.
Sunday, April 14, 1918	• <i>In front line.</i>	
Monday, April 15, 1918	• <i>In front line.</i>	• Similar to the 13th, night patrols encountered the enemy but did not manage to capture any prisoners.
Tuesday, April 16, 1918	• <i>In front line.</i>	
Wednesday, April 17, 1918	• <i>Moved back to supports.</i>	• Active patrols on the 17th encountered an enemy working party “<i>who put up quite a scrap</i>”, were overcome by the patrol’s fire but managed to escape owing to the wire. However, a wounded enemy Sargeant was captured, brought back, his wounds were dressed and was interrogated by “<i>higher authorities</i>”. • The Battalion was relieved on the night of the 17th and went back into support.
Thursday, April 18, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Friday, April 19, 1918	• <i>Anti-aircraft.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Saturday, April 20, 1918	• <i>In supports.</i>	
Sunday, April 21, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Monday, April 22, 1918	• <i>Nothing much doing.</i>	
Tuesday, April 23, 1918	• <i>Relieving 87th in front line.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 21, Reference #5) indicated that the Battalion moved into the front line again on the 23rd "<i>where an uneventful six days were spent, chiefly remarkable for the fact that we had no casualties.</i>"
Wednesday, April 24, 1918	• <i>In front line for six days.</i> • <i>Very quiet. No casualties.</i>	
Thursday, April 25, 1918	• <i>In front line for six days.</i> • <i>Very quiet. No casualties.</i>	
Friday, April 26, 1918	• <i>In front line for six days.</i> • <i>Very quiet. No casualties.</i>	
Saturday, April 27, 1918	• <i>In front line for six days.</i> • <i>Very quiet. No casualties.</i>	
Sunday, April 28, 1918	• <i>In front line for six days.</i> • <i>Very quiet. No casualties.</i>	
Monday, April 29, 1918	• <i>14th Plt on patrol had brush with enemy.</i> • <i>Moved to Cellars Camp.</i>	• "14th Plt" would have been the 14th Platoon. • The Battalion's record (pp. 21 and 22, Reference #5) stated that "<i>We were relieved again on the 29th and moved back, half of the Battalion going to Neuville St. Vaast and the other half remaining in the ruined village of Vimy, taking up their abode in the various cellars, which were all that were left of a one-time beautiful place. This half was responsible for providing working parties.</i>" • Norman's reference to the "Cellars Camp" in his diary would have meant the cellars in the ruined village of Vimy.
Tuesday, April 30, 1918	• <i>In rest camp.</i> • <i>Paid.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Wednesday, May 1, 1918	• <i>Moved up to Petit-Vimy</i>	
Thursday, May 2, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Friday, May 3, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Saturday, May 4, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Sunday, May 5, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Monday, May 6, 1918	• <i>Working party.</i>	
Tuesday, May 7, 1918	• <i>Moved by bus to Cambigneul.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 22, Reference #5) indicated that the Battalion was anticipating a short training period at Cambigneul, then would be used for an attack in the Bethune area. This was later revised to prepare for battles to defend the coal fields of Bruay - these were "<i>seriously menaced</i>" by the Germans. During this time, the Battalion was under orders to be prepared to move with 4 hours notice. • Consistent with other records, the 54th Battalion's account (p. 22) indicated that the German army had launched a massive offensive on the Western Front in the spring of 2018 and had retaken some ground that it had previously lost.
Wednesday, May 8, 1918	• <i>Polishing brass.</i>	• "<i>Polishing the brass</i>" means getting ready for a high-level inspection. The next few days were spent "<i>drilling</i>".
Thursday, May 9, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Friday, May 10, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Saturday, May 11, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Sunday, May 12, 1918	• <i>Church parade.</i>	
Monday, May 13, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Tuesday, May 14, 1918	• <i>Bath parade.</i>	
Wednesday, May 15, 1918	• <i>Route march.</i>	
Thursday, May 16, 1918	• <i>Field manouevers.</i>	
Friday, May 17, 1918	• <i>Ranges.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Saturday, May 18, 1918	• <i>Field manouevers.</i>	
Sunday, May 19, 1918	• <i>Church parade.</i>	
Monday, May 20, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Tuesday, May 21, 1918	• <i>Field manouevers.</i>	
Wednesday, May 22, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Thursday, May 23, 1918	• <i>Machine gun lecture.</i>	As additional context, Pierre Burton, in his 1986 book titled "Vimy", noted that at the start of World War I, the British were still using tactics from the 1899 - 1902 Boer War where machine guns were viewed as largely unnecessary. Initially, each division had only about two with four being considered a luxury while the enemy had fifty to a division. This changed later in the war with the number of machine guns for each division beginning to increase by the end of 1916. By the end of the war, the number of machine guns for each division had increased to about 80, so Norman Williamson's training on machine gun operation in the spring of 1918 would have been consistent their increased use.
Friday, May 24, 1918	• <i>Machine gun lecture.</i> • <i>Bath.</i>	
Saturday, May 25, 1918	• <i>Moved from Cambigneul to Ourton.</i>	The Battalion's record (p. 22) indicates that during much of May, 1918, intensive training occurred, brigade manouevers, route marches, inspections, etc. It was noted that, to much amusement, each platoon was inspected by a platoon commander of another company. The Battalion also participated in many sports activities during this time as well. The Battalion's record also noted that only one death occurred and that happened when the enemy bombed the hospitals at Étaples.
Sunday, May 26, 1918	• <i>Church parade.</i>	
Monday, May 27, 1918	• <i>Machine gun class.</i>	
Tuesday, May 28, 1918	• <i>Machine gun class.</i>	
Wednesday, May 29, 1918	• <i>Firing machine gun (Sports Field)</i>	
Thursday, May 30, 1918	• <i>Firing machine gun.</i>	
Friday, May 31, 1918	• <i>M.G. class.</i>	"M.G." would be "machine gun".

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Saturday, June 1, 1918	• <i>Field manouevers.</i>	
Sunday, June 2, 1918	• <i>Bath.</i> • <i>Paid.</i>	
Monday, June 3, 1918	• <i>Brigade Sports.</i>	
Tuesday, June 4, 1918	• <i>Field manouevers.</i>	
Wednesday, June 5, 1918	• <i>M.G. class.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".
Thursday, June 6, 1918	• <i>M.G. class.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".
Friday, June 7, 1918	• <i>Field manouevers.</i>	
Saturday, June 8, 1918	• <i>M.G. class.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".
Sunday, June 9, 1918	• No Entry	
Monday, June 10, 1918	• No entry	
Tuesday, June 11, 1918	• No entry	
Wednesday, June 12, 1918	• No entry	
Thursday, June 13, 1918	• <i>M.G. class.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".
Friday, June 14, 1918	• <i>Ranges.</i>	
Saturday, June 15, 1918	• <i>Divisional sports.</i>	
Sunday, June 16, 1918	• <i>Church parade.</i>	
Monday, June 17, 1918	• <i>M.G. class.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".
Tuesday, June 18, 1918	• <i>Firing M.G.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".
Wednesday, June 19, 1918	• No entry	
Thursday, June 20, 1918	• No entry	
Friday, June 21, 1918	• No entry	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Saturday, June 22, 1918	• <i>On Ranges at Pernes.</i>	• Pernes is a small community located about 10 km to the northwest of Ourton.
Sunday, June 23, 1918	• <i>Church parade.</i>	
Monday, June 24, 1918	• <i>M.G. class.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".
Tuesday, June 25, 1918	• <i>Sick</i>	• The Battalion's record stated that "<i>June passed uneventfully, except for the 'flu'.</i>" The Battalion's record also indicated that towards the end of the month, several Dominion statesmen visited the Canadians. Although uneventful, the Battalion had been ordered during this period to be prepared to move at any time with 4 hours notice.
Wednesday, June 26, 1918	• <i>Sick</i>	
Thursday, June 27, 1918	• <i>Scrubbing Equipment.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 22) stated that on the last day of the month, brigade sports were held at Dieval, which also consisted of a transport competition. Transport included all vehicles, cookers, etc., used to move materials to the front. The Battalion's record stated that "<i>...our good transport turned out in beautiful shape, making it hard to realize that all the vehicles, including cookers, were in daily use, and reflecting great credit on the transport men and pioneers, who had worked so hard to parade looking spick and span.</i>" Norman Williamson's day on June 27th spent "<i>scrubbing equipment</i>" would have been part of the preparation for this transport parade.
Friday, June 28, 1918	• <i>Drilled.</i>	
Saturday, June 29, 1918	• <i>Field manouevers</i>	
Sunday, June 30, 1918	• <i>Transport show.</i>	• This is the transport show for which the Battalion was preparing and referenced above on June 27, 1918.
Monday, July 1, 1918	• <i>Corps sports.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 22) stated that "<i>On Dominion Day a big sports meet was held by the Canadian Corps, which was attended by all ranks.</i>" The record went on to state that "<i>...this day will long be remembered by those who attended the meet.</i>"
Tuesday, July 2, 1918	• <i>Instructing M.G. class.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun". • The record for July 2, 1918 shows that Norman Williamson had now become an instructor for machine gun classes.
Wednesday, July 3, 1918	• <i>M.G. Inspection</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".
Thursday, July 4, 1918	• <i>Instructing M.G. class.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Friday, July 5, 1918	• <i>On ranges at Pernes.</i>	
Saturday, July 6, 1918	• <i>Field manouevers.</i>	
Sunday, July 7, 1918	• <i>Church parade.</i>	
Monday, July 8, 1918	• <i>Cleared M.G. ammunition.</i>	• "M.G." would be "machine gun".
Tuesday, July 9, 1918	• <i>Nothing doing.</i>	
Wednesday, July 10, 1918	• <i>Moved to Maroeuil.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 23) indicated that on July 10th, "...the division moved forward preparatory to taking over the Oppy sector again."
Thursday, July 11, 1918	• <i>Moved to reserve line.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 23) noted that "...the 54th took over the support line of the Oppy-Gavrelle front on the night of the 11th of July."
Friday, July 12, 1918	• <i>In reserves.</i>	
Saturday, July 13, 1918	• <i>On A.A.</i> • <i>Got paid.</i>	• "A.A." likely means "anti-aircraft" duty.
Sunday, July 14, 1918	• <i>Moved to Ry. Embankment</i>	• It is likely that "Ry. Embankment" means "railway embankment". In WW I abbreviations, "RY" commonly means "railway".
Monday, July 15, 1918	• <i>In reserve.</i>	
Tuesday, July 16, 1918	• <i>In reserve.</i>	
Wednesday, July 17, 1918	• <i>Moved to support line.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 23) noted that "On the night of the 17th the Battalion relieved the 75th Battalion in the front line. Active patrolling was carried on by day and night and several times the enemy was encountered, with much loss to him, but no luck for us in our principal quest for prisoners for identification purposes."
Thursday, July 18, 1918	• <i>In supports.</i>	
Friday, July 19, 1918	• <i>In supports.</i>	
Saturday, July 20, 1918	• <i>In supports.</i>	
Sunday, July 21, 1918	• <i>In supports.</i>	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Monday, July 22, 1918	• <i>On raiding party.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 23) stated that "<i>A raid, in conjunction with the 102nd Battalion, was put on by "D" Company on the night of the 22nd, and after some clever work a party of the enemy was encircled and almost in our grasp. Unfortunately, ..., they managed to slip away and our party returned, having inflicted many casualties ... and with identifications in the way of great coats and tunics, but not bringing in any prisoners. This was an extremely good piece of work, in spite of not having prisoners, and messages of congratulation were received from the divisional and brigade commanders.</i>" • Norman Williamson was on this raiding party and would have been with Company "D". • The Battalion's record (p. 23) also noted that "<i>Special attention was paid to maintenance of trenches during this tour and Captain Smith and "D" Company were complimented by the Brigadier on having the best organized and cleanest lot of trenches in the brigade.</i>"
Tuesday, July 23, 1918	• <i>Moved back to Roclincourt.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 23) noted that "<i>On the evening of the 23rd we were relieved by the 75th Battalion, proceeding back into reserve, which did not prove so secure as the front line, a number of men being gassed and also casualties by shell fire being suffered. The Battalion was split up, half being in the railway cutting about one and one-half miles behind the line and the other half at Roclincourt.</i>" As per Norman's diary, he was part of the group that moved to Roclincourt.
Wednesday, July 24, 1918	• No entry	
Thursday, July 25, 1918	• <i>Bath.</i>	• Upside down and at the bottom of the page below the entry for Thursday, July 25, 1918, Norman did a calculation, likely related to sight adjustments for the Lewis Gun. The calculations were: • 12 in = 63360 • 1 in = 12/63360 = 1/5280 • with his long-division notes located at the bottom of the next page in his diary.
Friday, July 26, 1918	• <i>Moved to Ry Cutting.</i>	• "Ry" would be "Railway", likely to rejoin the other half of the Battalion left at the railway cutting on the 23rd.
Saturday, July 27, 1918	• <i>On L.G.Course.</i> • <i>Came out to H.L.</i>	• "L.G." would be "<i>Lewis Gun</i>", a lightweight machine gun introduced in World War I and capable of being carried and operated by a single soldier. • Not certain what place the abbreviation "<i>H.L.</i>" represents.
Sunday, July 28, 1918	• <i>Went to Beaurainville.</i>	• The currently named town of "<i>Beaurain</i>" is located close by, so "<i>Beaurainville</i>" likely is the same place.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Additional Information and Notes for Context</u>
Monday, July 29, 1918	• <i>L.G. Lecture.</i>	• “L.G.” would be “Lewis Gun”. • The Battalion’s record (p. 23) stated that “<i>On the 29th we took over the front line again.</i>”
Tuesday, July 30, 1918	• <i>L.G. Lecture.</i>	• “L.G.” would be “Lewis Gun”.
Wednesday, July 31, 1918	• <i>L.G. Lecture.</i>	• “L.G.” would be “Lewis Gun”. • This is the last dated entry in Norman Williamson’s pocket diary except for brief entries beginning on May 30, 1919 when he began his voyage back to Canada. • The Battalion’s record (p. 23) stated that “<i>Relief took place on the 31st.</i>” The Battalion’s record noted that this was unusual to be relieved from the front after such a short period of time and it was thought that “<i>...some big and dirty work...</i>” was on hand for the Canadians. • The Battalion’s record noted that extreme precautions were “<i>taken to prevent knowledge of movement by enemy aircraft and we were not allowed to congregate or move about in the daytime.</i>” • Although not specifically mentioned in the Battalion’s record for this time period, this was the beginning of preparations for what history recorded as the “<i>Canada’s Hundred Days</i>”, sometimes called the “<i>100 Days Campaign</i>” or “<i>100 Days Offensive</i>”. Because of the extreme secrecy required at this time in order to not alert the enemy to the Allies intent, this may have been why Norman Williamson made no further entries in his pocket diary. • The “<i>100 Days Offensive</i>” began August 8, 1918 and ended November 11, 1918 with the signing of the Armistice.

No Diary Entries - August 1, 1918 to May 30, 1919 (Information from Battalion's Record)

<u>Period</u>	<u>Information Taken from the 54th Battalion's Record titled "<i>Cinquante-Quatre</i>" and sub-titled "<i>Being a Short History of the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion</i>"</u>
August 01, 1918 to about August 4, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 23) stated that after a few days at Warlus, the battalion moved by bus on August 3, 1918. Many thought they were headed back to The Salient but it turned out they headed south and stopped at Oisemont, near Abbeville and south of Amiens at 6:00 a.m. on the morning of August 4th.
August 5, 1918 to August 7, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 23 and 24) states that "<i>Now began the time of no rest and many secret moves. All journeys were made at night. one night march from a place called Warlus to Prouzel commenced at dusk on the 5th and ended at 6 the next morning, a march of 21 miles...</i>". The Battalion's record went on to state that this was "<i>Some march, 21 miles in full marching order on a dark, wet night, in fresh country, on roads with many twists and turns. A remarkable feat, and one of the best things done by the Battalion in France.</i>" At dusk we moved again for 10 miles to Boves Wood, where there was no accommodation at all and we lay down on the wet ground for an hours or twos rest. The wood, which was very large, was literally packed with troops. There we remained all day of the 7th and were issued with our orders for the attack next day. The plan of attack, which was to be a very large one, was, on our particular front, for the 4th Division to follow up behind the 3rd Division and pass through them, push the attack home and exploit success. The French were to attack on our right and the remainder of the Canadians and Australians on our left". • "On the night of the 7th at 10 o'clock we moved up to our assembly positions behind Gentelles Wood, arriving there about 1 a.m."

<u>Period</u>	<u>Information Taken from the 54th Battalion's Record titled "Cinquante-Quatre" and sub-titled "Being a Short History of the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion"</u>
August 8, 1918	- The Battalion's record (p. 24) states that <i>"At 4:20 a.m. the 8th of August, on a beautiful summer morning, the attack started. Our move was timed for 5:20 a.m....". "The feature of this attack was surprise, a large artillery concentration and a mass of tanks. Those who spent the hours of waiting in Gentelles Wood will not forget the noise of moving tanks, which came from every direction. The attack went very well and the 3rd Division reached all objectives on time, with the 4th Division (Norman Williamson's Division) well behind, after making the difficult crossing of the Avre [River] with no hitch. For the first time we saw artillery galloping into action and cavalry moving up. At 1:35 p.m. we passed through the 3rd Division and proceeded towards our objectives, which included the capture of Beaucourt-en-Santerre, "A" and "B" Companies leading, with "C" Company in support and "D" Company in reserve. Very heavy machine gun fire was encountered and after capturing Beaucourt our leading companies were held up on the east side of the village."</i> The Battalion's record noted that the enemy was found <i>"...in strong numbers holding a wood about 300 yards in front of us."</i> The reserve company (Company "D" in which Norman Williamson was posted) <i>"...was ordered up...in the face of the fire of many machine guns at close range."</i> <i>"The wood was successfully taken and enable our whole line to advance to their objective, which was reached about 2:30 p.m. The Battalion suffered fairly heavily in casualties."</i> - The Battalion's record stated that 72 were killed or later died of their wounds, 161 were wounded, and 5 were missing.
August 9, 1918	The Battalion's record (p. 25) indicated that it remained in place at Beaucourt-en-Santerre for the day after the battle.
August 10, 1918	- The Battalion's record (p. 25) stated that the Battalion received orders to move forward at 5 a.m. The Battalion halted at La Quesnel, then sent forward to Meharicourt to support the 12th Brigade. - The Battalion's record indicated that <i>"On our march up there we had the new experience of being fired on by a large fleet of Gothas (Gothas were very large German bombers), which flew over us and endeavored to inflict casualties."</i> The record goes on to state that within 10 seconds of given orders to find shelter, everyone fled the road, found shelter, and no casualties were incurred. - The Battalion's record (p. 25) went on to state that <i>"On arrival at Meharicourt the Battalion was subjected to some very heavy shelling..."</i>. It was noted that the forward troops were now in the old French trench systems, which had previously been occupied during the Somme offensive in 1916 and because of the old wire, trenches and shell holes, the attack had stalled.
August 11, 1918 to August 16, 1918	The Battalion's record (p. 25) stated that on the 11th, orders were received to capture Chaulnes but this order was later cancelled.
August 17, 1918 to August 19, 1918	The Battalion took over the front line trenches at Chilly and on the 19th, <i>"...put on a small attack, straightening our line on the left."</i>

<u>Period</u>	<u>Information Taken from the 54th Battalion's Record titled "Cinquante-Quatre" and sub-titled "Being a Short History of the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion"</u>
August 20, 1918 to August 26, 1918	• The Battalion's record stated that on the 20th, the Battalion was relieved and moved back into support. • On the night of the 25th, the Battalion was heavily bombed.
August 27, 1918 to August 28, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 25) indicated that it received sealed orders, boarded a train and in the morning, found itself once again at the ruined Mount-St.-Éloi church. The Battalion got off the train at Acq and were moved by bus to Dainville near Arras.
August 29, 1918 to August 31, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 25) noted that on the morning of the 29th, the Battalion moved up to a concentration area near Neuville-Vitasse with the expectation of an immediate move forward. The Battalion received orders to prepare for an attack on the Drocourt-Queant line (part of the Hindenburg Line).
September 1, 1918 to September 2, 1918	• The Battalion moved forward in the evening of September 1st in preparation for the attack beginning on the 2nd. The Battalion's record (p. 26) indicated that while moving up under cover of darkness, it was bombed several times. The Battalion reached its assembly area about 1:00 a.m. which consisted of shell holes. It was noted that it was a "<i>very cold, black night, which made keeping in touch very difficult...</i>". The Battalion's orders were to push forward to cross the Canal du Nord, some 3 to 4 miles ahead, after other brigades had secured the Drocourt-Queant line. • At 5:00 a.m. on the 2nd, an intense artillery barrage began and at 6:15 a.m., the Battalion was ordered forward. • While advances were made, heavy fighting on the Battalion's left flank held up further progress. The Battalion remained in recently captured trenches just south of Drury while new battle plans were developed. • The Battalion suffered fairly heavy casualties with 49 killed and 120 wounded.
September 3, 1918 to September 5, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 26) indicated that on September 3rd, it was observed that the enemy had retired and orders were immediately issued that the Battalion was to move forward. The enemy had taken up a new defensive line on the eastern side of the Canal du Nord so the 54th Battalion established its line on the western bank - all bridges had been destroyed. • During the next couple of days, reconnaissance showed that the enemy was holding its line strongly and that too many casualties would occur if attacked there at that time. • On the night of September 5th, the Battalion was relieved and moved back to its old dugouts at Neuville-Vitasse.

<u>Period</u>	<u>Information Taken from the 54th Battalion's Record titled "Cinquante-Quatre" and sub-titled "Being a Short History of the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion"</u>
September 6, 1918 to September 26, 1918	• The Battalion remained at Neuville-Vitasse until September 25th and undertook training, reorganization and receiving reinforcements. • Orders were received for a new attack on Bourlon Wood and then to push on to capture Cambrai. • The Battalion's record (p. 27) stated that <i>"On the night of the 25th a move forward was made to the concentration area around Bullecourt, where the Battalion was scattered over the old battlefield in shell holes, dugouts, etc. The Battalion moved forward to their assembly area in the old Hindenburg line just west of Inchy en Artois, arriving there at 1 a.m. on a very wet and slippery night"</i>.
September 27, 1918	• The Battalion began its move forward on the night of September 27, 1918. The Battalion's record stated that the task <i>"...was to get around the north side of Bourlon Wood and capture the northern and eastern portion of the wood."</i> • The Battalion's record (p. 27) stated that <i>"Bourlon Wood was on high, commanding ground and it was vital that this ground should be in our hands before the 3rd Army commenced their attack. Accordingly it was arranged that the 54th Battalion on capturing the eastern side of the wood was to send up a star rocket to signify that this high ground was taken. The Canal du Nord was crossed without casualties and the Battalion jumped off without delay, and after stiff fighting managed to establish themselves on the eastern side of the wood, sending up the signal that the wood was captured. There it was in a precarious position with both flanks in the air, as the units on the right and left had not managed to get up. A serious counter-attack was made on the right flank but was successfully repulsed, as were several others."</i> • The Battalion suffered 37 killed and 97 wounded in this action. • A Canadian veterans war memorial is in place near Bourlon, France to commemorate the Canadian forces contribution to the battle at Bourlon Wood.

<u>Period</u>	<u>Information Taken from the 54th Battalion's Record titled "Cinquante-Quatre" and sub-titled "Being a Short History of the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion"</u>
September 28, 1918 to September 30, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 27 and 28) stated that <i>"On the morning of the 28th..., the Battalion reassembling west of Bourlon Wood and getting part of a night's rest in old cellars, etc. At 6:30 on the morning of the 29th we moved forward again north of Bourlon village to an assembly position preparatory to putting in a new attack north of Cambrai. Here we waited all day expecting to attack at any time, but it was decided late in the day not to attack until the following morning, and at 4:30 the next morning we moved forward to our jumping-off place, having very considerable difficulty in finding same owing to the darkness and poor guides. At 6 a.m. on the 30th of September, zero hour, our attack was launched, with the 75th leading and our Battalion following. The enemy was, however, resisting very strongly, and no headway could be gained. He put down a very heavy barrage on our positions and his shelling was the worst ever experienced by this Battalion. As it was evident he was in considerable force and meant to fight, and as our flanks were not able to get forward, it was decided not to press the attack. Both the 75th and ourselves suffered very heavy casualties."</i> • 54th Battalion's casualties during this part of the battle north of Cambrai were 35 killed, 194 wounded, and 12 missing. • During the afternoon of September 30th, new orders were received and, in preparation, took over the line running along a railway cut.
September 31, 1918 to October 2, 1918	• The Battalion's record indicated that at 5:00 a.m., its attack began under cover of darkness. The Battalion's record (p. 28 and 29) stated that <i>"This went very well for a time. Later, however, the [enemy] began pouring in reinforcements and put up a big resistance. After much stubborn fighting, which lasted all day and in which the whole 11th Brigade became involved, a definite line was established well ahead, just south of Cuvillers. This line was handed over to the 2nd Division in the early hours of the morning of the 2nd of October, the Battalion moving back to near Bourlon village, and later in the day to Pronville, on the other side of the Canal du Nord, taking up its abode in the cellars of the ruined houses of that one-time village."</i> • The Battalion's record (p. 29) went on to state that <i>"So ended the most strenuous few days in the history of the Battalion, starting with the move up for the Bourlon Wood "show" on the 26th of September and ending with the fighting on the 1st of October and arrival in billets on the 2nd of October. Everyone was fairly well tired out and the rough, cold cellars were almost like home again."</i>

<u>Period</u>	<u>Information Taken from the 54th Battalion's Record titled "Cinquante-Quatre" and sub-titled "Being a Short History of the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion"</u>
October 3, 1918 to October 14, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 29) stated that "A quiet few days were spent at Pronville, training, rest and absorption of reinforcements being the order of the day until the night of the 8th, when we moved away by bus (and what a ride!) back to the "Y" huts near Arras." • Because the British were successfully pushing the enemy back in retreat, it was decided all available units would be thrown into the battle in an attempt to end the war before winter. The Battalion's record stated that "Accordingly we received our marching orders for the 14th and that day saw us take the train at Agnez les Duisans. This was a record train journey, as it took 12 hours to go a distance, as the crow flies, of about 12 or 15 miles. However, we arrived at our destination at about midnight, taking up our billets in the ruined old village of Rumaucourt, where the transport, which had gone by road, met us and provided us with blankets, bed rolls and a hot meal."
October 15, 1918 to October 18, 1918	• The Battalion's record stated that "Later in the day on the 15th we moved forward and took over the front line along the Canal de la Sensee, facing north, relieving an Imperial battalion. As it was expected the [enemy] would be retiring on this front we were given a long line to hold and were ordered to make attempts to cross the canal and find out what he intended to do. As, however, he held the line fairly strongly, and as there were no bridges across the canal, it was not possible for us without incurring heavy casualties, to get over. However, on the night of the 17th the [enemy] did withdraw and we immediately crossed over and followed him up in conjunction with the remainder of the division. A series of alternative moves now took place, first the 102nd Battalion and then ourselves being in front. In this way we advanced through Palleul, Auberchicourt, Abscon and Escaudain to the north of Denain."
October 19, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 30) stated that "The night of the 19th saw us just west of Haveluy, north of Denain. At 1 a.m. on a very wet night the Brigadier visited the Battalion headquarters and instructed the C.O. that the Battalion was to attack and take Haveluy at daybreak and push on the outskirts of Valenciennes. Accordingly we advanced and took Haveluy, but were held up all along the line just east of this place and Denain. As we were holding a very extended front and as the [enemy] as evidently in the process of a big retreat, it was not considered advisable, in order to keep down casualties, to press him hard, so we remained where we were all day. During the night of the 20th our patrols went out far ahead and found that the [enemy] had again withdrawn...."
October 19, 1918 to October 30, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 30) stated that "We remained at Bellaing for some days and while here we were honored by a visit from His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who had a look around our billets and chatted with several of the men."

<u>Period</u>	<u>Information Taken from the 54th Battalion's Record titled "Cinquante-Quatre" and sub-titled "Being a Short History of the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion"</u>
October 31, 1918 to November 2, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 30 to 31) stated that <i>"The whole western side of Valenciennes had been badly flooded by the [ememy] and it was therefore impossible to advance further in this direction. It was decided to make a flanking movement on the town from the south and to this end we moved to Prouvy, near Denain, on the 31st. An attack was commenced on the 1st of November by the 10th Brigade, which was very successful, and this Battalion was ordered to be ready to move forward and exploit the attack during the day. Accordingly at 3 p.m. we moved forward, having to take a very circuitous route owing to the inundations, and by 10 p.m. had taken over the front line from the 46th Battalion just southeast of Valenciennes."</i> • The Battalion's record went on to state that <i>"During the night our men pushed forward and at 5.50 on the morning of the 2nd of November the companies advanced and in spite of severe opposition reached the town of Marly. Considerable street fighting ensued, as enemy machine guns were encountered at all corners and from the southern end of Valenciennes, but this did not stop us from taking Marly, which was in our hands at 7.10 a.m. During the day a definite line was established about 1,000 yards east of the town."</i> • Further, <i>"During the night the [enemy] withdrew and at dawn a general advance was ordered. Our patrols soon came in contact with the enemy and some tough fighting ensued, during which we captured the village of Estruex"</i>. • The Battalion's record (p. 31) finally notes that <i>"This was the last scrap of the old Battalion, as the Armistice was signed on the 11th of November."</i> • During these battles, 10 soldiers were killed and another 50 suffered wounds.
November 3, 1918 to November 6, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 31) stated that <i>"We rested in Marly until the 6th of November, when we ... moved back to billets in Anzin."</i> and went on to indicate that <i>"For the first time for over two years, during the period in France, every man had a bed and was really comfortable."</i>
November 11, 1918	• The Armistice was signed, ending World War I.
November 13, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 31) stated that <i>"To celebrate the signing of the Armistice the officers gave a dinner on the 13th, at which the chief figures of the corps, division and brigade were present."</i>
November 14, 1918 to November 20, 1918	• The Battalion's record (p. 31) stated that <i>"News was received that the whole Canadian Corps was to take part in the march to the Rhine and form part of the Army of occupation. To carry this out we left Anzin on the 15th, stayed at Quievrain for the night, and arrived at La Bouverie on the 16th, where we remained for five days, moving off again to Barthelemy, near Mons, on the 20th of November."</i>

<u>Period</u>	<u>Information Taken from the 54th Battalion's Record titled "Cinquante-Quatre" and sub-titled "Being a Short History of the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion"</u>
November 21, 1918 to December 17, 1918	• The Battalion reached Jauche, Belgium on December 17, 1918 <i>"...after staying on the way at La Louviere, Courcelles, Tongrinne and Thorambais les Beguines."</i> • The Battalion's record stated that now began a most trying time for the Battalion - the war was over and everyone was anxious to get home to Canada. The Battalion's record also noted that it was recognized that not all of the troops could be transported at once back to Canada. • Norman Williamson has many postcards in his WW I memorabilia collection of Jauche including a photograph of a family which potentially may have been where he billeted for the winter of 1918 / 1919.
December 25, 1918	• Christmas Day was spent in Jauche, Belgium where troops were treated to a dinner of <i>"...turkey, plum pudding, etc."</i>
January 4, 1919 to April 17, 1919	• The Battalion's record (p. 32 to 33) <i>"On the 4th of January we left Jauche and moved quite close to Brussels, arriving at Groenendael, only five miles away from Brussels, on the 6th, staying at Pietrebais and Wavre en route. Particular care was taken to see that all had good billets here as it was understood that our stay was to be of some month's duration. Educational work, frequent trips to Brussels, Waterloo and the surrounding neighborhood, and sports were freely indulged in, intermingled with concerts and dances. One day was spent in Louvain, where a friendly football match was played with the civilians."</i> • During much of March, the Battalion served on guard duties.
April 18, 1919 to April 27, 1919	• The Battalion left Groenendael, Belgium on April 18, 1919, were taken to the station at Wavre, Belgium, then travelled for two days by train to the port city of Le Havre, France.
April 28, 1919	• Departed by ship from Le Havre, France and <i>"after a very rough crossing"</i>, Bramshott, England was reached by train.
May 3, 1919	• The 54th Battalion participated in a large Victory Parade in London on May 3, 1919. Norman Williamson retained the printed program for the Victory Parade in his collection of memorabilia and it is titled <i>"Program - "Triumphal March of the Dominion Troops through London", May 3rd, 1919."</i>
May 4, to May 30, 1919	• The Battalion's record (p. 33) indicated that much of May was spent in England on leave.

Diary Entries - May 30, 1919 to June 9, 1919

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Friday, May 30, 1919	• <i>Left Bramshott for Liverpool.</i>	• The entries for Friday, May 30, 1919 to June 7, 1919 are located in Norman Williamson's pocket notebook with the name "Lutetia" on the front and not in his pocket diary.
Saturday, May 31, 1919	• <i>Arrived Liverpool.</i> • <i>Embarked on Mauritania at 2 P.M.</i>	• Norman Williamson retained four post cards showing the ship <i>Mauretania</i>. These are now located in the binder with his WW I heirloom items. The post cards show the spelling to be "<i>Mauretania</i>" rather than "<i>Mauritania</i>".
Sunday, June 1, 1919	• <i>Sailed at 12 Noon.</i>	•
Monday, June 2, 1919	• <i>All going well.</i> • <i>Sea very calm.</i> • <i>549 knots.</i>	• "549 knots" would be 5.49 knots.
Tuesday, June 3, 1919	• <i>All going well.</i> • <i>Quite a swell on.</i> • <i>567 knots.</i>	• "567 knots" would be 5.67 knots.
Wednesday, June 4, 1919	• <i>Fairly calm again.</i> • <i>556 knots.</i>	• "556 knots" would be 5.56 knots.
Thursday, June 5, 1919	• <i>587 knots.</i>	• "587 knots" would be 5.87 knots.
Friday, June 6, 1919	• <i>Landed at Halifax at 5:30.</i> • <i>Left Halifax at 9:30 P.M.</i>	• The Battalion's record (p. 33) stated that after arriving in Halifax "<i>No time was lost here and we were soon installed in the train en route for Hamilton, Ont., our first point of demobilization.</i>"
Saturday, June 7, 1919	• No Entry	•
Sunday, June 8, 1919	• No Entry	• The Battalion's record (p. 33) indicated that Hamilton, Ontario "<i>...was reached on the 8th of June and a great welcome was extended to the Battalion by the good citizens of Hamilton, followed by a banquet in the evening and a trip to Niagara Falls the following day.</i>" • Norman Williamson's discharge papers are dated June 8, 1919, signed at Hamilton, Ontario. • In Norman's collection of memorabilia, he retained a souvenir coin from the City of Hamilton along with five post cards from Niagara Falls.
Monday, June 9, 1919	• No Entry	• About three-quarters of the Battalion was demobilized at Hamilton, Ontario, with the remainder leaving for Revelstoke, British Columbia on Monday, June 9, 1919. • The Battalion's record shows that it visited Niagara Falls on June 9, 1918.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Diary Entry</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Mid-June, 1919	• No Entry	• Norman Williamson arrived in Winnipeg in mid-June, 1919 amidst the Winnipeg General Strike and, much to his consternation, was delayed further in his return to Grandview because of the lack of train service.

Notes, Poems and Other Material from Norman Williamson's Pocket Diary

- On the page in his pocket diary after the entry for Thursday, July 18, 1918, Norman Williamson included a poem. The poem is as follows:

*"Go live the Wide World
But when you come to die,
A quiet English churchyard
Is the only place to lie.*

*I held it half a lifetime
Until through war's Mischance
I saw the Wooden crosses
That fret the fields of France.*

*Stone crosses take no notice,
but the little wooden ones
Are thrilling every minute
to the music of the guns.*

*But you cannot die a failure
If you win a cross in France."*

- The first two verses and the last verse of this poem were published in the Times by E. W. Hornung, who lost his son in the War. The poem was titled "*Wooden Crosses*". The third verse was not in the original so it may have been added by Norman Williamson, who we knew to be quite literate, or may have been added by an unknown author.
- On another page later in his pocket diary, and inserted in a small space in the top margin, the following poem was found (although transcription was a bit difficult since parts were overwritten) - this one may have been written by Norman:

*If I had money
You'd have your part
But as I have none
You have my heart*

- A large part of Norman Williamson's diary was used to record notes. The notes included items recorded during training sessions (sniper school, machine gun classes, Lewis gun class, anti-aircraft training, detailed rifle sighting tables and notes such as elevation vs distance, lead distance for moving targets, etc.).

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- As an example, in one section, there is a list of reasons why machine guns misfire. This note was probably written during his machine gun classes, for example, the lecture on May 23, 1918.
 - In another entry, a hand drawn map is shown with the gate, No 2 post, and road marked "D" with an entry stating *"Benjama & Spencer, captured by No 2 post at 1:30 p.m. At front marked along road, 2 men sighted at 1:15 p.m. passed gate at 2:00 p.m"*. It is not clear what this entry means - whether it was part of training, whether soldiers of the 54th Battalion captured two German soldiers, or whether Benjama & Spencer were captured. Norman's writing is difficult to interpret at times (it is written in the field, often under less-than-ideal circumstances). There is a Pte. W. Bunjan and a Pte. J. Spence listed in the Battalion's personnel record - perhaps these are the soldiers to which Norman is referring.
 - Some figures are provided at various places within Norman Williamson's diary which appear to be compass bearings.

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