

John Randall Painter

John Randall Painter was a descendant of a local farming family. His father, John Thomas Painter 1844-1928, farmed at Hale Farm and later Brook Farm, **Benson**. Before that his grandfather, James Giles Painter, originally from Upton, Berkshire farmed at Woodhouse Farm, Mongewell and in his later years resided at Brook House, Brook Street, **Benson**.

Being his father's fifth son, whose first marriage had produced four sons, he would not have expected any inheritance, so after finishing his schooling when he was sixteen he emigrated to Canada. He arrived in Quebec, Canada on the 13th May 1912 aboard the ship Corsican, on his way to Ingersoll, Ontario, to find work in farming.

The Canadian Virtual War Memorial records him as farming in Mt. Elgin, Ontario, until September 1915. Then, most probably in response to the continuing war in Europe, he joined the newly opened Curtiss Flying School at Long Branch Aerodrome, Toronto. However things could not have worked out with flying, as he enlisted in the 4th Brigade Canadian Field Artillery (C.F.A.), on the 1st February 1916 at Toronto and became a gunner. His military record detail is not listed at present; however, he would have had initial training in Canada before mobilization and further training in England, before embarkation to France.

Mid 1916, about the time John R. Painter would have arrived after his training, saw the 4th C.F.A. on the Somme at Sanctuary Wood and Hooge. He was with the Brigade until his death, having survived battles such as Courcellette, Vimy Ridge, Passchendale, Amiens, Hindenburg Line, as well as other operations. He was seriously wounded in the battle at Canal du Nord on the 30th September 1918.

Excerpt from "Gun-Fire", as extracted from the War Diary:

"On the 29th September the 4th Canadian Division infantry, after carrying Sancourt, crossed the Douai-Cambrai railway and entered Blécourt, but later, attacked by large enemy forces, was forced to withdraw to the line of the railway..... Shortly after the barrage, each Battery of the Brigade sent forward a section of guns to assist the Infantry in overcoming resistance of enemy machine-guns. Owing to the obstinate fighting that characterised this day, many targets were fired upon and the Infantry given good protection by the sniping activities of these guns... The Canadian Corps had now reached the fringe of the large plateau which extended from the Scheldt to the Sensée. The enemy was fighting tenaciously to hold the crests. Picked troops were thrown in to hold the Canadians as a deep advance on our front would seriously jeopardise the successful withdrawal of enemy forces further south.

On the 30th September the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions continued the pressure. Advancing towards the bridge-heads at Pont d'Aire and Ramillies, troops of the 4th pushed through Blécourt but owing to the smoke screen covering the attack becoming blown away, our men were forced to withdraw to their lines in front of Sancourt."

It would have been during this action that John Randall Painter received a gun-shot wound to the chest requiring him to be transported to Etaples Military Hospital.

He died on 6th October 1918, just five weeks before the Armistice, and was buried in Etaples Military Cemetery. Grave ref. LXVII. H. 25.