

Forbes Ballantyne - WW1



(original photo enhanced with AI technology)

1. Personal Profile & Enlistment

- Regimental Number: 1004035 (Forbes Bal... p. 3).
- Rank: Private (Pte.) (Forbes Bal... p. 5).
- Civilian Trade: Car Repairer (Forbes Bal... p. 3).
- Next-of-Kin: His mother, Mrs. Stewart (M. A.) Ballantyne, residing in Ballantyne's Cove, Antigonish County, Nova Scotia (Forbes Bal... pp. 3, 10).
- Enlistment: He formally signed his attestation papers on November 23, 1916, at Sudbury, Ontario (Forbes Bal... p. 3). He was assigned to the 227th Overseas Battalion, CEF (Forbes Bal... p. 3).

2. Overseas Deployment & Frontline Infantry Combat (1917–1918)

- Arrival in England: Ballantyne embarked from Halifax on April 10, 1917, aboard the *H.M.T. Carpathia* and arrived in Liverpool, England, on April 22, 1917 (Forbes Bal... p. 23).

The H.M.T. Carpathia (His Majesty's Transport Carpathia) was a transatlantic passenger steamship owned by the Cunard Line (Forbes Bal... p. 23), best known for its legendary role in maritime history and its later service as a troopship during the First World War. The ship achieved global fame on April 15, 1912, when it raced to the site of the sinking Titanic and successfully rescued all 705 survivors from the Titanic's lifeboats and transported them to New York.

He was initially taken on strength by the 8th Canadian Reserve Battalion for training at Shorncliffe (Forbes Bal... p. 23).

- Deployment to France: On September 27, 1917, he proceeded overseas to France (Forbes Bal... p. 23). He joined his frontline combat unit, the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion (Central Ontario Regiment), in the field on October 13, 1917 (Forbes Bal... p. 23).

The 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion, CEF—popularly known as the "Kootenay Battalion"—was a prominent frontline combat unit of the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War.

- He served continuously with them on the Western Front through late 1917 and most of 1918 (Forbes Bal... p. 24).

On October 13 in both 1917 and 1918, the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion (Kootenay) was heavily engaged on the Western Front, but under completely different tactical circumstances. In 1917, they were bracing for the mud of Passchendaele,

whereas in 1918, they were spearheading the fast-moving pursuit of the retreating German army.

Late 1917 - the 54th Battalion spent the remaining months of the year alternating between frontline duties, reserve rotations, and working parties in the heavily ruined mining areas around Lens and Souchez. The primary objective during this period was maintaining defensive lines through sub-zero temperatures, managing localized German artillery duels, and repairing water-logged trenches.

1918 - In March 1918, the German Army launched its massive Kaiserschlacht (Spring Offensive) further south. While the 4th Canadian Division was not struck by the main force of the advance, the 54th Battalion was placed on high alert in defense-in-depth positions to prevent a breakthrough toward the vital logistics hub of Arras. To keep the enemy off balance and identify which German units were opposite them, the 54th heavily engaged in deadly, small-scale night raids and structural patrolling. As the German offensive burned out, the period from May to July 1918 became a time of intense preparation. The 54th Battalion moved behind the lines for comprehensive maneuvers. Rather than practicing static trench assaults, they trained heavily in open warfare tactics, learning to leapfrog platoons forward, utilize mobile Lewis machine guns, and coordinate directly with early British tanks. By the end of July 1918, this months-long regimen of raiding and open-field maneuvering had transformed the 54th Battalion into a highly efficient shock-troop unit. In August 1918, they were secretly moved south to launch the legendary Battle of Amiens, triggering Canada's historic Hundred Days Campaign. The soldiers would have known what was coming, and after surviving to this point, it is not surprising what Pvt. Ballantyne did next.

3. Court-Martial, Incarceration, & Secondary Medical Units

In August 1918, Private Ballantyne's frontline combat timeline was halted by a severe disciplinary infraction and injury:

- Self-Inflicted Injury & Court-Martial: On August 3, 1918, he was admitted to No. 12 Stationary Hospital with a gunshot/shrapnel wound to his left foot, labeled as a "Self-Inflicted Wound" (S.I.W.) (Forbes Bal... pp. 15, 24). He was held in strict military confinement from August 3 to September 3, 1918, awaiting legal judgment (Forbes Bal... p. 24).
- The Verdict: On September 3, 1918, he was tried and convicted by a Field General Court-Martial (F.G.C.M.) (Forbes Bal... p. 24). He was found guilty on two counts: (1) Negligently wounding himself, and (2) Drunkenness (Forbes Bal... p. 24). **He was sentenced to 56 days of Field Punishment No. 1** (Forbes Bal... pp. 15, 24).

In the Canadian military during the First World War, a sentence of 56 days of Field Punishment No. 1 was a severe, highly humiliating corporate penalty reserved for serious military crimes. Introduced as a "humane" replacement for flogging, it was heavily utilized in the field to maintain discipline without locking soldiers up in distant military prisons where they could escape frontline service.

A 56-day sentence was so long that it could only be handed down by a formal Field General Court-Martial (a commanding officer was legally capped at awarding a maximum of 28 days).

The sentence carried three severe physical and financial components:

1. The "Crucifixion" (Physical Restraint)

The most notorious and degrading element of Field Punishment No. 1 required the soldier to be physically restrained and attached to a fixed object:

- *The Routine: The soldier was placed in irons, fetters, or handcuffs and tied tightly by the wrists and ankles to a fixed object—most commonly a large wooden artillery gun wheel, a fence post, or a tent tent pole.*
- *The Limits: By military law, they could be tied up for a maximum of two hours per day. This could not be done for more than 3 out of every 4 consecutive days, and for no more than 21 days total out of the overall 56-day sentence.*
- *Public Humiliation: According to the Canadian Officer's Guide to the Study of Military Law, the tying was explicitly executed in as public a place as possible within the camp or battalion billets. Left completely immobile in full view of their peers, the soldier was entirely helpless against common battlefield irritants like swarming flies, mud, rain, or lice.*

2. Hard Labour and Defaulter Status

When the soldier was not actively tied to a post or wheel, they were treated as a military defaulter:

- *They were subjected to continuous hard labour.*
- *They were forced to perform the most grueling, miserable, and hazardous sanitation duties in the camp (e.g., digging trenches, cleaning latrines, and moving heavy ammunition chains) explicitly to relieve well-behaved soldiers from those chores.*
- *They were kept under strict supervision in a designated camp guardroom or a localized Field Punishment Camp when off-duty.*

3. Total Forfeiture of Pay

A sentence of Field Punishment No. 1 triggered an automatic stoppage of pay. For all 56 days of the sentence, the soldier forfeited their daily baseline pay and field allowances, meaning they earned absolutely nothing while undergoing the punishment.

- *Transfer to Labor Pool: Following his physical recovery at No. 4 General Hospital, a medical board classified him as "Class B1" (permanently unfit for arduous front-line trench combat) (Forbes Bal... p. 24). Consequently, on October 18, 1918, he was officially struck off the strength of the 54th Battalion and transferred into the Canadian Labor Pool (Forbes Bal... p. 24).*
- *Subsequent Hospitalization: While serving with labor units, his feet failed again. He spent most of November 1918 hospitalized at No. 7 Canadian General Hospital and No. 6 Convalescent Depot recovering from a severe case of I.C.T. Foot (Inflammation of the Connective Tissue) (Forbes Bal... p. 24).*

4. Repatriation and Demobilization (Late 1918 – Early 1919)

- **Return to England:** On December 17, 1918, he was transferred out of France and posted back to the 2nd Central Ontario Regimental Depot at Witley, England (Forbes Bal... p. 24).
- **Atlantic Voyage:** On February 19, 1919, he boarded the S.S. *Scotian* at Liverpool to sail home, arriving back in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on March 1, 1919, where he was assigned to the local Casualty Company (Forbes Bal... p. 25).

5. Formal Military Discharge (March 1919)

Private Ballantyne was officially discharged from the army on March 26, 1919, at District Depot No. 6 in Halifax (Forbes Bal... p. 21).

- **Reason for Discharge:** His papers record his release strictly due to general Demobilization (Forbes Bal... p. 21). A final medical clearance exam on March 17, 1918, noted that his foot had fully healed with "no remaining disability" (Forbes Bal... p. 31).
- **Post-War Gratuity & Legacy:** He was issued a Class "A" War Service Badge (No. 233861) (Forbes Bal... p. 21). Because of his length of service, he was awarded a full War Service Gratuity of \$420.00, plus an additional \$180.00 dependent tracking allowance for his mother, finalizing a \$600.00 total payout (Forbes Bal... p. 20). He

returned to civilian life in Antigonish County, passing away years later on November 1, 1946 (Forbes Bal... pp. 21, 43).