

John Beaton - WW1



(original photo enhanced with AI technology)

Soldier Profile

- Full Name: John Beaton (p. 2)
- Regimental Number: 443209 (p. 2)
- Rank: Private (Pte.) (p. 4)
- Date of Birth: March 14, 1894 (p. 2)
- Place of Birth: Antigonish, Nova Scotia (p. 2)
- Next of Kin: Daniel Beaton (Father), Antigonish, Nova Scotia (p. 2)
- Trade/Occupation: Bridgeman / Bridge Builder (pp. 2, 7)
- Physical Description on Enlistment: 21 years old, 5'6" tall, dark complexion, hazel/brown eyes, dark brown/black hair (pp. 3-4).

Service Timeline

1. Enlistment and Training (1915)

- June 7, 1915: Enlisted and signed his Attestation Paper at Vernon Camp, British Columbia (p. 2). He was initially assigned to the 54th Kootenay Battalion, CEF (p. 3).
- November 1, 1915: Arrived in England where he continued training (p. 21). He was briefly transferred to the 30th Battalion before moving to his deployment unit (pp. 21, 32).

2. Frontline Deployment & Injury (1916)

- March 15–16, 1916: Transferred to the 7th Battalion (British Columbia Regiment) and deployed to the Western Front in France (p. 32).
- May 1916: Suffered an initial service injury when he fell off a military transport vehicle, causing persistent lower back trauma (pp. 7, 9).
- June 14, 1916: Wounded in action during intense fighting at Ypres, Belgium (Mount Sorrel) (p. 16). He sustained a severe Gunshot Wound (G.S.W.) / shrapnel wound to his right ankle and foot (pp. 6, 16). The shrapnel fractured his lower fibula and outer ankle bone (os calcis) (p. 6).

What the 7th Battalion endured before Pvt. Beaton's injury:

The 7th Battalion, CEF (originally raised in British Columbia) played a pivotal, harrowing role in the Battle of Mont Sorrel. While Private John Beaton's files show he was struck down on June 14, 1916 (pp. 4, 39), his unit's timeline during those two weeks reveals exactly what he endured leading up to that day:

June 2–3 (The Emergency Deployment): *When the initial, apocalyptic German artillery barrage annihilated the 3rd Canadian Division forward lines on June 2, the 1st Canadian Division—including the 7th Battalion—was rushed up from reserve to stabilize the crumbling sector.*

The Shattered Counter-Attack: Elements of the battalion were caught up in the desperate, uncoordinated Canadian counter-attacks of June 3. Moving across open ground in broad daylight under zero cover, the Canadians suffered immense casualties but successfully halted the German advance from breaking completely through to Ypres.

June 4–11 (Holding the Line): The 7th Battalion endured days of brutal trench holding under near-constant German shelling. They lived in muddy, half-destroyed ditches, surrounded by chemical gas attacks, preparing for a highly orchestrated counter-offensive.

June 13–14 (The Retaking of the Heights): Under the command of Major-General Arthur Currie, the 7th Battalion was heavily involved in the grand counter-strike launched at 1:30 AM in a torrential downpour. Backed by a perfectly synchronized, creeping artillery barrage, they leaped over the top, overwhelmed the German trenches with bayonets, and successfully recaptured the lost high ground.

The Final Toll: On June 14, as the battalion consolidated the reclaimed trenches and repelled desperate German counter-attacks, Private Beaton was severely struck in the ankle and foot by exploding shrapnel (pp. 4, 16). He was one of thousands of casualties the 7th Battalion suffered in this victorious but bloody meatgrinder.

3. Medical Hospitalization & Convalescence (1916–1917)

- June 1916: Evacuated from the field through clearing stations to No. 8 Stationary Hospital in Wimereux, France, where surgeries were performed to remove the shrapnel and insert drainage tubes (p. 16).
- June 16, 1916: Transferred back to England and admitted to the Duchess of Connaught Canadian Red Cross Hospital in Taplow (pp. 16, 35).
- August 1916 – June 1917: Transferred to the Granville Canadian Special Hospital in Ramsgate for intensive physiotherapy, foot exercises, and orthopedic treatments (pp. 17-18). Medical boards noted he walked with a severe limp and could not support his weight on his toes (p. 13).
- July 10, 1917: Boarded a ship at Liverpool to return to Canada (p. 33). During the voyage, he contracted scabies and was hospitalized briefly upon arrival in Halifax, Nova Scotia (p. 15).

4. Domestic Duty and Discharge (1918–1919)

- 1918: Transferred out west to British Columbia (p. 33). Deemed unfit for active infantry service, he was placed on home defense duties with the 11th Battalion, Canadian Garrison Regiment (C.G.R.) (pp. 27, 34).
- March 1919: Transferred to Esquimalt Military Hospital in Victoria, B.C., for ongoing "Myalgia" (chronic back muscle pain stemming from his 1916 fall) and stiffness in his right foot (pp. 6, 9).
- June 18, 1919: Formally discharged from the CEF in Vancouver, B.C., after a final Medical Board ruled him "Medically Unfit" for further military service (pp. 4, 34).

Medical Summary & Permanent Injuries

Private Beaton's records show that his four years of war service left him with substantial physical trauma (pp. 4, 7):

1. Right Ankle/Foot Deformity: The shrapnel wound caused permanent bone fractures, structural scarring, and limited joint mobility (pp. 6, 13). He suffered constant pain when walking over rough terrain or walking more than a mile (pp. 6, 9).
2. Chronic Back Myalgia: The spinal jar from falling off the military transport in France resulted in permanent tenderness, rigidity, and severe limits on his ability to bend forward or reach upward (pp. 6, 9).

He was awarded a War Service Badge (Class A, No. 307964) upon his departure to civilian life (pp. 36, 41).

