

Charles Albert Falkenham - WW1



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Personal Profile & Enlistment

- Full Name: Albert Charles Falkenham (recorded interchangeably as Charles Albert) (pp. 5, 39).
- Birth Details: Born March 17, 1886, in Dayspring, Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia (pp. 5, 23).
- Pre-War Life: He worked as a machinist and served 3 years in the 75th Regiment local militia (pp. 1, 24).
- Family: He was married to Catherine Ann Falkenham, with whom he had a 5-year-old son, Charles Kimball Falkenham (p. 5). His parents were Charles and Mary Agnes Falkenham (p. 6).
- Physical Markers: Standing 5' 8¼" with dark skin, brown eyes, and dark brown hair, his distinct identifying feature was a physical scar on his left elbow (pp. 2, 24).
- Enlistment Date: He initially took his oath on September 15, 1914, with the Composite Battalion (p. 17). He officially attested for overseas service at Halifax on August 1, 1916 (p. 1).



Military Service & Promotion Timeline

- September 1914 – July 1916: Served in Canada with the Composite Battalion safeguarding local defenses, rising from Private to Acting Corporal, and finally promoting to Corporal on December 1, 1915 (pp. 17-18).
- August 1916: Transferred to the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) Reinforcements to prepare for deployment (pp. 15, 18).
- October 1916: Embarked from Halifax on October 4 aboard the SS *California*, arriving in Liverpool, England on October 13 (p. 31).
- February 1917: Appointed to Acting Corporal with pay while training at Seaford with the 7th Reserve Battalion (p. 31).
- June 1917: Reverted back to the permanent rank of Private at his own request (or to go overseas) (p. 32).
- September 1917: Arrived in France on September 12, 1917, and moved directly to the frontlines to join the active Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) in the field (pp. 31-32).

In the fall of 1917, The Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) was serving as an elite permanent-force regular infantry battalion within the 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 3rd Canadian Division. By the time Private Albert Falkenham arrived as a front-line reinforcement in September 1917 (p. 7), the Canadian Corps had transformed into what the German military considered a premier Allied "shock troop" formation, fresh off sweeping victories at Vimy Ridge in April and Hill 70 in August.

☀ Combat Wound & Hospitalization Ledger

Private Falkenham's frontline tour was cut short by heavy fighting in Belgium, leading to a long chain of medical admissions (p. 25):

1. Gunshot Wound/German Mustard Gas(Oct 1917): On October 30, 1917—during the muddy final phases of the infamous Battle of Passchendaele—he sustained a shrapnel/gunshot wound to his right arm, and was gassed with German mustard gas. (pp. 21-22). He was evacuated through No. 8 Canadian Field Ambulance and shipped back to England to recuperate at Norfolk War Hospital (p. 22).

On the exact day Private Falkenham was wounded by shrapnel and gassed, the 7th Infantry Brigade launched a major push. The RCR's specific assignment that day was highly hazardous:

Combat Infrastructure Support: According to the Official First World War War Diary of the RCR, the regiment was positioned in a unique, highly lethal role. They did not launch the primary assault waves; instead, they were tasked as heavily equipped carrying parties to directly reinforce and resupply the front-line assaulting battalions.

Targeted Under Fire: Moving heavy crates of ammunition, water, rations, and trench mats through waist-deep mud meant the men had zero cover. They were entirely exposed to relentless German artillery shellfire and mustard gas barrages.

Tactical Readiness: Despite acting as a supply lifeline, the RCR went into the mud fully armed. They were prepared to drop their crates, fix bayonets, and immediately fight off German counter-attacks to secure the line if the forward units collapsed.

2. Gas Poisoning (January 1918): While recovering, records from the Military Convalescent Hospital at Epsom note treatment for gas poisoning alongside his healing arm (p. 38). He was discharged to a command depot on February 6, 1918 (p. 25).

Depot Assignment: Upon being discharged from the convalescent hospital in Epsom on February 6, 1918, he was not sent back to France (pp. 22, 25). Instead, he was attached to the 2nd Canadian Command Depot (2nd CCD) and the 17th Canadian Reserve Battalion in Bramshott, England (pp. 32, 35). These units were domestic training and recovery pools for soldiers recovering from injuries.

3. Internal Medical Surgery (April – June 1918): Suffered from severe hemorrhoids (piles) (p. 38). He underwent corrective surgery at No. 12 Canadian General Hospital in Bramshott on May 1, 1918, spending over a month recovering (pp. 38, 41).

4. Leg Infection (August – October 1918): Admitted again to Bramshott with severe I.C.T. (Inflammatory Connective Tissue infection) in his right leg and knee, compounded by a boil on his neck (pp. 19, 38). He was not discharged back to his unit until October 4, 1918 (p. 25).

Discharge and Later Life

- Return to Canada: As the war wound down, he boarded the massive troopship SS *Olympic* on December 7, 1918, arriving back home in Halifax on December 13, 1918 (pp. 27, 33).
- Official Discharge: He was officially struck off strength on January 8, 1919, at Halifax (pp. 27, 33). His papers cite "Demobilization" as the official reason, though companion logs note he was medically unfit for further active service due to his combat wounds (pp. 40, 43).
- Post-War Residence: Upon leaving the military, his temporary address was listed as Ballantynes Cove, Antigonish County, before settling at 36 Franklin Avenue in Halifax, Nova Scotia (pp. 23, 39).

Back in Canada, Albert took advantage of The Civil Service Act of 1918, and received "Veterans Preference", which gave preference to veterans for jobs within the Civil Service. If a veteran passed the entry position, they had to be hired ahead of any civilian candidate, regardless of whether the civilian scored higher on the test. This is how Albert ended up as the lighthouse keeper at Cape George Point after the war.