

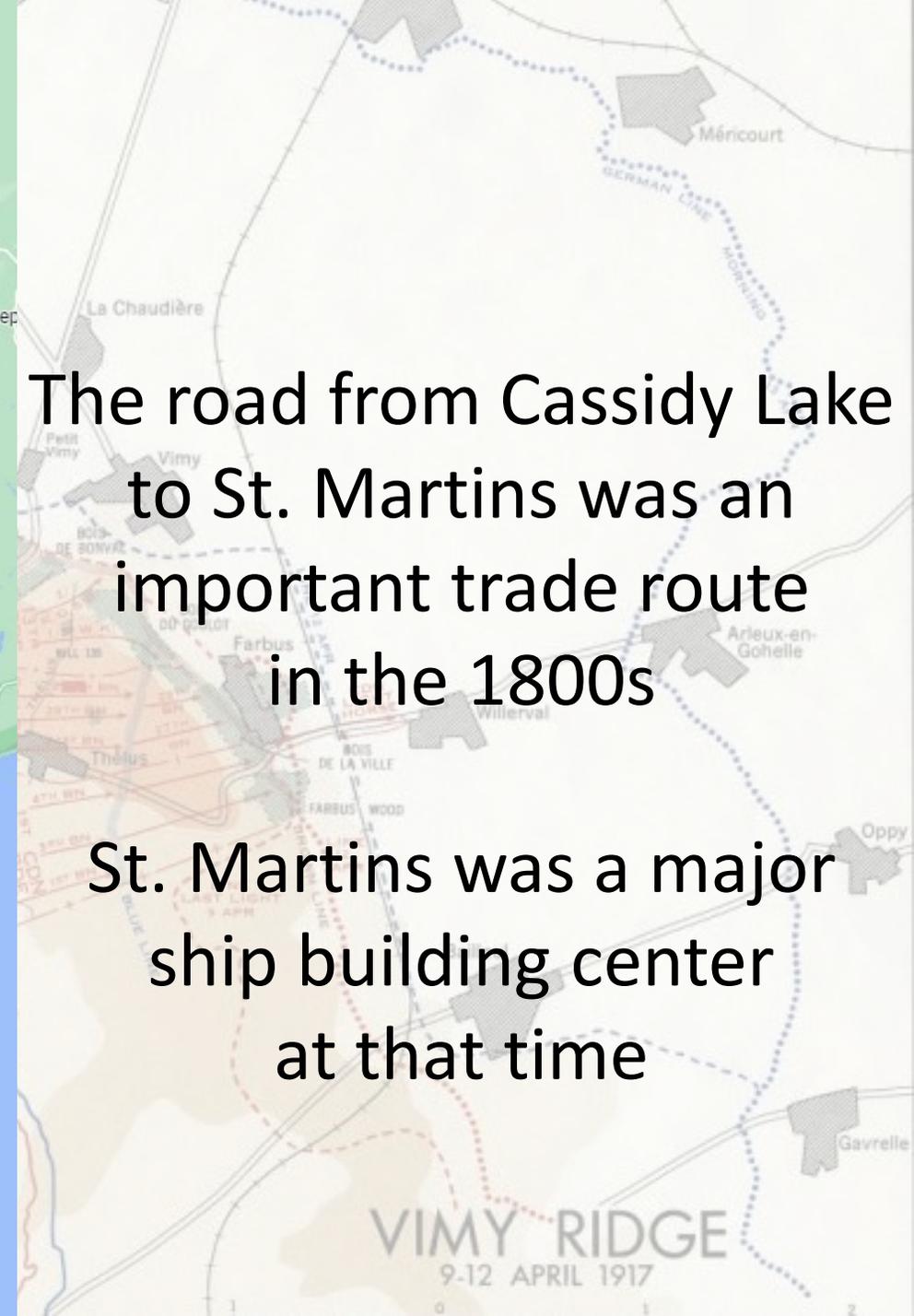
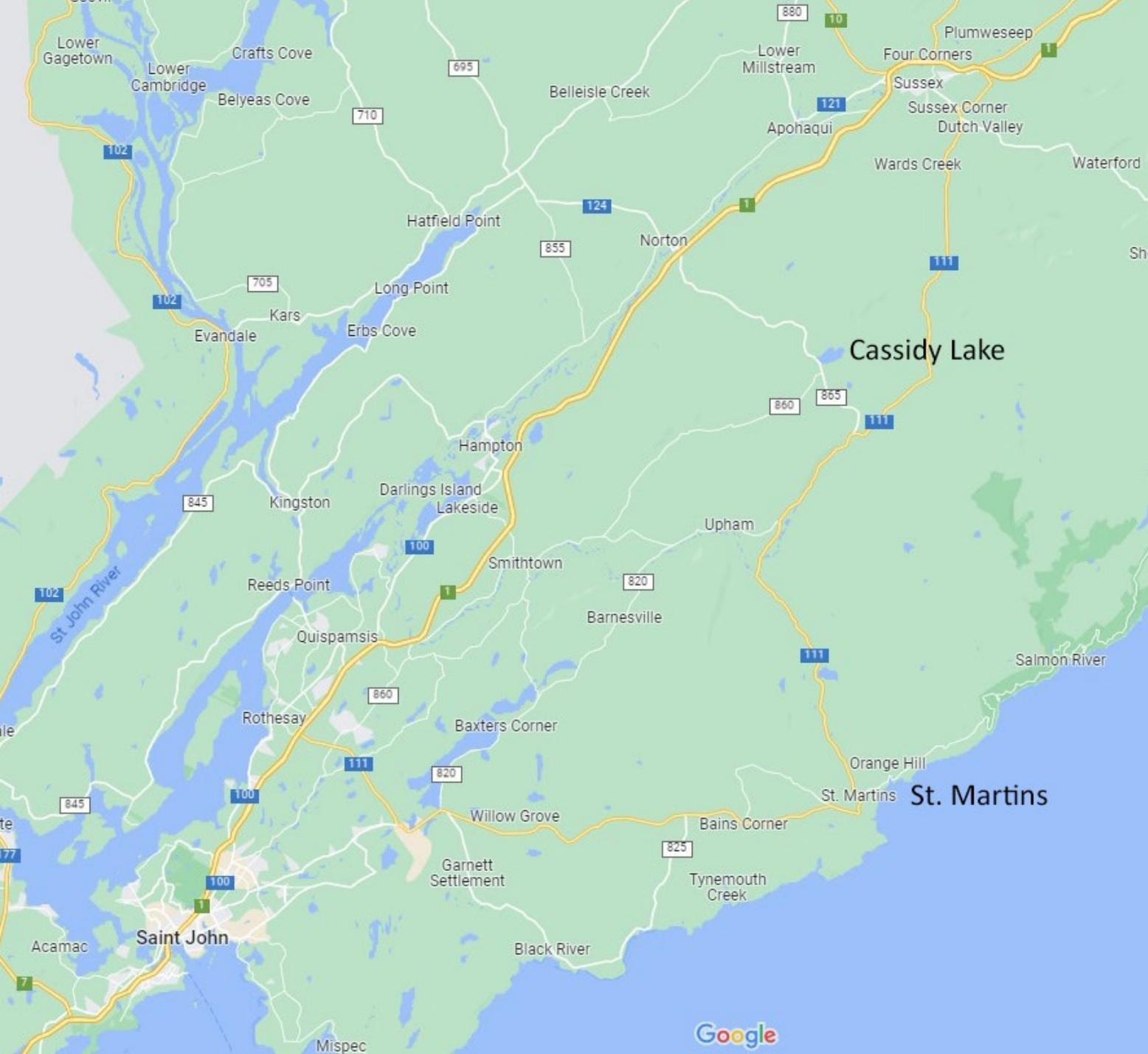
# The Story of Brian Allan Cassidy 1895-1917

Our WWI Brick Wall  
Battle of Vimy Ridge or the Battle of Arras

Story based on research by  
Brian Cassidy and Paul Cassidy  
2023

VIMY RIDGE  
9-12 APRIL 1917



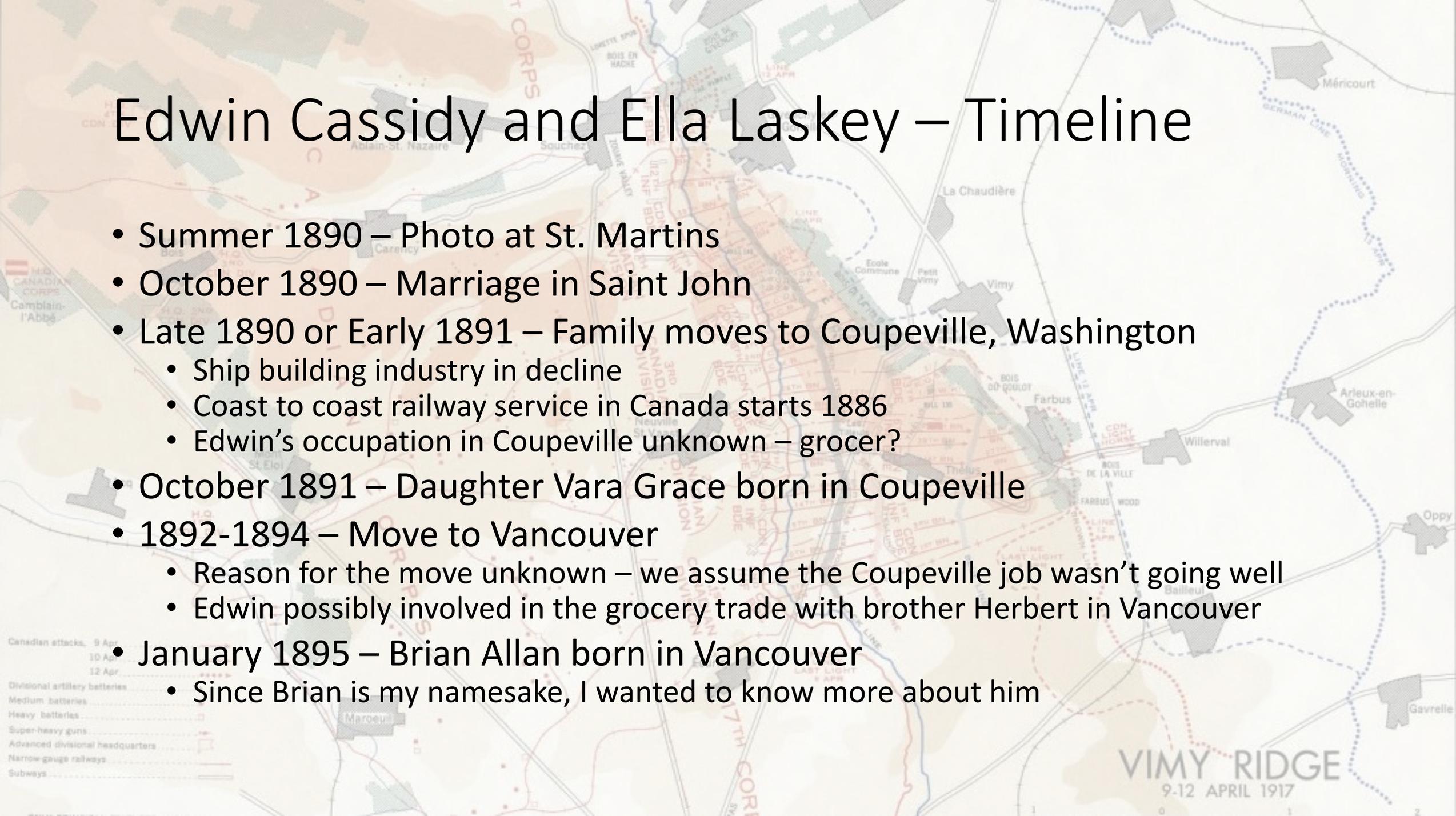


The road from Cassidy Lake to St. Martins was an important trade route in the 1800s

St. Martins was a major ship building center at that time

# Edwin Cassidy and Ella Laskey – Timeline

- Summer 1890 – Photo at St. Martins
- October 1890 – Marriage in Saint John
- Late 1890 or Early 1891 – Family moves to Coupeville, Washington
  - Ship building industry in decline
  - Coast to coast railway service in Canada starts 1886
  - Edwin's occupation in Coupeville unknown – grocer?
- October 1891 – Daughter Vara Grace born in Coupeville
- 1892-1894 – Move to Vancouver
  - Reason for the move unknown – we assume the Coupeville job wasn't going well
  - Edwin possibly involved in the grocery trade with brother Herbert in Vancouver
- January 1895 – Brian Allan born in Vancouver
  - Since Brian is my namesake, I wanted to know more about him



William and Jane emigrated from Ireland to Saint John in 1819 - purchased land at DeForest Lake (now Cassidy Lake) in 1823

William Cassidy 1797-1886  
Jane Milligan 1798-1875

Thomas Cassidy  
1829-1902

Francis Edward Cassidy  
1834-1927

Herbert Francis Cassidy  
1863-1934

Edwin Vail Cassidy 1864-1942  
Ella Laskey 1865-1966

Matthew Richard Cassidy  
1871-1960

Robert Allen Cassidy  
1879-1965

Vara Grace Cassidy  
1891-1984

Brian Allan Cassidy  
1895-1917

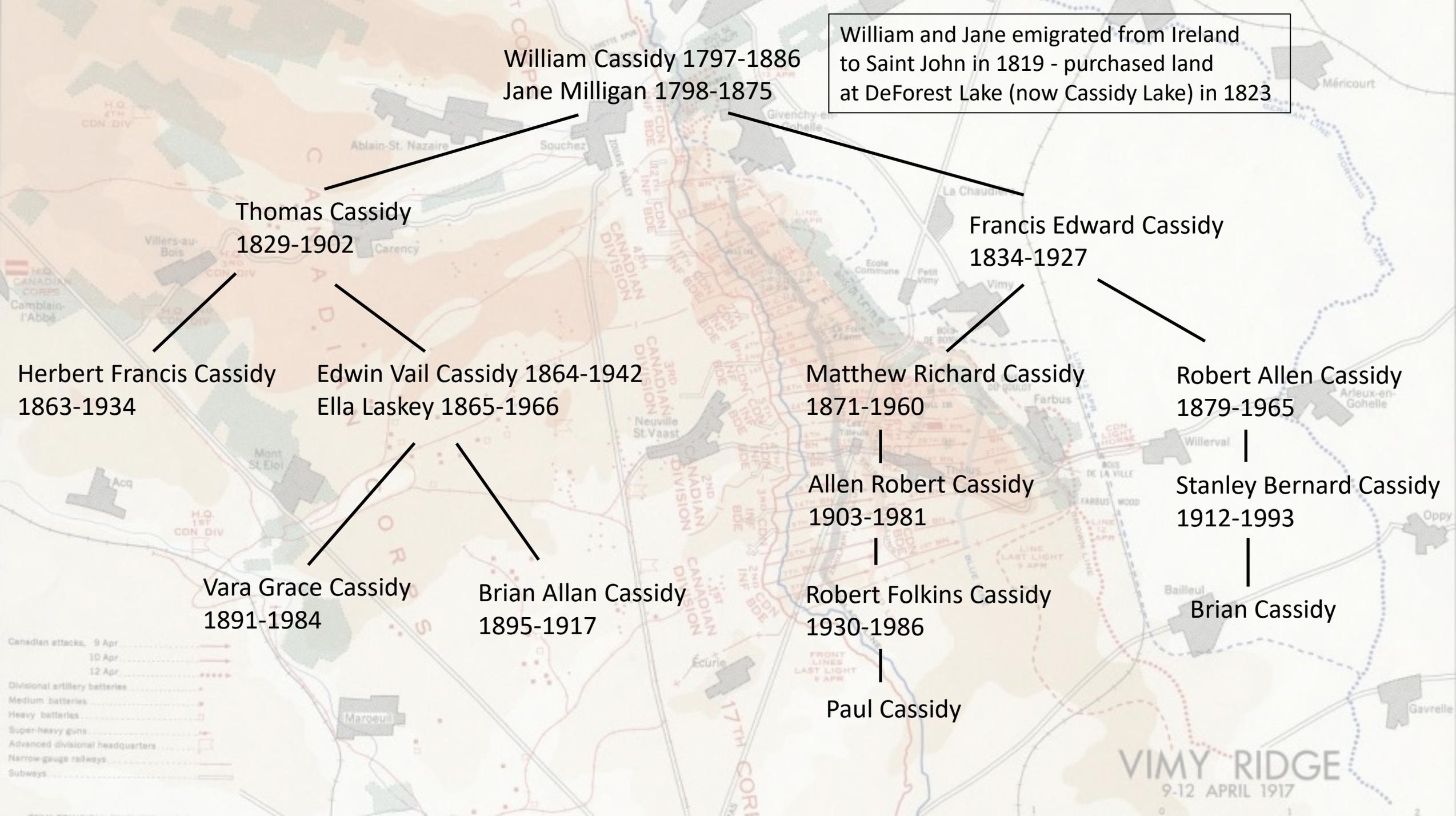
Allen Robert Cassidy  
1903-1981

Stanley Bernard Cassidy  
1912-1993

Robert Folkins Cassidy  
1930-1986

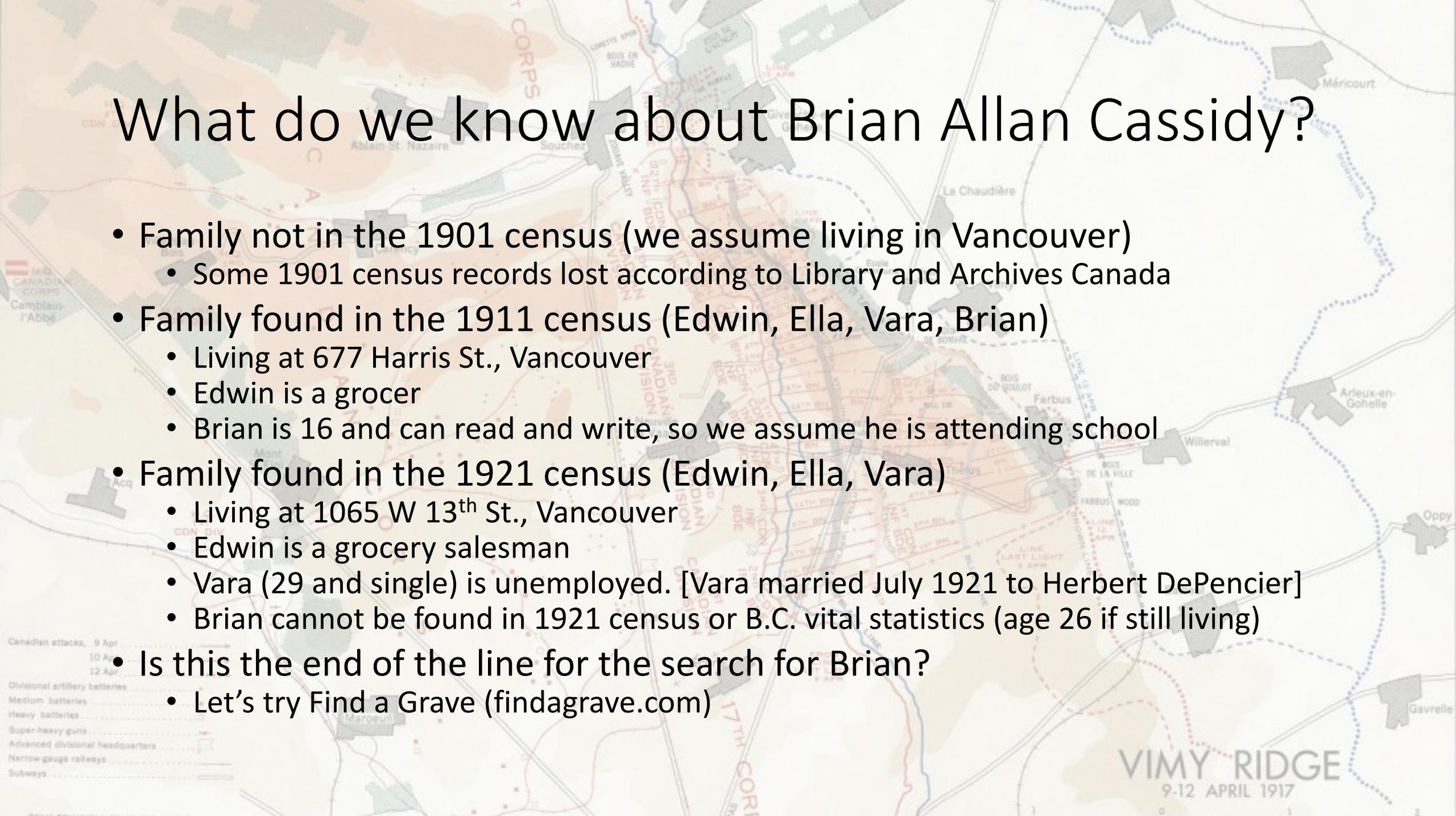
Brian Cassidy

Paul Cassidy



# What do we know about Brian Allan Cassidy?

- Family not in the 1901 census (we assume living in Vancouver)
  - Some 1901 census records lost according to Library and Archives Canada
- Family found in the 1911 census (Edwin, Ella, Vara, Brian)
  - Living at 677 Harris St., Vancouver
  - Edwin is a grocer
  - Brian is 16 and can read and write, so we assume he is attending school
- Family found in the 1921 census (Edwin, Ella, Vara)
  - Living at 1065 W 13<sup>th</sup> St., Vancouver
  - Edwin is a grocery salesman
  - Vara (29 and single) is unemployed. [Vara married July 1921 to Herbert DePencier]
  - Brian cannot be found in 1921 census or B.C. vital statistics (age 26 if still living)
- Is this the end of the line for the search for Brian?
  - Let's try Find a Grave ([findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com))



# Found him on Find a Grave!

## Pvt Brian Allan Cassidy ▼

**BIRTH** 20 Jan 1895  
Vancouver, Greater Vancouver Regional District, British Columbia, Canada

**DEATH** 14 Apr 1917 (aged 22)  
France

**BURIAL** [Lapugnoy Military Cemetery](#)  
Lapugnoy, Departement du Pas-de-Calais, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France

**PLOT** III. E. 10.

**MEMORIAL ID** 56528062 · [View Source](#)

SHARE

+

SAVE TO

SUGGEST EDITS



MEMORIAL

PHOTOS 0

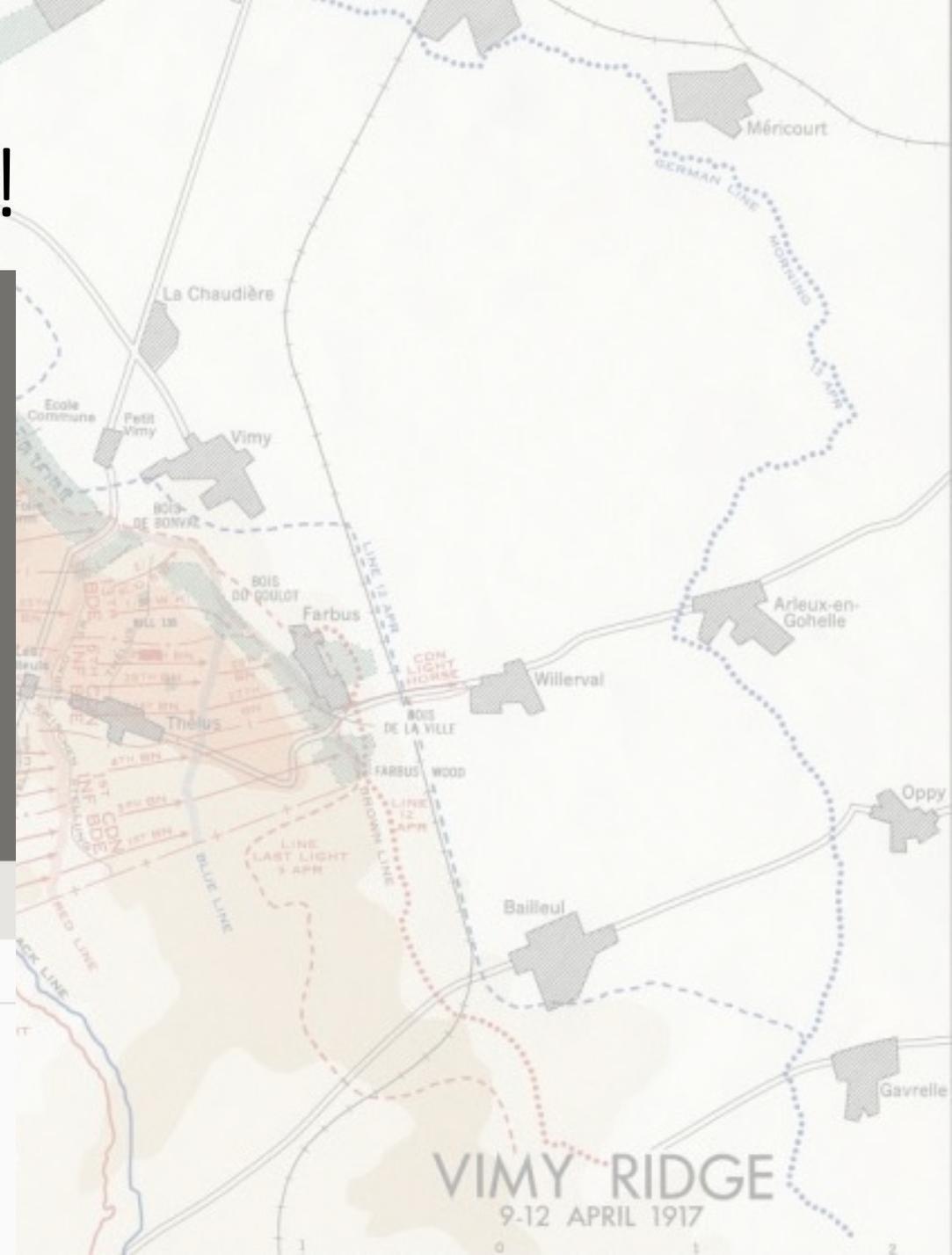
FLOWERS 2

### Inscription

129937

### Gravesite Details

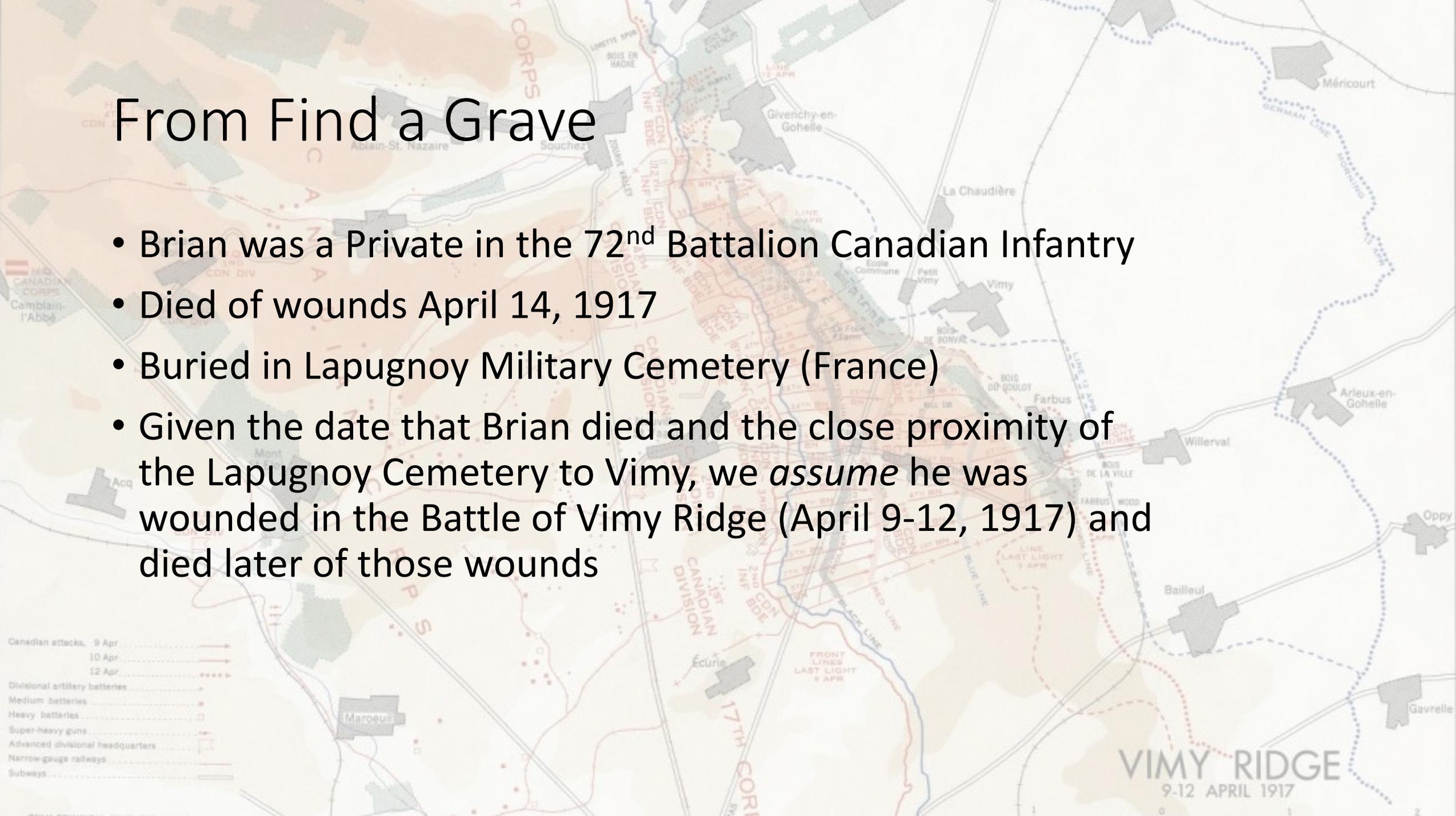
Private, 72nd Battalion, Canadian Infantry (British Columbia Regiment). Died of wounds. Age: 22.



- Canadian attacks, 9
- 10
- 12
- Divisional artillery bat
- Medium batteries ...
- Heavy batteries ...
- Super-heavy guns ...
- Advanced divisional ?
- Narrow-gauge railway
- Subways

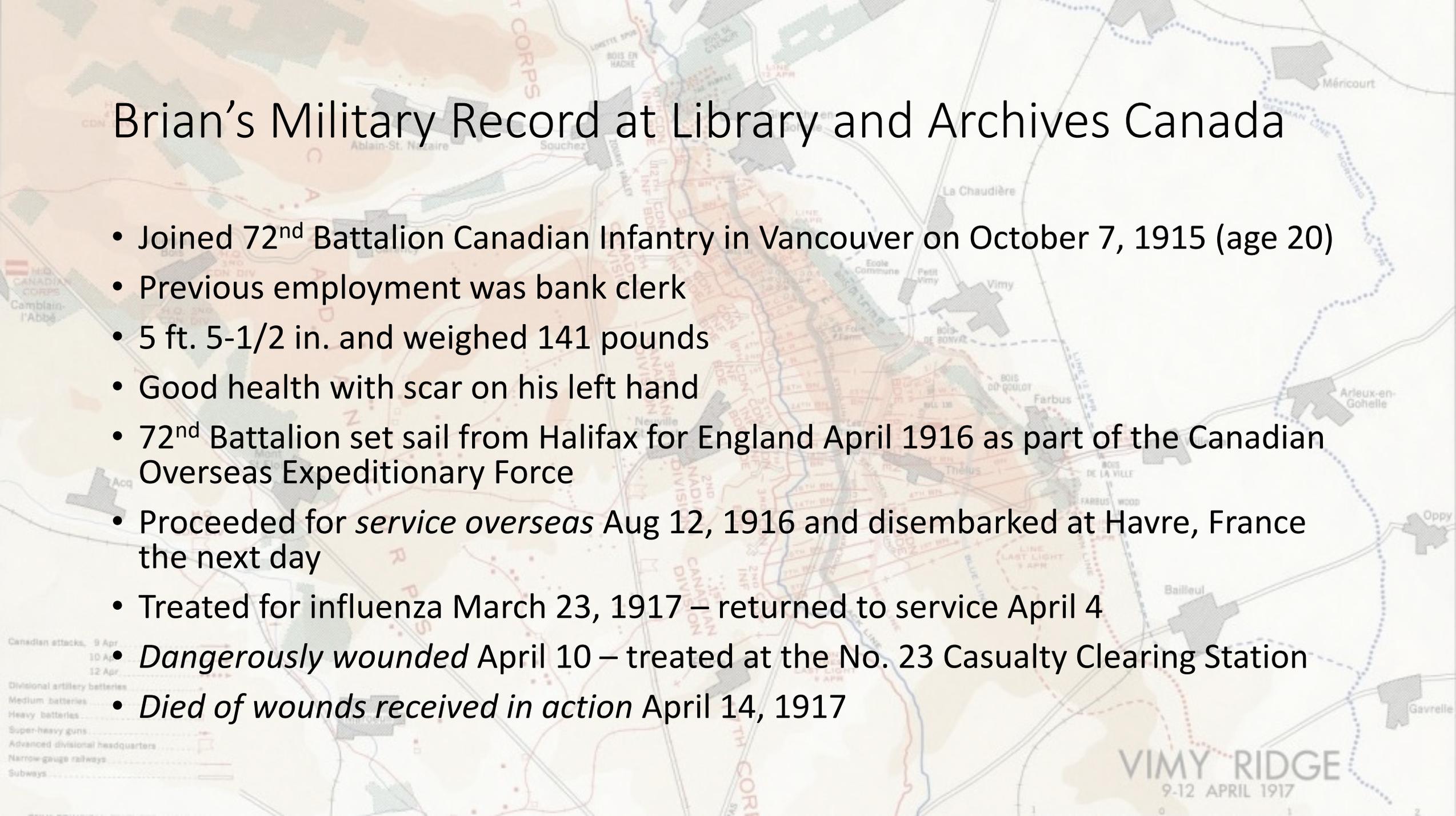
# From Find a Grave

- Brian was a Private in the 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Canadian Infantry
- Died of wounds April 14, 1917
- Buried in Lapugnoy Military Cemetery (France)
- Given the date that Brian died and the close proximity of the Lapugnoy Cemetery to Vimy, we *assume* he was wounded in the Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9-12, 1917) and died later of those wounds



# Brian's Military Record at Library and Archives Canada

- Joined 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Canadian Infantry in Vancouver on October 7, 1915 (age 20)
- Previous employment was bank clerk
- 5 ft. 5-1/2 in. and weighed 141 pounds
- Good health with scar on his left hand
- 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion set sail from Halifax for England April 1916 as part of the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force
- Proceeded for *service overseas* Aug 12, 1916 and disembarked at Havre, France the next day
- Treated for influenza March 23, 1917 – returned to service April 4
- *Dangerously wounded* April 10 – treated at the No. 23 Casualty Clearing Station
- *Died of wounds received in action* April 14, 1917



Perforated sheet for Will from Pay Book of Reg.

No. 129937

Name Brian Alan Cassidy

Unit 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Canadian)

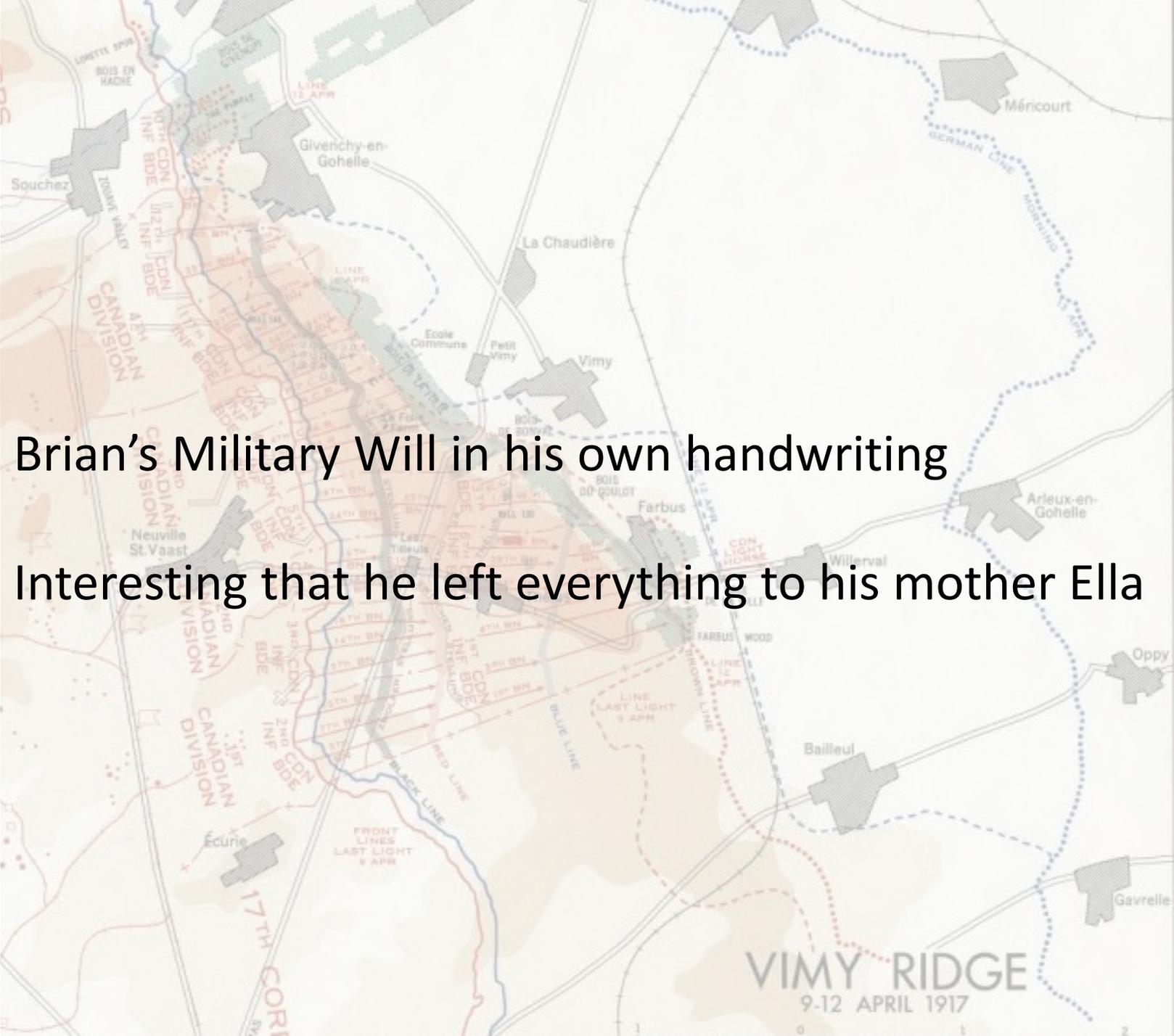
Military Will.

In the event of my death,  
I give the whole of my  
property and personal effects  
to my mother, Mrs. Ella  
E. Cassidy, 827 Sutherland  
Ave., North Vancouver, B.C.,  
Canada.

Signature Brian Alan Cassidy

Rank and Regt. Private # 129937,

Date 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Canadian) 22/7/16 A.D.



Brian's Military Will in his own handwriting  
Interesting that he left everything to his mother Ella

Rank  Name **CASSIDY, Brian Allan.**  Reg'l No. **129937**  R-122  
 Unit **72nd. Bn.**  If in perm. Corps, }  
 What Unit? } **Vancouver,** Married or Single **Single.**   
 Place and Date of Enlistment **Oct. 7th. 1915.**  Place of Birth **Vancouver, B.C.**

Name and Address, Next-of-Kin **Edwin V. Cassidy.**   
**827, Sutherland, North Vancouver, B.C. Can.**  Relationship **Father.**

Assigned Pay Monthly \$ Payable to  
 Relationship **M**

Separation Allowance \$ Payable to  
 Relationship

N/E. R.B. No 2962  
 File R.L. 2562819 17/5/17.  
 Category D.W.

Discharge, Date and Place Reason Character

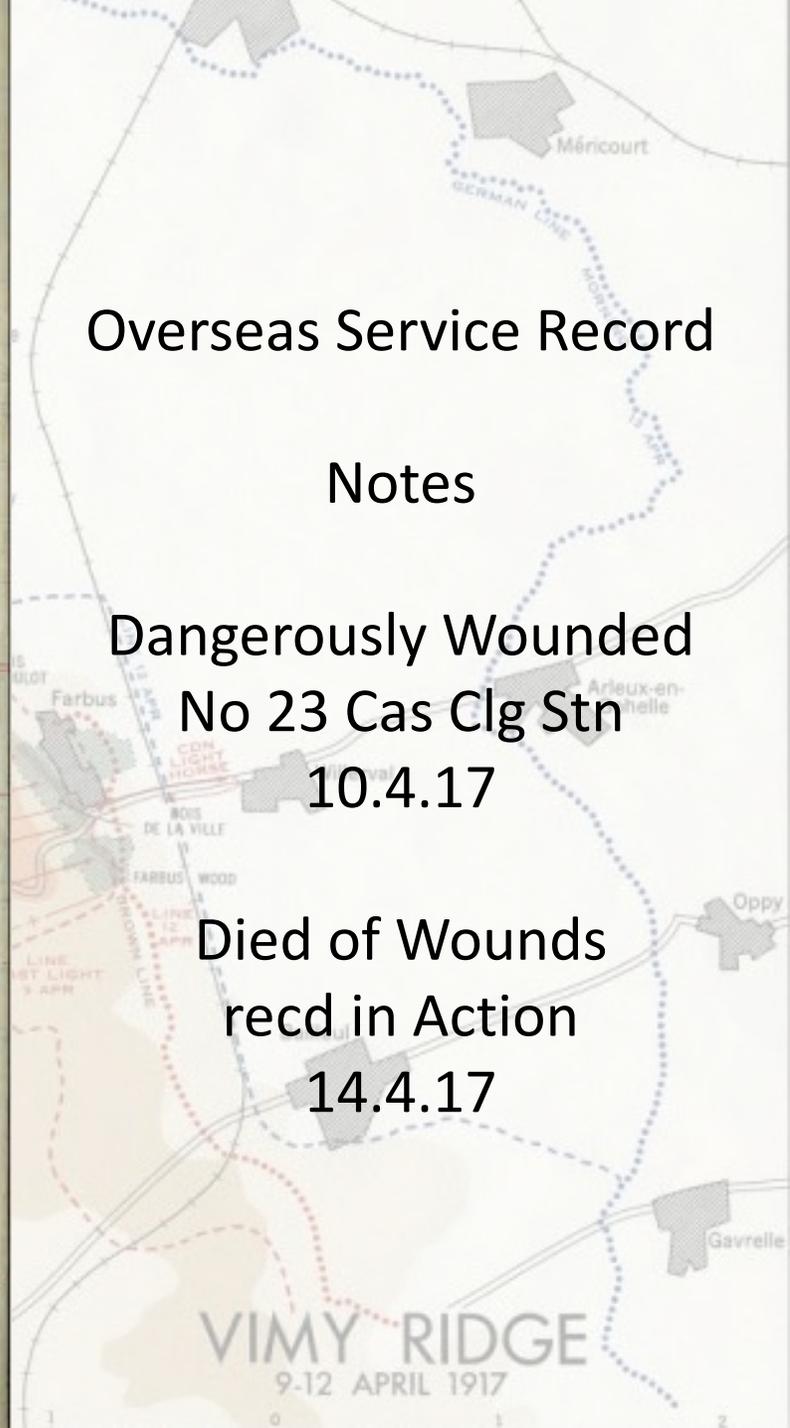
Report.	Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place.	Date.	REMARKS. Taken from Official Documents.
Date.	From whom received.			
	<i>Arrived in England</i>		<b>7 MAY 1916</b>	<b>A.F.B. 103, CHECKED</b> <b>22 AUG. 1916</b> <i>Empress of Britain</i>
<b>11 8-16</b>	<b>72nd.</b>	<b>Embarke<sup>d</sup> For France</b>	<b>Framshott</b>	<b>12-8-16 Part 2 D. O. 315</b>
<i>11.4.17</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Adm 12<sup>th</sup> Can Fld Amb.</i>	<i>Field</i>	<i>23.3.17 CHA 176. Influenza</i>
<i>23-4-17</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Returned to Duty</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>4-4-17 G.L.A. 186</i>
<i>13.4.17</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Dangerously Wounded.</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>10.4.17 CHA 178. Wounded Q.</i>
		<i>no 23 Cas Clg Sta</i>		<i>m 1683</i>
<i>20.4.17</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Prev reptd Dangerously Wounded. now reptd.</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>14.4.17 CHA 184. Not Stated</i>
		<i>Died of Wounds</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>m 2283</i>
<i>17.4.17</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Died of Wounds recd. in Action</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>14.4.17 Part II O 38.</i>

# Overseas Service Record

## Notes

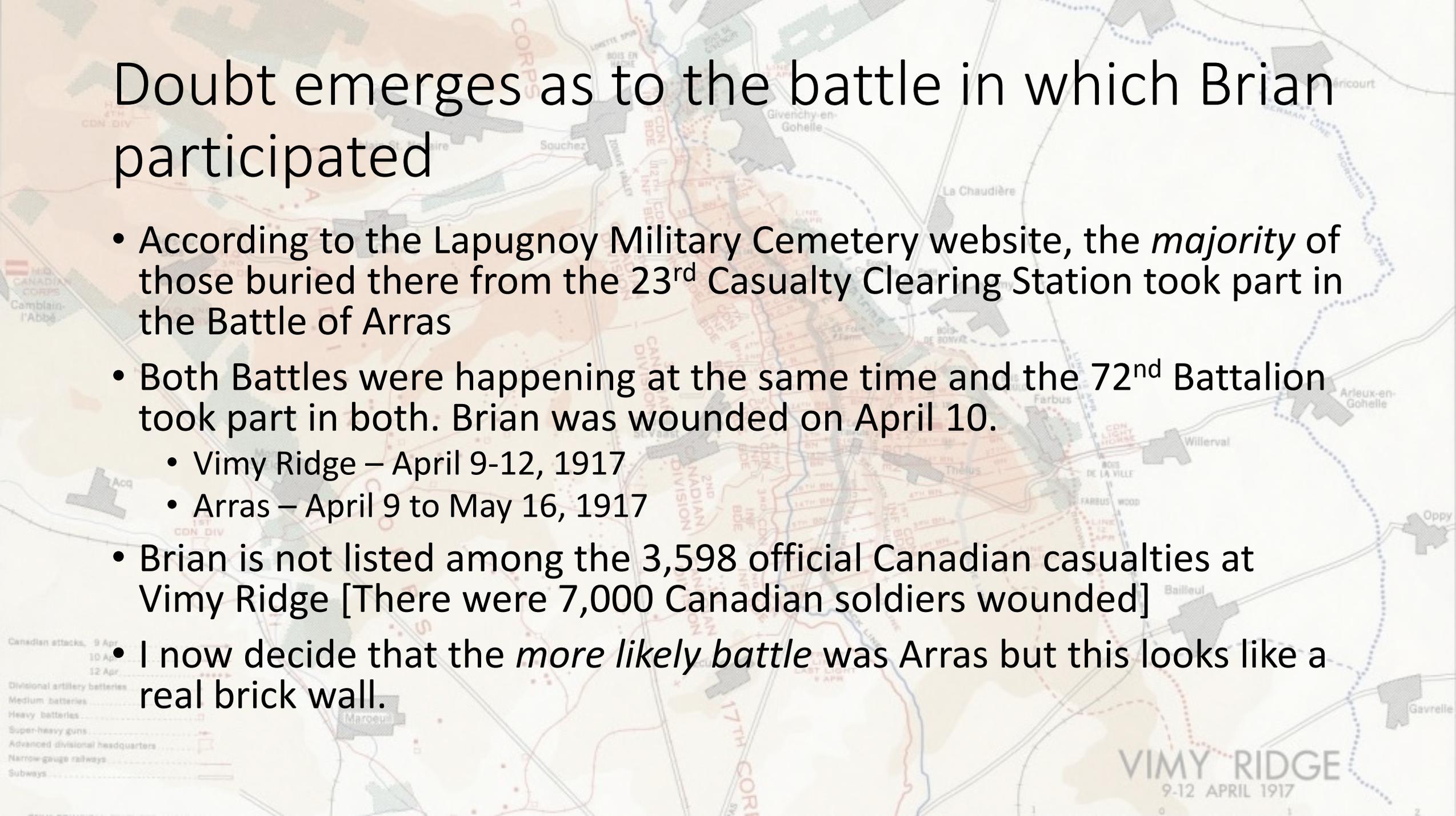
**Dangerously Wounded**  
**No 23 Cas Clg Stn**  
**10.4.17**

**Died of Wounds**  
**recd in Action**  
**14.4.17**



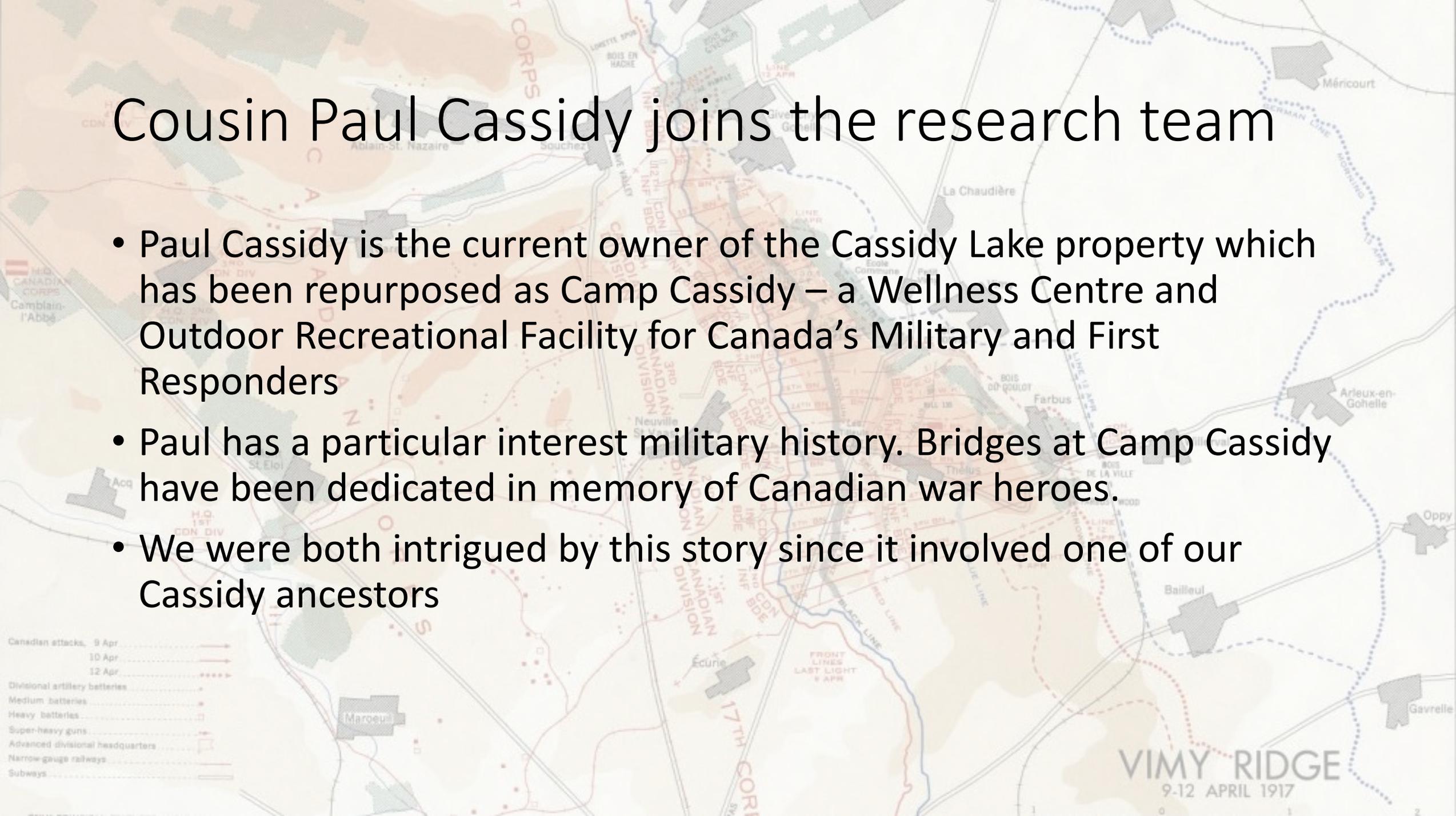
# Doubt emerges as to the battle in which Brian participated

- According to the Lapugnoy Military Cemetery website, the *majority* of those buried there from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Casualty Clearing Station took part in the Battle of Arras
- Both Battles were happening at the same time and the 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion took part in both. Brian was wounded on April 10.
  - Vimy Ridge – April 9-12, 1917
  - Arras – April 9 to May 16, 1917
- Brian is not listed among the 3,598 official Canadian casualties at Vimy Ridge [There were 7,000 Canadian soldiers wounded]
- I now decide that the *more likely battle* was Arras but this looks like a real brick wall.



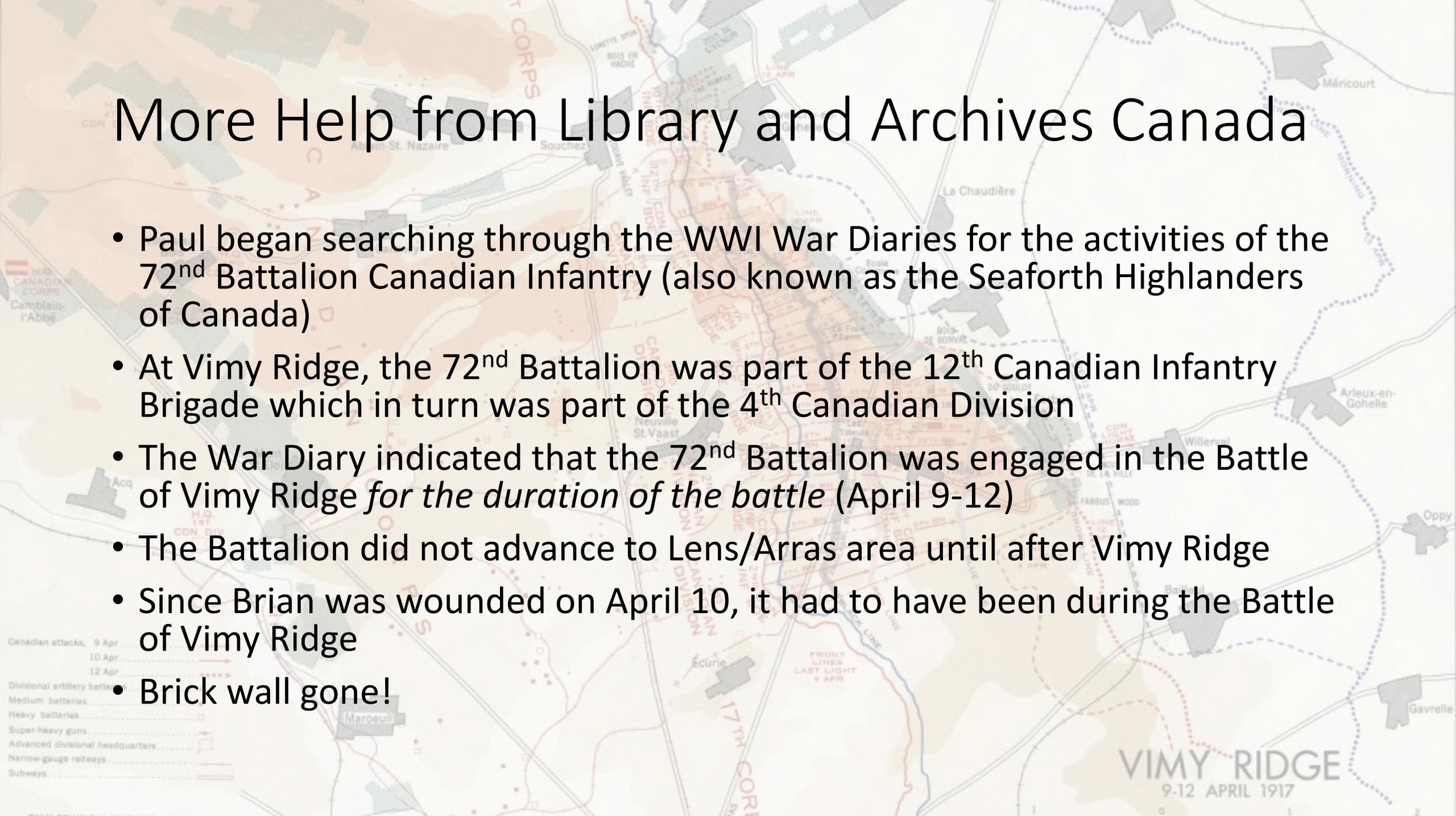
# Cousin Paul Cassidy joins the research team

- Paul Cassidy is the current owner of the Cassidy Lake property which has been repurposed as Camp Cassidy – a Wellness Centre and Outdoor Recreational Facility for Canada’s Military and First Responders
- Paul has a particular interest military history. Bridges at Camp Cassidy have been dedicated in memory of Canadian war heroes.
- We were both intrigued by this story since it involved one of our Cassidy ancestors



# More Help from Library and Archives Canada

- Paul began searching through the WWI War Diaries for the activities of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Canadian Infantry (also known as the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada)
- At Vimy Ridge, the 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was part of the 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade which in turn was part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division
- The War Diary indicated that the 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was engaged in the Battle of Vimy Ridge *for the duration of the battle* (April 9-12)
- The Battalion did not advance to Lens/Arras area until after Vimy Ridge
- Since Brian was wounded on April 10, it had to have been during the Battle of Vimy Ridge
- Brick wall gone!



# War Diary – 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion – April 1917

## WAR DIARY

ORIGINAL

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.

## or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Erase heading not required.)

Vol 22

72<sup>nd</sup> Army F.A. Bde.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Fisc 88	1-4-17		Batteries registering hostile artillery quiet. Nothing to report	RMB
-	2-4-17		Orders received that Canadian Corps will attack Vimy ridge on 2 day. Batteries started preliminary bombardment according to orders from 1 <sup>st</sup> Canadian D.A. firing on an average 1000 Rds in 24 hours	RMB
-	3-4-17		Bombardment continues. now including daily bombardment of THÉLUS.	RMB
-	4-4-17		Orders received that the german wire is not properly cut. A.B. & C. turned on to wire cutting	RMB
-	5-4-17		results good as only 5 hours were allowed. RMB	
-	6-4-17		Bombardment continues. 2 day fixed for 8 <sup>th</sup> 4-17.	
-	7-4-17		2 day postponed 24 hours. Batteries (16 pdr) continue wire cutting and bombardment.	RMB
-	8-4-17		Bombardment (and wire cutting up to 12 noon) continued.	
-	9-4-17		Zero hour having been fixed for 5.50 am all firing was stopt at 3 am for the Brigade. at zero all batteries opened a creeping barrage starting on the enemy front line covering 3 <sup>rd</sup> Canadian Bde. First two objectives were taken according to programme. all batteries turned onto standing barrages. The whole attack was successful and all objectives of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Canadian Bde. were taken also all important high ground on Canadian Corps front. Two M.C. in the Bde were wounded. Infantry casualties light. THÉLUS village was taken without opposition. D72 was kept very busy all day first with neutralizing hostile batteries then on standing barrages.	RMB
-	10-4-17		Brigade did not move forward on 9 <sup>th</sup> still in position road forward very bad.	RMB
-	11-4-17			
-	12-4-17			
A-10 D	13-4-17		1 <sup>st</sup> D.A. Col J.A. Stirling, C.M.G. now. Brig Gen gone to command 59 <sup>th</sup> D.A.	RMB
-	14-4-17		Rde move forward to LEVS-ARRAS Rd Lt Col Richy RFA arrives to Command 1 <sup>st</sup> CO	RMB
-	15-4-17		all in action. Enemy out of village. C72 & D72 move forward near THÉLUS	RMB
-	16-4-17		Nothing to report	RMB

# War Diary – 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion – April 1917 – Vimy, France - Transcription by Brian Cassidy

*9-4-17 Zero hour having been fixed for 5:30 am all firing was stopped at 3 am for the Brigade.*

*At Zero all 4 Batteries opened a creeping barrage starting onto enemy front line covering 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian J Bde. First two objectives were taken according to programme.*

*All batteries turned onto standing barrages. The whole attack was successful and all objectives of 3<sup>rd</sup> C R Bde were taken also all important high ground on Canadian Corps front.*

*Two N.C.O. in the bde were wounded. Infantry casualties light.*

*Thélus Village was taken without opposition.*

*D72 was kept very busy all day first with neutralizing hostile batteries then on standing barrages.*

*10-4-17 Brigade did not move forward on 9<sup>th</sup>. Still in position road forward very bad*

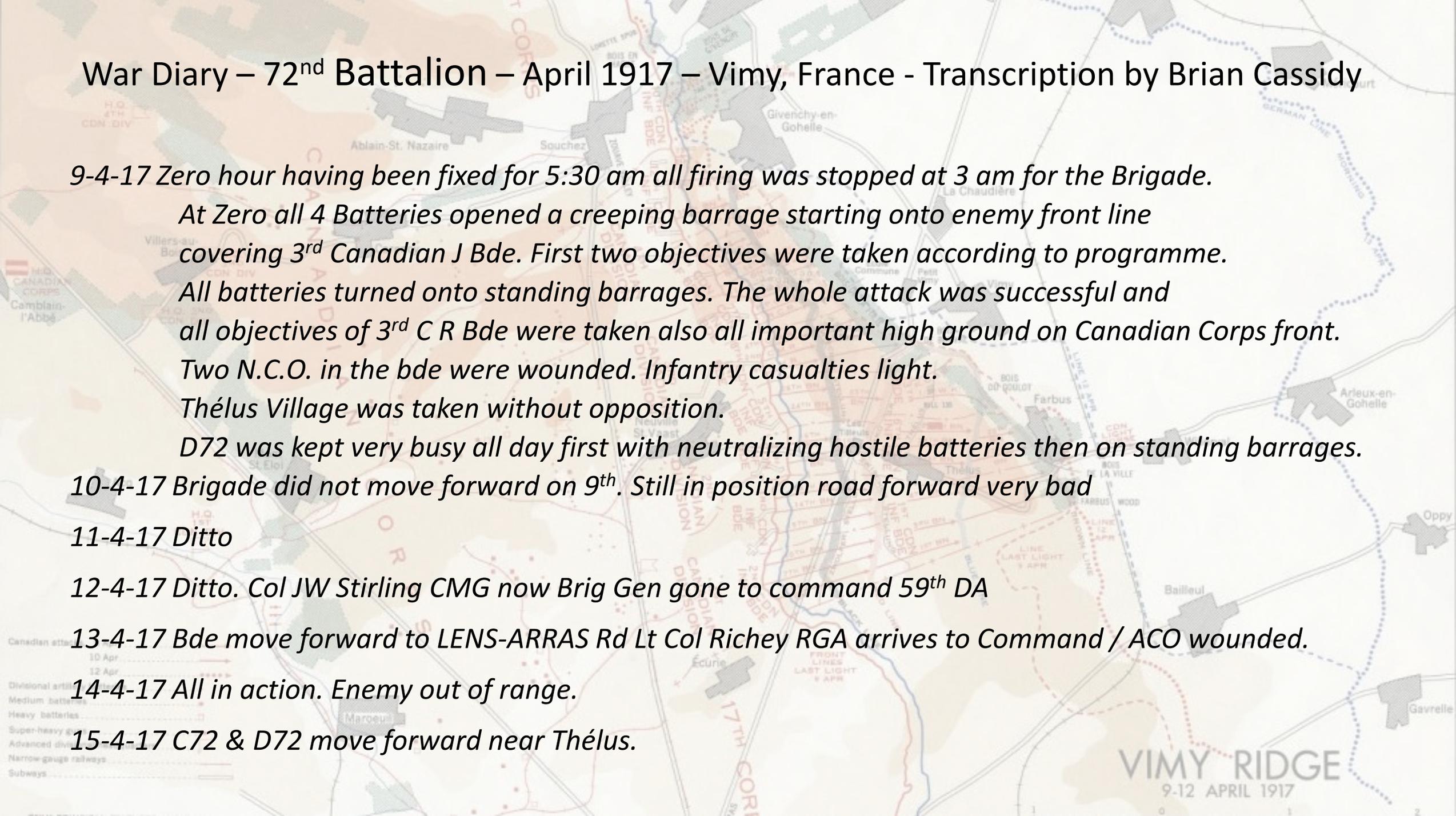
*11-4-17 Ditto*

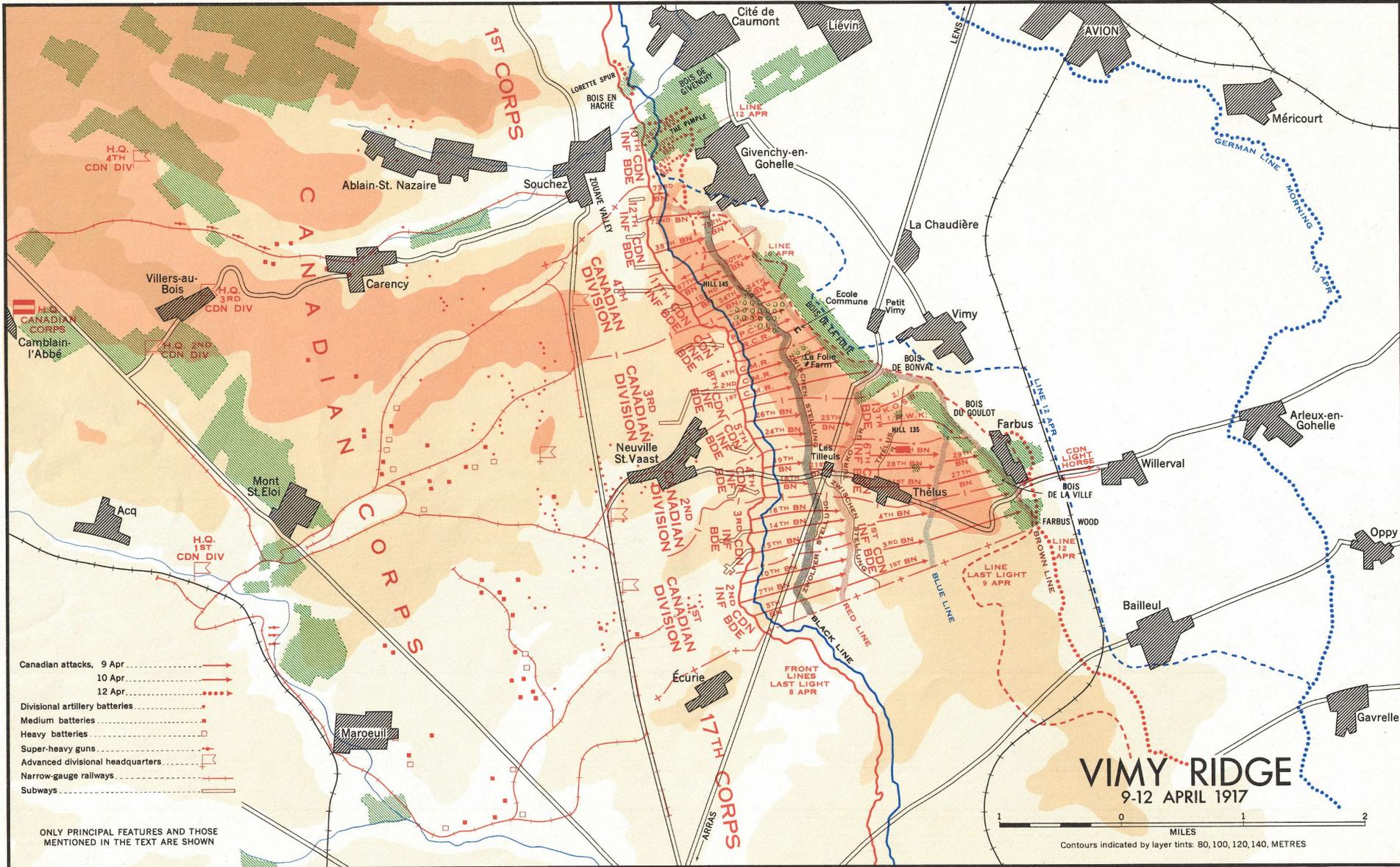
*12-4-17 Ditto. Col JW Stirling CMG now Brig Gen gone to command 59<sup>th</sup> DA*

*13-4-17 Bde move forward to LENS-ARRAS Rd Lt Col Richey RGA arrives to Command / ACO wounded.*

*14-4-17 All in action. Enemy out of range.*

*15-4-17 C72 & D72 move forward near Thélus.*





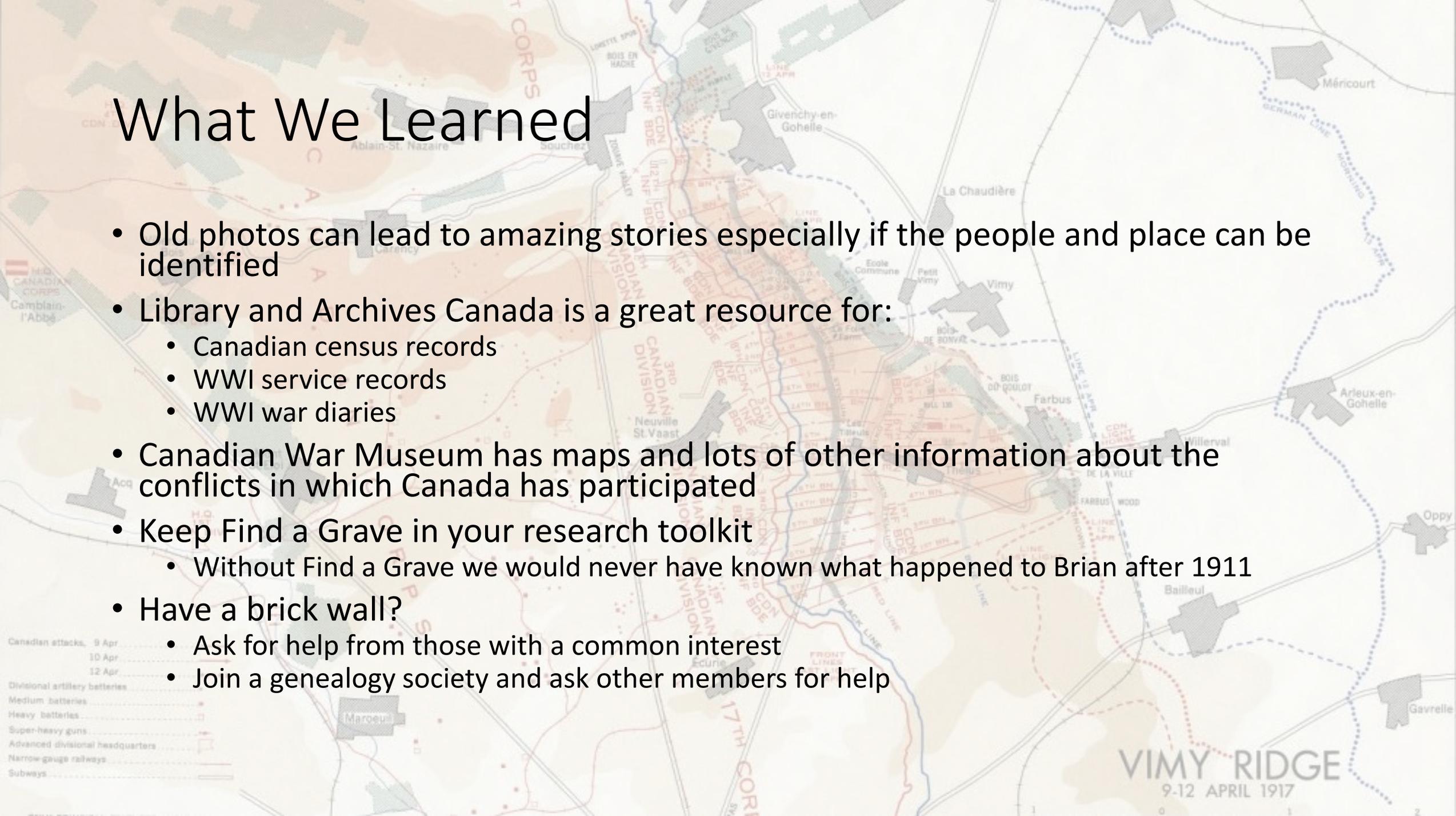
Reproduced by Army Survey Establishment

Compiled and drawn by Historical Section G.S.

License obtained – Used with permission

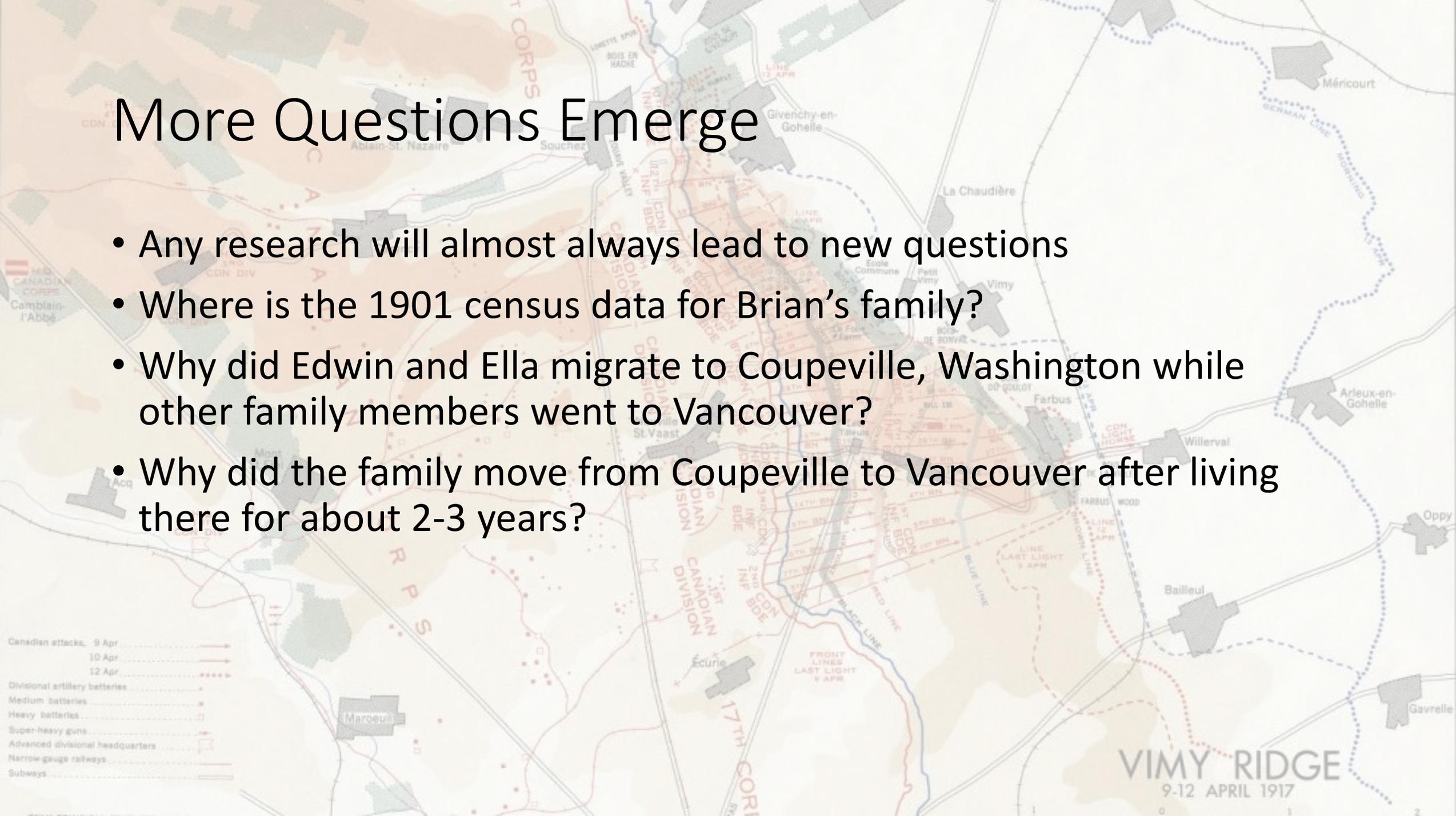
# What We Learned

- Old photos can lead to amazing stories especially if the people and place can be identified
- Library and Archives Canada is a great resource for:
  - Canadian census records
  - WWI service records
  - WWI war diaries
- Canadian War Museum has maps and lots of other information about the conflicts in which Canada has participated
- Keep Find a Grave in your research toolkit
  - Without Find a Grave we would never have known what happened to Brian after 1911
- Have a brick wall?
  - Ask for help from those with a common interest
  - Join a genealogy society and ask other members for help



# More Questions Emerge

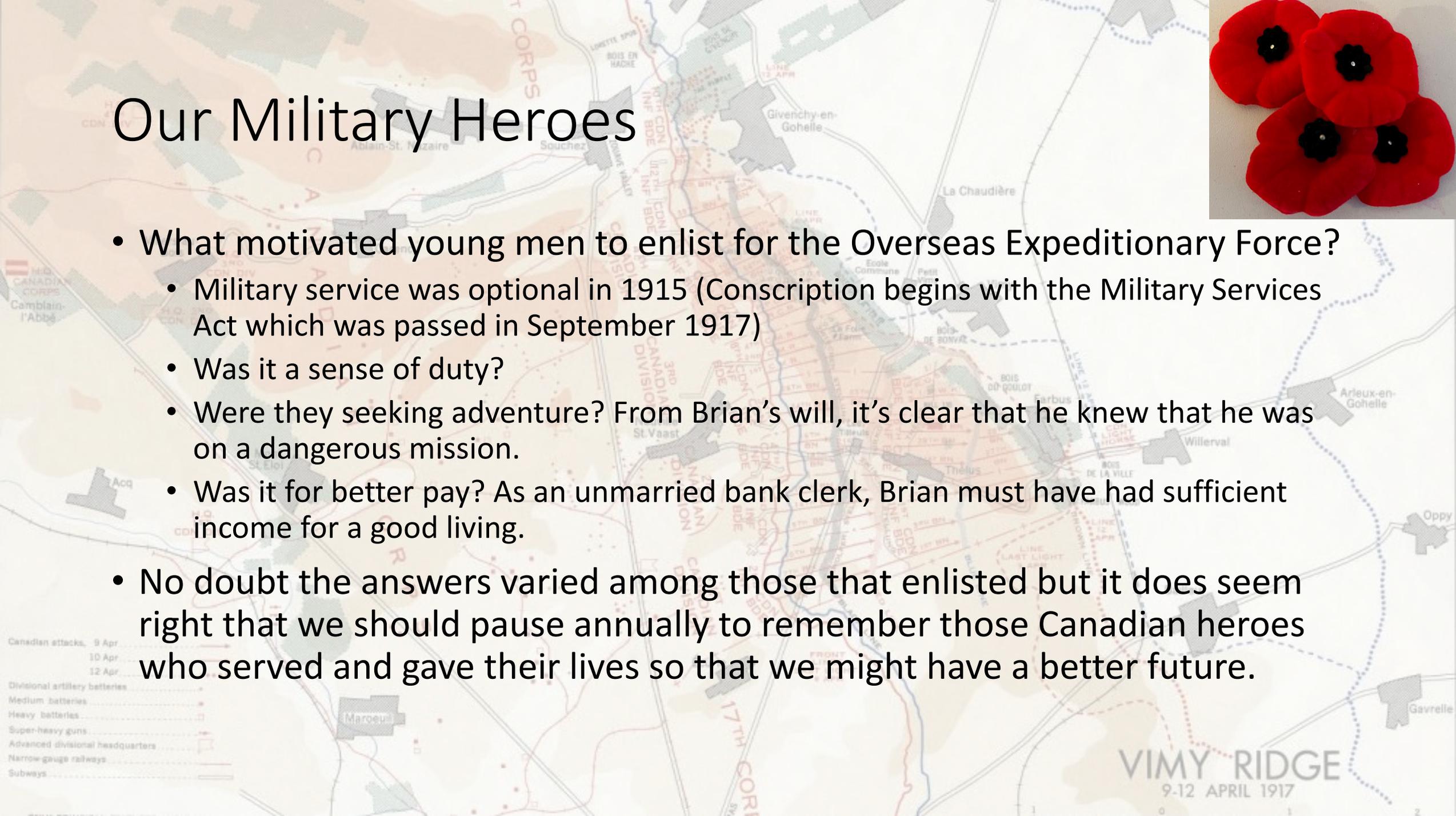
- Any research will almost always lead to new questions
- Where is the 1901 census data for Brian's family?
- Why did Edwin and Ella migrate to Coupeville, Washington while other family members went to Vancouver?
- Why did the family move from Coupeville to Vancouver after living there for about 2-3 years?



# Our Military Heroes

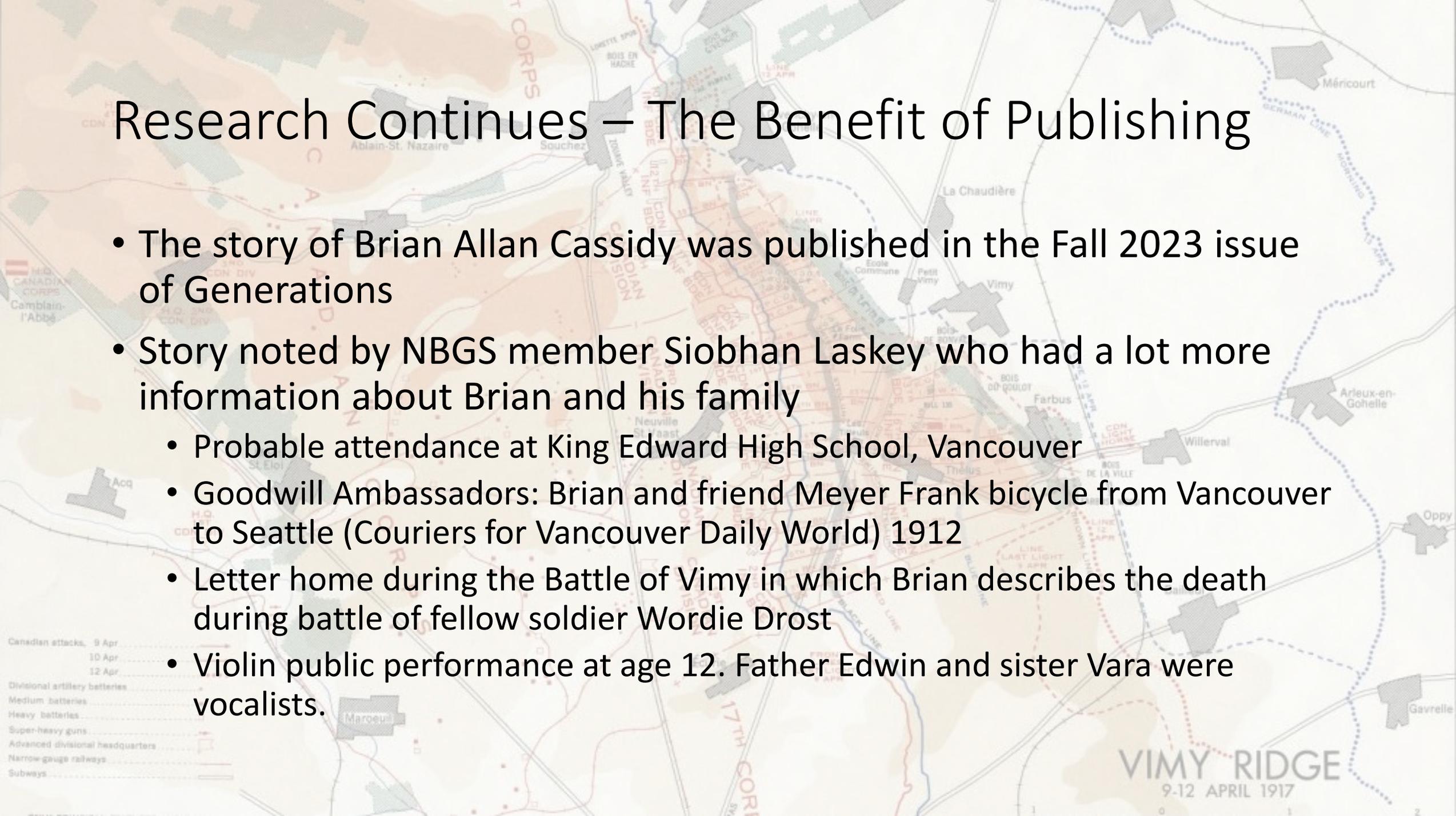


- What motivated young men to enlist for the Overseas Expeditionary Force?
  - Military service was optional in 1915 (Conscription begins with the Military Services Act which was passed in September 1917)
  - Was it a sense of duty?
  - Were they seeking adventure? From Brian's will, it's clear that he knew that he was on a dangerous mission.
  - Was it for better pay? As an unmarried bank clerk, Brian must have had sufficient income for a good living.
- No doubt the answers varied among those that enlisted but it does seem right that we should pause annually to remember those Canadian heroes who served and gave their lives so that we might have a better future.



# Research Continues – The Benefit of Publishing

- The story of Brian Allan Cassidy was published in the Fall 2023 issue of Generations
- Story noted by NBGS member Siobhan Laskey who had a lot more information about Brian and his family
  - Probable attendance at King Edward High School, Vancouver
  - Goodwill Ambassadors: Brian and friend Meyer Frank bicycle from Vancouver to Seattle (Couriers for Vancouver Daily World) 1912
  - Letter home during the Battle of Vimy in which Brian describes the death during battle of fellow soldier Wordie Drost
  - Violin public performance at age 12. Father Edwin and sister Vara were vocalists.



# Vancouver Daily World – July 23, 1912

## BICYCLE COURIERS OF THE WORLD START ON RECORD BREAKING TRIP



BRIAN CASSIDY.

MEYER FRANK.

In order that The World may more Cornell. Two years ago they made

Brian Cassidy and Meyer Frank plan bicycle trip Vancouver – Seattle

Both are students of King Edward High School - Vancouver

VIMY RIDGE  
9-12 APRIL 1917

# Vancouver Daily World – November 27, 1907

## FOWLER CONCERT WAS GREAT SUCCESS

Miss Alberta V. Fowler, assisted by the Misses Cassidy and Fowler, Mr. W. J. Butler, Mr. Cathrea and Brian Cassidy, gave a most pleasant entertainment in Larson's Pavilion Tuesday evening.

The program opened with a duet by Misses Vara Cassidy and Alice Fowler, the rendering of which was acknowledged with prolonged applause from the audience. Miss A. V. Fowler followed with a reading entitled "Sunday Thieves." The several characters in the piece was well interpreted by Miss Fowler. The next item was a vocal solo by Mr. Cassidy accompanied by Brian Cassidy with the violin. Mr. Cathrea has been heard in North Vancouver before and is always very much appreciated. Following Mr. Cathrea's solo was a dramatic sketch by Miss A. V. Fowler and Mr. R. J. Butler, of this city and was entitled "A Pair of Lunatics." Miss Fowler and Mr. Butler both did credit to themselves in the rendering of this piece and were encored heartily. Miss R. E. Fowler gave a vocal solo (selected) with pleasing effect and Mr. Brian Cassidy may almost be termed a boy wonder by the masterly way he played "Berceuse" on his violin. Following this was a reading by Miss Fowler, "Chariot Race," (from "Ben Hur"), a vocal solo (selected) by Mr. Fisher and the concluding item on the program, a comedietta, "Chalk and Cheese," by Misses R. E. and A. V. Fowler and W. J. Butler. A notable feature of the program was the pungtuality with the appearance of each item and the splendid manner in which each was rendered. Mrs. Wyndal was accompanist.

The next item was a vocal solo by Mr. Cassidy Accompanied by Brian Cassidy with the violin.

Mr. Brian Cassidy may almost be termed a boy wonder by the masterly way he played 'Berceuse' on his violin.

*Brian would have been 12 years old at this concert.*

Canadian attacks, 9 Apr  
10 Apr  
12 Apr  
Divisional artillery batteries  
Medium batteries  
Heavy batteries  
Super-heavy guns  
Advanced divisional head  
Narrow-gauge railways  
Subways

VIMY RIDGE  
9-12 APRIL 1917

# The Province – April 18, 1917

## Brian documents the horror of Vimy Ridge

### WORDIE DROST DIED GAME

Smiling. He Cried "Good Luck, Fellows," As He Expired.

Mrs. E. V. Cassidy of 827 Sutherland avenue, North Vancouver, has just received a letter from her son, Pte. Brian Cassidy, in which the latter describes the death of the late "Wordie" Drost, son of Mr. and Mrs. P. G. Drost of Mt. Pleasant. The letter is in part as follows: "It happened about 6 o'clock in the morning during a very heavy Fritz bombardment. I was out in the cook-house dugout containing four men. It was hit by a large shell and I came out a few seconds afterward. Our machine guns behind me were spitting fire and steel across the valley with a fierce crackle. 'Fritz' rum jars, 'H. E. shells,' 'minnies,' etc., were falling around like flies and when I came out, alone, I shall never forget the sight, and I have seen things before now, too.

"I did the best I could and ran down a block and got two stretcher-bearers and a stretcher. It was hopeless, however, but they did their best. Then I heard about an hour afterwards that "Wordie" was killed. Art Drummond, Major Johnson, "Flum" (Douglas Flumerfelt) shot through the leg and about forty more. 'Wordie' was shot through the heart about 100 yards the other side of Fritz' front line. He fell and, turning on his back, said with a smile: 'Good luck, fellows.' He was recommended for a commission, too, and would have gone on a two months' course about now. Well, he died game like the man that he was, for he certainly was a fine boy."

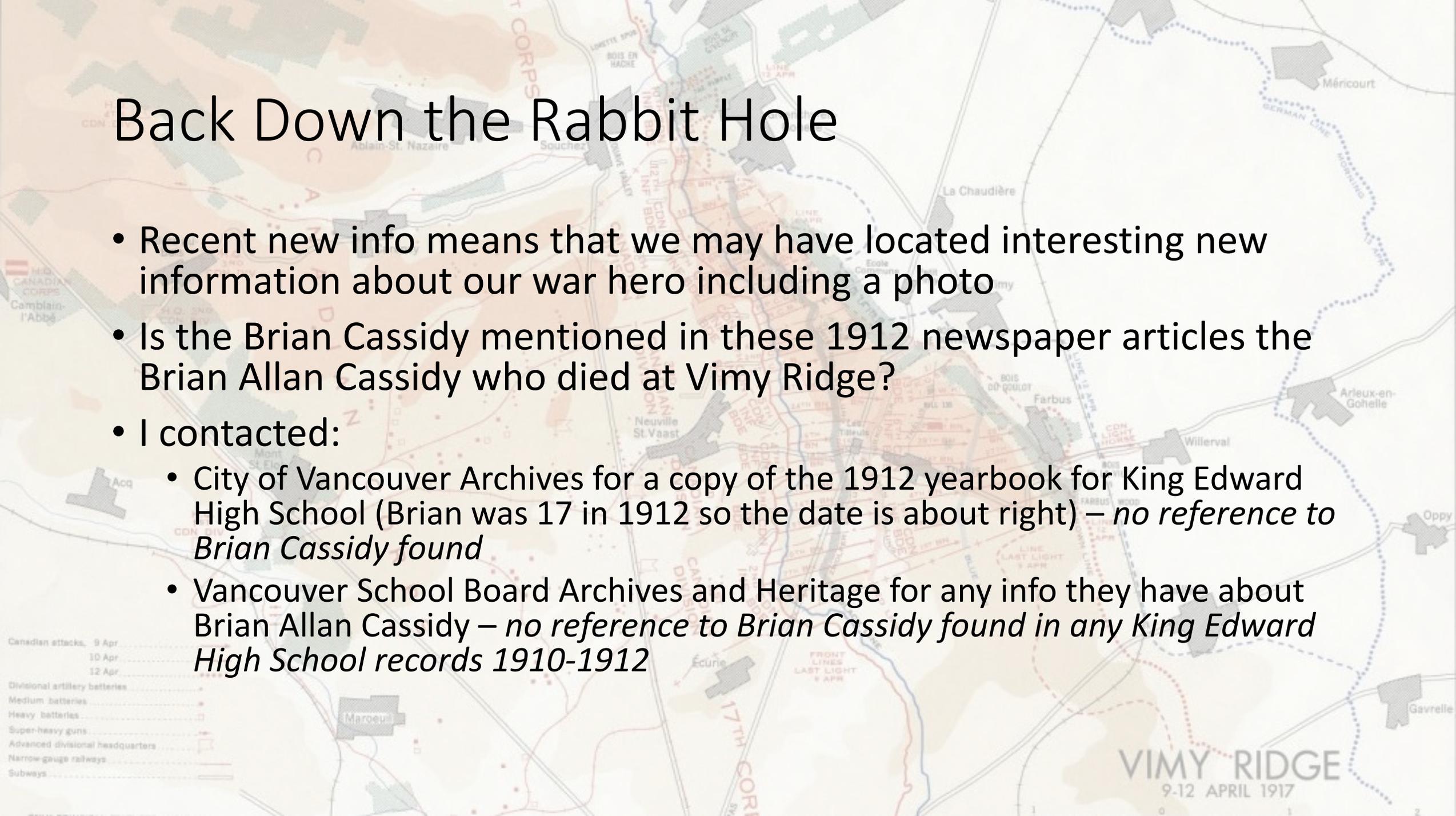
*Our machine guns behind me were spitting fire and steel across the valley with a fierce crackle. Fritz rum jars, H E shells, Minnies etc. were falling around like flies ... I shall never forget the sight and I have seen things before now, too.*

*Wordie was shot through the heart about 100 yards the other side of Fritz' front line. He fell and turning on his back, said with a smile: 'Good luck, fellows.' Well, he died game like the man he was, for he certainly was a fine boy.*

VIMY RIDGE  
9-12 APRIL 1917

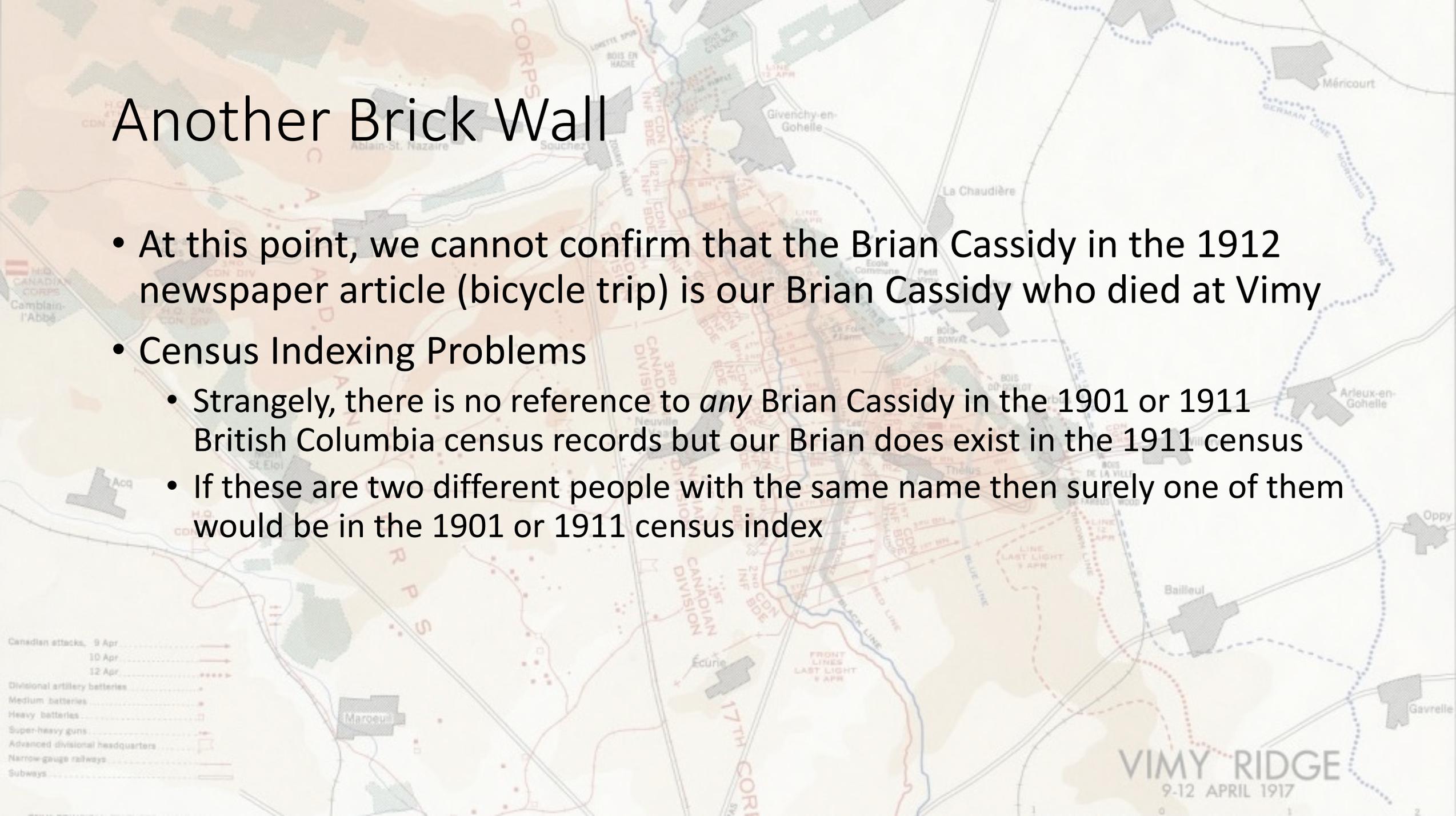
# Back Down the Rabbit Hole

- Recent new info means that we may have located interesting new information about our war hero including a photo
- Is the Brian Cassidy mentioned in these 1912 newspaper articles the Brian Allan Cassidy who died at Vimy Ridge?
- I contacted:
  - City of Vancouver Archives for a copy of the 1912 yearbook for King Edward High School (Brian was 17 in 1912 so the date is about right) – *no reference to Brian Cassidy found*
  - Vancouver School Board Archives and Heritage for any info they have about Brian Allan Cassidy – *no reference to Brian Cassidy found in any King Edward High School records 1910-1912*



# Another Brick Wall

- At this point, we cannot confirm that the Brian Cassidy in the 1912 newspaper article (bicycle trip) is our Brian Cassidy who died at Vimy
- Census Indexing Problems
  - Strangely, there is no reference to *any* Brian Cassidy in the 1901 or 1911 British Columbia census records but our Brian does exist in the 1911 census
  - If these are two different people with the same name then surely one of them would be in the 1901 or 1911 census index



# Questions?

Ella Laskey Cassidy  
Memorial Cross Mother



Lapugnoy Military Cemetery  
1,338 identified casualties  
[cwgc.org](http://cwgc.org)



Vimy Ridge Memorial  
[vimyridge.valourcanada.ca](http://vimyridge.valourcanada.ca)