

## Private Richard Thurston Ball

**Regimental Number: 1031011**

**72<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force**

**born: 5 March 1889 - died: 29 November 1918**

Private Richard Thurston Ball, born 5 March 1889 in Preston, Lancashire,<sup>1</sup> was the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Jane Ball.<sup>2</sup> Thomas was born in about 1846 in Preston. His wife, Elizabeth Jane, was born in about 1847, also in Preston. Richard had four older siblings: Mary Ellen (born about 1872), William (born about 1875), Elizabeth (born about 1878) and Thomas (born about 1881). In 1891, his father was a spinner and all his siblings were working as spinners or weavers. By 1901, his mother had died and his father had become a beer seller in a public house. Richard was still living at home with his father, his two sisters and his nephew.<sup>3</sup>

Richard immigrated to the United States at some point. He married Elizabeth in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1912.<sup>4</sup> When he enlisted, they were living at 17 Roosevelt Street, New Bedford.<sup>5</sup> He came to Canada and enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on 25 June 1917 in Fredericton, New Brunswick. He was 28 years old, 5' 6¾" tall, a loomfixer, with a dark complexion, blue eyes and dark brown hair. He was considered fit to serve in the Canadian Expeditionary Overseas Force. He was a Roman Catholic.<sup>6</sup> In July 1917, he made a will bequeathing his personal estate to his wife.

When Richard first enlisted, he joined the 236<sup>th</sup> O.S. Battalion.<sup>7</sup> He arrived in England on 19 February 1917 and joined the 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Seaforth Highlanders) in March 1918. The Seaforth Highlanders were formed in 1910 in Vancouver by people of Scottish descent as the "72<sup>nd</sup> Highlanders of Canada."<sup>8</sup> Eventually, the unit was renamed the "72<sup>nd</sup> Regiment Seaforth Highlanders of Canada" in 1912. The Battalion left for France in 1916 as the 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The unit served at Vimy Ridge and at Passchendaele. Over 2,500 of the 3,700 officers and men from the Battalion who served in World War I died in the conflict.

Richard arrived in France with the 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion on 8 March 1918<sup>9</sup>. By July, he was in the 13<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance after being gassed and with shell injuries to his arm. He was transferred immediately to the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station and the following day to the 55<sup>th</sup> General Hospital. In August he was gassed and wounded again and sent to the 55<sup>th</sup> General Hospital and later to the 12<sup>th</sup> Convalescent Depot in Aubengue. He was gassed and wounded again in September and sent to a rest camp. When he was released, he was sent to the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Centre before rejoining his unit later that month. Ten days later, on 29 September, he was reported missing and presumed to be a prisoner of war.<sup>10</sup> On 20 November, he was repatriated and six days later was "dangerously ill"<sup>11</sup> and admitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Casualty Clearing Station.<sup>12</sup>



R T Ball in Gosselies Communal cemetery  
(Source: Author)

The 72<sup>nd</sup> Battalion learned just after the Armistice on 11 November that it would be part of the army of occupation and would shortly be marching to the Rhine.<sup>13</sup> The march began on 15 November and, by 26 November, the unit was located near

Mons, Belgium. The 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS was located in Gosselies, nearly 40 kilometres away.<sup>14</sup>

Richard wouldn't make that march with his Battalion. He died at the 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS on 29 November of albuminuria, following pneumonia and pleurisy.<sup>15</sup> He was buried the following day in Gosselies Communal Cemetery (Grave 247), with a Roman Catholic priest presiding. His wife, Elizabeth, was notified of his death.

The 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS was then the foremost Casualty Clearing Station on the advance to Germany and close to the outpost line.<sup>16</sup> The day he was admitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> CCCS, the station was "Continuing receiving patients – large numbers of R.P.O.W.s arriving in shocking condition, starved, emaciated, very scantily clad, very lousy and dirty with wounds and sores showing gross lack of care or treatment. Very busy."<sup>17</sup> There are ten First World War servicemen buried in the Gosselies cemetery, all of whom died after the Armistice.<sup>18</sup>



Graves of nine WW1 soldiers in Gosselies Communal cemetery (Source: Author)

Richard was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theatre).<sup>19</sup> The medals were sent to his wife.

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<sup>1</sup> "Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 30 March 2015), entry for Richard Thurston Ball

<sup>2</sup> "1891 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 30 March 2015), entry for Richa Thurston Ball, Registration district: Preston, Sub-registration district: Trinity, ED, institution, or vessel: 12, Piece: 3431, Folio: 20, Page Number: 35

<sup>3</sup> "1901 England Census," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 30 March 2015), entry for Richard Ball, Registration district: Preston, Sub-registration district: Trinity, ED, institution, or vessel: 10, Piece: 3944, Folio: 59, Page Number: 32, Household schedule number: 218

<sup>4</sup> "Massachusetts, Marriage Index, 1901-1955 and 1966-1970," *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk): accessed 30 March 2015), entry for Richard Thurston Ball, Volume Number: 610, Page Number: 262, Index Volume Number: 66, Reference Number: F63.M36 v.66

<sup>5</sup> "Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918," entry for Richard Thurston Ball. Unless otherwise noted, all information about his military career comes from this record.

<sup>6</sup> "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," Library and Archives Canada (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/search.aspx>; accessed 13 April 2015) entry for Richard Thurston Ball, Reference: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 394 - 48

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> "Seaforth Highlanders of Canada," (<http://seaforthhighlanders.ca/history/>; accessed 12 March 2015)

<sup>9</sup> "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," entry for Richard Thurston Ball

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," entry for Richard Thurston Ball

<sup>12</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 715

<sup>13</sup> "72nd Canadian Infantry Battalion, War Diaries," *Canada and First World War (World War I)* (<http://www.canadaatwar.ca/forums/showthread.php?t=2768>; accessed 12 March 2015)

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<sup>14</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31," *Library and Archives Canada* ([http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202\\_e.html&r=1&f=G](http://data4.collectionscanada.gc.ca/netacgi/nph-brs?s1=casualty+clearing&s13=&s12=&l=20&s9=RG9&s7=9-52&Sect1=IMAGE&Sect2=THESOFF&Sect4=AND&Sect5=WARDPEN&Sect6=HITOFF&d=FINN&p=1&u=http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/02015202_e.html&r=1&f=G))

<sup>15</sup> "Record of Deaths, 17 February 1916 - 10 February 1919, a record maintained at No. 1 CCCS," Record number 715. His Service Files indicate that he died of acute nephritis.

<sup>16</sup> "War Diaries of the First World War: 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station 1914/08/13-1919/03/31"

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "Gosselies Communal Cemetery," *Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (<http://www.cwgc.org/>; accessed 30 March 2015)

<sup>19</sup> "Service Files of the First World War, 1914-1918 – CEF," entry for Richard Thurston Ball