



**Harold Albert Russell**

**Canadian Expeditionary Force**

**1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Canadian Field Artillery**

**Regimental No. 43768**

**World War I**

**Born:** 19 April 1888

**Died:** 15 August 1917

**Place of Birth:** Bay Roberts, Newfoundland

**Parents:** Isaac and Elizabeth Ann Russell

Harold was twenty-six (26) years old when he enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). The date was September 25, 1914, and the location was Valcartier, Quebec.

Harold's enlistment documents provide a record of Harold physically and other personal information about him as recorded in 1914. Physically, Harold stood 5' 8" tall, weighed 165 lbs, was of fair complexion and had brown hair with blue eyes. He gave his occupation/trade as sailor, had tattoos on both forearms and was Methodist by faith.

The information provided below comes directly from his service record. It provides a timeline of

events by date, event and location of the day to day life experienced by Harold while in service:

1. 24 - Sep -1914: Enlisted at Valcartier.
2. 12 - Feb - 15: Embarked on board the S.S. Rosetti
3. 27 - Feb - 15: Absent for 10 days and forfeited 14 days pay
4. 27 - Jul - 15: Absent again for 5 days and forfeited 8 days pay
5. 25 - Sep - 15: To #3 CCS (Casualty Clearing Station
6. 29 - Sep - 15: To #22 general hospital at Camiers
7. 29 - Sep - 15: To #9 Stationary hospital at Havre
8. 20 - Oct - 15: Discharged
9. 31 - Oct - 15: TOS (taken on strength) of 1<sup>st</sup> DAC (Divisional Ammunition Column)
10. 18 - Nov - 15: Rejoined unit from hospital
11. 22 - Nov - 15: Granted leave from 09 - Jan - 16 to 18 - Jan - 16
12. 16 Feb 1916: To #4 Station Hospital (St. Omer)
13. 14 Feb 1916: Attached to Canadian Engineers (France)  
Returned to unit
14. 08 Mar 1916: To Canadian Base Depot
15. 30 Apr 1916: "Tried and convicted of disobeying a lawful order and sentenced to 2 years hard labour"
16. Sentence of 2 years commuted to 3 months.
17. 21 Aug 1916: Posted to 12<sup>th</sup> Bde (Brigade) CFA (Canadian Field Artillery)
18. 13 Sep 1916: Admitted to #29 general hospital
19. 10 Oct 1916: Discharged
20. 31 Mar 1917: TOS (taken on strength) from 12<sup>th</sup> Bde CFA
21. 18 Apr 1917: Admitted to #3 Canadian Field Ambulance
22. 23 Apr 1917: Discharged
23. 19 Aug 1917: Killed in action

Here is Harold's obituary as published in the local weekly newspaper – The Guardian on 31 August 1917:

*From The Guardian  
04 December 1914*

## Harold Russell killed in Action

A message was received here from Ottawa this week conveying the sad intelligence that Pte. Harold Russell, with a Canadian Ammunition Column in France ever since the outbreak of the war, had been killed on Aug. 15th. The entire family are on the Labrador, and the sad news was sent to them by the Rev. S. Bennett. One after another our boys are paying the awful price of this war in giving up their lives. What are we stay-at-homes doing! The message follows:

Ottawa,  
Aug. 25, 1917,

Isaac Russell,  
Country Road,  
"Deeply regret inform you 43708  
Gunner Harold Albert Russell, ar-  
tillery, officially reported killed in  
action August 15th, 1917"  
Director of Records

## Letter From a Country Road Boy

Salisbury Plains, Eng.,  
Nov. 13, 1914.

(Editor the Guardian).

Dear Sir,—I think it would interest the readers of your much esteemed paper, the Guardian, to know that dear old Newfoundland is so well represented in the defence of the Mother Country against the foe. Beside the gallant little 500 directly from home, there are many others in our regiment alone.

In the Canadian Divisional Ammunition Column there are 17 Newfoundlanders, and I am personally acquainted with about 84 Newfoundlanders among the other regiments camped close by us here.

If they are distributed all over camp as they are close by our lines, then I can truthfully say that if the Canadian Expeditionary Force was lined up in squads of 100 men each, from each line could be picked at least six men who would proudly say, 'I'm from Newfoundland.'

Thanking you for space and wishing you and your readers the compliments of the season. I remain, yours truly,

HAROLD A. RUSSELL,  
With the First Canadian Expeditionary Force in England.

[Note—Harold is a son of Isaac and the late Elizabeth Ann Russell, Country Road. He left here about five years ago, and when volunteers were called for, he joined the Canadian Contingent in St. John, N. B.—Editor.]

Below and on pages 3 and 4 are several letters written by Harold to his parents and his sister that were published in the local weekly newspaper The Guardian.

## Letter From Harold Russell, of Country Road

Easter Sunday,  
April 4th, 1915.

Dear Sister,—Just a line to say I am still alive and quite well and happy as usual, hoping this will find you the same. Haven't much news to write you. The weather is nice and warm here now. It has been like summer the past week. The ground is drying up nicely and the trees have started to bud and the flowers have started to bloom. The country around here is very level; not a hill in sight. We are unable to see very far, just to the nearest hedge, it is so level. All we see day after day is thousands and thousands of our own troops as we ride through the fields on each side of the wads, and through the sides are deep and wide ditches. But for these the ground would be water-soaked all the time.

The people here have some of the most peculiar wagons on their farms, and you ought to see the churns they use. They put a dog in a big wheel and tie him fast. The dog keeps on walking but he never gets any farther ahead. The big wheel goes around slowly. It is connected to the churn. That's how they do their churning.

It is surprising to see the people work in the fields all day long. Girls and women and men all alike working away together just a few miles off the firing line, even where the star shells and the searchlights and reflections of the guns light up the fields while they work. These people work on through it all seemingly as unconcerned as though there never was such a thing as war. How do you think you would like to be a French farm girl working in a field where the roar of guns is worse than any thunder you ever heard or thought of.

*From The Guardian*  
*07 May 1915*

Don't worry too much about me, dear, as I am quite safe in the ammunition column. Of course, I should prefer to be in one of the batteries, but if I do my little part here I shall be happy when it is all over and I can get back to see you all again.

We will lick old Bill in a few more weeks and then home. Don't grieve for me, for very often when you are grieving for me I am happy as a lark playing or boxing or some other game. Remember me to all friends. Your loving brother,

**HAROLD RUSSELL,**

No. 1 station, Divisional Ammunition Column,

First Canadian Division,  
British Expeditionary Force.

[The above was written by Harold to his sister, Mrs. Henry Matber, Bangor, Maine. Harold is in France.—Editor]

*From The  
Guardian  
10 March 1916*

## Letter from the Front

15 Gladstone Street,  
Bristol, England,  
Jan. 14, 1916.

Dear Father,—I am back in Old England once more, after being 11 months in France and Belgium. It was just 11 months from the day I left my billet in Lavington till the day I left the firing line in Belgium. During that time I have had numberless very close calls. I will tell you about the last one.

About 15 days ago I was out with a working party of 18 men in a little shell-battered village in Belgium. We were trying to get some bricks for our horse lines. We had just got on the roof of an old ruined house and was putting a rope around it to pull it down when a shell burst about 200 yards away. We didn't worry about that. A moment later another came a little nearer, and soon another. Then we looked to see what was doing. There was only one gun popping at us. He cut his range about 30 yards left and lengthened it about the same, so we knew we were under plain observation. But we wanted those bricks to keep our horses up out of the mud, and the boys who helped block the Kaiser's road to Calais in the face of thousands of shells and gas and other terrible things were not the kind to be chased away by one little 18-pounder popping high explosives at us.

Every shot came nearer and nearer and we worked faster and faster, till a shell hit the corner of the building next the one on which we were working. Then lead and iron and brick, wood, dirt and everything went in the air and started to fly around our ears. Sixteen of the 18 got hit. A brick got me in the right shoulder. I thought for a while that a fast express had run into me. I pinched myself to see if I was dead, then picked myself up and discovered that something had torn a hole in the tail of my coat.

I looked around and found a piece of the shell that fitted the hole exactly. So I guess it must have made the hole. I have it with me now and will send it on to you to-day. It's a piece of an 18-pound high explosive shell. Those of us who didn't get hurt too badly helped the others away to the ambulance. Again the wonderful good luck of the column was with us, and nobody was killed. Eleven of the boys are here in England in hospital, all doing well.

But while we were trying to get our senses together to make sure we were not all dead, we heard the roar of a gun, close by, and then another. We then knew that the Montreal heavies, under Major Magee, of St. John, had sent two messages across the enemy's lines. We heard no more of the enemy gun. We learned later our old Canadian gun layers had put him out of action with just two shots.

Our waggons came up then and they loaded the bricks and pulled out. I had only been in the lines about 20 minutes when my horse, who is a no-good old brute, kicked me in the leg, for no other reason than because I gave him a nice feed of oats, then went behind him to fix his rug on him to keep him warm. I would not go to hospital as I knew my furlough would soon come, and I did so want to have a happy week with my friends here. I am staying with a lady friend I knew in Canada. She was very sick and

came home to die, but am glad to know she has fully recovered. Her and her people are very nice. I think they sit up nearly all night planning for my comfort and happiness next day.

I am a bit lame in one arm and one leg, but we should not worry. There's lots of taxi cabs in Bristol and I have lots of money. I am having some time believe me.

My best horse was killed in a little mix up sometime back. That's why I got the other one that hurt my leg. Guess I'll ring off now, father. Don't let all this worry you. I can face it all with a smile. I want you to be happy, too. Give my love to mother, Nellie, Minnie and George, and all enquiring friends. Good bye. Your loving son,

HAROLD RUSSELL,  
Country Road.