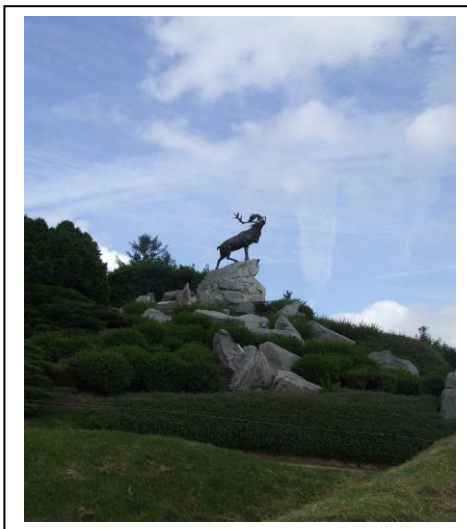




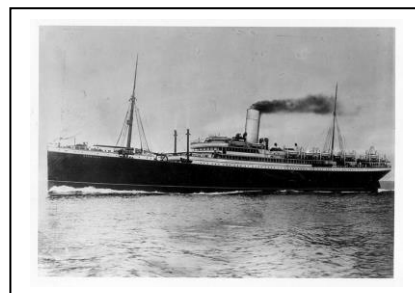
Private Otto Herbert Adams (Regimental Number 1770), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a farmer, Otto Herbert Adams was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on August 10, 1915, he then enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on the following day, August 11, before attesting one day later again, on August 12.



**A second source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

Private Adams and the other personnel of 'G' Company – apparently in the company of several naval reservists and also some German prisoners (these latter presumably to remain in Canada) - left St. John's by train on October 27, to cross the island to Port aux Basques. The contingent then traversed the Gulf of St. Lawrence by ferry, and proceeded by train from North Sydney to Quebec City.



At Québec the Newfoundlanders boarded His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* (above) for the trans-Atlantic passage to the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport where they arrived on November 9.

By the morning of the 10th the new arrivals had travelled by train and had gone north to Scotland. There they had been billeted in huts in a military camp at Gailles, not far removed from the new Regimental Depot where accommodation for the contingent was as yet not available.

That new Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland to serve as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers arriving from home were sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.

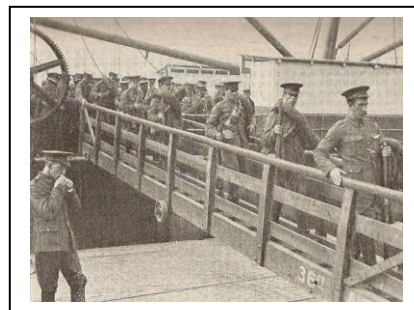


(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot that, on May 24, a month before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Adams was prevailed upon to re-enlist for *the duration of the War**.

**At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.*

On June 14, 1916, the 6th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Adams among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the following day, the 15th, it disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and the site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot where the contingent spent time in final training and organizing before moving on to a rendezvous with 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

**Apparently, the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

A detachment of sixty-six *other ranks* from Rouen, a draft which included Private Evans, arrived to join the parent unit in the community of Louvencourt on June 30. At 9:15 that evening, the Newfoundlanders – including a goodly number of those newcomers – but with the exception of the fourteen officers and eighty-three *other ranks* assigned to remain behind with the Re-enforcement Company, marched from there to their assigned *forming-up place trenches i.e. rear line of trenches in our usual sector* (Regimental War Diary).



(Right above: *Just inside the entrance to the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel, this trench is reputed to be the one where 1st Battalion spent the night before launching its attack from there on July 1. – photograph from 2009*)

Private Adams was not one of those who marched away from Louvencourt on the evening of June 30, and thus did not figure in the fighting of the morning of July 1 with 1st Battalion at Beaumont-Hamel; he was one of that ten per cent reserve held at Louvencourt and not called forward until about two o'clock in the afternoon of that day when the fighting had greatly subsided.



(continued)

****The well-known roll-call of July 2 of those who survived the battle unscathed was not officially recorded until two days later. The roll call of those who had been in the ten percent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three men held back for most of the day at Louvencourt was apparently also recorded officially only later. Thus the inscription 'With Battalion 4/7/16' on certain records.***

(Page preceding: another part of the reconstituted battlefield, here showing the British front lines, in the Newfoundland Park at Beaumont-Hamel: today the wire serves only to keep the tourists out of the trenches. – photograph from 2010(?))

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1st Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after re-enforcement - moved north and entered into Belgium for the first time.

It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel of July 1. *The Salient* was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatal. On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, 1st Battalion moved south back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.



(Right above: the entrance to 'A' Company's quarters in the ramparts of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010)

(Right: the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card)



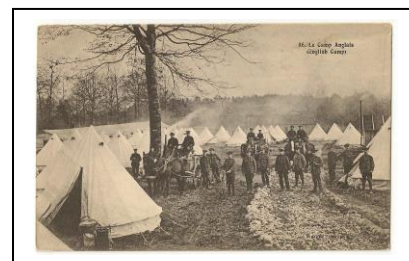
Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1st Battalion went again to the offensive at a place called Gueudecourt, some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. It proved to be another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

(Right: This is the ground over which 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007)



(continued)

After Gueudecourt, 1st Battalion continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period broken only by the several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period, encamped well behind the lines and close to the city of Amiens.



(Right: a typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card)

After that welcome six-week Christmas respite spent in *Corps Reserve*, the Newfoundlanders had *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23, 1917, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred their first casualties of 1917.

The only infantry activity directly involving 1st Battalion during the entire period from the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917, was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and beginning of March, an action which brought this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.



(Right above: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time.* - photograph from 2009(?))

After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March was a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events. They even had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris (right), the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



On March 29, 1st Battalion began to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, their march to finish amid the rubble of a village called Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right: *the remnants of the Grande Place of the city of Arras in early 1916 – from Illustration*)

(continued)

On April 9 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties it was the most expensive operation of the War for the British, its only positive episode being the Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday. The French offensive was a disaster.



(Right above: *the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

1st Battalion was to play its part in the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at a place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After Beaumont-Hamel, Monchy-le-Preux was to prove the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties on April 14 alone.



(Right above: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the western – in 1917, the British – side of the community. The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

On April 10, while on the march towards Arras, Private Adams incurred the displeasure of his superiors and, although the exact charge seems not to be documented among his files, he was awarded seven days of Field Punishment No. 2 – being kept in shackles - by his Commanding Officer.

But the worst was yet to come:

...Charged with desertion for leaving the trenches while under shell-fire, he was found guilty and was sentenced* to suffer death by being shot. This sentence was commuted to one of ten years PS to be suspended, suspension to date 31/5/17 but the case will be brought forward for further consideration on 31/8/1917 – KIA 9/10/17**

Auth: 3rd Army C. M. 69324 88 Bge. No. C. A. 157

*He was sentenced on May 23, 1917.

**Penal servitude (prison)?

Presumably having spent some time in confinement, there seem to be no record as to when Private Adams re-joined his unit. However, most likely it was after May 31, 1917, the date on which his sentence was suspended.

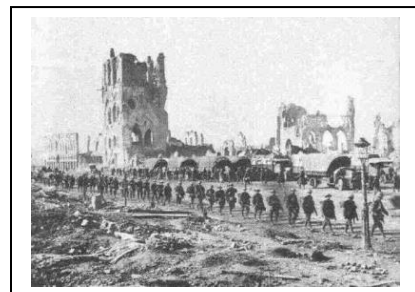
(continued)

May of 1917 had been a period when the Newfoundlanders were moving hither and thither on the Arras front, in and out of the trenches. Apart from the ever-present artillery, there was little infantry activity – except for the marching. At the beginning of June, 1st Battalion retired from the line to Bonneville and spent its time re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.



(Right above: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville in early May of 1917 – from *The War Illustrated**)

The Newfoundlanders once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of Ypres. This had been selected as the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, borrowing that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army’s objectives.



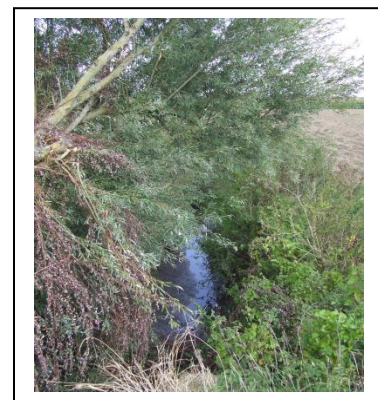
(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from *Illustration**)

1st Battalion remained in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army which floundered its way across the sodden countryside of Flanders. Notably it fought in two major engagements, at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembeek* on October 9.



(Right: *an unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from *Illustration**)

The son of Thomas Daniel Adams (deceased February 22, 1919) and Theresa Frances (*Fanny*) Adams – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay and to whom he had willed his all - of 26, Belvedere Street, St. John’s (later of 81, LeMarchant Road) - he also apparently had at least two sisters: Victoria and Minnie; and at least three brothers: Alexander, William Thomas, and Frederick William.



Private Adams was at first reported as *missing in action* on October 9, 1917, while serving with ‘A’ Company during the fighting at the *Broembeek*, Belgium, during *Third Ypres: Passchendaele*.

(continued)

However, a subsequent report dated 18/12/17 and submitted by a Lieutenant Massey, 50th Division *Salvage & Burial Officer*, recorded the identification of his remains and their interment on or about that same date. Private Adams' documentation was thus amended so as to read *killed in action or died of wounds on or shortly after 9/10/1917*.

Otto Herbert Adams had enlisted at the *declared* age of eighteen years and three months – although his mother also claims him to have enlisted at age sixteen years and six months*.

(Right above: *In September of 2009 the Broembeek was a small, innocuous stream. In October of 1917 it was full to overflowing, transforming the adjacent countryside into a quagmire.* – photograph from 2009)

**She also claimed that the effects later sent to her were not those of her son, despite the affirmation of such by the authorities. Apparently the belt sent back was that of the Ambulance Service, and amongst his other 'possessions' were post-cards, a book of poetry and a French dictionary – curious items indeed for a young man who could neither read nor write.*

Private Otto Herbert Adams was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



From D. A. G.
Effects Branch (Men)
G. H. Q. 3rd Echelon
1770, O. H. Adams 1st Newfoundland Regiment

50th Divisional Burial Officer
23/7/1918

Reference attached. Having been able to get in touch with the NCO attached to Lieut. Massey whilst he was acting as Burial Officer, I am enabled to give you the following particulars. The effects as sent to the Base on 6/11/17 were obtained from a partially buried body found by Lieut. Massey's party in the neighbourhood of Langemark, Belgium, and it was therefore presumably the body of the above-mentioned soldier as a Paybook was obtained bearing the above particulars. This AB 64 was also forwarded to you but I note does not appear on list of effects on attached sheet.

(continued)

An attempt at re-interment was made by Lt. Massey's party, but had to be abandoned in its initial stages owing to severe enemy shelling. Upon the burial party's return to the spot on the following day in order to complete the burial it was discovered that the ground had been greatly cut up by shell-fire and the body had completely disappeared.

There were no identification discs upon the body when found by Mr. Massey's party and it is opined that those were removed by the individuals who had originally interred the body.

No burial return was rendered by Mr. Massey, he apparently not considering it advisable under the circumstances as above stated.

Personally I do not think there is any doubt that the body was that of Pte Adams.

**D. W. Smith
Lieutenant
50th Div. Salvage & Burial Officer**