

Second Lieutenant Augustus (Gus) Alcock (Regimental Number 1372\*), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

*\*Officers who were eventually promoted from the ranks may be identified from their Regimental Number. Other officers who were not from the ranks received the King's Commission, or in the case of those in the Newfoundland Regiment, an Imperial Commission, and were not considered as enlisted. These officers thus had no Regimental Number allotted to them.*

*And since officers did not enlist, they were not then required to re-enlist 'for the duration', even though, at the beginning, as a private, they had volunteered their services for only a limited time – twelve months.*

His occupation previous to enlistment recorded as that of a teacher, Gus Alcock presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on April 6, 1915, before enlisting – engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of \$1.10 – and apparently also attesting on the following day, April 7.

Some two months later he was promoted to the rank of lance corporal, on June 12, and then embarked for overseas service with 'F' Company on board His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* (right) on June 20. It was to be a three-week voyage from St. John's to the United Kingdom. He had been further promoted, to the rank of corporal, on June 19, the day before the ship sailed.



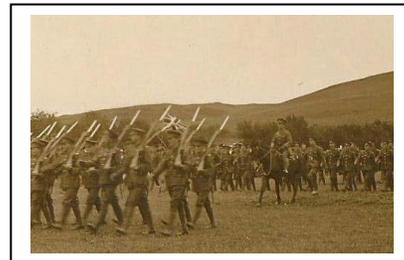
*\*Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the journey of about a week. Not only was Calgarian escorting three submarines, but she sailed by way of the Portuguese Azores and then Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders even having the time to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. She reached Liverpool on July 9.*



(Right above: Gibraltar in pre-War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background. – from a vintage postcard)

(continued)

Arriving in Liverpool, 'F' Company entrained to join 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'E' Companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion already in Scotland at Stobs Camp near the town of Hawick. 'F' Company arrived at Stobs Camp railway station on July 10, 1915. It was an important moment in the history of the Regiment for it brought 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion up to a strength of fifteen hundred – five hundred of which to be kept in reserve - the number necessary for a Battalion to be considered as ready for *active service*.



(Right above: *By the time of 'F' Company's arrival a month later, the Regiment had received its Colours at Stobs Camp in a ceremonial parade on June 10. – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo*)

In early August the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' – which in future were to comprise 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion – were sent south to Aldershot, in England, for two weeks of final training - and a royal inspection - and from there to travel to the Middle East and to the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Companies 'E' and 'F', the later arrivals, were instead sent to the new Regimental Depot, as was Corporal Alcock.

At the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, the Regimental Depot was at the time being established to serve as a base for the new 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion which – as of November of 1915 up until January of 1918 - was to send reinforcements to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, at first to the Middle East and later to the Western Front in France and Belgium.



(Right: *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 while he was stationed at Ayr, on August 8 of 1916, that Sergeant\* Alcock received an Imperial Commission and appointment to the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant, a promotion that was retroactive to July 12, some four weeks prior.

*\*There seems to be no documentation as to the date of promotion to the rank of sergeant, only an official paper to the effect that that was his rank at the time when he received his officer's Commission.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Alcock was not posted to *duty* with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion until March 6 of 1917, arriving on that date in the company of a draft of thirty-one *other ranks* while the Newfoundlanders were out of the line for two weeks at Meaulté. He had been at the Regimental Depot at Ayr on the Scottish west coast during much of the preceding year-and-a-half – at least a part of which had been spent in hospital – in January of 1916 - undergoing medical attention for a case of measles, but when he he had departed to proceed to the Continent appears not to be documented.

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 – it arrived on the same day as did 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Alcock and his detachment - 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, 1<sup>st</sup> 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 the village of Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right: *the remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War – from Illustration*)

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*)

1<sup>st</sup> 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. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to incur a total of four-hundred eighty-seven casualties on the day.



(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*)

The only child of Mark, fisherman, and Mary Ann Alcock (née *Elms*) of Griquet, and a member of the *Legion of Frontiersmen*, he was at first reported as *missing in action* on April 14, 1917 while commanding 14 Platoon, ‘D’ Company\*, in the fighting at Monchy-le-Preux, during the *Battle of Arras*. Apparently it was only weeks later, on May 11, that 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Alcock’s file was amended so as to read *killed in action* – although some of the evidence seems to have been submitted at a later date.

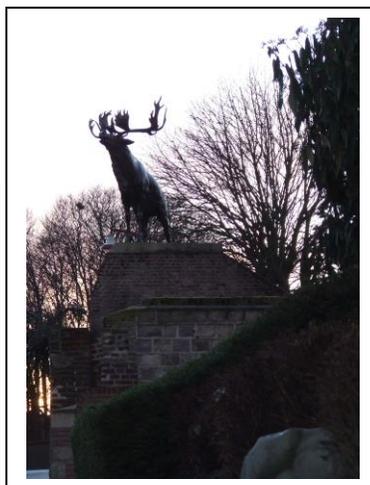
At home, it was the Reverend E. S. Tarrant of St. Anthony who was requested to bear the news to his family.

His death was confirmed on a later date by Private Frampton (Number 2880) who was taken prisoner on that same April 14.

Gus Alcock had enlisted at the age of twenty-one years.

*\*Most of 'D' Company was surrounded by the enemy, many being taken prisoner.*

*(Far right: The Caribou at Monchy-le-Preux stands atop the vestiges of a German strongpoint in the centre of the village. – photograph from 2010)*



(The photograph of Sergeant Alcock is from the Provincial Archives.)

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Augustus Alcock was entitled to the British War Medal and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



47 Hawkehill Ave.  
Ayr, Scotland  
24-1-18

Major Timewell,  
Dear Sir,

I received your communication regarding Lt. A. W. Alcock.  
Permit me to thank you for your kindness and courtesy in endeavouring to obtain information for me.

I am,

Yours faithfully

(Mrs.) Susie G. Corbett (continued)

**Sir – With reference to your enquiry of 14, April, Whilst attacking Lieut. Alcock was in my rear in 16 Platoon, my Platoon was 14, I saw him advancing. Owing (sic) to dust etc. I lost sight of him, after being taken prisoner, I heard the Lt. Alcock had been killed, being shot through the head. Hoping this information will lead to something definite.**

**I remain, Sir  
Your humble servant,**

*A.F. Osmond*

Number 1131, Private A. F. Osmond, was in a prisoner-of-war camp at the time of writing.

**I saw Lt. Alcock killed on April 14 1917 at Monchy.**

2544 Pte. S. Halfyard, was also a prisoner-of-war when he wrote this report.