



Private Walter Andrews (Regimental Number 2058), 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 salesman, Walter Andrews was a recruit of the Eighth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on January 4, 1916, he then enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and also attested on the following day, January 5.

It was to be some eleven weeks before Private Andrews was to embark for overseas service to the United Kingdom. It was as a soldier of the second contingent of 'H' Company that he took ship for overseas service on board His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian*\* (right) in St. John's Harbour on March 23-24. The ship did not sail from Newfoundland until the 25<sup>th</sup> and likely crossed the Atlantic in convoy.



This would explain what was apparently a slow voyage<sup>\*\*</sup>: Private Andrews did not disembark in the United Kingdom until April 9, at which time the contingent was transported to the Regimental Depot in Scotland.

*\*Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel, originally built for the Allan Line, had been requisitioned as a troop-ship and transport carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

*\*\*Convoys often altered course and obviously had to travel at the speed of the slowest ship. Sicilian would also have had to sail to a rendezvous point to meet the accompanying vessels – a convoy left Halifax on March 31-April 1 to arrive in Liverpool on April 9.*

*It could also be that she embarked some Canadian troops before crossing the Atlantic as she could carry well over one-thousand passengers with ease.*

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as a base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (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 despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



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(Previous page: *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*)

During the winter of 1915-1916 the men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion had been lodged in several venues, at a nearby military camp at Gales, but also as far afield as Paisley Barracks, some sixty-five kilometres distant. However, by the spring of 1916 the difficulty had been overcome by housing the men in a requisitioned school, in a tented community and in the Ayr Racecourse Grandstand, all in the district of Newton-upon-Ayr.



(Right above: *the new race-course at Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photo from 2012*)

It was at *the Racecourse* at Newton-on-Ayr that Private Andrews re-enlisted\* on June 30 and only nine days before his departure for the Continent.

*\*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.*

July 9 saw the 8<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Private Andrews among its ranks - pass through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to France. On the day following, the 10<sup>th</sup>, it disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and made its way to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, there to undergo final training and organization\* before moving to a rendezvous with the parent unit.



(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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

There must have been a sense of urgency at the time: 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had suffered terribly at a place called Beaumont-Hamel on the morning of July 1, and on July 6 its depleted strength, as reported by the Regimental War Diarist, still numbered no more than one-hundred sixty-eight *other ranks*, less than twenty per cent of the regulation strength of a British battalion.

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Private Andrews was one of the contingent of one-hundred twenty-six *other ranks* from Rouen to report *to duty* with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on July 21 in the small community of Acheux. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had marched to there from the trenches in front of Mailly-Maillet four days prior, and would continue this march as far as Beauval on the 23<sup>rd</sup> where they were to be billeted for only forty-eight hours before covering – still on foot – a further twenty kilometres to Candas on the 26<sup>th</sup> to board a train.

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1<sup>st</sup> 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 to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel.



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

*The Salient* was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatalities. On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to move south, back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.



(Right above: *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 *the Somme*, on October 12, 1<sup>st</sup> 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 on those two days – and for little gain.



(Right above: *This is the ground over which 1<sup>st</sup> 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*)

It was at Gueudecourt on that October 12 that Private Andrews was wounded, suffering severe gun-shot injuries to the left leg. To where he was evacuated at first is apparently not recorded but on October 14 he was admitted into the 9<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in Rouen. Six days later again, on October 20, he was on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Aberdonian* (right) en route for hospitalization in the United Kingdom.





Upon arrival in England on the 21<sup>st</sup>, Private Andrews was taken to and admitted into the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.

(Right: *The main building of what became 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)



(Above far right: *Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing at the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

He was not discharged from there until more than two months later, on December 28, when he was granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital in the United Kingdom. This period of leave terminated on January 6 of the New Year, 1917, the day after which Private Andrews reported to duty at the Regimental Depot in Scotland.



(Right above: *the High Street in Ayr, dominated then as it still is today by the imposing Wallace Tower, as shown on a postcard of the time sent home by a Newfoundland soldier – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo*)

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Re-enforcement Draft passed through Southampton and then Rouen on March 25 and 26, Private Andrews one of its soldiers. As was almost inevitable, the troops went to the Base Depot there to organize and to be organized before setting off to rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. However, on this occasion, Private Andrews was *not* one of its soldiers.

By that time he had been admitted into the 1<sup>st</sup> Stationary Hospital in Rouen on April 3, and there diagnosed, not unusually, as being with NYD (*Not Yet Determined*), later confirmed as a venereal disease.

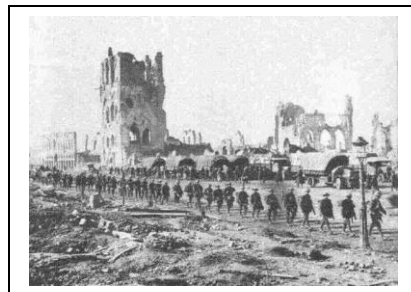
On June 14 he was released back to Base Depot from where he re-joined 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion four weeks later, on July 13, at Proven Camp, near Poperinghe, Belgium.



(Right above: *a British camp – this one apparently suffering wintry conditions – somewhere on the Continent during the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

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The Newfoundlanders had by then once again moved north into Belgium – some two weeks earlier, at the end of June - and once again to the area of Ypres. This had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. Officially 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.



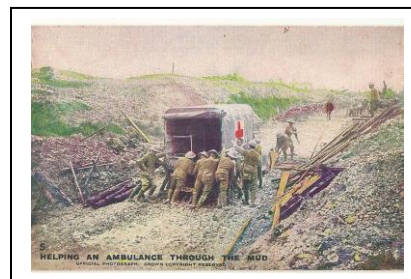
(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

1<sup>st</sup> 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*)

It may well be that Private Andrews played his unsung part in the action at the *Steenbeek*, but he was *not* present at the *Broembeek*, having been hospitalized once more. On September 27 he was sent to the 89<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance for treatment for boils on his neck and forwarded from there to the 14<sup>th</sup> Corps Rest Station on the same day.



(Right above: *transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

Discharged to Base Depot on October 11, he was admitted into the 11<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital with a recurrence of same complaint on the following day, October 12. He was back again at the Base Depot on October 21 and then re-joined 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in the northern French community of Berles-au-Bois on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: Cambrai. They were ordered back south from Belgium into northern France on October 17 to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras.

The so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

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The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



(Above right: *the Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

He was the son of John S. Andrews and Emma (*Emmie*) Dorcas Andrews - to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay, and to whom he had willed his all – the family address at the time of enlistment 48, Pleasant Street in St. John's – of 38, Power Street by May of 1916; then (perhaps) of 110, Casey Street by 1918; and of 75 New Gower Street by 1921.



Private Andrews was at first reported as *wounded* and then subsequently as having been *killed in action*\* on November 20, 1917, while serving with 'B' Company in the fighting near the village of Masnières.

Walter Andrews had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and three months.

*\*Private Andrews may well have been taken to the 17<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance either already dead or dying-upon-arrival since he is recorded as KIA. Furthermore, as a burial report was made by the Reverend W. Keary, attached to the 17<sup>th</sup> FA, and dated November 22, his grave must have been destroyed in subsequent fighting or its whereabouts forgotten.*

(Right above: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012*)

Private Walter Andrews was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

