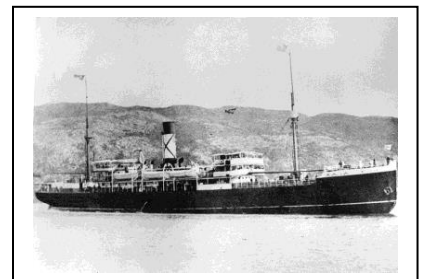




**Sergeant Archibald Ash (Regimental Number 575) is buried in Sully-Saillisel British Cemetery – Grave reference II. A. 5.**

**His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of an electrical engineer working for \$15.00 a week, Archibald Ash presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on September 19 of 1914. He then enlisted three days later – engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem - on September 22. He was a recruit of the First Draft.**

**Having been awarded his lance corporal's stripe only six days after enlistment, on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and having attested on October 2, Lance Corporal Ash embarked for England, on October 3, onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* (right – courtesy of *Admiralty House Museum*). The ship set sail on the following day, the 4<sup>th</sup>, in order to join the convoy carrying the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division overseas. The Newfoundlanders arrived in the south-coast English port of Devonport on October 14 and then sat on board the ship until the 20<sup>th</sup>.**



Having disembarked in the United Kingdom, Lance Corporal Ash trained with the Battalion: firstly in southern England on the Salisbury Plain; then in Scotland at Fort George (right); at Edinburgh Castle; and for some three months at Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick.

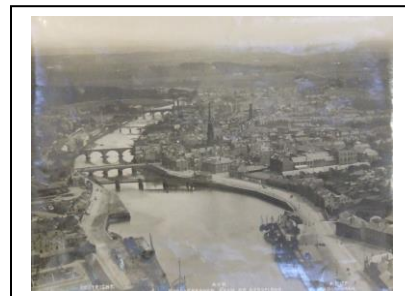


It was while at Stobs Camp, on a date in June apparently unspecified in the records, that he received further promotion, on this second occasion to the rank of corporal.

(Far right above: *The Newfoundland Regiment parades at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915.* – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

Corporal Ash did not travel south with the four senior companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion for further training at Aldershot, nor was he to sail with them to the Middle East and to Gallipoli; instead, he was posted to the new Regimental Depot along with the late arrivals from Newfoundland, 'E' and 'F' Companies.

The Regimental Depot was in the process of being established during that summer of 1915 at 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 until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were to be sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



It was while at Ayr that, on October 1, 1915, Corporal Ash re-enlisted for the duration of the war. It was also during this posting at the Regimental Depot, that a third promotion was made and he was appointed to the rank of sergeant on February 3, 1916.

(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)

On October 3 of 1916, some fourteen months after his posting to Ayr, Sergeant Ash was on his way to the Western Front as a non-commissioned officer of the 11<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft, embarking through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the large British Expeditionary Base Depot at Rouen, the capital city of Normandy. His unit disembarked there on the next day, the 4<sup>th</sup>, making its way to the Base Depot for final training\* and organization before moving on to a rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(continued)

(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route 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.*

It was a large detachment of two-hundred sixty-six *other ranks* which reported to the Battalion transport lines on October 12. That was also the day on which 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion made its attack on the enemy positions at Gueudecourt, again sustaining heavy casualties – two-hundred thirty-nine in all - and gaining little. So it was that the new-comers remained behind the lines until the 14<sup>th</sup>, two days later, when they were moved up to *Switch Trench* and parcelled out to the Battalion's four depleted fighting companies.

After Gueudecourt, 1<sup>st</sup> 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.



(Right above: *a British camp, in not particularly clement conditions, somewhere on the Continent during the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

After their six-week Christmas respite, the Newfoundlanders *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date – and had incurred their first casualties of the New Year. On January 27, the Regiment War Diary entry of the day notes: “*C*” *Company were out helping to bring in wounded & carrying up material for consolidation purposes...* One of those involved was Sergeant Ash (see below).



(Right above: *Stretcher-bearers at work during an advance by British troops; un-armed, these men were as vulnerable as the other troops, and often for a longer period of time. - from Illustration*)

The only infantry activity directly involving 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion during that entire period – from Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp action 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.



(continued)

(Previous page: *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(?))

A week prior to that engagement 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had moved from the rear to take up positions in the firing-line at Sailly-Saillisel, relieving the Lancaster Fusiliers. Part of the entry of the Regimental War Diary for February 23 reads... *Strict orders were given that gas-helmets were to be worn at alert position as enemy had been making frequent use of gas shells. Fairly lively enemy bombardment while Batt. going in. Casualties, 1 killed, 3 wounded, 1 gassed.*



(Right: *a soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers in the cold of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel during the winter of 1916-1917, just prior to their relief by the Newfoundlanders at the end of February – photograph from Le Miroir*)

The son of George Edward Ash and Sarah Frances Ash of Red Bay, Straits of Belle Isle, Labrador - before Labrador became part of the *Dominion of Newfoundland* – Sergeant Ash's own address was recorded as St. Anthony.

A member of the *Legion of Frontiersmen* at the time of his enlistment, Sergeant Ash was reported as having been *killed in action* while serving with 'A' Company on that February 23, 1917, by enemy artillery fire while 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was moving up to and into the line at Sailly-Saillisel.

Archibald Ash had enlisted at twenty-three years of age.

The remains of Sergeant Ash were originally interred in a cemetery at Combles by a Reverend A. Clayton. They were later transferred to the site close to Sailly-Saillisel where they repose today. At home it was the Reverend B. P. Pardy who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Sergeant Ash was mentioned posthumously in despatches on April 9, 1917: *'Action Date, January 27th, 1917 – Lesboeufs: On January 27th, 1917, when another unit had made a successful attack, Sgt. Ash went out in front and bandaged up wounded under very heavy shell fire. He directed the stretcher bearers and made several trips with them. Later on, he went out three times searching the ground for wounded until he was satisfied no more remained. The fire was heavy the whole time and he showed a total disregard for danger and set a great example to the stretcher bearers working with him.'* – London Gazette, June 6, 1917



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

(continued)

**Sergeant Archibald Ash was entitled to the British War Medal and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).**

