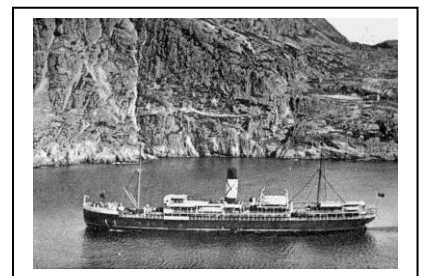




Lance Corporal Edward Alphonse Ayre (Regimental Number 1009) lies in Y Ravine Cemetery – Grave reference A. 33.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a seaman-steward on the Bowring Brothers' vessel *SS Portia*, earning a monthly \$25.00, Edward Ayre presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on January 28, 1915. He then enlisted – engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem - on January 29, before attesting two weeks later, on February 11.

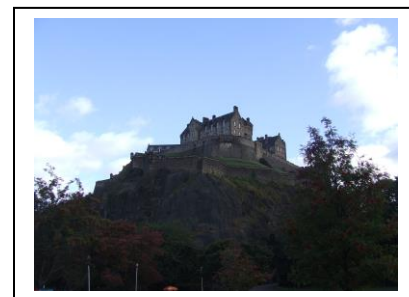


(continued)

Private Ayre then embarked with Number 8 Platoon of 'D' Company, some five weeks later again, onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* (previous page – from *Provincial Archives*) on March 20, 1915, for passage to Halifax and for overseas service. From Halifax he took ship on His Majesty's Transport *Orduna* (right) for the trans-Atlantic crossing to Liverpool.



Sailing from Nova Scotia on March 22 for Liverpool, the draft landed there eight days later, on the 30th, and entrained to Edinburgh, arriving at the historic Castle on the same day. For the next six weeks, having been united with 'A', 'B' and 'C' Companies already stationed there, the Newfoundlanders formed the garrison – the first troops from outside the British Isles to do so - of the guardian of Scotland's capital city.



(Right: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the skyline of the Scottish capital city from the summit of Castle Hill. – photograph from 2011*)

On May 11 the Newfoundlanders were transferred to Stobs Camp, near Hawick, to the south-east of Edinburgh. There they remained for some three months until the beginning of August when the senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' – now to become 1st Battalion, the Newfoundland Regiment - were sent south to Aldershot in the south of England. There they received final training – and a royal inspection - to prepare for *active service* in Gallipoli.

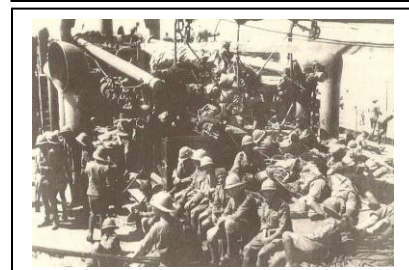


(Right above: *the Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp on June 10, the day it received its Colours – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

The later arrivals, 'E' and 'F' Companies, were sent to the new Regimental Depot recently being established at Ayr, on the west coast of Scotland. There they were to become the nucleus of the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.



It was during this period at Aldershot, on August 15, that Private Ayre was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion 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.*

(continued)

On August 20, 1915, Private Ayre took ship on board the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (preceding page) for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting in Gallipoli where, a month later – of which two weeks had been spent billeted at the British barracks at Abbassia, near the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, 1st Battalion landed on the beach at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



(Previous page bottom: *Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros, either Megantic on August 29, Ausonia on September 18, or Prince Abbas on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – from Provincial Archives)*



(Right above: *'Kangaroo Beach', where the men of 1st Battalion landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph from 2011)*



(Right above: *almost a century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Ayre served during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*

(Right: *Cape Helles (see following paragraph) as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached. The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011)*



On the night of December 19-20, the British abandoned their positions and withdrew from Suvla Bay, the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, forming a part of the rear-guard on that occasion. 1st Battalion was transferred two days later to Cape Helles on the western tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders were soon, on the night of January 8-9, to be abandoning Cape Helles as well.

(Right above black & white: *'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration)*



(Right: *'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces and by the Newfoundlanders who were the last soldiers to leave the beach: vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture above are still to be seen – photograph from 2011)*

When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, 1st Battalion was sent to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. From there the Newfoundlanders were transferred, almost immediately, south to Suez where they were to await further orders. To that point it seems that the theatre of the future posting of 29th Division was still uncertain.



It was during this period at Suez, on February 27, that Private Ayre received promotion, to the rank of lance corporal.

(Right top: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders, employed as the rear-guard, were among the last to leave on two occasions. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration*)



(Right above: *Port Tewfiq at some time just before the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



On March 14, the officers and men of 1st Battalion embarked through Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the Suez Canal onto His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* (right adjacent) for the voyage to the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles, en route to the *Western Front*.

(Right: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage post-card*)

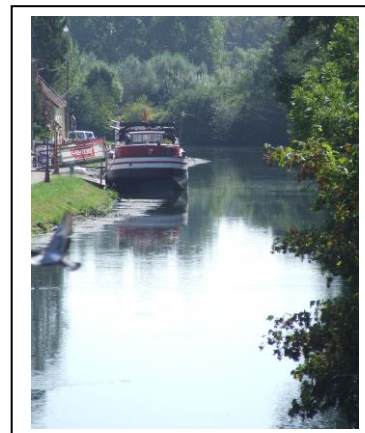


Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy.

It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them travelling unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the station at two in the morning the Newfoundlanders still had a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

(Right: *the Somme seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy as it flows through the community – photograph from 2010*)

It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers paid much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge that they passed on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would be a part of their history.



(continued)

On April 13, 1st Battalion marched into the village of Englebelmer – three kilometres behind the lines and perhaps some fifty kilometres in all distant from Pont-Rémy – where it was billeted, welcomed re-enforcements on the 15th and, on that same day, was introduced into the British lines where the Newfoundlanders were then put to work making improvements to the communication trenches.

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that same meandering river which flowed through the region, *the Somme*.

(Right: *part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)



The son of Edward Ayre and Selina Ayre – to whom he allotted a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay and to whom (his mother) he had willed his all - of Isle Aux Morts, his own place of residence recorded as Channel, he was apparently one of nine children, three of whom had died by the year 1920.

Lance Corporal Ayre was at first reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with ‘D’ Company during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. Some six months later, on December 31, he was officially *presumed dead*.

However, a subsequent report submitted on April 23, 1917, by the Officer Commanding V Corps, recorded the identification and then burial of Lance Corporal Ayre’s remains in No-Man’s-Land just to the west of Y Ravine. His record was thus amended so as to read *killed in action*.



Edward Alphonsus Ayre had enlisted at nineteen years of age (at seventeen according to his mother). *Vital Statistics* has him *killed in action* aged twenty.

(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel - looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences - The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009*)

(Right: *a grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from ...*)



(continued)

Lance Corporal Edward Alphonsus Ayre was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).

