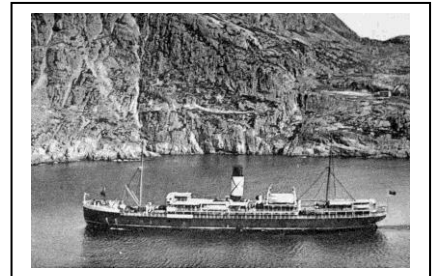




Private William Bennett (Regimental Number 1229), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation previous to his military service recorded as that of a tin-smith working with *John Clouston* of Duckworth Street for a monthly \$40.00, William Bennett presented himself in St. John's on March 11, 1915. He then enlisted – engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem - on March 15, before attesting some ten days later, on March 25.



Private Bennett of 'E' Company embarked in St. John's on board the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* (right above – from the *Provincial Archives*) some four weeks later again, on April 22, 1915.

The ship sailed to Halifax where his contingent took ship on His Majesty's Transport *Missanabie* (right) – likely with Canadian troops - for the crossing to Liverpool – the ship departed Halifax on April 25. From Liverpool the Newfoundlanders travelled by train to Edinburgh where they arrived on May 2. 'E' Company was to have but a few days to savor the charms of the Scottish capital.



Only nine days later, on May 11, the entire Battalion was posted for three months training, from Edinburgh to a tented Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick.

(Right: *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)



From Stobs, some thirteen weeks later again, in early August, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the senior Companies now become 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, the Newfoundland Regiment, were transferred to Aldershot in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before departing on active service to the Middle East and to the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

'E' and 'F' Companies – the latter having arrived at Stobs Camp on July 10 - were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were to form the nucleus of the newly-formed 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion. The Depot was to be Private Bennet's home for the next three months.

The Regimental Depot was being established during that summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland to serve as a base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 up 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.



(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 not until the fourteenth day of November that the 1<sup>st</sup> Reinforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Bennett among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport to embark onto His Majesty's Transport *Olympic*, sister ship of *Britannic* and the ill-fated *Titanic*, en route to Gallipoli.



(Right above: *HM Transport Olympic on the right lies at anchor along with HM Hospital Ship Aquitania, centre, at Mudros Bay in the autumn of 1915. – from a photograph from the Imperial War Museum, London*)



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

Less than three weeks later, on the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned Suvla Bay, the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, forming a part of the rear-guard on that occasion. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was transferred two days later to Cape Helles on the western tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula.



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



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

(continued)

(Right: 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces and the Newfoundlanders, rear-guard also on this second occasion: vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen – photograph from 2011)



(Right below: 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*)



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



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

(Right: Port Tewfiq in a time just before the Great War – from a vintage post-card)



(Right below: 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 in France on March 22, 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

(continued)

**(Right: *the Somme seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy as it passes 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.

On April 13, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy – where it was billeted, received re-enforcements on the 15th and, on the evening of the same day, was sent forward to work on improving some 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, *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 William Bennett, fisherman, and Agnes Bennett (née *Haley/ Healey*) – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of forty cents - of the South Side Road in St. John's, he was also brother to Patrick, to Thomas-Leo, to Catherine (*Kitty*) who was to receive his Memorial Plaque and medals on September 21, 1921, to Lucy-Agnes and to Leonard-Joseph (see below\*).

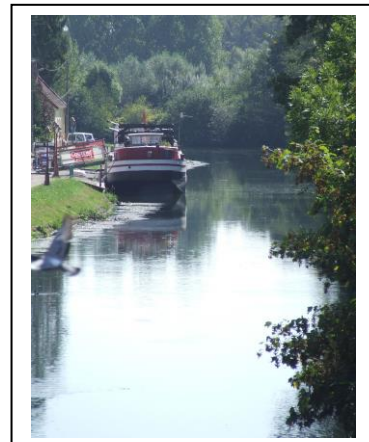
Private Bennett was reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. Some six months later, on December 31, he was officially *presumed dead*.

William Bennett had enlisted at the age of thirty-one years: date of birth May 21, 1884.

**(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)



Private William Bennett 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).



\*BENNETT, Leonard Joseph (1331x, seaman) - died 21/12/1915, has no known grave and is thus commemorated on the bronze of to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel (see right). At the time of his death he was twenty-nine years of age.



(Above: *HMS Lady Ismay* (auxiliary minesweeper) – ship lost due to a mine explosion in the estuary of the River Thames. – photograph from *Old Ship Picture Galleries* web-site)

(Right: A family memorial which stands in *Belvedere Cemetery* in *St. John's* commemorates the sacrifice of both *Private Bennett* and that of his brother *Seaman Bennett*. – photograph from 2015)

