



Private Edgar Blackmore (Regimental Number 1578), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a fisherman earning an annual \$300.00, but also being an employee of the *Dominion Iron & Steel Company* on Bell Island, Edgar Blackmore was a recruit of the Fifth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on May 17, 1915, he then enlisted - at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 - on May 25 before attesting three days later again, on May 28.



*\*A second source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

Private Blackmore embarked on board His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* (above – original photograph from the *Provincial Archives*) on June 20 in St. John's Harbour and sailed (almost\*) directly to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two men of 'F' Company and eighty-five naval reservists to take passage on that day.

*\*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 apparently even having the time to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. She reached Liverpool on July 9.*



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

On the day after its arrival in the United Kingdom, 'F' Company marched from the railway station and reported to duty at Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick on the evening of July 10. It was an important moment: the Newfoundland Regiment, as of that day counting fifteen hundred personnel, was now at fighting strength and could be posted on active service.

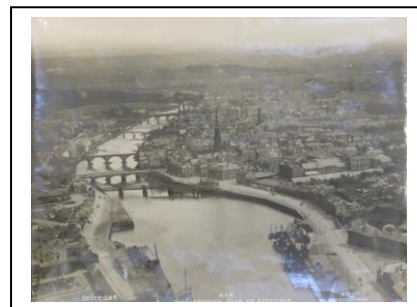


(Right above: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles.* – original photograph from the *Provincial Archives*)

From Stobs, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the senior Companies, having now become 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of 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 become home to Private Blackmore for the following eight months - apart from the time he spent in hospital during July and August for medical attention to a venereal complaint.

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.

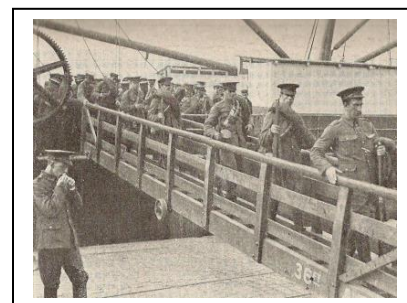


(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was while at Ayr, on April 5 of 1916, and only three days before his departure to join 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, that Private Blackmore 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.*

On April 8, Private Blackmore, as a soldier of the 4<sup>th</sup> Reinforcement Draft from Ayr, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on his way to report to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on the Continent. Arriving on that same day, on the 8<sup>th</sup>, in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, the Draft was posted there for several days of final training and organization\*.



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

A draft of a single officer and forty-one *other ranks* from Rouen, Private Blackmore among that number, joined the parent unit on April 26. At the time all four companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were in the throes of a first tour of the front-line trenches, not far from the village of Englebelmer.

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



The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the meandering river that flowed – and today still flows - innocuously through the southern part of the region to which it lends its name, *the Somme*.

Private Blackmore was not one of those who figured in the fighting of the morning of July 1 with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at Beaumont-Hamel, but his name was included on the unit's nominal roll; it is therefore possible that he had been seconded to another unit or, more likely, that he was one of the ten per cent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three *other ranks* held at Louvencourt and not called forward until late in the afternoon of that day when the fighting had subsided.



*\*The well-known roll-call of July 2 of those who survived the battle unscathed was not officially recorded until two days later. The roll call of those who had been in the ten per cent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three men held back for most of the day at Louvencourt was apparently also recorded officially only later. Thus the inscription 'With Battalion 4/7/16' on certain records.*

(Right above: *another part of the reconstituted battlefield, here showing the British front lines, in the Newfoundland Park at Beaumont-Hamel: today the wire serves only to keep the tourists out of the trenches. – photograph from 2010(?)*)

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 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. *The Salient* was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatal.



On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion moved south back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

(continued)

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



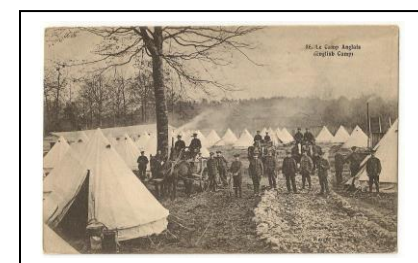
(Right: *the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card*)

Only four days after its return to France, 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 - for little gain.



(Right: *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*)

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 to the rear and close to the city of Amiens.



(Right above: *a typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card*)

After that welcome six-week Christmas respite spent in *Corps Reserve*, the Newfoundlanders had *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23, 1917, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred their first casualties of 1917.

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



(Right above: *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(?)*)

(continued)

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, 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 a village called 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, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties on April 14 alone.



(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 son\* (see below) of Henry William Blackmore – also a fisherman - and Fanny Elizabeth Blackmore (née *King*) - a domestic, and to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay - of Pilley's Island, Notre Dame Bay, he was also brother to Hannah, George, Arthur, Ophelia, Ann, Elijah, Emma, Herbert, Stanley and to Martha.



***\*Newfoundland Vital Statistics have him recorded as grand-son of Henry and Fanny Blackmore, and as the son of their daughter Ophelia Blackmore.***

**Private Blackmore was reported as *missing in action* on April 14, 1917, while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting at Monchy-le-Preux. Some thirty weeks later, on November 17, 1917, he was officially *presumed dead*.**



**Edgar Blackmore had enlisted at the declared age of twenty years and two months: date of birth (Vital Statistics) April 21, 1896.**

**(Right above: *The Caribou at Monchy-le-Preux stand in the centre on top of the vestiges of a German strongpoint. – from a vintage post-card*)**

**Private Edgar Blackmore was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).**

