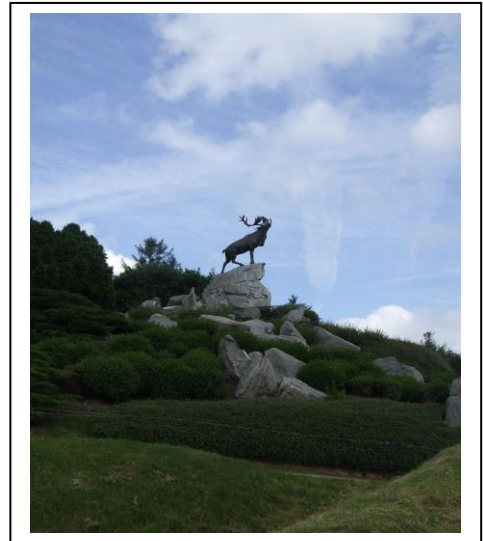


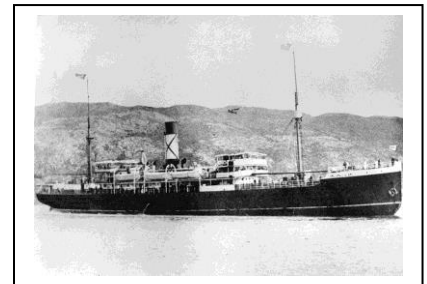


Private Joseph Boone (Regimental Number 3478), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman earning a monthly \$24.00, Joseph Boone was a recruit of the Fourteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury on Harvey Road in St. John's on February 12, 1917, he also enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* and at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and attested on that same day.



It was on April 7 of 1917, that Private Boone boarded either the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* (right) for Halifax, or a train\* in St. John's for the cross-island journey to Port aux Basques from where a ferry and another train would have transported Private Boone and his co-travellers to Halifax – the files are contradictory. Apparently it had been hoped that the fifty personnel of this draft would be joining the *Windsor Draft*\*\* on April 16 or 17 when it was to board one of the three transports awaiting in Halifax harbour and sail.



*\*The records of Private Boone and of other personnel cite... 'Embarked St. John's S.S. Train to Halifax 7/4/17' ...while other sources hint that the passage to Nova Scotia may have been by ship: nevertheless, a personal memo of a Private Yetman also mentions the Florizel.*

*\*\*This was the name given to the draft of about three-hundred twenty all ranks which had left St. John's on January 31, 1917, en route to Halifax from where they were to sail to the United Kingdom. This contingent would eventually make that voyage, but about thirteen weeks later than envisaged. They were quarantined at Windsor as the result of a measles and mumps epidemic that claimed two of their number – and maybe a later third. In the meantime, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion at Ayr was running low on man-power.*

This plan, however, was not to be, for whatever the reason – perhaps lack of space as the ships were carrying Canadian reinforcements overseas - and it was not until the final day\* of the month that this small contingent – Private Boone still one of its number - finally sailed from Halifax. They may, in fact, have embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Olympic* (right) – sister-ship of *Titanic* – which sailed at that time from Halifax with Canadian troops to the United Kingdom.



***\*If it were on Olympic that the contingent embarked – she appears to have been the only ship sailing on or about that time - then the Newfoundlanders sailed from Halifax on April 29 to arrive in Liverpool on May 7.***

Having arrived in England, the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence to serve as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some two years. It was from here – since November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were being 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.



***(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)***

***(Right: 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)***



Apparently Private Boone then spent some seven months in Scotland, both at Ayr and at Barry\* where it was temporarily re-located during that summer of 1917. But in January of the New Year, 1918, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion move its quarters definitively from the Royal Borough of Ayr to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester. It was from there that Private Boone travelled when ordered to join the British Expeditionary Force.

***\*During the summer months of 1917, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.***



***(Right: a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918 – from The War Illustrated)***

On March 27 of 1918, the 40<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft of eighty other ranks, from Hazely Down, - Private Boone among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port-city of Southampton to board ship for the Continent. It disembarked on the 29<sup>th</sup> in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and spent little time there before moving on to its rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



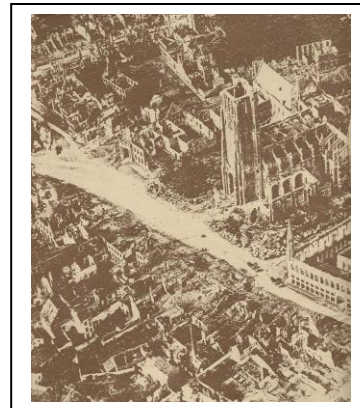
**(continued)**

(Previous page: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

*\*Apparently the standard length of time for this final training had been ten days – although this was flexible - in areas that became known as the Bull Rings. By this stage in the War, however, the need for men was such that it was perhaps more flexible than previously.*

Private Boone reported for duty with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on April 4 while it was out of the line at Hasler (Haslar) Camp near St-Jan, just north-east of Ypres. By the evening of the next day the Newfoundlanders were back *in* the line.

Some three months prior, at the beginning of January of 1918, and after a snowy Christmas period spent to the south-west of Arras withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had returned to Belgium, to the Ypres Salient, for a third time. There, like the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences.



(Right above: *an aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916 – from Illustration*)

In the meantime, the Germans had been preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking man-power after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them. It was expected that they would launch a spring offensive.



It was expected that the Germans would launch a spring offensive. While they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders continued to dig.

(Right above: *countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were stationed in March and early April of 1918 – photograph from 2011*)

Private Boone had arrived not a moment too soon.

The Germans did as was expected of them. Ludendorff's armies had already launched a powerful thrust on March 21, striking at first in the area of *the Somme*, overrunning the battlefields of 1916 and beyond; for a while the advance seemed unstoppable. Then a second offensive, *Georgette*, was launched in the northern sector of the front, in Flanders, where the Newfoundlanders were stationed: the date was April 9. Within two days the situation of the Allies was desperate.



(Right above: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918 – from Illustration*)



On the day after the first heavy bombardments, April 10, as the Germans approached the towns of Armentières and Nieppe, troops were deployed to meet them. The Newfoundlanders, due to come out of the line and move back to the Somme, boarded buses at three o'clock in the afternoon and were suddenly directed southward, towards Nieppe. They were in action, attempting to stem this latest offensive, three hours later.



(Right above: *the area of La Crêche - the buildings in the background - where the Newfoundlanders de-bussed on April 10 to meet the Germans in the area of Steenwerck and its railway station – photograph from 2010.*)

The British were pushed back to the frontier area of France and Belgium. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, fighting in companies rather than as a single entity, was making a series of stands.

On April 13, during the defensive stand near the De Seule crossroads on the Franco-Belgian border, one platoon of 'C' Company was obliterated while trying to check the German advance. The remainder of 'C' Company took up defensive positions along a light railway line and, with 'A' Company, stopped a later enemy attack. 'B' and 'D' Companies – in a failed counter-attack on that evening - were equally heavily involved.



(Right above: *ground just to the east of Bailleul where 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion fought during the period April 12 to 21 – photograph from 2013*)

What exact role Private Boone played is not known (but see immediately below) - it is recorded only that he was a soldier of 'C' Company - but from April 10 to 21 was to be a difficult eleven days for all of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's personnel. Nevertheless, somehow, the German breakthrough never materialised and the front finally stabilised.

The *Regimental War Diary* entry for April 12-13 cites *...the remainder of 'C' Coy. under Capt. Paterson, M.C. and Hqrs. took up a position along a light railway line and prepared to fight to a finish. ...there can be no doubt that it was Hqrs., 'A' & 'C' Coys. that by their resistance saved what would have been at least a very serious position for the whole 34<sup>th</sup> Division.*

*\*88<sup>th</sup> Brigade – and thus 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion – was seconded from the 29<sup>th</sup> Division to the 34<sup>th</sup> during this critical period.*

By April 17 and 18 the fierce German momentum had been arrested, although the fighting was to continue until the end of the month. The *Regimental War Diary* entry for the 18<sup>th</sup> records that... *The Battalion took over a Sector of Front line being relieved by the French on the 21st.*

(continued)

It had also documented by the Regimental Diarist on the previous day, the 17<sup>th</sup>, that... *A slight alteration in position was made, and the Brigade was subjected to two intense bombardments, but our luck was in, only one shell entering our trenches and inflicting 3 casualties\**.

*\*Also according to the Diary, there may be inaccuracies in some of the dates cited during this hectic period.*

The son of John Boone, fisherman, and Louisa Boone (she later Mrs. George Hannam of Leading Tickles West) his own place of residence recorded as Cottle Cove\*, he was also brother to Mrs. Mary Smart – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay\*\* - of Clarke's Beach. Private Boone was reported as having been *killed in action* on April 18\*\*\*, 1918, while serving with 'C' Company during fighting on the Franco-Belgian border.

Joseph Boone had enlisted at the age of twenty years and four months.

*\*His papers say Cottle Cove – which appears not to exist although Cottle's Island does (did!) – but there is no mention of a Boone family there, nor is the name Boone honoured on the War Memorial. Maybe he meant Cottrell's Cove where the name Boone exists in the 1921 Census.*

*\*\*He apparently also allotted fifty cents to his mother – but surely not to both at the same time: that would have amounted to his full wage.*

*\*\*\*This may be a late reporting of a casualty of the day before, the 17<sup>th</sup>. There was no infantry action or bombardment recorded on the 18<sup>th</sup> and in fact the Newfoundlanders were relieved by a French unit on that day.*

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

