

BRENT, D.

Private David Brent (Regimental Number 1794), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service that of a lumberman, David Brent was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. Enlisting at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on August 27, 1915 – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – he also attested on the same day.

Private Brent and the other personnel of 'G' Company – apparently in the company of several naval reservists and also some German prisoners (these latter presumably to remain in Canada) - left St. John's by train on October 27, to cross the island to Port aux Basques. The contingent then traversed the Gulf of St. Lawrence by ferry, and proceeded by train from North Sydney to Quebec City.

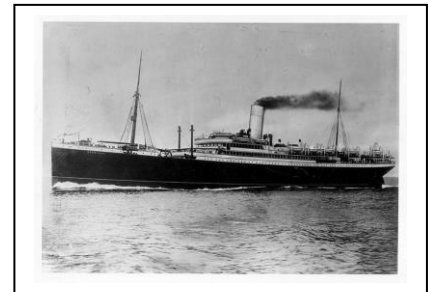
At Québec the Newfoundlanders boarded His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* (above) for the trans-Atlantic passage to the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport where they arrived on November 9.

By the morning of the 10th the new arrivals had travelled by train and had gone north to Scotland. There they had been billeted in huts in a military camp at Gales, not far removed from the new Regimental Depot where accommodation for the contingent was as yet not available.

That new Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland to serve as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers arriving from home were sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.

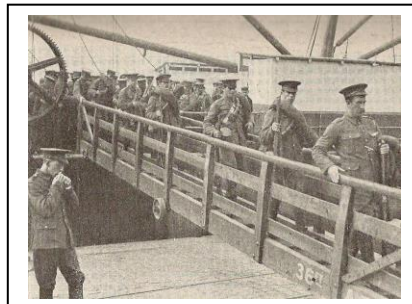
(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot that, on May 24, some three weeks before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Brent was prevailed upon to re-enlist *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.*

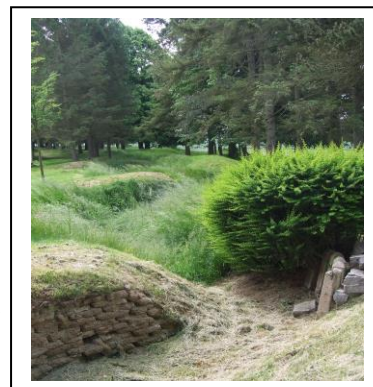
On June 14, 1916, the 6th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Brent among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the following day, the 15th, it disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and the site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot where the contingent spent time in final training and organizing* before moving on to a rendezvous with 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way 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 detachment of sixty-six *other ranks* from Rouen, a draft which included Private Brent, arrived to join the parent unit in the community of Louvencourt on June 30. At 9:15 that evening, the Newfoundlanders – including a goodly number of those newcomers – but with the exception of the fourteen officers and eighty-three *other ranks* assigned to remain behind with the Re-enforcement Company, marched from there to their assigned *forming-up place trenches i.e. rear line of trenches in our usual sector* (Regimental War Diary).



(Right above: *Just inside the entrance to the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel, this trench is reputed to be the (re-constituted) one where 1st Battalion spent the night before launching its attack from there on July 1. – photograph from 2009*)

The son of John Brent* (from Loon Cove) and Susan (Susannah) Brent (née Sheppard from Cupids) – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay, and to whom he had willed his everything - of Botwood, he was also brother to Eunice, Frederick and John.



**The family name had apparently formerly been Brenton: this and the above information could use confirmation.*

(continued)

Private Brent was at first reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel while serving with 'D' Company during the fighting on the first day of *the Somme*, July 1, 1916.

However, in a letter subsequently submitted by the Officer Commanding of 71st Infantry Brigade, it was reported that his remains had been identified and buried on or about September 29, 1916. His record was thus amended so as to read *killed in action**

It was the Reverend J.T. Newman of Botwood who was requested to bear the news to his family.

David Brent had enlisted at twenty-two years and two months of age.

**Apparently his grave was later destroyed, most likely in the fighting during the spring and summer of 1918.*

(Preceding page: *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 ...*)



Private David Brent was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

(continued on following page)



Hon. John R. Bennett
Colonial Secretary

Parsonage
Botwood
Sept. 26/16

Dear Sir:

On Saturday night last, Mrs. Brent, mother of Private David Brent, No 1794 who is reported missing since July 1st, brought a letter that she had received from a young woman in Scotland who knew her son. The young woman states that a wounded soldier who was in the drive of July 1st, reports that David Brent was first slightly wounded in the arm & afterwards was shot through the body & killed. I assured the mother that no official report had been sent. Of course the parents are very anxious to know the truth about their son, and they have written the young woman asking for the name of the wounded soldier. I thought it best to report the matter to you.

I have the honor to be
Sir
Your obedient servant, John G. Newman