

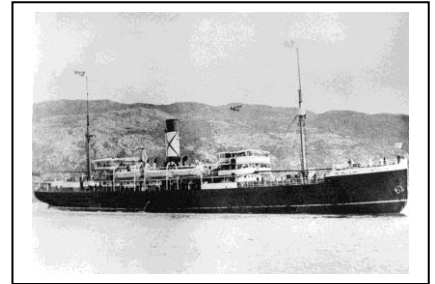
BUCKLEY, J.

Private James Buckley (Regimental Number 4274), 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 lumberman, James Buckley was a recruit of the Eighteenth Draft. He enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on December 28, 1917 - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attested on the same day.



Private Buckley did not embark for overseas service until January 29 of 1918, some six weeks later, when he boarded the Bowring Brothers' Red Cross Line vessel *Florizel* (right) en route for Halifax. From there he sailed on an unspecified troop-ship to the United Kingdom.



**This draft may even have travelled on to Québec or Montréal where ships were still apparently sailing even at this late time.*

In the latter part of January of the New Year of 1918, the Regimental Depot which served the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester.

This transfer was finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was to Hazely Down that Private Buckley reported *to duty* from Newfoundland; it was also to be *from* there that he was then later despatched to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent.



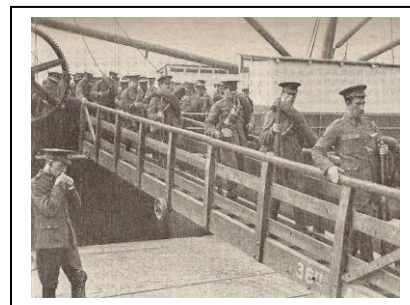
(Right: a *bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp* at some time during the winter of 1918 – from *The War Illustrated*)

On or about July 2, either the 47th or the 48th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Buckley one of this contingent - from Hazely Down, passed through the English port of Folkestone and, on the 5th, arrived at the French city of Rouen, for final training and organization* at the British Expeditionary Force Depot there, before finding its way to 1st Battalion.

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Only days afterwards, on July 8 – although *his* file says the 9th - he was surely one of the detachment of one-hundred twenty-eight *other ranks* from Rouen that reported to duty with the Newfoundland parent unit at Équihen on the French west coast.

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

Meanwhile, just days after the crisis of the German spring offensive had passed, on April 24 – and some eleven weeks before Private Buckley's arrival at Équihen - the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion officially had said farewell to their comrades-in-arms of 88th Brigade and 29th Division and on the morrow had participated in a recessional parade attended by the officer commanding 88th Brigade, Brigadier Freyberg.

They were later to be deployed to another unit, but for the summer of 1918 1st Battalion was to move a world away from Flanders where it had just fought, to be stationed on the west coast of France.

On April 29, the Newfoundlanders – 1st Battalion by now reduced to a total strength of just thirty officers and four-hundred sixty-four other ranks - took train in Belgium for the French coastal town of Étapes, where they arrived at eleven o'clock in the late evening. For now, for them, the fighting was a thing of the past.

The summer of 1918 was to pass peaceably enough for most of the personnel of 1st Battalion. For the months of May, June and until early July, the unit was posted to Écuire, to the Headquarters of Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in Europe.



(Right: *Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force at the time of the Battalion's posting to GHQ – from Illustration*)

The cosmetic honour of this new role, however, masked the reality that the 1st Battalion of the recently-proclaimed *Royal Newfoundland Regiment* was no longer capable of serving in the field.

**Although few at home cared to admit it publicly, the problem was that 1st Battalion had run out of reserves and was unable to continue as a fighting entity. It was to be September before even a battalion of reduced strength could return to active service. At home, mandatory military service was initiated – conscription by another name – but with limited results.*

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The posting to Écuire completed, for most of July and all of August the Newfoundlanders were encamped in much the same area, close to the coastal village of Équihen – itself not far removed from the large Channel port of Boulogne – and far to the rear of the fighting, of which there had been plenty elsewhere.



This was, of course, both the time and place of Private Buckley's reporting *to duty in the field* with 1st Battalion.

(Right above: *a view of the sparsely-populated coastal community of Équihen at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Re-enforced, the Newfoundlanders returned to the fray on Friday, September 13, as one of the three battalions of the 28th Brigade of 9th Scottish Division. 1st Battalion was once more to serve on the Belgian front where, some six weeks later, having advanced out of the *Ypres Salient*, it would finish its war on October 26 at a place called Inghoyghem (*Ingooigem*).

On September 28, the Belgian Army and the 2nd British Army broke out of their positions, overrunning the enemy lines. It was the start, for them, of the *Hundred Days Offensive**. On the following day, the Newfoundlanders were fighting at the Keiberg Ridge.



After almost four years of stalemate, it was once again to be a conflict of movement.

(Right above: *British troops and German prisoners in Flanders during the Hundred Days – from Illustration*)

**This offensive would prove to be the final campaign of the Western Front and would terminate with the Armistice of November 11. It had begun further to the south on July 18 on the French front on the River Marne, followed on August 8 by an onslaught by British and Empire troops near Amiens in what would also become known as 3rd Somme.*

The advance, despite fierce resistance at times, was relentless. On the night of October 19-20, 1st Battalion crossed the Lys Canal under fire just to the east of Courtrai – today Kortrijk - on barrel bridges and on the morrow was advancing towards the village of Vichte.



(Right: *the Lys – both canal and river – at a point not far from the crossing-place – right to left - of October 19-20, 1918 - The Harlebeke Caribou stands about at a distance of about one hundred metres behind the camera. – photograph from 2010*)

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(Right: *The Caribou at Harlebeke commemorates the crossing of the Lys Canal and the sacrifices of the last campaign of the War.* – photograph from 2012)



The son of John Buckley, lumberman(?), at the time of his son's enlistment serving with the Newfoundland Forestry Corps, Number 8448, and of Theresa Buckley of Botwood (formerly of nearby Peter's Arm), he was also brother to at least Arthur.



Although James Buckley had unlisted as an un-married man, he was in fact the husband – married September 30, 1913 - of Sarah Buckley (née Cooper*) (she later of Bishops Falls) – to whom he at first had allotted a daily eighty cents from his pay, to be reduced to fifty cents as of June 1, 1918. He was also the father of their two young daughters, Beatrice and Cora.

Private Buckley was reported as *missing in action* on October 25, 1918, while fighting near the Belgian villages of Vichte and Ingoyghem during the *Hundred Days Offensive*. On the next day, 1st Battalion, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, withdrew from the front line for the final time.

Some thirty weeks later, on May 27 of 1919, he was officially *presumed dead*.

James Buckley had enlisted at the age of twenty-four years and eleven months: date of birth, August 23, 1893.

(Right above: *the valley of the Scheldt as seen from Ingoyghem, the Newfoundlanders' furthest point of advance on October 26, 1918* – photograph from 2010)

**Mrs. Buckley's maiden name comes from Vital Statistics; a second source documents her maiden name as Anthony.*

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

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Hon J R Bennett
St John's

Botwood
Feb 11/19

Dear Sir

Two of the Regiment neighbours of ours returned yesterday who went to the front with my husband in the battle of Oct 25th and both those men Jack Lyver and Thomas Hancock who both say that they helped to bury my husband Pte James Buckley on the 3rd of Nov 10 days after the battle it is strange that this should be and the officials do not know the rights of it.

Will you please try and find out the rights of the matter and let me know as I have 2 small children 1 - 4 mos old and one between 2 7 5 yr please attend to this as I am very anxious to know the rights - and not be kept in suspense.

Yours truly
Mrs. Jas Buckley

- my husbands No was 4274

In another letter, this one received by Private Lyver's father from his son and dated November 4, was a statement that... *his chum James Buckley had been blown up in a barn...* (The incident is confirmed in *The Fighting Newfoundlander*.)