

Private Leighton Bugden (Regimental Number 1544), 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 grocer and earning a weekly \$7.00, Leighton Bugden was a recruit of the Fifth Draft. He presented himself for medical examination on May 14, 1915, at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, before enlisting three days afterwards – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on May 17. He is recorded as having attested on that same date.



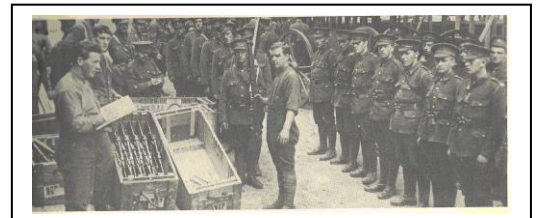
Private Bugden embarked on board His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* (above – original photograph from the *Provincial Archives*) on June 20 in St. John's Harbour and sailed (*almost**) directly to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two men of 'F' Company and eighty-five naval reservists 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 1st 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 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. The Depot was to become home to Private Bugden for the following seven 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 2nd (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 1st Battalion.

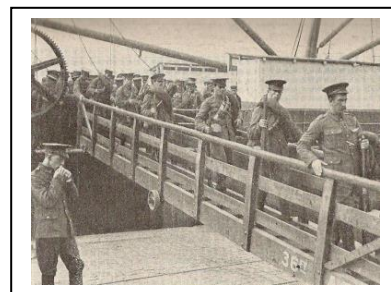


(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was during this posting to Ayr that Private Bugden re-enlisted *for the duration of the war*, signing the form to that effect on April 5*.

**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 25 the 7th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent, Private Bugden among its ranks. On the 26th the detachment disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot. The draft spent some days there undergoing final training and organization* before proceeding to its rendezvous with 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *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.*

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This meeting was effected on July 11 (recorded elsewhere as the 12th) while the parent unit was just behind the line, quartered in huts in the village of Mailly-Maillet and recovering from the trauma of Beaumont-Hamel. It was here that Private Bugden and one-hundred twenty-six other ranks from Rouen reported for duty. Even with this addition, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1st Battalion still numbered only 11 officers and 260 rifles.



(Right: *the reconstructed village of Mailly-Maillet – twinned with Torbay in the District of St. John’s East – a century later, the monument to the French War Dead in the foreground – photograph from 2009*)

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1st Battalion - still below battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong - 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*, 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, 1st Battalion moved south back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

(Right above: *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, 1st 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 1st 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*)

(continued)

The son of James Bugden and Bessie* Bugden (both apparently deceased at a young age), he was also brother of John Randolph Bugden of 99, George Street in St. John's, employee at *Ayre & Sons*, and to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of thirty cents from his pay.

Private Bugden was at first reported as *missing in action* on October 12, 1916, while serving with 'C' Company at Guedecourt, during the fighting at Gueudecourt.

The record of Private Bugden was subsequently amended, in March of the following year, so as to read *killed in action or died of wounds on or shortly after 12/10/1916*, this upon the submission of an eye-witness account of his death in a letter from the *Enquiry Department for Wounded & Missing* – a joint venture of the *British Red Cross* and *Order of St. John* (see below).

Leighton Bugden had enlisted at nineteen years of age.

**Could it have been Jessie?*

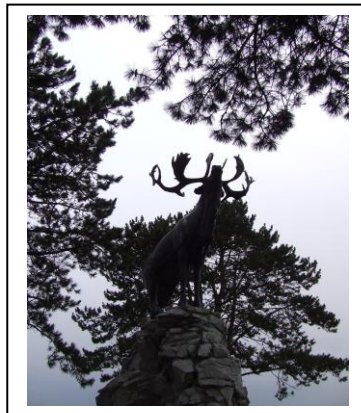
(Right above: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands on the site of the furthest point of advance of the Battalion on October 12, 1916. – photograph from 2012*)

(Right: *A family memorial found in the Old Anglican Cemetery on Forest Road in St. John's commemorates the sacrifice of Private Bugden. – photograph from 2015*)

The photograph of Private Bugden is from the Provincial Archives.

Private Leighton Bugden was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

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1st NEWFOUNDLAND REGT. C Co.

**L. BUGDEN 1544
B. R. EDNEY 1714**

**Missing 12.10.16
W & M**

I saw both Bugden and Edney killed by the same shell after we had gone over the top at Flers on date mentioned. They fell only a few yards from the parapet. This was about 2.0 p.m.

Reference: Cpl. C. P. Martin 192

Convalescent Camp, Rouen 7.2.17