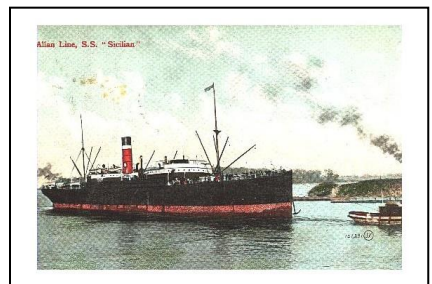




Private Goliath Bursey (Regimental Number 2381) lies in St-Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen – Grave reference P. V. E. 4A.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a railway section man working for the *Reid Newfoundland Company* and earning eight dollars and fifty cents a week, Goliath Bursey was a recruit of the Ninth Draft. Having presented himself at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's for medical examination on March 31, he then enlisted *for the duration of the war* – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on the following day, April 1. He attested on that same April 1.

Private Bursey sailed from St. John's on July 19 on board His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian** (right). The ship - refitted some ten years previously to carry well over one thousand passengers - had left the Canadian port of Montreal on July 16, carrying Canadian military personnel.



It is likely that the troops disembarked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool; however, it is *certain* that upon disembarkation the contingent journeyed north by train to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot.

(continued)

**Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport during another conflict, carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as the 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 despatched 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-upon-Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)

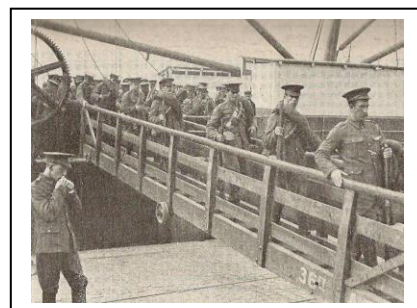
At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been billeted at Newton Park School and either in the grandstand or in a tented camp at the racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr.



(Right above: the new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photograph from 2012)

The 11th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Burse among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on October 3 of 1916 on its way to the Continent and to the Western Front.

The contingent disembarked in the Norman capital of Rouen on the next day, October 4, and spent time at the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot located there, in final training and organization*, before making its way to a rendezvous with 1st Battalion.



(Right: 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.*

(continued)

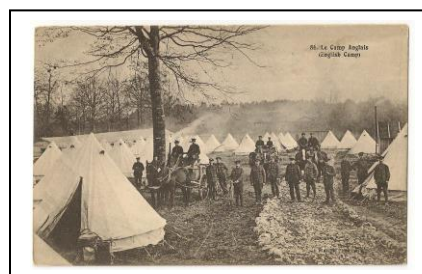
The contingent with which Private Bursey reported *for duty in the field* was a large detachment of two-hundred sixty-six *other ranks* which arrived from Rouen at the Battalion transport lines on October 12. This was also the day on which 1st Battalion made its attack on the enemy positions at Gueudecourt, again sustaining heavy casualties – two-hundred thirty-nine all told - and gaining little.

Thus it was that the new-comers remained behind the lines until the 14th, two days later, when they were moved up to *Switch Trench* and parcelled out to the Battalion's four depleted fighting companies. Consequently, the date of their arrival is often recorded not as October 12 but as October 14.

(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. This is also the area of the positions into which the re-enforcements of October 12-14 were posted. – photograph from 2007*)



After the episode of October 12 at Gueudecourt, 1st Battalion had remained in the same area of *the Somme* and was regularly into and out of the trenches. There were to be no infantry engagements, but the incessant artillery action ensured a steady stream of casualties. The Newfoundlanders would be withdrawn from active service on or about December 12 and were to spend the following six weeks or so encamped well behind the lines and close to the city of Amiens.

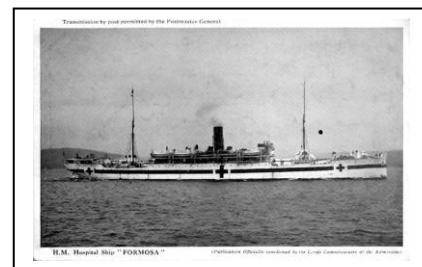


(Right above: *a British encampment somewhere on the Continent, apparently during the winter season – from a vintage post-card*)



Private Bursey's fall, Christmas and winter period was not, however, to follow the pattern as described above. On November 25 he is recorded as having been admitted into the 3rd General Hospital at Le Tréport with a severe case of trench-foot.

(Right above: *the British 3rd General Hospital, much of it under canvas, in the French coastal resort-town of Le Tréport – from a vintage post-card*)



Three days later he was embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Formosa* (right) for the short crossing of the English Channel back to the United Kingdom.

(continued)

Having arrived in England Private Bursey was transferred on November 30 to the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth where he received treatment and convalescence for the following three months, until March of 1917.

(Right: *The main building of what became 3rd London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1st, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)



(Above far right: *Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing at 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

Private Bursey was then granted – on March 4 - the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon discharge from hospital care in the United Kingdom. Being posted after this period of leave to the Regimental Depot at Ayr, he reported to *duty* there on March 13. He was to remain in Scotland* for just under five months.



(Right above: *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*)

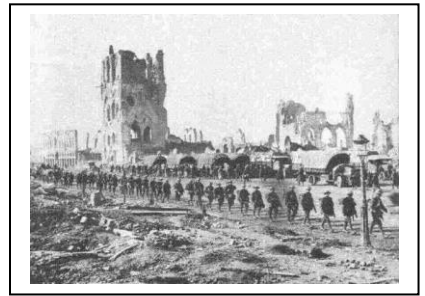
On August 5, the 28th Re-enforcement Draft from Barry* made its way to France, probably through the English Channel port of Folkestone before docking in Rouen on the 7th, two days later – the records are contradictory. After the inevitable time spent in those final preparations at the Base Depot there, Private Bursey was eventually despatched northwards.

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of Dundee. 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.*

Private Bursey was one of the two drafts totalling one-hundred sixty-six personnel which arrived at Penton Camp, in the vicinity of the Belgian town of Poperinghe, on August 28. 1st Battalion had quit the line on the 24th and was not to return to the front for an entire month. This period, a planned lull in the fighting, was to allow the entire British Army time to reorganize and re-enforce.

(continued)

Some two months previously, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of *the Ypres Salient*. This had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

1st Battalion remained in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army which floundered its way across the sodden countryside of Flanders. Notably it fought in two major engagements, at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembeek* on October 9.



(Right: *an unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*. They were ordered back south from Belgium into northern France on October 17 to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of *Berles-au-Bois*, a small rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras.

The so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1st Battalion was again dealt with severely, at *Marcoing* and at *Masnières* - where a *Caribou* stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



(Above right: *the Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

(continued)

On November 25, Private Bursey was recorded as having been admitted into the 9th General Hospital in Rouen for treatment to gun-shot injuries to the chest. The circumstances of his wounding have not been documented except that they occurred while he was serving with 'D' Company during the fighting at Masnières.



(Right: *transferring wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

The youngest son of Reuben Bursey, fisherman-farmer, and Mary Bursey (née *Balsom*) – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay - of Clarendville, Trinity Bay, he was the third of seven children (this at the time of the 1911 census): Frederick, Fannie, Emily-Jane, Joseph, Eliza and William being the others.



Private Bursey was reported as having *died of wounds* in hospital in Rouen on November 30, 1917.

Goliath Bursey had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen years and six months (birth date: November 14, 1897) – a year's discrepancy.

His older brother Frederick also served in the Newfoundland Regiment (Number: 1348), attaining the rank of lance corporal and surviving the War.



(Right above: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of 1st Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012*)

(Right above: *The War Memorial in Clarendville honours the sacrifice of Private Bursey. – photograph from 2009*)

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

(continued on following page)



Clarenville

Dec 26th 1917

To the Pay and Record Office

Dear Sirs

In reference to my Son who died of wounds on the 30th of Nov in the 9th General Hospital Pte Goliath Bursey No 2381 Im informed that they don't get their full amount of wages when they goes to the trenches if he got any money their I would like to get it its his wish as he leaved me an old Broken hearted father To die for King and Country and the freedom of the world. He was my only help.

Yours Respectfully

Mr Ruben Bursey

Clarenville

Trinity Bay NFLD