

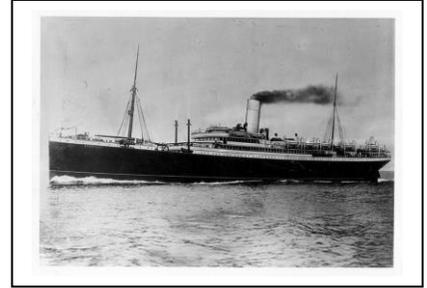


Lance Corporal Harvey Ronald Butler (Regimental Number 1883) lies in Heilly Station Cemetery, Méricourt l'Abbé – Grave reference IV. A. 82 - and shares a headstone with Private William Charles Forbes of the Royal Fusiliers.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of an office clerk, Harvey Ronald Butler was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. He enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's – engaged at the daily private soldier' rate of \$1.10 – on September 30, 1915, and attested five days later, on October 5.

****A second source has him enlisting only on October 5.***

Private Butler and the other military 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.

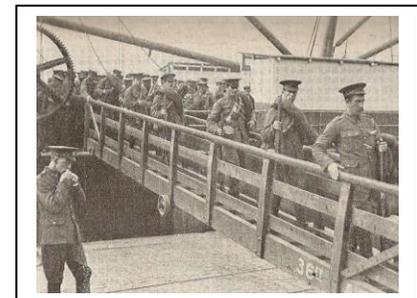


(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was while he was posted at Ayr that Private Butler was awarded his first stripe – and a raise in pay of five cents per day – being promoted to the rank of lance corporal on February 2 of 1916. What is not recorded is the date that he re-enlisted – if indeed he did so – or if, in fact, he was one of the first to be engaged for the duration of the war at the time of his first enlistment*.

**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.*

The 8th Re-enforcement Draft – Lance Corporal Butler one of its non-commissioned officers - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to the Continent on July 9, 1916. It arrived in the Norman capital of Rouen on the following day, July 10, whereupon the contingent was received into the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot.



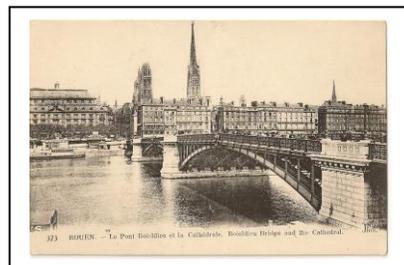
There the newcomers were to undergo a period of final training* and organization before moving onwards towards the front and to a rendezvous with 1st Battalion, the parent unit.

(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 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.*

There must have been a sense of urgency at the time: 1st Battalion had suffered terribly at a place called Beaumont-Hamel on the morning of July 1, and on July 6 its depleted strength still numbered no more than one-hundred sixty-eight *other ranks* instead of the regulation strength of approximately one thousand. The unit was desperately in need of re-enforcement.

Lance Corporal Butler, for the time being however, was to proceed no further than to Rouen. Perhaps having been hospitalized immediately upon arrival, he was reported as entering the 2nd Convalescent Depot there on July 12 – only two days after disembarkation - suffering from scabies. On July 28 he was *discharged to duty* to the Base Depot, from where he was released to join 1st Battalion, apparently on August 7*.



(Right above: *The River Seine flows through the centre of the French city of Rouen – and under the watchful eye of its venerable gothic cathedral - at or about the time of the Great War. – from a vintage post-card.*)

Arriving on this date, he reported *to duty* amid the ruins of the medieval city of Ypres in Belgium.

**Although the only re-enforcements recorded in the Regimental War Diary are those of June 29 and August 13.*

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1st Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after re-enforcement – had 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*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel. 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*.

(continued)

(Page preceding: *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*)



Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1st Battalion went again to the attack 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 managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007*)



It was during the attack on enemy positions of October 12 at Gueudecourt that Lance Corporal Butler was wounded. He was right away evacuated to the 15th CW(?) Dressing Station, from there to be transferred to the 36th Casualty Clearing Station at Heilly. He had incurred injuries inflicted by gun-fire to the arm and to the thigh while serving with 'C' Company in the fighting at Gueudecourt*.



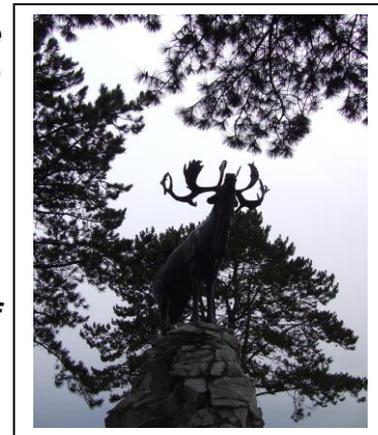
(Right above: *transferring wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

The eldest son of Annie Butler - to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay, and to whom he had willed his all - and William Parsons Butler - employee in the shoe department at *G. Knowling, Importers & General Merchants* - of 92, Pleasant Street, St. John's, he was reported as having *died of wounds* in the same 36th CCS on October 12, 1916,

Harvey Ronald Butler had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and five months.

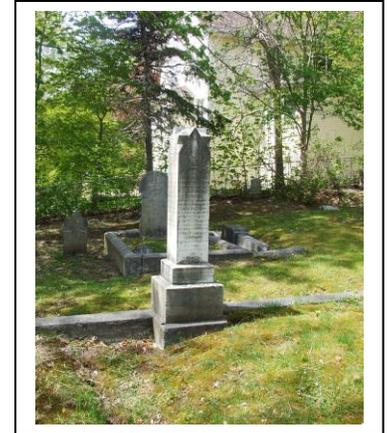
**A second source suggests that he may have been injured during the heavy enemy artillery bombardment of the evening of October 11.*

(Right above: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt marks the furthest point of advance of 1st Battalion on October 12, 1916. – photograph from 2009(?)*)



(continued)

(Right: A family memorial which stands in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's commemorates the sacrifice of Lance Corporal Butler. – photograph from 2015)



Lance Corporal Harvey Ronald Butler was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

