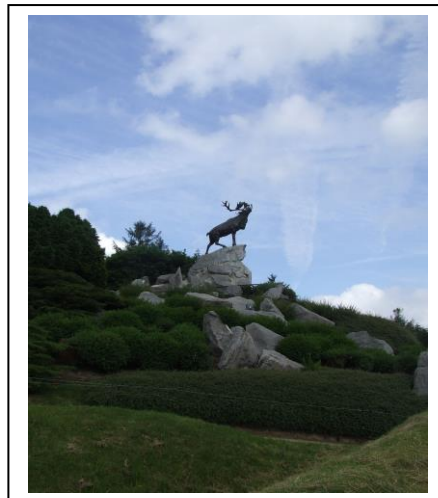




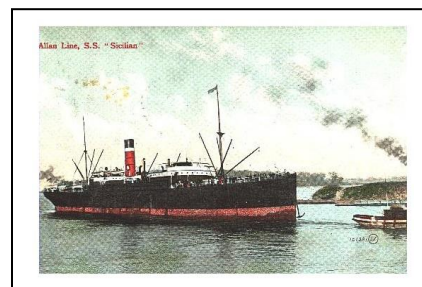
Private Thomas Charles Butler (Regimental Number 2990), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in the Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a farmer earning a daily dollar, Thomas Charles Butler was a recruit of the Tenth Draft. He enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's *for the duration of the war* – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on July 26 of 1916, before then presenting himself for medical examination and attestation on the following day, July 27.



It was the 28th of August when Private Butler embarked for passage to the United Kingdom and it was on board His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian** (right) that he was to make the trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom.

This was the third such voyage that the ship was to make in 1916, the Newfoundlanders likely sharing the vessel with Canadian personnel**. Private Butler was a soldier of Section 15, Platoon 12, 'C' (Reserve) Company of 3rd Battalion (see *** below), and one of a draft of two-hundred forty-two personnel from Newfoundland in all.



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

***Sicilian had been re-fitted in 1906 to carry just under twelve-hundred passengers, thus her journey to St. John's in March of 1916 was likely followed by the short passage to Halifax to embark Canadian military personnel. Likewise, in July, she had sailed from Montreal on July 16 with Canadians to embark the Newfoundlanders awaiting passage overseas.*

****3rd Battalion was based in St. John's, whereas 2nd (Reserve) Battalion – 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Companies - was stationed in the United Kingdom. 1st Battalion was the edge of the sword – 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies – and was posted to the front.*

Upon arrival in the United Kingdom, the ship docked in the south-coast naval port of Devonport from where the Newfoundlanders entrained for the journey north to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot where each newcomer was delegated to one of the four resident companies - and the where the somewhat confusing title of 'C' Company was abandoned.

(continued)

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 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 despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



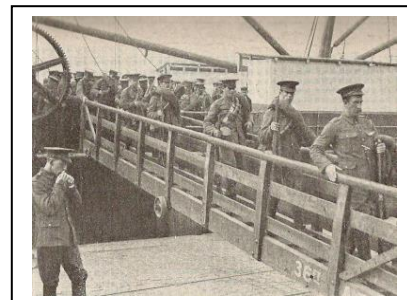
(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-upon-Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

During the winter of 1915-1916 the men of the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been lodged in several venues, at a nearby military camp at Gales, but also as far afield as Paisley Barracks, some sixty-five kilometres distant. However, by the spring of 1916 the difficulty had been overcome by housing the men in a requisitioned school, in a tented community and in the Ayr Racecourse Grandstand, all in the district of Newton-upon-Ayr.



(Right above: *the new race-course at 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 – photo from 2012*)

The 14th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Butler among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on November 30 of 1916 on its way to the Continent and to the Western Front. It disembarked in the Norman capital of Rouen on the next day, December 1, 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.



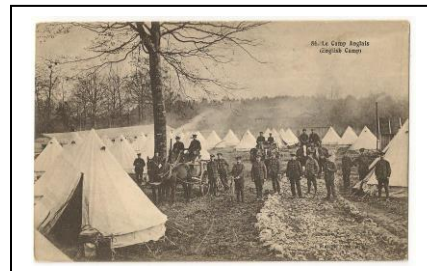
(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

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

When that rendezvous was effected it was late in the day of December 11 – which is likely why it is recorded in the Regimental War Diary as occurring on the 12th. The parent unit had retired from the front on December 8, but many of the men had been seconded for work at Carnoy and Fricourt.

(continued)

Those spared had marched on to Méricourt l'Abbé which is where the one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Base Depot – Private Butler among that number - reported *to duty*. The newcomers were just in time for the six-week Christmas period to be spent well behind the lines in *Corps Reserve*, encamped near the city of Amiens.



(Right: a typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card)

After that Christmas respite, 1st Battalion *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23 of the New Year, 1917, although they had already been back in the trenches for several days and had suffered their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

The next five weeks were little different from those before Christmas: in and out of the trenches, the occasional dead, wounded and ill, and the occasional cold winter's day with its snow and ice - which did not seem to bother the Newfoundlanders.

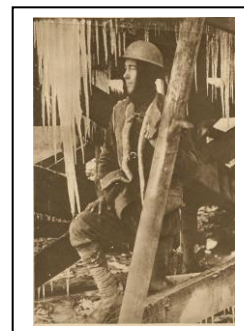
Anything was better than rain and mud.

The only infantry activity involving 1st Battalion during that entire period – from the action in mid-October of 1916 at Gueudecourt, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and the beginning of March, an action which brought this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.



(Above right: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time.* - photograph from 2009(?))

(Right: *A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers stands in the cold of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel apparently enjoying a cigarette, during the late winter of 1916-1917, just prior to the arrival there of the Newfoundlanders who relieved them.* – from *Illustration*)



On March 2, the day prior, part of the entry in the Regimental War Diary reads... *All our trenches were subjected to a heavy and accurate bombardment during the day, particularly B Co. in PALZ TRENCH in the afternoon... 2/Lt Thomson and 1 OR reported missing. Other Casualties: 4 killed, 13 wounded*

The son of Garland Benjamin Butler (schoolmaster, drowned October, 1895) and Sarah Butler (deceased January, 1908) of Griquet in the District of St. Barbe, his own place of residence was recorded as Middle Bight, Kelligrews, where he had lived since the age of four with his uncle and adoptive father, William Butler and his wife Elizabeth - to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay.

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Apparently unable to have children, the Butlers of Kelligrews had adopted young Thomas in the hope that he would become their support later on in life and the eventual heir to their estate.

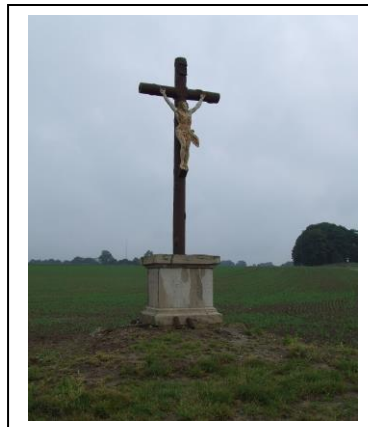
Thomas Butler had the following siblings who later came to be: Rev. W. A. Butler (serving in Hodge's Cove and Port de Grave); Mrs. Clement Boyle; Mrs. Wm. Clark; Mrs. Stephen Parsons; Mrs. T. C. Butler; Miss Ethel Butler (later Hopkins); Signaller Alfred Francis Butler (Regimental Number 460, discharged as being *medically unfit* in 1918); and Madeleine who died at the age of four months.

Private Butler was reported as having been *killed in action* on that March 2, 1917, while serving with 'B' Company during the bombardment of that afternoon at Sailly-Saillisel, in the French *Département de la Somme*.

Back at home, it was the Reverend Canon Colley of Kelligrews who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Thomas Charles Butler had enlisted at the age of twenty-eight years and three months.

(Right: A Calvaire at a crossroads not far distant from Sailly-Saillisel is still a collecting point for munitions – to be seen next to the base - ploughed up a century later. - photograph from 2007)



Private Thomas Charles Butler was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

