

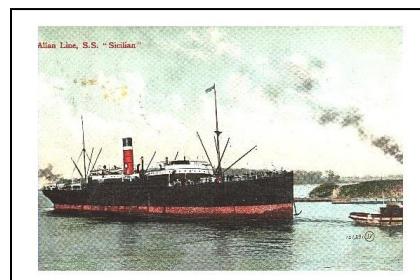


Private Samuel Butt (Regimental Number 2520) is buried in the Rocquigny-Équancourt Road British Cemetery – Grave reference Ill. B. 2.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Samuel Butt was a recruit of the Ninth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on April 14, 1916, he then both enlisted – engaged *for the duration of the war* and at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and attested on the following day, April 15.

Private Butt 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.

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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.

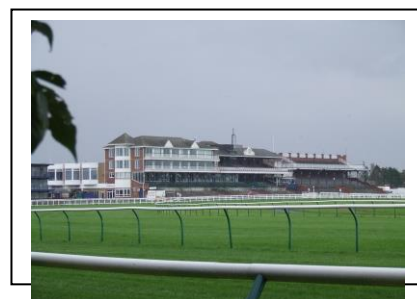
*\*Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport during another conflict, carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

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 2<sup>nd</sup> (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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

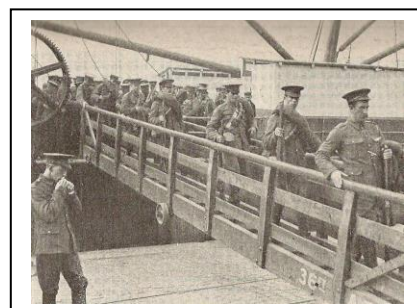


(Right above: *the new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photograph from 2012*)

The 11<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Private Butt 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

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



(continued)

***\*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.***

The contingent with which Private Butt 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion made its attack on the enemy positions at Gueudecourt, again sustaining heavy casualties – two-hundred thirty-nine all told - and gaining little.

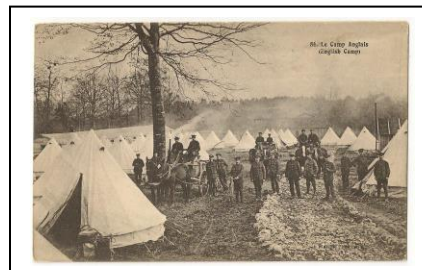
Thus it was that the new-comers remained behind the lines until the 14<sup>th</sup>, two days later, when they were moved up to *Switch Trench* and parcelled out to the Battalion's four depleted fighting companies. Consequently, the date of their arrival is often recorded not as October 12 but as October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

(Right: *This is the ground over which 1<sup>st</sup> 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 action of October 12 at Gueudecourt, 1<sup>st</sup> 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*)

After that welcome six-week Christmas-time respite away from the front lines, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

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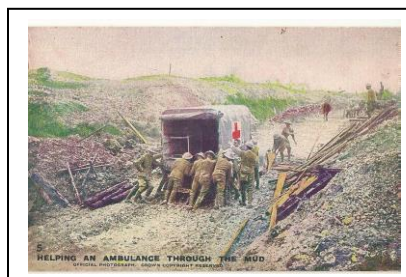


The only infantry activity involving 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion during that entire period – from the action in mid-October of 1916 at Gueudecourt, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and the beginning of March, an action which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



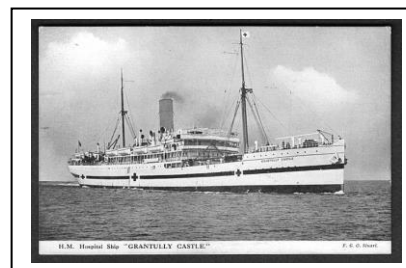
(Above right: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion’s posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time. - photograph from 2009(?)*)

Private Butt was not, however, to serve at Sailly-Saillisel as, on February 26, he was admitted into the 87<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance before being transferred on the same day to the 34<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Grovetown near the village of Meaulté. He had been diagnosed as suffering from pleurisy.



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

From there on an unspecified date he was forwarded on to the 10<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Rouen where he received further treatment until March 12 on which date he was embarked onto His Majesty’s Hospital Ship *Grantully Castle* (right) for the crossing back to the United Kingdom.



Upon his arrival in England, Private Butt was admitted as a patient of the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth on March 13 – by then apparently having contracted bronchitis as well.

(Right: *The main building of what became 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

After treatment and convalescence Private Butt was granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon discharge from hospital in the United Kingdom. This short period of leave, from April 26 until May 5, was followed by a posting back to the Regimental Depot in Scotland.

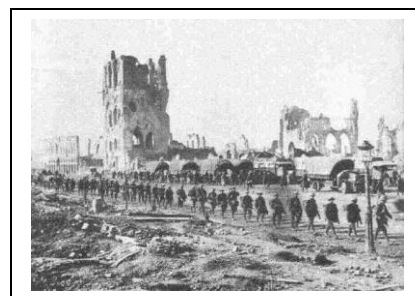
*(Right: the High Street in Ayr, dominated then as it still is today by the imposing Wallace Tower, as shown on a postcard of the time sent home by a Newfoundland soldier – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo)*



On August 5 the 28<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Barry\* embarked, probably in Folkestone to land in Rouen two days later, on the 7<sup>th</sup> – the records are contradictory. Whatever the case, on the same August 7, Private Butt, in lieu of making his way with the contingent to the Base Depot, was being admitted into the 1<sup>st</sup> Stationary Hospital in Rouen in need of medical attention for a case of venereal disease. He was in hospital for a month before being discharged to Base Depot on September 12, thence to join the parent unit *in the field* on October 12.

*\*During the summer months of 1917, 2<sup>nd</sup> (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.*

Some three months previous to Private Butt's return to *active service*, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had once again been ordered 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)*

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to remain 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, by that time it had fought in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembeek* on October 9.



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

Private Butt's draft of ninety-four *other ranks* arriving from Rouen on October 12, was days too late to play a role in the second of those two actions and by the time of its arrival, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had already been withdrawn from the line, anticipating deployment elsewhere.

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A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembek*, 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.

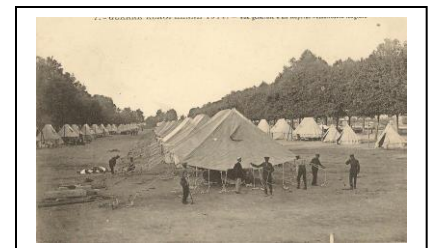
The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where 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*)

The son of Thomas Butt, fisherman, and Elizabeth (Lizzie) H. Butt – to whom he had allocated a daily fifty-five cents from his pay and to whom he had willed his all - of Hickman's Harbour, Trinity Bay – he was oldest of six children: Walter-James, Moses, Blanch(e), George-Allen and Ralph being the others.

Private Butt was reported as having *died of wounds* - unspecified injuries suffered while serving with the re-enforcement company in the fighting close to the French villages of Marcoing and Masnières. He died at the 21<sup>st</sup> Casualty Clearing Station in the village of Ytres on November 22, 1917.

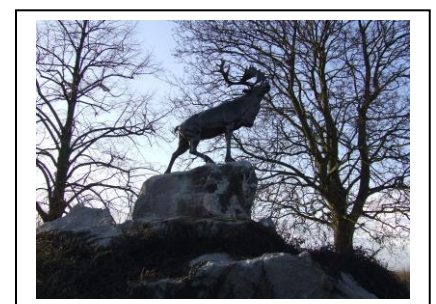


(Right above: *a British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War – from a vintage post-card*)

Back at home, it was the Reverend D. E. Freake of Random South who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Samuel Butt had enlisted at the age of nineteen years and five months: date of birth November 15, 1896.

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**(Previous page: *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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial.* – photograph from 2012)**

**Private Samuel Butt was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).**

