



**Private John Carsons (Regimental Number 1192) is interred in Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery No. 2, Auchonvillers – Grave reference A. 45.**

**His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a fisherman working for an annual \$450.00(?), John Carsons presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on March 9, 1915. He then enlisted three days later - at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem - on March 12, before attesting four days later again, on March 16.**



**Private Carsons of 'E' Company embarked in St. John's on board the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* (right above – from the *Provincial Archives*) a further five weeks later, on April 22, 1915.**

**(continued)**

The ship sailed to Halifax where his contingent took ship on His Majesty's Transport *Missanabie* (right) – likely with Canadian troops - for the crossing to Liverpool – the ship departed Halifax on April 25. From Liverpool the Newfoundlanders travelled by train to Edinburgh where they arrived on May 2. 'E' Company was to have but a few days to savor the charms of the Scottish capital.



Only nine days later, on May 11, the entire Battalion was posted for training from Edinburgh to a tented Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick.



(Right: *the Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp on June 10, the day it received its Colours* – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

From Stobs, some thirteen weeks later again, in early August, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the senior Companies now become 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 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 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion.

When he was apprised of his transfer seems not to be recorded, but Private Carsons was one of the few from 'E' Company who were to swell the ranks of the units posted to Aldershot - thus he became a soldier of 'A' Company. It was during the period while he was at Aldershot, and as was the case with the great majority of the Newfoundland troops, that Private Carsons was prevailed upon to re-enlist *for the duration of the war*. This he did on August 15\*.



*\*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 August 20, 1915, Private Carsons took ship on board the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (right above) for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting in Gallipoli where, a month later – of which two weeks had been spent billeted at the British barracks at Abbassia, near the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion landed on the beach at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



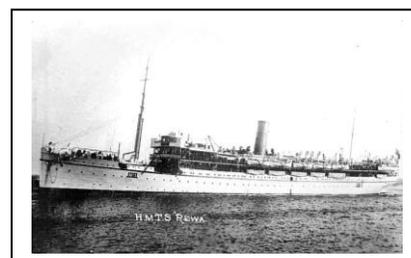
(Previous page black & white: Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros, either *Megantic* on August 29, *Ausonia* on September 18, or *Prince Abbas* on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – from Provincial Archives)



(Previous page bottom: 'Kangaroo Beach', where 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph from 2011)

(Right above: almost a century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Carsons served during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)

At beginning of December, Private Carsons received treatment at the South Wales Mounted Brigade Field Ambulance Unit at Suvla, and was then embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Rewa* (right) for evacuation to Malta.



On December 3, he was admitted into the Military Hospital, Floriana, for treatment to rheumatism, on the British-held Mediterranean island of Malta. From Floriana Private Carsons was forwarded to the All Saints' Convalescent Camp, also on Malta, and from there was discharged to duty – in all likelihood being posted back to the Sidi Bishr Base Depot in Alexandria – on January 21 of the New Year, 1916.



(Right: Numerous former British military medical establishments today stand disused and abandoned on the now-independent – since 1964 - island of Malta. - photograph from 2011)

(Right: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders, employed as the rear-guard, were among the last to leave on two occasions. – photograph taken from the battleship *Cornwallis* from *Illustration*)

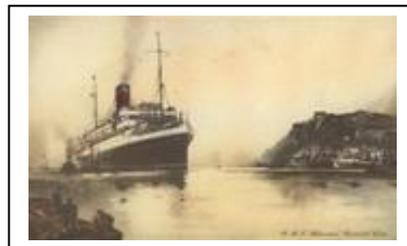


When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been sent to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month. From there the Newfoundlanders were transferred, almost immediately, south to Suez. To that point it seems that the theatre of the future posting of 29<sup>th</sup> Division was still uncertain.

It was during the posting to Suez that Private Carsons, only two weeks before the Battalion's departure from there, reported *to duty*, on March 1.

(continued)

On March 14, the decision having been taken, the officers and men of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion embarked through Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the Suez Canal onto His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* (right) for passage to the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles, en route to the *Western Front*.



(Right: *Port Tewfiq at a time just before the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

(Right below: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles*. – from a vintage post-card)



Some three days after the unit's disembarkation in France on March 22, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them travelling unused in a separate wagon.



De-training at the station at two in the morning the Newfoundlanders still had a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

(Right: *the Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy* – photograph from 2010)

It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers paid much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge that they passed on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would be a part of their history.



On April 13, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy – where it was billeted, received re-enforcements from Rouen on the 15<sup>th</sup> and, on the evening of that same day, was sent forward into the British lines to make improvements to the communication trenches.

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that same meandering river, *the Somme*.

(Right: *part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel* – photograph from 2007(?))



(continued)

A native of Bear Cove, Harbour Grace, Private Carsons' parents – possibly Edward Carson and Catherine Jane Carsons (née *Brazill*); if so, siblings are James-Edward, Lorenzo-Brazill, Ambrose and possibly Jessie - may have been deceased by the time of his enlistment as he named his brother Lorenzo, who later moved to Bayfield, New Brunswick, as his next of kin. He had also allotted him a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay.

Private Carsons was at first reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. Some six months later, on December 31, he was officially *presumed dead*.



However, a subsequent report dated April 24, 1917, and submitted by the Officer Commanding 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, recorded the identification of his remains and their burial west of Y Ravine in No-Man's-Land on or about that same date. Private Carsons' dossier was thus amended so as to read *killed in action 1/7/16*.

John Carsons had enlisted at the age of nineteen years.

(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel - looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences - The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009*)



(Right: *a grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from ...*)

Private John Carsons was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

