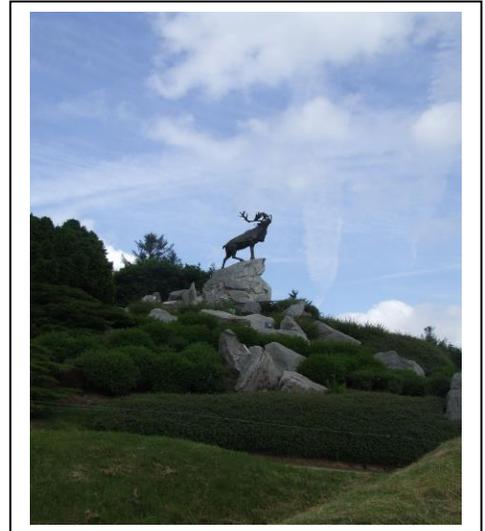




Corporal Joseph Cave (Regimental Number 2944), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service that of a school teacher earning three hundred dollars per annum, Joseph Cave was a recruit of the Tenth Draft. Presenting himself for medical examination and *apparently* also attesting at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on July 6 of 1916, he enlisted – engaged *for the duration of the war* at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – only on July 7, the following day, this according to his file.



It was the 28<sup>th</sup> of August before he embarked for passage to the United Kingdom and it was as Lance Corporal Cave – promoted on August 26 or 27 – that he did so on His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian*\* (right). This was the third trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom from St. John's that the ship was to make in 1916, the Newfoundlanders likely again sharing the vessel with Canadian military personnel\*\*. He sailed as a non-commissioned officer of 10<sup>th</sup> Platoon, Section 8, of 'C' Company of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion\*\*\*.



*\*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.*

*\*\*\*3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was based in St. John's, whereas 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion – 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Companies - was stationed in the United Kingdom. 1<sup>st</sup> 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 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 – photo from 2012*)

The 14<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Lance Corporal Cave among that contingent - 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. The contingent 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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, Étaples, 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 most likely why it is recorded elsewhere as happening on the 12<sup>th</sup>. 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.

Those spared had marched on to Méricourt l'Abbé which is where the one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Base Depot – Lance Corporal Cave among that contingent - reported *to duty*.



The newcomers were just in time for the six-week Christmas period to be spent encamped well behind the lines in *Corps Reserve* and near to the city of Amiens.

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

The Newfoundlanders officially returned to active service on January 23 of 1917, although they had already been back in the trenches and had suffered their first casualties – and fatality – of the year. The next five weeks differed little from those of the preceding autumn: in and out of the trenches, the occasional dead, wounded and ill, and the occasional winter's day which did not seem to bother the Newfoundlanders. Anything was better than rain and mud.

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



(Right above: *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(?))

For the Newfoundlanders, the month of March was a quiet period. Having departed from the trenches, they spent their time near the community of Meaulté re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events. They even enjoyed the novelty of a visit from the Regimental Band from Scotland as of March 6, and a second, from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris (right), on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



On March 29, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion began to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, their march to end in the remnants of a village by the name of Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right: *the rubble of the Grande Place in the city of Arras at the time of the Great War* – from Illustration)

On April 9 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties it was the most expensive operation of the War for the British, its only positive episode being the Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.

The French offensive was a disaster.



(Right above: *the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to play its part in the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at a place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After Beaumont-Hamel, Monchy-le-Preux was to prove the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties on April 14 alone.



(Right above: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen, almost a century later, from the western – in 1917, the British – side of the community. The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

(Right: *Newfoundland troops just after the time of Monchy-le-Preux – from *The War Illustrated**)



May of 1917 was a period when the Newfoundlanders were moved hither and thither on the Arras front, in and out of the trenches. Apart from the ever-present artillery, there was little infantry activity – except for the marching.

At the beginning of June, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion retired from the line to Bonneville and spent its time re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.

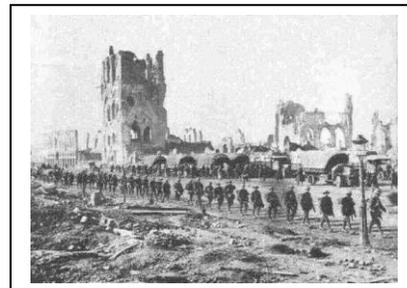


It was during this period of preparations for what was to come that Lance Corporal Cave received a second promotion, to the rank of corporal, on June 14.

(Right above: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville in early May – perhaps the 7<sup>th</sup> - of 1917 – from *The War Illustrated**)

(continued)

The Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 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 designated as the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, borrowing 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*)

The entry in the Regimental War Diary for July 10 makes mention of only a single – wounded - casualty. However, the report of the day previous, the 9<sup>th</sup>, reads as follows: *At about 11.20 pm, Germans open a heavy Barrage on Trout & Support Trenches and Canal Bank Total Killed 6 wounded nineteen...* Corporal Cave was most likely among that number but, given the late hour, reported on the following day.

The son of Elias Cave, fisherman, and Lucy Cave – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of the Change Islands, he was reported as having been *killed in action* on July 10, 1917 – which may have occurred on the previous day - while serving with ‘D’ Company on the Yser Canal to the north of the Belgian city of Ypres.



Joseph Cave had enlisted at the age of twenty-two years and four months.

(Right above: *the Yser Canal as it flows north of Ypres – From July 5 to 10, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was manning positions on both sides of the water. The Front was on the eastern bank – to the right on the photograph – which was where ‘D’ Company was stationed during this time. – photograph from 2013*)

(Right: *the monument erected by Elias and Lucy Cave to the memory of their son, and which stands in St. Margaret’s Anglican Churchyard on the Change Islands – photograph from 2013*)



Corporal Joseph Cave was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

