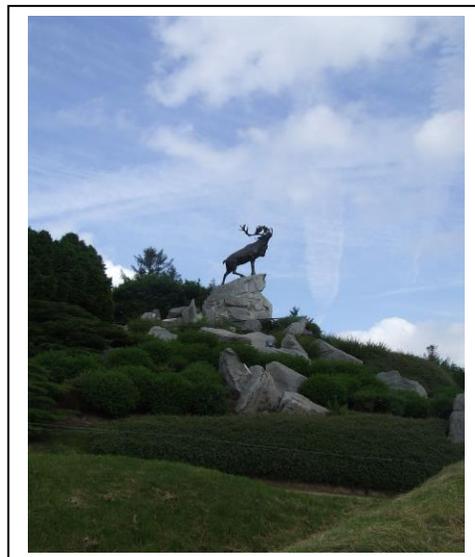




Private Arthur James Chaffey (Regimental Number 3014), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Arthur James Chaffey was a recruit of the Thirteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury on Harvey Road in St. John's on August 7 of 1916, he then also enlisted – *for the duration of the war* and engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and attested on that same August 7.



It can be speculated that, had circumstances proved different, Private Chaffey would have left for Halifax – and then would have been quarantined in Windsor – at the end of January, 1917, until the month of April. As it transpired, he contracted measles while still in Newfoundland in November of 1916 and was admitted into the Military Infectious Diseases Hospital in St. John's from November 21 until December 22.

Just less than three weeks later, he was back in hospital – for the same medical problems – and remained there from January 10 until March 6.

On April 7 of 1917, he boarded a train in St. John's for the cross-island journey to Port aux Basques. From there a ferry and another train transported Private Chaffey and company to Halifax. Apparently it was hoped that the fifty personnel of this draft would be joining the *Windsor Draft*\* on April 16 or 17 when it was to board one of the three transports awaiting in Halifax harbour to depart in convoy for the United Kingdom.

*\*This was the name given to the draft of about three-hundred twenty all ranks which had left St. John's on January 31, 1917, en route to Halifax from where they were to sail to the United Kingdom. This contingent would eventually make that voyage, but about thirteen weeks later than envisaged. They were quarantined at Windsor as the result of a measles and mumps epidemic that claimed two of their number – and maybe a later third. In the meantime, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion at Ayr was running low on man-power.*

This plan, however, was not to be, for whatever the reason, and it was not until the final day of the month that this small contingent – Private Chaffey still one of that number - finally sailed from Halifax. They may, in fact, have hitched a ride on His Majesty's Transport *Olympic* (right) – sister-ship of *Titanic* – which sailed, not in convoy, at that time from Halifax with Canadian troops to the United Kingdom.



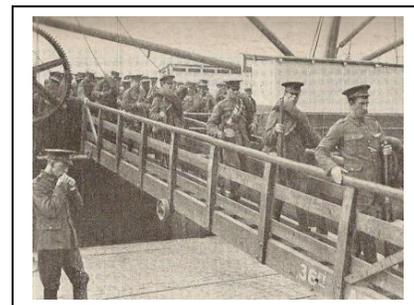
(continued)

Arriving in England the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence to serve as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for two years. It was from here – since November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from Newfoundland were to be 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: *the new race-course at Ayr – opened in 1907 – where men of the Regiment were billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photo from 2012*)

On June 11, 1917, the 25<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Private Chaffey in its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to France. On the following day, June 12, it disembarked in the Norman capital, Rouen, where time was spent at the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, to be organized and to undergo final training\* before moving onward to its eventual rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

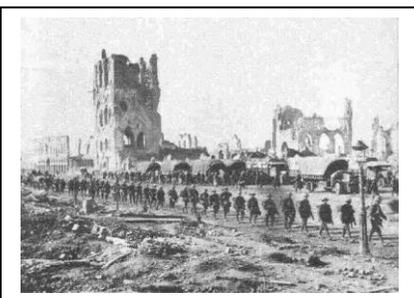


(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

*\*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.*

His records show that it was on July 2 – the *Regimental War Diary* says, in fact, on the day before - that Private Donohue's contingent of two-hundred fifty *other ranks* reported to *duty* at Caribou Camp, behind the lines near Woesten in Belgium. For the next few days – and nights – 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion supplied working parties for road-mending and for the construction of infantry tracks.

Only days before, at the end of June, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had once again moved north into Belgium and once again to the area of Ypres. 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.

(continued)

(Preceding page: *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 remained 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 it fought in two major engagements, at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembeek* on October 9.

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



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

(Right above: *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 Edward Joseph Chaffey, railway worker - and Catherine Ann Chaffey (née *Madore*) - to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay – theirs was a rare, mixed marriage at the time\* - of Jeffreys, Bay St. George - *Jeffrey's Crossing* in the 1911 census - he was the oldest brother of Mary W., Ulric C., Flora M., William F. and Peter.

Private Chaffey was at first reported as *missing in action* on December 3, 1917, while serving with 'C' Company during the fighting retreat near the villages of Marcoing and Masnières.

(continued)

However, a subsequent report submitted by the Reverend W. Keary, attached to the 17<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, forwarded on December 12 and received two days later, recorded Private Chaffey's death and burial.



There was also subsequently received via the offices of the Geneva Red Cross, a German report that they had identified and buried his remains in Seranvilles Cemetery in the vicinity of Cambrai\*\*.

The file of Private Chaffey was thus amended on or about June 10, 1918, so as to read *killed in action 3/12/17*.

At home, it was the Reverend E. Butler of St. George's Bay who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Arthur James Chaffey had enlisted at the age of seventeen years and two months – his recruitment form records a *declared* age of eighteen years and one month: his date of birth was June 12, 1899, according to the 1911 census.

*\*They were married in 1897 in Sandy Point Anglican Church.*

*\*\*If this is so, it is likely that his first grave was disturbed by subsequent fighting and thus his remains re-interred.*

(Right above: *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 Arthur James Chaffey was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

