



Private Albert Chatman (Regimental Number 2278), 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 fisherman earning a monthly twenty-six dollars, Albert Chatman was a recruit of the Ninth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on March 13, 1916, he also enlisted on the same day – engaged *for the duration of the war* at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10. He then attested on March 18, five days later.



Private Chatman 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.



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 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-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

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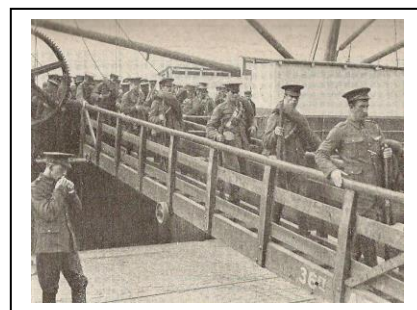
At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been 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 11th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Chatman one of its number - 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. It 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 1st Battalion.

(Right: *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.*

It was a large detachment of two-hundred sixty-six *other ranks* – a number which included Private Horwood - that reported from Rouen to the 1st Battalion transport lines on October 12. This was also the day on which 1st Battalion made its attack on the enemy positions at Gueudecourt, again sustaining heavy casualties – some two-hundred thirty-nine all told - and gaining little in return.

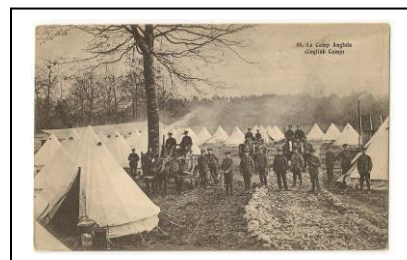
Thus it was that the new-comers remained behind the lines until the 14th, two days later, when they were moved up to *Switch Trench* and parcelled out to the Battalion's four depleted fighting companies. Consequently, the date of their arrival is often recorded not as October 12 but as October 14.

(Right: *This is the ground over which 1st 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*)



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After the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1st Battalion had continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter. This was a period to be broken only by the several weeks – as of December 11-12 - spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period.



The Newfoundlanders were withdrawn well behind the lines to spend that time and encamped close to the city of Amiens.

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

After that welcome six-week Christmas-time respite away from *the Front*, the Newfoundlanders *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.

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.

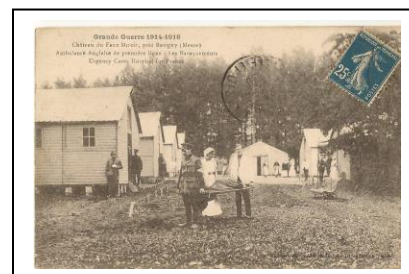


(Right above: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time.* - photograph from 2009(?))

After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March was a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events. They even had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris (right), the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



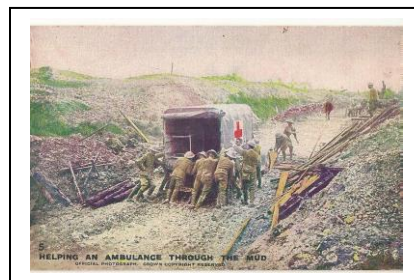
Five days after the Prime Minister's appearance at Meaulté – 1st Battalion by now at Camps-en-Amienois - Private Chatman was admitted into the 88th Field Ambulance with a case of tonsillitis. Some six days later, on the 28th, he was forwarded to the New Zealand Stationary Hospital at Amiens from where he was sent onwards to the 12th General Hospital at Rouen on April 6.



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(Previous page: a *British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some* – from a vintage post-card)

(Right: *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)



On April 14, the day of the Newfoundlanders disastrous attack at Monchy-le-Preux, Private Chatman was released from hospital into the 2nd Convalescent Depot, also in Rouen, to recover from impetigo. He remained there for just over five weeks until May 20 when he was discharged to duty at the Base Depot, Rouen. Some three weeks later again, he was ordered to join a small draft from Rouen to report to 1st Battalion, at the time in the community of Bonneville.

This the detachment of fourteen *other ranks* did on June 11.

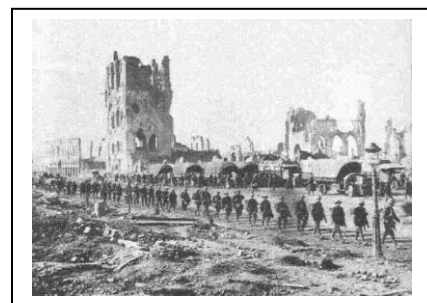
In the meantime, May of 1917 had been a period when the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion were moved hither and thither on the Arras front, in and out of the trenches. Except for the ever-present artillery, there was little military activity – apart from the marching.

(Right: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville in early May of 1917* – from *The War Illustrated*)



At the beginning of June, 1st Battalion had retired from the line to Bonneville and spent its time re-enforcing – witness the arrival of Private Chatman on June 11 - re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.

The Newfoundlanders of 1st 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*)

1st 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 *Broembek* on October 9.



(Previous page: *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 *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 – some personnel even having been granted at the time a ten-day furlough back to the United Kingdom.

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. 1st 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 William Chatman, fisherman, and Olivour (elsewhere *Olivia*) Chatman (née *Lidden*) – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Bunyan's Cove*, Bonavista Bay, he is recorded in a family source as having been a stretcher-bearer (although many ordinary soldiers also served as such when necessary). He was also brother to Charles; to Christina-Leadingham; John-Chesleigh-Freeman – who, having later moved to the United States, apparently served in the American Navy in both World Wars; to William Jr.; Stewart; and to Annie Elizabeth and Fellef (sic), both of whom, by 1911, had already died at a young age.

Private Chatman was at first reported as *missing in action* on November 20, 1917, while serving with 'B Company in the fighting near the French villages of Marcoing and Masnières.

However, subsequent to a death and burial report submitted on December 21, 1917, by the Reverend F.L. Hines, attached to the 7th Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry, his record was amended so as to read *killed in action or died of wounds on or shortly after 20/11/1917*.



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At home, it was the Reverend Edgecombe of Port Blandford who was requested to bear the news to his family.

(Page preceding: *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 1st Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial.* – photograph from 2012)

Albert Chatman had enlisted at the age of twenty-four years and six months: date of birth, October 10, 1891.

**Burgen's Cove in a 1904 business directory but seemingly nowhere else*

(Right: *The War Memorial in Bunyan's Cove honours the sacrifice of Private Chatman.* – photograph from 2010)

Private Albert Chatman was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



Mr. G. McGrath
St. John's

Bunyan's Cove
April 14th 1917

Dear Sir,

Please pardon me for mailing you but am sending this to inform you that I have not received my son Wm's monthly pay for April.

My husband got my son Albert's monthly pay last Monday so I imagine that there must be some slight mistake or I would have received mine to.

Anyway I trust it will be along in a few days. Awaiting your reply

I am

yours truly
Mrs Wm Chatman
Bunyan's Cove