

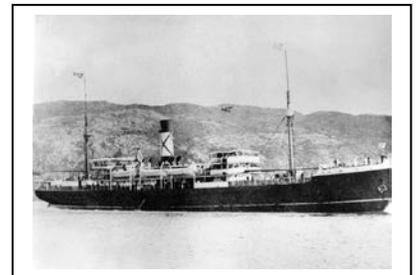


Private George Rankin Clarke (Regimental Number 271) lies in East Mudros Military Cemetery on the island of Lemnos: Grave reference III. D. 105.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *student*, being...*at school*...with no declared income, George Rankin Clarke presented himself for medical examination in his home community of Brigus on September 2, 1914. It was a procedure which pronounced him...*fit for Overseas Service*.

At some time during the next three days, George Rankin Clarke was to make the short journey to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, where he was now to enlist at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (this included a ten-cent Field Allowance) - on September 5. He was a recruit of the First Draft.

Following an almost four-week wait – although training was to be ongoing – Private Clarke was to attest on October 1 and then, two days following, was to embark on October 3 with the others of the *First Five Hundred* onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting the contingent in St. John's Harbour.



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(Preceding page: *The image of Florizel at anchor in the harbour at St. John's is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

The ship sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island where she was to join the convoy transporting the 1st Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

In the United Kingdom Private Clarke trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh Castle – where it provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.

(Right above: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)



(Right above: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', were then ordered south to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot; meanwhile the two junior Companies, the later-arrived 'E' and 'F*', were sent to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.



(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia*)

**On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service. The 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.*

It had then been during that period spent at Aldershot that Private Clarke of 'B' Company* – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 13, to re-enlist *for the duration of the war**.*

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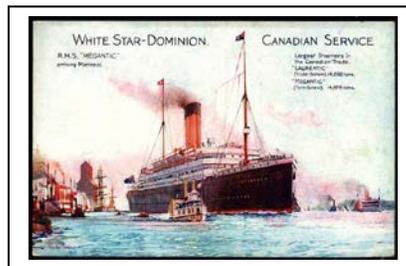
****At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.**

(Right above: Some of the men of ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915 – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)



(Right below: The image of *Megantic*, in peace-time a ‘White Star Line’ vessel, is from the *Old Ship Picture Galleries* web-site.)

On August 20, 1915, Private Clarke and his comrades-in-arms embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks. There, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment dis-embarked at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right: *Kangaroo Beach*, where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of *Suvla Bay*. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on ‘A’ Beach. – photograph taken in 2011)



(Right: 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)



By or about the time of the Battalion’s landing at *Suvla Bay*, however, Private Clarke was no longer to be serving with his unit.

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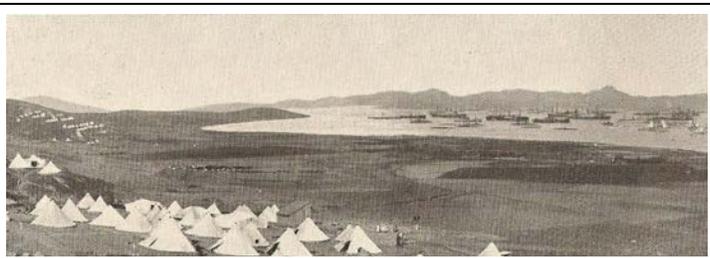
(Right: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at *Suvla Bay*, and where the 1st Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



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On that September 20, Private Clarke likely did not disembark with 1st Battalion at *Suvla Bay*, but was apparently transported back instead on that day to be admitted into the 1st Stationary Hospital in the vicinity of the minuscule community of Mudros on the Greek island of Lemnos, for medical attention to a venereal problem*.

(Right: *By the end of the year 1915, the bay and the inadequate harbour at Mudros Bay were almost entirely surrounded by French and British – including Canadian and Australian - medical facilities, the majority of them under canvas. – image from Illustration*)



**There are no records among his papers to say whether Private Clarke went to Suvla Bay, only to be immediately returned to Lemnos, or if he was to land on the island (Lemnos) on September 19 when the others of the Newfoundland Battalion were transferred to the ‘Prince Abbas’ for the final fifty-kilometre run-in to the beaches.*

Then, some five weeks later, on October 25, Private Clarke was admitted into 16th British Stationary Hospital, also at Mudros, by that time having been diagnosed as suffering from dysentery.



(Right above: *A further image of East Mudros Military Cemetery – photograph from 2011*)

The son of John Clarke, fisherman, and of Lydia Clarke (née *Chalker*) – to whom apparently as of October 10 of 1914 Private Clarke had allotted the daily sum of seventy cents from his pay - of Riverhead, Brigus, Newfoundland, he was also brother to Ralph-Lancelot, Victor, Florence and to Roy.



Private Clarke was reported as having *died of sickness* in hospital on the island of Lemnos where he remains today, of dysentery on November 24, 1915.

At home it was the Reverend R.H. Maddock of whom it was requested to bear the news to Private Clarke’s family.

George Rankin Clarke had enlisted at the declared age of nineteen years: date of birth at Riverhead, Brigus, Newfoundland, October 20, 1897 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



(Right above: *The War Memorial in Brigus honours the sacrifice of Private Clarke.*)

(*The photograph of Private Clarke is from the Provincial Archives.*)

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Private George Rankin Clarke was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).

