



Private John Clarke (Regimental Number 3392) is interred in Dozinghem Military Cemetery – Grave reference III. G. 21.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a lumberman, John Clarke was a recruit of the Eleventh Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on January 5 of 1917, before enlisting – *for the duration of the war* and at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attesting on that same day.

Private Clarke was one of the contingent of one-hundred four *other ranks* to leave St. John's on March 17, St. Patrick's Day of 1917, for the journey to Halifax. The means of their departure, however, is not clear: in one source, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, the claim is that it was on board the Bowring Brothers vessel *Florizel*; the files of the soldiers themselves record that it was... *Embarked S.S. Train to Halifax 17/3/17...* presumably via Port-aux Basques and thence by ferry and train again to Halifax. Other sources have not proved helpful.

It was from Halifax that the detachment made its trans-Atlantic crossing in the company of Canadian troops on board His Majesty's Transport *Missanabie* (right), sailing from Nova Scotia on March 28. Thus this draft was to reach the United Kingdom two weeks or so before the ill-fated *Windsor Draft** which had left Newfoundland at the end of January, some ten weeks earlier.



**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, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion at Ayr was running low on man-power.*

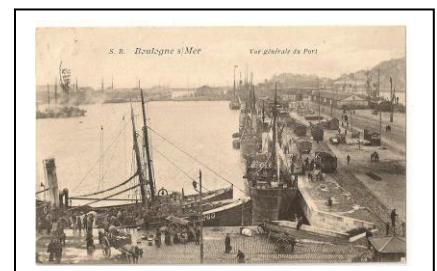
Missanabie having docked in Liverpool on April 6, the Newfoundland contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence to serve as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for two years. It was from Ayr – 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 1st Battalion.



By the time that the Windsor Draft arrived at the Regimental Depot, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion was becoming critically short of personnel.

(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*)

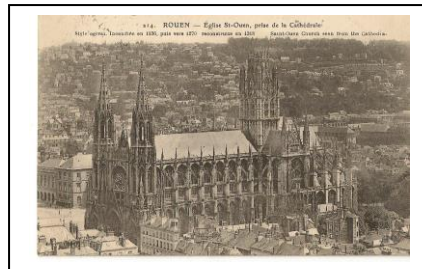
On June 3, the 24th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Clarke one of its number - passed through the English Channel port of Folkestone for the short sea-crossing to Boulogne on the French coast opposite. From there the Newfoundlanders entrained to travel south to Rouen and to the large British Expeditionary Force Base established there, for final organization and training* before leaving to seek out 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *a view of the French port of Boulogne at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

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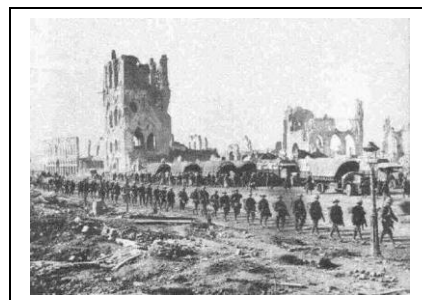
(Right: *the centre of the French city of Rouen with its venerable gothic cathedral at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



**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.*

Private Clarke, one of a contingent of one-hundred eighteen *other ranks* from Rouen, reported *to duty* to the parent unit on June 19, in the community of Bonneville. At the beginning of June, 1st Battalion had retired from the line to Bonneville and was to spend much of that month re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.

At the end of the month of June, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion were once again ordered north into Belgium 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 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.



(Above right: *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.



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

The entry in the Regimental War Diary for August 13 is brief: *Heavy shelling during afternoon. Casualties – OR 1 killed, 12 wounded.*



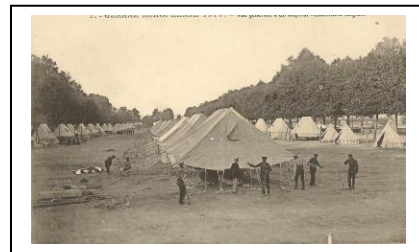
Private Clarke was reported as having been one of those wounded on August 13, suffering injuries to the right side, the abdomen, to both thighs, and to his face while serving with 'C' Company in the area of the *Steenbeek*, to the north-east of Ypres.

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(Previous page: *This is the area of the Steenbeek – the stream runs close to the trees - and also close to where 1st Battalion was stationed on August 13, 1917. It is some eight kilometres distant from a village called Passchendaele. – photograph from 2010*)

He was evacuated from the field on that same August 13 to the 47th Casualty Clearing Station at Lozinghem.

The son of John L. Clarke, labourer, and Phoebe Clarke – to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Campbellton, Notre Dame Bay, he was also brother to Eliza, David, William and Blanche. Private Clarke was reported as having *died of wounds* on August 14, 1917, in the same 47th CCS.



(Right above: *a British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War – from a vintage post-card*)

At home, it was Adjutant Simms of the Salvation Army in Campbellton who was requested to notify his family.

John Clarke had enlisted at the age of twenty years.

Private John Clarke was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

