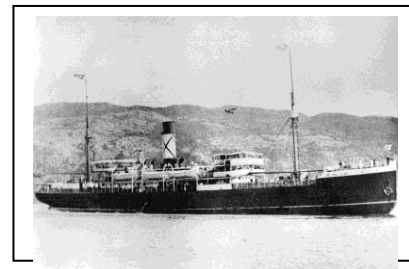




Private Henry Cluett (Regimental Number 3900) is buried in La Kreule Cemetery, Hazebrouk – Grave reference I. A. I – the first grave inside the gate.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Henry Cluett was a recruit of the Fifteenth Draft. Presenting himself for medical examination at Headquarters at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on July 7, 1917, he then enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attested on that same day.

Private Cluett did not leave St. John's until August 4 of that year. On that day he marched down to St. John's harbour and boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel, *Florizel* (right)*. The destination was Halifax, Nova Scotia, from where the Newfoundland draft now took ship – thus far un-identified: maybe *Missanabie* but this is far from certain - to cross the Atlantic to the United Kingdom.



**Albeit a second source claims that the contingent left St. John's by train.*

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 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some two years. It was from here – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home had been 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*)

Private Cluett spent the five months succeeding his arrival in the United Kingdom at the Regimental Depot at Ayr and likely also at Barry*.

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of Dundee. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.*

In the latter half of January of the New Year, 1918, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion was to move quarters from Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester.

It was there that Private Cluett would have been stationed at the beginning of February when he was ordered to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent.

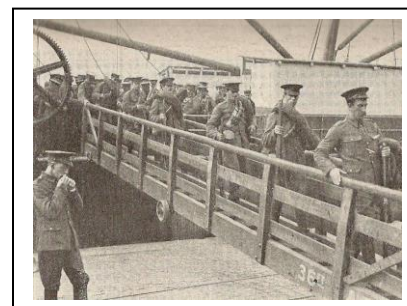


(Right: *a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918 – from The War Illustrated*)

On February 4, the 36th Re-enforcement Draft of two hundred *other ranks* from Hazely Down – Private Cluett a soldier among its ranks - passed through the English port of Southampton on its way to the Continent. On the 6th the Newfoundlanders landed in the French port of Rouen for the inevitable final training and organization* at the Base Depot before finding their way to the front.

(Right: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route 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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*



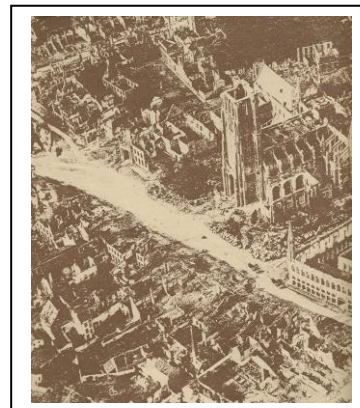
A detachment of one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Rouen – Private Cluett among that number - reported *to duty* with 1st Battalion at Steenvoorde, on the Franco-Belgian frontier, on the 15th of that February, the day before an inspection by Major-General Beauvoir de Lisle, Officer Commanding 29th Division, a parade complete with presentation of decorations and the announcement that the Newfoundland Regiment was to be designated as *Royal*.

Meanwhile, some ten weeks previous, at the close of the *Battle of Cambrai* at the beginning of December of 1917, 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment – once again badly under-strength due to the heavy casualties incurred – had been withdrawn from the area of the front lines to re-enforce and to re-organize. The following weeks had been spent at first to the south-west of the city of Arras, at Humbercourt and then at some distance to the north-west, at Fressin.

The weather obliged and even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow, a bit too much at times apparently.

At the beginning of January of 1918, and after that snowy Christmas period spent to the west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had been ordered into Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time.

There, as it was with the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences. It was during a period while 1st Battalion was out of the lines that Private Cluett reported to *active service*.



(Right above: *an aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916 – from Illustration*)

Meanwhile, while the Allies built their defences, by the beginning of 1918 the Germans were preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking man-power after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them.



It was expected that the Germans would launch a spring offensive. While they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders continued to dig.

(Right above: *countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were stationed in March and early April of 1918 – photograph from 2011*)

(continued)

Then the Germans did as was expected of them. Ludendorff's armies had already launched a powerful thrust on March 21, striking at first in the area of *the Somme*, overrunning the battlefields of 1916 and beyond; for a while the advance seemed unstoppable.



Then a second offensive, *Georgette*, was launched in the northern sector of the front, in Flanders, where the Newfoundlanders were stationed: the date was April 9.

Within two days the situation of the Allies was desperate.

(Right above: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918 – from Illustration*)

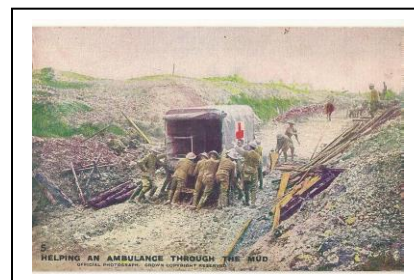
On the day after the first heavy bombardments, April 10, as the Germans approached the towns of Armentières and Nieppe, troops were deployed to meet them. The Newfoundlanders, due to leave the line and move back to the Somme, boarded buses at three o'clock in the afternoon and were suddenly directed southward, towards Nieppe.



They were in action, attempting to stem this latest offensive, some three hours later.

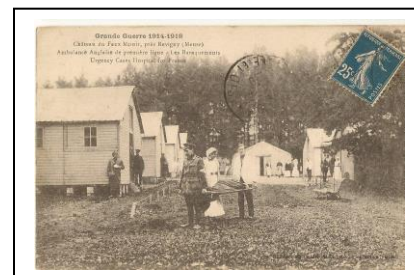
(Right above: *the area of La Crêche - the buildings in the background - where the Newfoundlanders de-bussed on April 10 to meet the Germans in the area of Steenwerck and its railway station – photograph from 2010.*)

It was while serving with 'D' Company during this, one of the first actions of the entire period, that Private Cluett was wounded. Suffering gun-shot wounds to the abdomen, he was evacuated to the 17th Casualty Clearing Station at the Rémy Siding, just south of Poperinghe.



(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*)

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



The son of Stephen Cluett, fisherman, and Sarah Annie Cluett (née *Moulton*) – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Garnish, Fortune Bay, he was also brother to Charles W., John G., Bethial (sic – 1921 Census), Stephen, Samuel, Herbert and George*.

Private Cluett was reported as having *died of wounds* on the same April 10, 1918, at the same 17th CCS.

(continued)

Henry Cluett had enlisted at the age of twenty-two years and six months.

(Right: *the re-built hamlet of La Creche, in the same area as in the time of the Newfoundlanders debussed and the area where 'C' and 'D' were killed on April 10 – photograph from 2010*)



**All of this information comes from the 1921 Census and along with it a date of marriage, April 6, 1892. There is nothing, however, that confirms with total certainty that this is Private Cluett's family.*

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



15th September 1918

In reply to your preceding minute, I beg to inform you that PRIVATE H. CLUETT was very seriously wounded in the abdomen on 10.4.18 and died while being brought into this CCS. He was buried the next day in the Military Cemetery at La Kreule, Nr Hazebrouck, his grave being duly marked and registered.

From OC 17CCS