



Private James Lewis Day (Regimental Number 1484), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as being that of a tailor's clothes-presser and earning a weekly \$5.00, James Lewis Day presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on April 26 of 1915. He then enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and also attested on the following day, April 27.



Private Day embarked on board His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* (above – original photograph from the *Provincial Archives*) on June 20 in St. John's Harbour and sailed (*almost**) directly to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two men of 'F' Company and eighty-five naval reservists to take passage on that day.

**Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the journey of about a week. Not only was Calgarian escorting three submarines, but she sailed by way of the Portuguese Azores and then Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders apparently even having the time to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. She reached Liverpool on July 9.*



(Right above: *the Crown Colony of Gibraltar in pre-War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background.* – from a vintage postcard)

On the day after its arrival in the United Kingdom, 'F' Company marched from the railway station and reported *to duty* at Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick on the evening of July 10. It was an important moment: the Newfoundland Regiment, as of that day counting fifteen hundred personnel, was now at fighting strength and could be posted on *active service*.



(Right above: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles.* – original photograph from the *Provincial Archives*)

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From Stobs, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the senior Companies, having now become 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, were transferred to Aldershot in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before departing on active service to the Middle East and to the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

'E' and 'F' Companies – the latter having arrived at Stobs Camp on July 10 - were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were to form the nucleus of the newly-formed 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. The Depot was to become Private Day's home for the following eight months.

The Regimental Depot was being established during that summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland to serve as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were to be sent 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*)

It was during this posting to Ayr that, on March 27, only the day before his departure on *active service*, Private Day re-enlisted *for the duration of the War**.

**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.*

On March 28, Private Day, as a soldier of the 3rd Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton and boarded His Majesty's Transport *Archangel* (right) on his way to join 1st Battalion on the Continent.

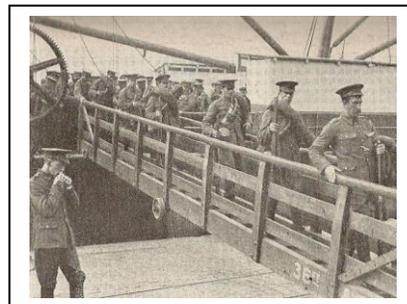


Disembarking two days later, on the 30th, in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, the contingent made its way to the Depot for several days of final training and organization* before leaving to seek out the parent unit.

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(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, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*



On April 15, a detachment from Rouen of two-hundred eleven *other ranks* – accompanied by two officers – reported to *duty* with 1st Battalion already billeted in the village of Englebelmer some three kilometres behind the lines of the *Western Front*. Private Day is documented as being among that number, a contingent which included not only personnel from Ayr, but also others from Gallipoli and Egypt whose departure from there had been delayed.

Only two days prior, on April 13, 1st Battalion had *itself* marched into the village of Englebelmer – thus completing a month-long transfer from Egypt – where the Newfoundlanders were billeted, welcomed those re-enforcements from Rouen on the 15th and, on the evening of that same day, were ordered forward – along with the new-comers - to work in the communication trenches not so very far away.

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the meandering river that flowed – and today still flows - innocuously through the southern part of the region to which it lends its name, *the Somme*.

(Right: *part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)



In action on July 1, 1916, at Beaumont-Hamel, he was one of the few to emerge unscathed from the fighting of that first day of *the Somme*. The records show that he was *with Battalion* on July 4, a misleading entry as it in fact signifies that, in his case, Private Day answered the *first* roll call, *on the morning of the 2nd*, after those disastrous forty-five minutes of the day before. These records, and others – also registered on the 2nd - were not *officially* recorded until days later*.

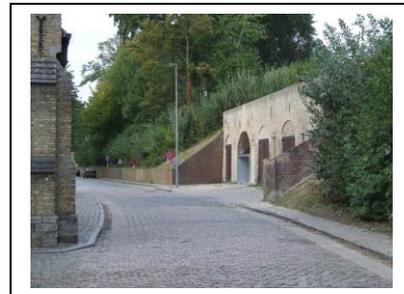


**Those who served in the ten per cent reserve contingent, and others seconded to various units, also fall into this category.*

(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel - looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences - The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph from 2009*)

(continued)

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1st Battalion moved north and entered into Belgium for the first time. It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize. *The Salient* was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatal.



On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, 1st Battalion moved south back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

(Right above: *the entrance to 'A' Company's quarters in the ramparts of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

(Right: *the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card*)

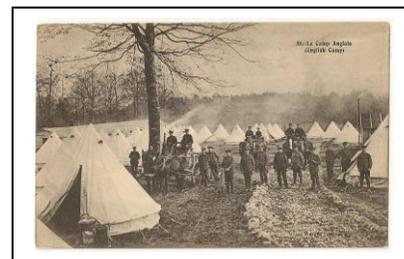


Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1st Battalion went again to the offensive at a place called Gueudecourt, some dozen kilometres or so to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. It was another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.



(Right: *This is the ground over which 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007*)

After Gueudecourt, 1st Battalion continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period broken only by the several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period, encamped well to the rear and close to the city of Amiens.



(Right above: *a British camp, in not particularly clement conditions, somewhere on the Continent during a winter of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

After that welcome six-week Christmas respite, the Newfoundlanders officially returned to active service on January 23, 1917, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred their first casualties of 1917.

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The only infantry activity directly involving 1st Battalion during that entire period – from the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and 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.



On March 29, 1st Battalion began to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, their march to finish amid the rubble of the village of Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right: *the remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War – from Illustration*)

On April 9 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties it was the most expensive operation of the War for the British, its only positive episode being the Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday. The French offensive was a disaster.



(Right above: *the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

1st Battalion was to play its part in the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at a place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After Beaumont-Hamel, Monchy-le-Preux was to prove the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties on April 14 alone.



(Preceding page: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the western – in 1917, the British – side of the community. The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

The son of Ernest Day, a baker with *T.W. Gale (Confectioner?)* and Sarah Day – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay, and to whom he had willed his all - of 48, Mullock Street, St. John's (later moving to 21½, Hayward Avenue), he was also brother to at least Walter, Thomas and Stella.

Private Day was reported as having been *killed in action* on April 23, 1917, while serving with 'D' Company during the fighting at Les Fosses Farm - near Monchy-le-Preux and only nine days after *that* episode - during the *Battle of Arras*.

James Lewis Day had enlisted at seventeen years and five months of age.

(Right above: *Windmill Cemetery – wherein lie four Newfoundlanders - stands in the fields near Les Fosses Farm, only three hundred metres to the right of the cross, along the main Arras-Cambrai road. – photograph from 2009(?)*)

(Right: *a re-built Monchy-le-Preux almost a century later with the Caribou standing atop a former German strongpoint – photograph from 2009*)

(Right: *A family memorial which stands in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's – the stele slightly left of centre – commemorates the sacrifice of Private Day. – photograph from 2015*)

Private James Lewis Day was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

