



Private Thomas J. Delaney (Regimental Number 2225), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service was recorded as that of a fireman* - earning a monthly thirty-seven dollars - on the steamship *Glencoe*, the vessel of the Reid Newfoundland Company's *Alphabet Fleet* which would eventually become its longest-serving ship.



A recruit of the Ninth Draft, Thomas Delaney presented himself for medical examination in St. John's on March 4, 1916, and then enlisted two days later - at the daily rate of \$1.10 - on March 6, *for the duration of hostilities*, attesting on that same day.

**Older steamships had coal-fired boilers, necessitating someone to keep the fires active: hence the job of fireman.*

Private Delaney 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.*

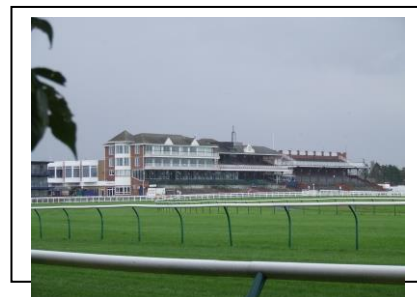
The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there - as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 - that the new-comers arriving from home were despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



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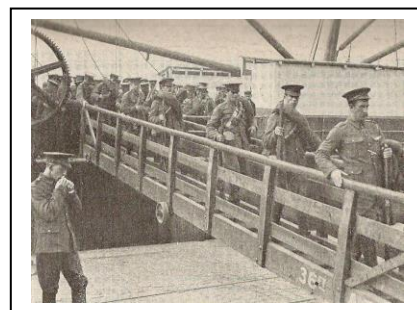
(Preceding page: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

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 Delaney 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 above: *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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

The contingent with which Private Delaney reported *for duty in the field* was a large detachment of two-hundred sixty-six *other ranks* which arrived from Rouen at the 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 – two-hundred thirty-nine all told - and gaining little.

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.

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(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*)



After the episode at Gueudecourt, 1st Battalion remained in the same area of the Somme and was regularly into and out of the trenches. There were no infantry engagements, but the incessant artillery action ensured a steady stream of casualties.

From November 17 to 21, 1st Battalion was posted to the front-line trenches in the area of the village of LesBoeufs. The guns, as ever, were going about their business. The Regiment War Diary merely reports ...*heavily shelled...* and then: *Total casualties while in line 5 killed and 15 wounded.*

The son of Michael Delaney, also fireman with the *Reid Newfoundland Company* ships (particularly *Glencoe*), and Bridget Delaney (née *Kelly*) – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay - of Townside, Placentia, he was also brother to Richard J. Delaney (later of 77, Patrick Street in St. John's), to a second brother, and to a sister who was eight years of age when he enlisted.

Private Delaney was reported as having been *killed in action* while serving with 'A' Company on November 20, 1916, a casualty of the enemy shelling of the 1st Battalion trenches near the village of LesBoeufs, in the French *Département de la Somme*.



At home it was the Reverend Monsignor Reardon who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Thomas Delaney had enlisted at the age of nineteen years and a single month: date of birth, January 16, 1897.



(Right above: *The Guards' Cemetery at LesBoeufs and the surrounding countryside in the area of the fighting on November 20, 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

(Right: *The Placentia War Memorial honours the sacrifice of Private Delaney. – photograph from 2013*)

Private Thomas J. Delaney was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

