



Captain* James John Donnelly MC is buried in Bancourt British Cemetery – Grave reference XII. B. 6.

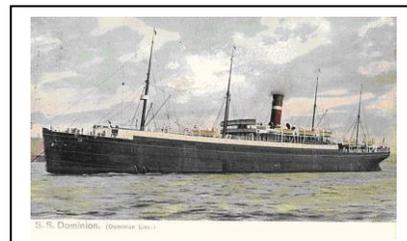
**Officers who were eventually promoted from the ranks may be identified from their Regimental Number. Other officers who were not from the ranks received the King's Commission, or in the case of those in the Newfoundland Regiment, an Imperial Commission, and were not considered as enlisted. These officers thus had no Regimental Number allotted to them.*

And since officers did not enlist, they were not then required to re-enlist 'for the duration', even though, at the beginning, as a private, they had volunteered their services for only a limited time – twelve months.

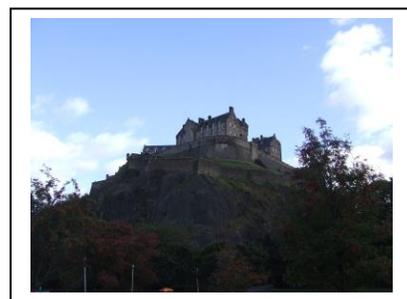
His occupation prior to his service in the Newfoundland Regiment recorded as that a draper for *G. Knowling Company*, and earning as much as seventy dollars a month, he had been active in the *Catholic Cadet Corps* in St. John's. James Donnelly received an Imperial Commission and an appointment to the rank of lieutenant from the Governor of Newfoundland on January 26, 1915.

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Embarking via the sealing tender *Neptune* onto the SS *Dominion* (right), anchored off Bay Bulls because of ice conditions, Lieutenant Donnelly departed Newfoundland for overseas service on February 5, as the officer commanding 11 Platoon of 'C' Company, the first re-enforcement for 1st Battalion to leave Newfoundland.



'C' Company reached the English port-city of Liverpool on February 16, 1915, and travelled by train north to the Scottish capital city of Edinburgh. There, on the 23rd, it joined 'A' and 'B' Companies which had arrived there from Fort George at about that same time and which had been stationed to garrison the historic Castle, the first unit from outside the British Isles to do so.



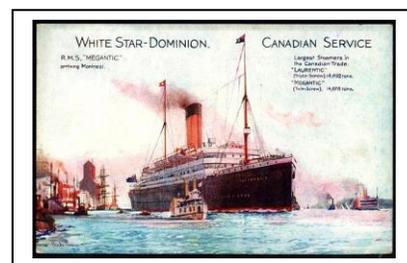
(Right: *the venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle on its hill in the centre of the city – photograph from 2011*)

On May 11, the Newfoundland contingent, by now having incorporated 'D' and 'E' Companies, was posted to Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick. There the Battalion trained before the four senior companies – 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' - of the Regiment moved south for just over two weeks at the beginning of August to England, to Aldershot, where they underwent final training and inspection in preparation for the Gallipoli Campaign.

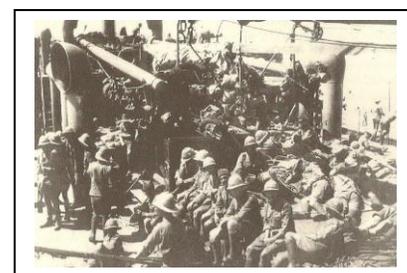


'E' and 'F' Companies, the latest arrivals, were posted to the new Regimental Depot being established as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion at Ayr, on the west coast of Scotland.

(Right above: *Troops of the Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp are presented with their colours on June 10, 1915. – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



On August 20, 1915, Lieutenant Donnelly embarked onto the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (right) for passage to the Middle East and for the fighting in Gallipoli where, a month later – two weeks of which had been spent at the British Abbassia Barracks close to the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he disembarked with 1st Battalion at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



(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 - In either case they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – from Provincial Archives*)

(Right: 'Kangaroo Beach', where the men of 1st Battalion landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is 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 from 2011)



(Right below: a century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Lieutenant Donnelly served during the autumn of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



Lieutenant Donnelly was one of those involved in a skirmish occurring in early November at a place remembered as *Caribou Hill* (see below) – although the whereabouts of the site itself seems to have been forgotten. It was for this action that certain personnel were awarded 1st Battalion's first decorations.

Lieutenant (later Captain) Donnelly was a recipient of the Military Cross for his conduct at 'Caribou Hill' during the Gallipoli Campaign: *'...for conspicuous gallantry and determination on the night of 4th/5th November, 1915, on the Gallipoli Peninsula. He occupied, with eight men, a knoll, to which our firing line was extended the next day. By his coolness and skill in handling this small party, which was reduced to five by casualties, he repelled several determined Turkish bomb and rifle attacks on his front and flanks, and held his own during the night.'* – London Gazette, 23/12/1915

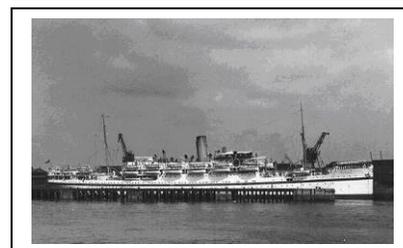


(Right: A photograph taken at the time of Caribou Hill, scene of the engagement described above. Since then it has been difficult to re-trace and to identify the exact site, even though the terrain has not changed a great deal since that time. – from the Provincial Archives)



On or around November 22, 1915, Lieutenant Donnelly was admitted to the 54th Casualty Clearing Station at Suvla suffering from a serious case of jaundice.

From the Gallipoli Peninsula he was then evacuated – most likely via the Greek island of Lemnos some fifty kilometres distant - to hospital on the British-held island of Malta – where he was admitted on November 26th. He made the passage on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Nevasa* (right).



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After further medical treatment and convalescence, Lieutenant Donnelly was discharged on December 22 from St. Andrew's Military Hospital, Malta, to *active service*, and embarked for the British Base Depot at Sidi Bishr, Alexandria, on board His Majesty's Transport *Peregrine*. The date on which he re-joined 1st Battalion appears not to have been documented.



(Right above: one of several British military hospitals, today abandoned, on the island of Malta: Independent since 1964, Malta was a British possession at the time of the Great War. – photograph from 2011)

When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, Lance Corporal Gardner – promoted on November 14, 1915 - and the others of 1st Battalion were sent to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. From Alexandria the Newfoundlanders were immediately sent south to Suez to await further orders as, apparently, the future of 29th Division of which they were a unit, had not by that time been decided.

(Right: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders, chosen to be rear-guard were among the last to leave the beaches on two occasions.* – photograph, taken from HMS *Cornwallis*, from *Illustration*)



Lieutenant Donnelly was promoted to the rank of captain on February 15, 1916, a promotion which was backdated to August 16 of the previous year, four days before the Battalion had embarked for the Middle East.

(Right: *Port Tewfiq before the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)



On March 14, the officers and men of 1st Battalion embarked through Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the Suez Canal onto His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* for the voyage to the French port of Marseilles, en route to the *Western Front*.

(Right: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles.* – from a vintage post-card)



Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy.

It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them travelling unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the station at two in the morning the Newfoundlanders still had a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

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(Right: *the Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)

It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers paid much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge that they passed on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would be a part of their history.

On April 13, 1st Battalion entered into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy – where the Newfoundlanders were billeted, welcomed re-enforcements on the 15th and, on the evening of the same day, were introduced into the British lines of the *Western Front*.

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that same meandering river, *the Somme*.

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

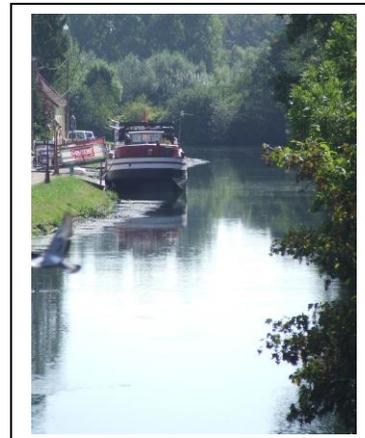
On May 20, 1916, Captain Donnelly and Lieutenant Colonel Hadow, Commanding Officer of 1st Battalion, attended an investiture at Buckingham Palace, the former to receive his Military Cross, and the latter the Distinguished Service Order.

Although on the nominal roll of 1st Battalion on July 1, 1916, the first day of *the Somme*, Captain Donnelly did not figure in the fighting at Beaumont-Hamel. According to a letter that he later wrote, he had been an officer of the ten per cent reserve – fourteen officers and eighty-three men – a force held back at Louvencourt which re-joined 1st Battalion *in the field* late in the day after much of the tumult had abated.

**The well-known roll-call of July 2 of those who survived the battle unscathed was not officially recorded until two days later. The roll call of those who had been in the ten per cent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three men held back for most of the day at Louvencourt was apparently also recorded only later. Thus the inscription ‘With Battalion 4/7/16’ on certain records.*

(Right above: *another part of the reconstituted battlefield, here showing the British front lines, in the Newfoundland Park at Beaumont-Hamel: today the wire serves only to keep the tourists out of the trenches. – photograph from 2010(?)*)

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The Newfoundlanders moved north at the end of July from France into Belgium where they had orders posting them to the *Ypres Salient*, there to re-enforce and re-organize after the catastrophe of July 1. Relatively quiet during this period, the *Salient* was to prove to be one of the most lethal postings of the entire War, although, during the late summer of 1916, it was relatively quiet. 1st Battalion remained in Belgium until October 8 when it was sent back to France and back to the region - and to the battle - of *the Somme*.



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

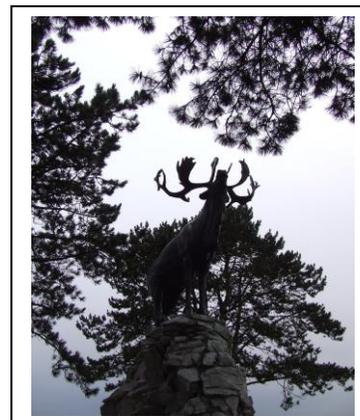
(Right: *the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card*)



Four days after their return to *the Somme*, on October 12, the Newfoundlanders passed to the attack on the outskirts of Gueudecourt, one of the many small farming villages of the area but then little more than an uninhabited heap of rubble. It was a second ill-planned attack: the Newfoundlanders once again lost very heavily – some two-hundred thirty-nine casualties - and achieved very little.

The son of William Donnelly (deceased December 19, 1907) and Bridget Donnelly of 169, Gower St. in John's, he was also brother to Michael - to whom he had allotted a daily ninety cents from his pay (later transferred to his mother) - and who was soon to die, in June of 1919.

Captain Donnelly was reported as having been *killed in action* on October 12, 1916, on the day of the assault at Gueudecourt during *First Somme*. He had been the officer leading 'C' Company, fighting on the Battalion's right, and was killed upon reaching the enemy trench.



Captain Donnelly died at thirty-four years of age.

In January or early February of 1920, the remains of Captain Donnelly were exhumed from the site of their original burial and transferred to where they repose today.

(Right above: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands on the site of the furthest point of advance of the Battalion on October 12, 1916, during the battle of First Somme – photograph from 2010*)



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(Page preceding: *These are the fields across which the Battalion – and Captain Donnelly - advanced on October 12, towards the copse of trees on the right horizon where the Gueudecourt Caribou is today to be found - photograph from 2010.*)

(Right: *The photograph of Captain Donnelly is from the Books of Newfoundland.*)



Captain James John Donnelly MC was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).

