



Private James Patrick Drake (Regimental Number 2957) is buried in Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille – Grave reference VI. B. 35.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman earning four hundred dollars per annum, James Patrick Drake was a recruit of the Tenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination, he also enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's – engaged *for the duration of the war* at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and attested, all on that same July 13, 1917.

It was the 28th of August before Private Drake embarked for passage to the United Kingdom and it was on His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian (page below) that he was to make the trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom. This was the third such voyage that the ship was to make in 1916, the Newfoundlanders likely sharing the vessel with Canadian personnel**. He sailed as a soldier of 12th Platoon, Section 13, of 'C' Company of 3rd Battalion***.**

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****Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.***

*****Sicilian had been re-fitted in 1906 to carry just under twelve-hundred passengers, thus her journey to St. John's in March of 1916 was likely followed by the short passage to Halifax to embark Canadian military personnel. Likewise, in July, she had sailed from Montreal on July 16 with Canadians to embark the Newfoundlanders awaiting passage overseas.***



******3rd Battalion was based in St. John's, whereas 2nd (Reserve) Battalion – 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Companies - was stationed in the United Kingdom. 1st Battalion was the edge of the sword – 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies – and was posted to the front.***

Upon arrival in the United Kingdom, the ship docked in the south-coast naval port of Devonport from where the Newfoundlanders entrained for the journey north to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot where each newcomer was delegated to one of the four resident companies - and the where the somewhat confusing title of 'C' Company was abandoned.

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 a 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.



(Right above: an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-upon 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 – photo from 2012)

(continued)

It was not, however, until almost the next summer, that of 1917, that Private Drake was to make his way to the Continent. In the meantime he would spend more than four weeks – from February 21 until March 26 – in the 4th Scottish General Hospital in Glasgow, receiving treatment for venereal disease.

On or about June 3 of 1916, the 24th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr passed through the English-Channel port of Folkestone en route to France. The contingent – Private Drake among its ranks – disembarked in Boulogne only hours later. From there the Newfoundlanders entrained and travelled south to the outskirts of the French city of Rouen, site of the large Base Depot of the British Expeditionary Force where the 24th Draft was to spend several days of training and organization* before leaving to seek out the parent unit.

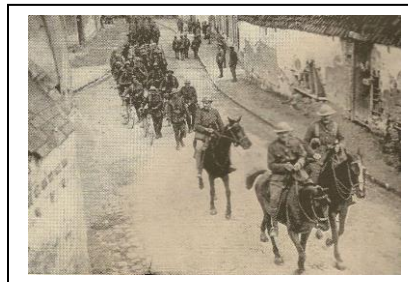


(Right above: *the French port of Boulogne at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

**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.*

May of 1917 had been a period when the Newfoundlanders were ordered hither and thither on the Arras front, in and out of the trenches. And while there was the ever-present artillery, there was little infantry activity – except for the marching.

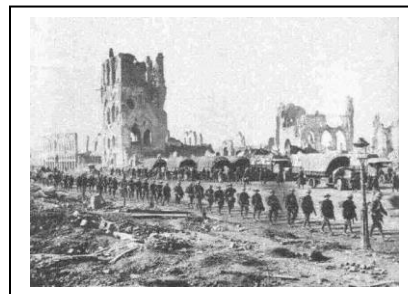
At the beginning of June, 1st Battalion retired from the line to Bonneville and spent its time re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.



(Right: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville in early May, perhaps the 7th, of 1917 – from The War Illustrated*)

It was on June 19 that a re-enforcement draft of one-hundred eighteen *other ranks* from Base Depot at Rouen arrived in Bonneville to report *to duty* with 1st Battalion. Private Drake was one of that number.

The Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - 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*, borrowing that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



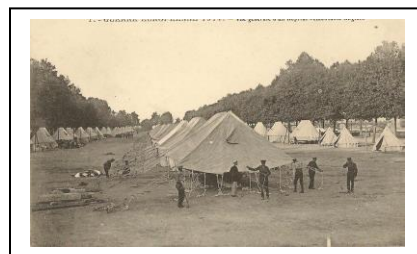
(Previous page: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

The entry in the Regimental War Diary for July 10 makes mention of only a single wounded casualty. However, the report of the day previous, the 9th, reads as follows: *At about 11.20 pm, Germans open a heavy Barrage on Trout & Support Trenches and Canal Bank Total Killed 6 wounded nineteen...* Private Drake was most probably among that number but, given the late hour, reported on the following day.



(Right above: *the Yser Canal as it flows north of Ypres – From July 5 to 10, 1st Battalion was manning positions on both sides of the water. The Front was on the eastern bank – to the right on the photograph: ‘B’ Company was in reserve trenches, situated on the western bank on the left-hand side – photograph from 2013*)

Evacuated from the area, he was taken to the 4th Casualty Clearing Station at Lozinghem, for attention to a gun-shot wound to the left thigh. From there on an undisclosed date – but certainly soon afterwards - Private Drake was forwarded to the 4th General Hospital at Dannes-Camiers on the French west coast.



(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*)

***Several names such as *Mendinghem, Bandaghem and Dozinghem* were invented by the British troops as they resembled the Belgian and northern-French fashion of naming villages. These sites were occupied by medical facilities only – and the inevitable cemeteries which today remain. But one of these centres, by the name of *Lozinghem*, is an exception in that it is a real place which has existed for centuries – however much the name might lend itself to the morbid spirit of the British soldier.**



(Right above: *the railway station serving the nearby communities of Dannes and Camiers through which many thousands of sick and wounded must have passed their way to and from hospital – from a vintage post-card*)



At Dannes-Camiers the decision was taken to invalid Private Drake back to the United Kingdom. Accordingly, on July 16, he was placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Newhaven* (right above) for the short cross-Channel journey, arriving on the same day.

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Once having arrived in England, Private Drake was transported to and admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth. He apparently remained hospitalized there – possibly elsewhere latterly for convalescence – until the final days of August.

(Right: *The main building of what became 3rd London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1st, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)



(Above far right: *Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing at 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

On or about August 28 Private Drake was released from care and was granted the customary ten-day furlough accorded service personnel upon discharge from hospital in the United Kingdom. Where he spent his leave seems not to be recorded but upon its completion he was immediately posted to the Regimental Base Depot in Scotland.

2nd (Reserve) Battalion was at the time temporarily stationed at Barry, also in Scotland, and it was to there that Private Drake reported *to duty* on September 6. He would spend almost the entire following twelve months with the Reserve Battalion, much of it, however, in hospital with iritis (inflammation of the iris): October 29 to November 21 at the 4th Scottish General Hospital in Glasgow; December 16 to January 7 of 1918 at the Military Hospital in Ayr; then back in Glasgow from January 8 to February 15.

By the time that Private Drake was released from hospital in Glasgow, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had moved its quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester. This transfer had been finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and so it was to there that Private Drake reported upon his departure from Scotland.



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

It was not to be until the last day of August that Private Drake departed from southern England to return to the Continent. On or about August 31 the 51st Re-enforcement Draft from Hazely took ship in Folkestone to land in Rouen (or perhaps at Le Havre). On September 2 the contingent reported to the Base Depot there, but on this occasion spending little time before being ordered further up the coast to rendezvous with 1st Battalion. A detachment from Rouen, including Private Drake, reported *to duty* with the parent unit at Équihen on September 5.

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By that time, the summer of 1918 had passed peaceably enough for most of the personnel of 1st Battalion. For the months of May, June and until early July, the unit had been posted to Écuire, to the Headquarters of Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in Europe.

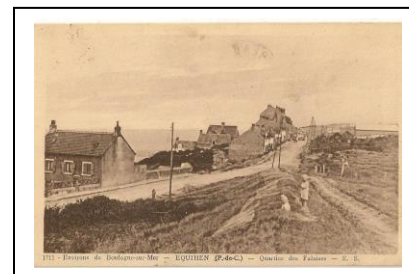


(Right: *Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force at the time of the Battalion's posting to GHQ – from Illustration*)

The cosmetic honour of this new role, however, masked the reality that the 1st Battalion of the recently-proclaimed *Royal Newfoundland Regiment* was no longer capable of serving in the field.

**Although few at home cared to admit it publicly, the problem was that 1st Battalion had run out of reserves and was unable to continue as a fighting entity. It was to be September before even a battalion of reduced strength could return to active service. At home, mandatory military service was initiated – conscription by another name – but with limited results.*

The posting to Écuire completed, for most of July and all of August the Newfoundlanders were encamped in much the same area, close to the coastal village of Équihen – itself not far removed from the large Channel port of Boulogne – and far to the rear of the fighting, of which there had been plenty elsewhere.



It was at the end of this period that Private Drake reported to duty with 1st Battalion: the summer was drawing to a close.

(Right above: *a view of the sparsely-populated coastal community of Équihen at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Re-enforced, the Newfoundlanders returned to the fray on Friday, September 13, as one of the three battalions of the 28th Brigade of 9th Scottish Division. 1st Battalion was once more to serve on the Belgian front where, some six weeks later, having advanced out of the *Ypres Salient*, it would finish its war on October 26 at a place called Inghoyghem (*Ingooigem*).

On September 28, the Belgian Army and the 2nd British Army broke out of their positions, overrunning the enemy lines. It was the start, for them, of the *Hundred Days Offensive**. On the following day, the Newfoundlanders were fighting at the Keiberg Ridge.

After almost four years of stalemate, it was once again to be a conflict of movement.



(Right above: *British troops and German prisoners in Flanders during the Hundred Days – from Illustration*)

****This offensive would prove to be the final campaign of the Western Front and would terminate with the Armistice of November 11. It had begun further to the south on July 18 on the French front on the River Marne, followed on August 8 by an onslaught by British and Empire troops near Amiens in what would also become known as 3rd Somme.***

The advance, despite fierce resistance at times, was relentless. On October 14, 1st Battalion, having been rested for a week after heavy fighting near Ledeghem, returned to the front for a new drive to commence on that day. The Newfoundlanders were to push along the northern bank of the River-Canal Lys, itself north of the city of Courtrai (today *Kortrijk*) which they were to bypass. The advance of the 14th was successful - but the cost again high: only three hundred reporting for muster at dawn on the following morning.



That October 14 was the day on which Private Drake was wounded for the second time. On this occasion he suffered multiple gun-shot wounds to the head while serving with 'B' Company and, by the following day, had been evacuated for treatment to the French coastal community of Boulogne where he was admitted into the 13th (*Harvard USA*) General Hospital.

(Right above: *the Lys – both canal and river – at a point not far from the crossing-place – right to left - of October 19-20, 1918: The Harlebeke Caribou stands about at a distance of about one hundred metres behind the camera. – photograph from 2010*)

(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*)



The son of Joseph Drake, fisherman, and Elizabeth Drake – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Marystown (known as *Mortier Bay* until 1909), he had been his parents' only remaining son after the death of two older brothers stricken with tuberculosis. He may also have been brother to Mary.

Private Drake was reported as having *died of wounds* at ten minutes to ten on the morning of October 23, 1918, in the same 13th General Hospital at Boulogne.



James Patrick Drake* had enlisted at the age of twenty years and four months.

(Right above: *The Caribou at Harlebeke commemorates the crossing of the Lys Canal and the sacrifices of the last campaign of the War. – photograph from 2012*)

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(Right: *The sacrifice of Private James Drake is honoured on the War Memorial in the community of Marystown. – photograph from 2015 with thanks to Cyril Bennett*)

****Apparently Private Drake had promised, upon returning home, to marry the young lady with whom he had fathered a child in St. John's before departing for overseas. Born in the Salvation Army Maternity Home, the child died only weeks after its birth.***



The photograph of Private Drake from St. Gabriel's Hall, Marystown – with thanks.

Private James Patrick Drake was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

