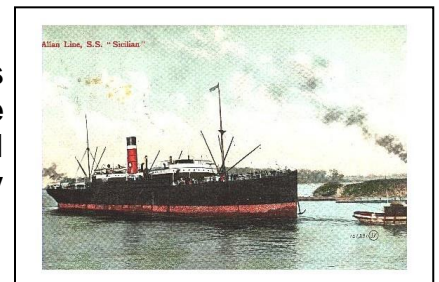




**Private Kenneth Driscoll (Regimental Number 2380) is buried in the Rocquigny-Équancourt Road British Cemetery – Grave reference IV. B. 11.**

**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman – and before as that of a clerk with *Lawrence Nfld. Co. Ltd.* - Kenneth Driscoll was a recruit of the Ninth Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on March 31, 1916, before enlisting *for the duration of the war* on the following day – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10. He then attested on the same April 1.**

**Private Driscoll 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.**



**(continued)**

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 2<sup>nd</sup> (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 1<sup>st</sup> 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*)

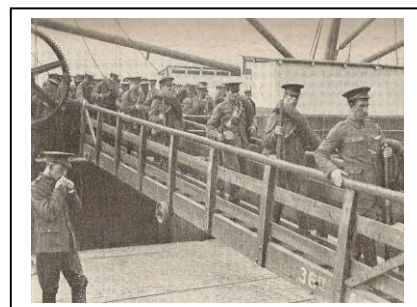
At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been 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 – photograph from 2012*)

The 11<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Private Driscoll among its ranks - 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.

The contingent 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(Right: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

(continuation)

*\*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.*

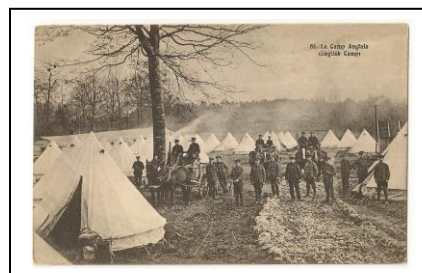
The contingent with which Private Driscoll reported *for duty in the field* was a large detachment of two-hundred sixty-six *other ranks* which arrived from Rouen at the Battalion transport lines on October 12. This was also the day on which 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion made its attack on the enemy positions 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 14<sup>th</sup>, 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.

*(Right: This is the ground over which 1<sup>st</sup> 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)*

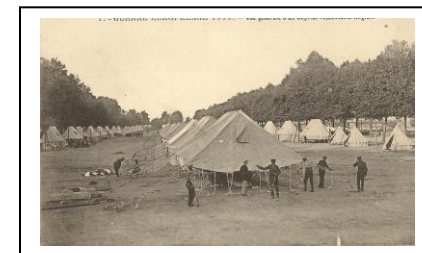


After the episode of October 12 at Gueudecourt, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had remained in the same area of *the Somme* and was regularly into and out of the trenches. There were to be no infantry engagements, but the incessant artillery action ensured a steady stream of casualties. The Newfoundlanders would be withdrawn from active service on or about December 12 and were to spend the following six weeks or so encamped well behind the lines and close to the city of Amiens.



*(Right above: a British encampment somewhere on the Continent, apparently during the winter season – from a vintage post-card)*

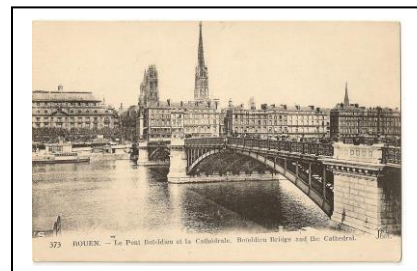
For Private Driscoll, however, the period of the late autumn had been a little more tormented than the ordinary routine of life in the lines: on November 22 he was sent to the 14<sup>th</sup> Camp Rest Station for treatment for trench foot. Perhaps the area was subjected at some time during the next two days to enemy artillery fire for he was transferred from there to the 34<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Grovetown – for medical attention apparently to a gun-shot wound to the left arm!



(continued)

(Preceding page: 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)

Forwarded from there on the very next day to the 6<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in Rouen, Private Driscoll was discharged *to duty* to the Base Depot at Rouen on December 5. Only days later he was sent on the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Convalescent Depot, also in Rouen, for further treatment to his original complaint, trench foot. The circle was complete when he returned to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in the field, on December 17, in plenty of time for the turkey dinner with real ale which had been planned for Christmas.



(Right above: *The River Seine flows through the centre of the French port-city of Rouen – and under the watchful gaze of its venerable cathedral - at or about the time of the Great War.* – from a vintage post-card)

After that welcome six-week Christmas-time respite away from the front lines, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

The only infantry activity involving 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion during that entire period – from the action in mid-October of 1916 at Gueudecourt, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and the 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 that 1<sup>st</sup> 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, its march to finish amid the rubble of a village called Monchy-le-Preux.



(Previous page: *the remnants of the Grande Place in the city of Arras in early 1916 – 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.



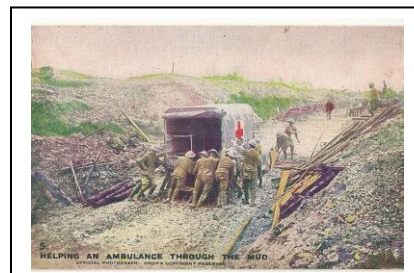
(Right above: *the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

1<sup>st</sup> 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 to be the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties on April 14 alone.



(Above right: *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, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

It was on that April 14 at Monchy-le Preux that Private Driscoll was wounded for the second time, incurring a gun-shot wound to his left thigh. Immediately evacuated to the 87<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, he was forwarded – all on the same day – to an unidentified casualty clearing station.



(Right above: *transferring wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

(Right: *the railway station at Dannes-Camiers through which many thousands of sick, wounded and convalescent military personnel passed during the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



On the morrow, the 15<sup>th</sup>, he was on the move again, to the 6<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital at Frévent where he was apparently at once placed onto an ambulance train. The train took him to the 22<sup>nd</sup> General Hospital at Dannes-Camiers, where he remained until April 21, six days later, when he was embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Newhaven* (right), en route back to the United Kingdom.



Arriving in England on the same day, Private Driscoll was admitted into the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.

(Right: *The main building of what became 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 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 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

Following treatment and convalescence Private Driscoll was granted the customary ten-day furlough granted military personnel upon release from hospital in the United Kingdom, a likely-welcome period of leave which commenced on May 26. Undoubtedly less welcome was the posting to the Regimental Depot at Ayr where he reported to duty on June 4.



(Right above: *the High Street in Ayr, dominated then as it still is today by the imposing Wallace Tower, as shown on a postcard of the time sent home by a Newfoundland soldier – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo*)

Private Driscoll was stationed in Scotland for a little over six weeks – probably being obliged to help in the temporary move of the Depot to Barry on or about July 3\*.

*\*During the summer months of 1917, 2<sup>nd</sup> (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.*

It was on July 11, while at Barry, that Private Driscoll was apprised of the contents of a telegram sent from home on or about June 26: it concerned his adoptive mother, Mrs. Mary Jane Adey, now terminally ill. On August 29 she herself wrote a letter to the *Pay & Record Office* in London asking that he be granted furlough to return home to visit her as... *it is possible that I may not live for any length of time...there is business between us that I am anxious to have attended to.*

The Commanding Officer of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Colonel Hadow, sent a reply on three occasions to the request for an extended furlough for Private Driscoll. The final one – all were of the same ilk – was sent to Newfoundland on October 5: *I regret that furlough is unobtainable at present.* Mrs. Adey passed away on October 6 in the community of Old Bonaventure and was buried in Trouty.

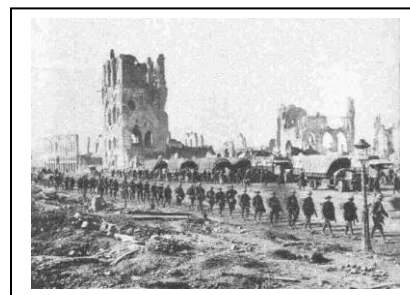
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By that time – in fact, months previously - the 27<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Barry had made its way through the port of Southampton on July 22 – Private Driscoll one of its number – and had embarked for Rouen where the contingent was to land on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The Newfoundlanders made their way upon arrival to the Base Depot for the inevitable last-minute preparations which, in the case of Private Driscoll, were apparently to last some five weeks.

That time having passed, a detachment from Rouen of one-hundred eight *other ranks* arrived at Penton Camp, just outside the Belgian community of Proven, on August 28, being just in time to enjoy – relatively – a month out to be spent out of the lines. The Newfoundlanders – and much of the rest of the British Army – had been withdrawn from the fighting to re-enforce and re-organize.

Such also was the case with the second Newfoundland contingent of two officers and fifty-six *other ranks* which showed up at Penton Camp on the same day from the re-enforcement camp at Bollezeele. To which of those two units Private Driscoll had been attached is not certain.

Some two months prior to Private Driscoll's appearance there, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had 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*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



(Right above: *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*)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion remained in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army which floundered its way across the sodden countryside of Flanders. Notably it fought in two major engagements, at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembeek* on October 9.



(Right: *an unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*. They were ordered back south from Belgium into northern France on October 17 to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras.

(continued)

The so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

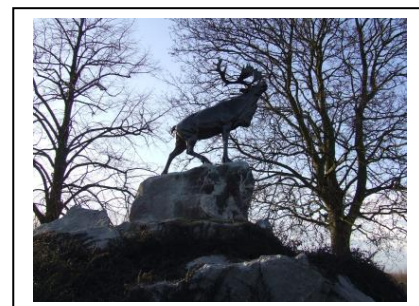
The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



(Above right: *the Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

The son of Willis Driscoll, carpenter, and Leah Driscoll (deceased 1894, née *Reid, Driscoll* her second marriage after *Manuel*), he was then step-son of father's second wife, Eliza Driscoll. He latterly resided at 54 (56 also cited), Lime Street in St. John's – and certainly in Clarendville at some time prior to that where he had been the adopted son of Mrs. Mary Jane Adey (*Eddy*) to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay.

Private Driscoll was reported as having *died of wounds* in the 21<sup>st</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Ytres on November 21/22, 1917, those injuries incurred while serving with 'D' Company in the fighting near the French village of Masnières. At home it was the Reverend E.P. Ward of Shoal Harbour who was requested by the Colonial Secretary's Office to bear the news to Mrs. M.J. Adey (deceased)!



Kenneth Driscoll had enlisted at twenty-three years of age.

(Right above: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012*)



(Right: *The sacrifice of Private Driscolle (sic) is honoured on the Clarendville War Memorial. – photograph from 2009*)

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

(continued)





Somewhere in France,  
Nov. 4. 1917.

Mr. Howley,  
Sir,

I have received word that it is necessary for me to write to you to have my allotment changed to Mrs Christiana Hicks for I want her to pay on my land and House. If you have made any payments for me I would like you to transfer them to her.

All my property belongs to her in my absence. I am making all the property I possess in Clarendville over to her. Never mind about my next of kin, it belongs to her.

I was back in Scotland a few months ago and asked for a furlough. If the authorities used a little consideration there wouldn't be any need of this trouble. Anyway, I guess this war won't last for always, either. Now Sir, I trust that you will act on the instructions I have given you in this letter, and oblige.

Your obedient servant,

Sgd. Kenneth Driscoll

Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>. 1917.

*From time to time the troops serving in the British Army received letters from home. It must have been such a postal delivery that moved Private Driscoll, on or about September 4, to request leave back to Newfoundland to be with his dying adoptive mother, Mrs. Mary Jane Adey. This request was refused: as seen elsewhere in this text, Mrs. Adey passed away on October 6 in the community of Old Bonaventure and was buried in Trouty.*