



Private Henry Dunn (Regimental Number 5208) lies in Burnside Cemetery, St. Alban's, Newfoundland.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman*, Henry Dunn presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on May** 20 of 1918. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.**

(continued)

****The building was to serve as the Regimental Headquarters in Newfoundland for the duration of the conflict.***

*****This was the month during which the Newfoundland Military Service Act (conscription) came into effect. From May 11 through to the end of the War, the Department of Militia called a total of 1,470 men into active service – although there appears to be no evidence among his papers to suggest that Private Dunn was one of those draftees.***

He had apparently been engaged for service in spite of poor vision in both eyes, this deemed acceptable to a military apparatus by that time having become desperately short of manpower. Days following the exam of May 20 a further examination was arranged and the results submitted by June 4: Private Dunn was to go overseas.

In his defence it should be said that the examining doctor had noted in his report that...*I have examined the marginally noted man and find his sight to be 6/12 both eyes, which is much better than the regulations call for.*

It was to be on the day of that first medical assessment, May 20, while at the same venue, that Henry Dunn would enlist. He was thus engaged...*for the duration of the war**...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

****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. Later recruits – as of or about May of 1916 - signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.***

Only some few hours were now to follow before there subsequently came to pass, while still at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On the same twentieth day of that month of May he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Henry Dunn became...*a soldier of the King.*

Subsequent to his enlistment, Private Dunn was hospitalized twice in St. John's: on the first occasion he was admitted into an auxiliary establishment at 27, Feild Street from June 3 to 25 to be treated for mumps; then on August 29 he was forwarded to the Barracks Hospital where he remained with an apparently undisclosed complaint for a mere two days, until the 31st, when he was discharged back *to duty.*

Other than in hospital during that period it is likely that he reported...*to duty*...to be quartered in the temporary barracks apparently established by that time in the *Prince's Skating Rink* in the eastern end of the city.

(Page following: *This photograph of the Prince's Rink in St. John's with military personnel, apparently attired in uniforms of Great War vintage, on parade is from the Ice Hockey Wiki web-site. There appears to be no further information a propos.*)

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Private Dunn was to leave St. John's to travel to Halifax, Nova Scotia, on September 22 and he was to make the first stage of the journey by train, presumably then to pass through Port-aux-Basques and North Sydney en route.



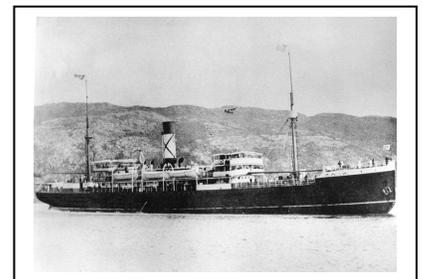
On an earlier date it would likely have been on board the vessel *Florizel** that Private Dunn and his fellow recruits would have sailed to Halifax, but *Florizel* had been wrecked with a large loss of life in February of that 1918 and there had been no ship available to replace her.

**Apart from carrying the First Five Hundred of the Newfoundland Regiment across the ocean to the United Kingdom in October of 1914, the vessel – as it had a commercial route down the Eastern Seaboard from St. John's as far as New York – had since that time transported several drafts as far as Halifax where they had embarked onto other ships for passage to England.*

Of Private Dunn's passage from Halifax to the United Kingdom there appears to be no recorded information to be found among his papers. The vessel on which he sailed has not been identified and therefore neither has the port in which he was to disembark. All that may be said with any certainty is that once having landed, likely in early October, Private Dunn and his fellow recruits would have been transported to the quarters of the Regimental Depot and the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment at *Hazely Down Camp* (also see further below).

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Some three years and ten months prior to that summer of 1918 when Private Dunn was to find himself in southern England, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's and elsewhere in the city, and were formed into 'A' and 'B' Companies.



During that same period the various authorities on both sides of the ocean had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

(Right above: The image of 'Florizel' at anchor in the harbour at St. John's in October of 1914 is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.)

This first Newfoundland contingent was to embark on October 3, in some cases only days after a recruit's enlistment and/ or attestation. To become known to history as the *First*

Five Hundred and also as the *Blue Puttees*, on that day they had boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John's Harbour.

(Right: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

The ship had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island. Once having disembarked in the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915: firstly in southern England on the *Salisbury Plain*; then in Scotland at *Fort George* – on the *Moray Firth* close to Inverness; and lastly at *Edinburgh Castle* – where it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.



(Right above: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011*)

Only days after 'A' and 'B' Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 of 1915, 'C' Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent - would arrive directly – through Liverpool of course - from Newfoundland.

On the final day of the month of March it had been the turn of 'D' Company to arrive – they via Halifax as well as Liverpool – to report...*to duty...*at Edinburgh, and then 'E' Company five weeks less a day later again, on May 4*.



**These five Companies, while a contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.*

Seven days after the arrival of 'E' Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent had been ordered elsewhere. On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit had been dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.

(Right above: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and of Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



Two months less a day later, on July 10, 'F' Company would march into *Stobs Camp*.

This had been an all-important moment: the Company's arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment's numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength* of a battalion which could be posted on...*active service*.

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

**A number sufficient for four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

From *Stobs Camp*, some three weeks after the arrival of ‘F’ Company, in early August ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, the four senior Companies, having by that time become the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, had been transferred to *Aldershot Camp* in southern England.



There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before the Battalion’s departure to the Middle East and to the fighting on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Right above: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – the photograph is taken from the Bain News Services as presented by the Wikipedia web-site.*)

The later arrivals to the United Kingdom, ‘E’ and ‘F’ Companies, were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were eventually to form the nucleus of the first re-enforcements to be dispatched to the 1st Battalion.

(Right below: *An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on-Ayr, where were quartered the ‘other ranks’, is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

Ayr was a small town on the west coast of Scotland whose history precedes the year 1205 when it was established as a Royal Burgh (Borough) by the crown of Scotland, an appointment which emphasized the importance of the town as a harbour, market and, later, administrative centre.



By the time of the Great War centuries later it was expanding and the River Ayr which had once marked the northern boundary of the place was now flowing through its centre; a new town to the north (Newton-on-Ayr), its population fast-increasing, perhaps encouraged by the coming of the railway, was soon to be housing the majority of the personnel of the Newfoundland Regimental Depot.



(Right: *The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower – it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo.*

Since that summer of 1915, recruits from Newfoundland had passed through The Regimental Depot at Ayr, there to undergo the mandatory fourteen weeks of training, and

had then been sent on their way to *active service*, a practice which was to continue for the subsequent twenty-nine months.

In all, Ayr had seen the coming and going of eleven drafts from home*.

**The last to do so would be the Seventeenth Draft. The first six – ‘A’ to ‘F’ Companies – had already been stationed in the United Kingdom – as seen above - before the establishment of the Regimental facilities at Ayr.*

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, and was to eventually 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 the 1st Battalion.

(Right: *Wellington Square seen here almost a century after it hosted the officers of the Newfoundland Regiment – photograph from 2012*)



(Right below: *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*)



At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to be able to accommodate the number of new arrivals – plus men from other British regiments which were still being billeted in the area...and a measles epidemic which was to claim the life of several Regiment personnel – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in the town-centre of Ayr itself, and the *other ranks* had been billeted at Newton Park School and if not, in the grandstand or a tented camp at the newly-built racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr.

During the summer months of 1917, as of early July the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment and the Regimental Depot had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was such that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the end of September.

In the New Year of 1918, the Regimental Depot and the Headquarters of the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the soon-Royal Newfoundland Regiment had moved quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to *Hazely Down Camp* in the southern English county of Hampshire, not far distant from the venerable cathedral city of Winchester.



(Preceding page: *Troops march through a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918 1918 – from The War Illustrated*)

This transfer had been finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was to there, *Hazely Down Camp*, that Private Dunn had reported upon arrival all those several months later in England.

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The next record pertaining to Private Dunn is dated November 10th, 1918: *...the undermentioned (#5208 Pte. H. Dunn) will proceed to join the Newfoundland Forestry Corps on Monday the 18th, on probation.* Presumably the *month* of his proposed transfer was the same November.

For whatever the reason – not cited but likely to have been medical – it would appear that Private Dunn was not to be permanently transferred, if even transferred at all*, to the *Newfoundland Forestry Corps* as he was reported back at *Hazely Down Camp* on April 10 when he was admitted for two weeks into the *Magdalen Camp Hospital*. There he was to be diagnosed as suffering from both influenza and tuberculosis. He was discharged from hospital on April 24...*to duty*...where he remained until June 1 when he was again reported to be sick.

****The little information available is somewhat convoluted as a second paper submitted by the Officer Commanding the Newfoundland Forestry Corps at the time reads as follows: 19/11/18 – The undermentioned having arrived from the 2nd Battalion, Royal Newfoundland Regiment, is attached to the strength from this date and posted to the following Company – ‘A’ Company – 5208, H. Dunn***

On June 24, 1919, His Majesty’s Transport *Cassandra* sailed from Glasgow carrying service personnel back to Newfoundland to be demobilized. Private Dunn was among those travelling, having been recommended for repatriation by a Medical Board. The ship was to arrive in St. John’s on July 1, the third anniversary of the debacle at Beaumont-Hamel.

(Right: *The ship ‘Cassandra’ was built in 1906 for the Donaldson Line and sailed on the commercial route from Glasgow to Montreal and Quebec City. When war came in 1914, one of her first duties was to be a part of the convoy conveying the (1st) Canadian Division overseas to the United Kingdom in October of that year. She later served as a troop transport during the Gallipoli Campaign. The vessel survived the conflict and served various owners until being scrapped in 1934. – the image of her on a vintage post-card is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)



Upon arrival, Private Dunn reported to Regimental Headquarters on that same date to be forwarded to the *Escasoni Hospital where it was recommended that he remain after his discharge from the Regiment and from the Army. His discharge took place on August 15 of that same year.**

****A house and farm in St. John's were confiscated from its German owner in 1917 by the government for use as a sanatorium, the Escasoni Hospital, for returning service personnel. This institution complemented the privately-funded Jensen Camp on Blackmarsh Road already in service since the previous year. The Escasoni Hospital closed at the end of 1920 and Jensen Camp a month later due to the expansion of a third facility on Topsail Road which was to become the St. John's Sanatorium.***

The son of Joseph Dunn, fisherman, and of Martha Dunn (née Lane) of Hollett's Tickle (today a part of the community of Burnside), Bonavista Bay, he was also brother to two sisters, Clara and Hannah.

Henry Dunn was reported as having...*died of sickness*...on April 3, 1920.

His grave in Squid Tickle was not finally completed and inspected by the War Graves Commission authorities until 1927.

Henry Dunn had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-one years: date of birth in the community of Salvage, Bonavista Bay, September 13, 1896 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

(Right above: *The sacrifice of Private Dunn is honoured on the Screen Wall in the Military Plot, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, St. John's. – photograph from 2011*)

Private Henry Dunn was entitled to the British War Medal for his overseas service.



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 30, 2023.