



**Private William Dunphy (Regimental Number 15) is interred in Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery No. 2, Auchonvillers – Grave reference A. 28.**

**His occupations prior to enlistment recorded as those of a *labourer* and *stevedore*, and of a *team-driver* employed for two dollars and fifty cents per diem by a *Mr. M. Power, Master Cooper*, for whom he had apparently worked – and likely apprenticed - for eight years, William Dunphy presented himself for medical examination on August 26 of 1914 - three weeks plus a day after the *Declaration of War* – at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John’s, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland.**

**(continued)**

The examination was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

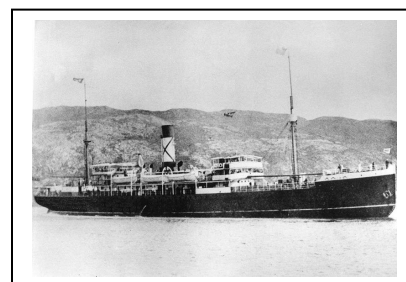
Seven days afterwards, on September 2, William Dunphy once again was to be found at the *C.L.B. Armoury*, on this occasion to enlist, engaged at the daily private soldier's pay of a single dollar, plus a ten-cent per diem *Field Allowance*. A recruit of the First Draft, he was likely now ordered to the tented area by that time established on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the East End of St. John's where a four-five week course of training was by now under way.

The regimental authorities were now also busy, preparing for the transport of this, the first body of volunteers, to *overseas* - and later to *active* - service.

At the beginning of the month of October a large number of the new recruits underwent attestation; Private William Dunphy was one of that number, taking his oath of allegiance on October 1.

Two days later, after the Newfoundland contingent - it was not as yet a battalion - of 'A' and 'B' Companies had paraded through the city, it embarked onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* which was awaiting in St. John's Harbour.

Private Dunphy and his comrades-in-arms of the *First Five Hundred* - also to be known to history as the *Blue Puttees* - were now to sit on board ship for the best part of a day as it was not to be until the morrow that *Florizel* would sail to the south coast of the Island and to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the Canadian Division across the Atlantic.



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

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



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 the unit was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.



(Right: *The venerable Edinburgh Castle dominates the city from its position on the summit of Castle Hill. - photograph from 2011*)

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Some three months later, on May 11, and some seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundland unit – by now, ‘A’ and ‘B’ Companies re-enforced by ‘C’, ‘D’, and ‘E’ - was ordered moved from the Scottish capital to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent received the re-enforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength\*. The now-formed 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered eligible to be ordered on ‘active service’.

*\*The number was approximately fifteen hundred, sufficient enough to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

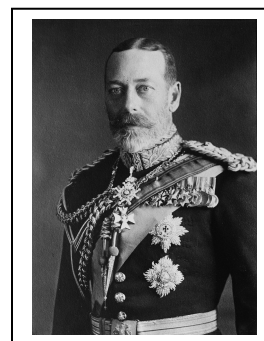
On occasion, so the records show, Private Dunphy was to find that parades were not to his liking and thus he declined at times to be present; the same records show him often having been penalized for these absences. In his defence, if there be any, it could be said that the records of other soldiers show that he often had plenty of company\*.



*\*Private Dunphy, during the period that the Regiment spent in the United Kingdom, accumulated a total of seventy-two days...confined to barracks...or similar punishment.*

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

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ – Private Dunphy among their ranks - were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot. This force, now designated the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, was thereupon attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.



Meanwhile the two junior Companies, the later-arrived ‘E’ and aforementioned ‘F’, were ordered transferred to Scotland’s west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion.

Private Dunphy during the posting to Aldershot was to spend five days in the Connaught Military Hospital – from August 4 to 8 (inclusive) - receiving treatment for scabies.

(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 from Bain News Services via the Wikipedia web-site.*)

It was also during this period while at Aldershot that, on August 14, Private Dunphy re-enlisted, on this occasion for the *duration of the war*\*

*\*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.*

(Right: Some of the personnel of ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, prior to its departure to active service on the Gallipoli Peninsula – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)



On August 20 of 1915, the Newfoundland Battalion had embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks.

There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Right above: *The image of Megantic, here in her peace-time colours of a ‘White Star Line’ vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)



(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 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli.* – from Provincial Archives)



(Right: *Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen 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 taken in 2011)



(Right: *A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*

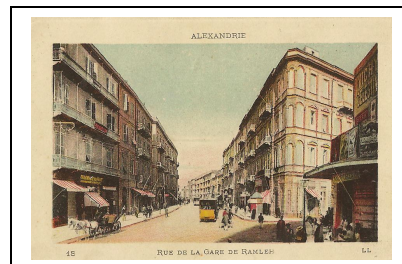


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On October 4, 1915, while at Suvla Bay, Private Dunphy was diagnosed as suffering from a venereal problem. He was evacuated from there on an unspecified hospital ship and admitted on October 10 into the Government Hospital *Zag a Zig*, at Dumanhour, Alexandria, for medical attention. He was then to be discharged from there *to duty* on November 11, a month later, to the British Base Depot at Sidi Bishr, also in the vicinity of the port-city of Alexandria.



(Right above: *one of the major thoroughfares in the Egyptian naval-base city of Alexandria, at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

There at Sidi Bishr Private Dunphy was to recommence his disciplinary misdemeanours, to be punished on five separate occasions there and on a single occasion, December 12, when he must have spent a few days at the nearby Mustapha Convalescent Depot. These problems were to continue during the remaining period of his military service.

It was not to be until January 26 of the New Year, 1917, that he reported back *to duty* with the Newfoundland Battalion. By that date the unit had been evacuated from the *Gallipoli Peninsula* (see immediately below) and was encamped at Suez awaiting further orders.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the Newfoundlanders had landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* on the night of September 19-20, 1915, they had disembarked into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion were to serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, had proved to be little more than a debacle:

Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command\* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and those of the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

(Right: *An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives*)



*\*Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

November 26 would see the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at Gallipoli; a freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm was to strike the *Suvla Bay* area and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival rather than the enemy was to be the priority.

There were to be many casualties on both sides, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

On the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel had been evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration; the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Right: *Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached: The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011*)



The British, Indian and *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had now only been marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* could be undertaken.

This final operation would take place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion to furnish part of the British rear-guard on this second occasion also.

(Right: *'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was only days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration*)



*\*Lieutenant Owen Steele of St. John's, Newfoundland, is cited as having been the last soldier of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to step into the final small boat to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.*

(Right: *'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in that January of 1916 and by the Newfoundlanders who were to be the last soldiers off the beach: Vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011*)



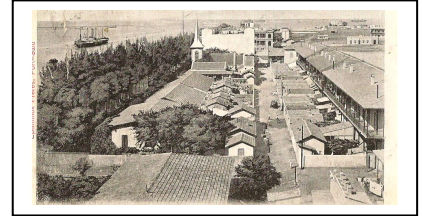
Immediately after the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city of *Alexandria*, to arrive there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to the vicinity of *Suez*, a port at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29<sup>th</sup> Division had yet to be decided\*.





***\*Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.***

**(Preceding page: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)***



It had been, of course, during this period, and as recorded in an earlier paragraph, on January 26 of the New Year, 1916, that Private Dunphy was to report back *to duty* at Suez with the Newfoundland Battalion.

**(Right above: *Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal as it was just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card)***

After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were to board His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage through the *Suez Canal* en route to France. The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles, on March 22.



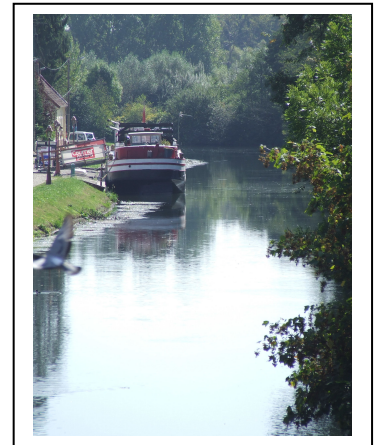
**(Right above: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage post-card)***

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably travelled unused in a separate wagon.

Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure the long, dark march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they had then marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to become a part of their history.

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



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On April 13, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had subsequently marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where it would be billeted, would receive re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front*, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit\* before the entire Newfoundland unit was to then be ordered to move further up for the first time into forward positions on April 22.

*\*It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lincolnshire Regiment Battalion, were then the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*

(Right below: *A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?)*)

Having then been withdrawn at the end of that April to the areas of Mailly-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing for the upcoming British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, that flowed – and still does so today – through the region.



If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered, they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later\*.



(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel: Looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences: The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009*)

(Right: *A view of Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?)*)

*\*Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion's casualties was to be incurred during the advance from the third line of British trenches to the first line from where the attack proper was to be made, and while struggling through British wire laid to protect the British positions from any German attack.*



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There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand were recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds*.

It was to be the largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the butchery of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.



(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village*. – photographs from 2010 and 2015)

*In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man’s-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.*



(Right: *A grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland - dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from...?*)

The son of Martin Dunphy, fireman on the SS *Kite*, of 23, Princes Street - later of Barter’s Hill - in St. John’s, and of Catharine Dunphy (née *Walsh*, deceased by the time of her son’s death), he was also brother to several siblings\*.

*\*According to Roman Catholic Parish Records they were: William-Joseph (born 1892), to John Patrick (born 1894)\*\*, to a second John Patrick (born 1897), to Bridget (born 1898), to James-Francis (born 1899) and to Patrick (born 1901).*

*\*\*Private John Patrick Dunphy of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment (Regimental Number 44) was to serve at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, where ‘...he was sitting on a fire-step with his cup of tea...when a bullet ricocheted off a periscope, struck him in the head and killed him instantly’. He died on December 12, 1915.*



(Right: *The grave marker of Private John Dunphy in Azmak Cemetery, Gallipoli – photograph from 2011*)

Private Dunphy was at first reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel, during the fighting of that first day of *the Somme*, July 1, 1916, while serving with ‘A’ Company. Six months later, on December 31, 1916, he was officially *presumed dead*.

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However, later again, the subsequent identification and burial of his remains on April 23 of 1917 by the Graves Registration Unit of the British 5<sup>th</sup> Corps was reported in a letter from its Officer Commanding. His first place of rest was in *No-Man's-Land*, not far removed from Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2\* where he lies today. His personal file was thus amended so as to read *killed in action 1/7/16*.

*\*The proximity of the gravestones, according to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, denotes a mass grave.*

William Dunphy was a *declared* twenty-one years of age at the time of his enlistment: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, July or August 28, 1895 (from Roman Catholic Parish Records – the year is cited elsewhere as 1893).



*(The photograph of Private Dunphy is from the Provincial Archives.)*

Private William Dunphy 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).



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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 10, 2023.