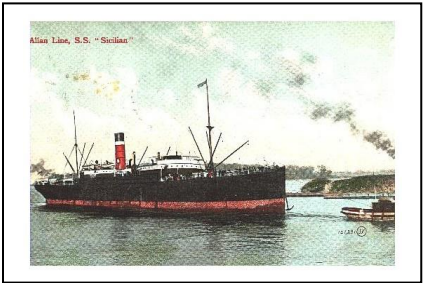




Private John Thomas Dwyer (Regimental Number 2725) is interred in Dozinghem Military Cemetery – Grave reference XI. J. 18.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a miner earning a monthly \$38.00, John Thomas Dwyer was a recruit of the Ninth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on May 9, 1916, he then enlisted *for the duration of the war* - engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and also attested on the following day, May 10.

Private Dwyer 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.

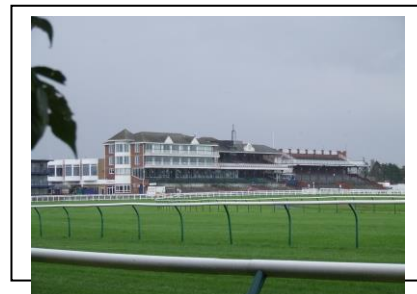
**Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport during another conflict, carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

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 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*)

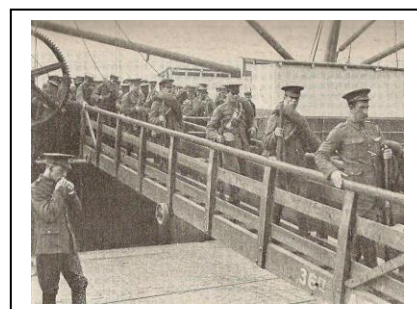
At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been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

The 11th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Dwyer 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 1st Battalion.



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

(continued)

****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 Dwyer 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 1st 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 14th, 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 1st 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)



For the remainder of that autumn of 1916, 1st Battalion remained in the same area of the Somme and was regularly into and out of the trenches. There were no infantry engagements, but the incessant artillery action ensured a steady stream of casualties.

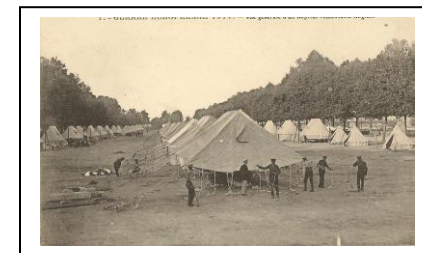
The Newfoundlanders would be withdrawn from active service on or about December 12 and were to spend the following six weeks or so encamped well behind the lines and close to the city of Amiens.

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



Private Dwyer was not, however, to enjoy that entire holiday respite. Only one week into the New Year of 1917, on January 7, he was evacuated to the 21st Casualty Clearing Station at Corbie suffering from hæmoptysis – the coughing-up of blood.

(Right: 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)



(continued)

He was forwarded from there to the 5th General Hospital at Rouen on January 10 and twelve days later, on the 22nd, placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Glenart Castle* (right) for the crossing of the English Channel back to the United Kingdom.



Upon his arrival in England, Private Dwyer was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.

(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 the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

Apparently his case was expediently dealt with as Private Dwyer is next recorded after some three weeks as having been discharged for the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital in the United Kingdom. He began this period of leave on February 13 before then taking up a posting back at the Regimental Depot in Scotland where he reported for duty on the 22nd of the month.

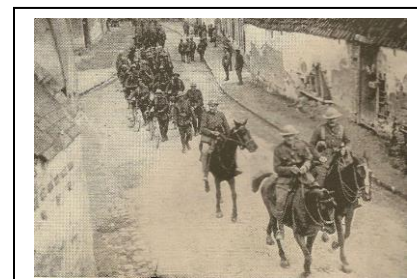


(Right above: *the High Street in Ayr, dominated then as it still is today by the imposing Wallace Tower, as shown on a postcard of the time sent home by a Newfoundland soldier – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo*)

The 24th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Dwyer one of its number - passed through the English Channel port of Folkestone on June 3 en route to Boulogne on the French side. There it disembarked only hours later. The Newfoundlanders then travelled south to the Base Depot in Rouen for those inevitable days of final preparation before setting off to seek out 1st Battalion.

Private Dwyer's contingent of one-hundred eighteen *other ranks* eventually joined the parent unit in Bonneville, near Arras, on June 19.

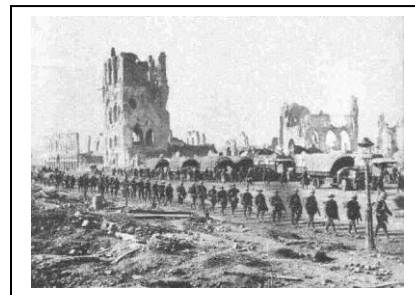
In the meantime, during the prior month - in contrast to the hard fighting at Monchy-le-Preux in April - May of 1917 had been a period when 1st Battalion, the parent unit, had been ordered hither and thither on the Arras front, in and out of the trenches. However, apart from the ever-present artillery, there had been little infantry activity – except for the marching.



(Preceding page: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville in early May of 1917 – from The War Illustrated*)

At the beginning of June, 1st Battalion had 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.

The Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had once again been ordered 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.



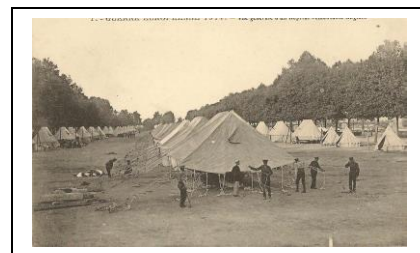
(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

1st 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*)

At the *Broembeek* on that October 9, Private Dwyer incurred gun-shot wounds to the abdomen and was immediately evacuated from the field into the 61st Casualty Clearing Station at Lozinghem.



(Right: *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*)

The son of Robert Dwyer, miner, and Jane Dwyer (née *Bailey*) – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay and to whom he had willed his everything - of Wabana Mines, Bell Island (but the family formerly from Tilt Cove), he was also brother to Catharine, to Elizabeth (Lillian), to Robert Jr., to James, to Ronald, to Andrew and to Clara.

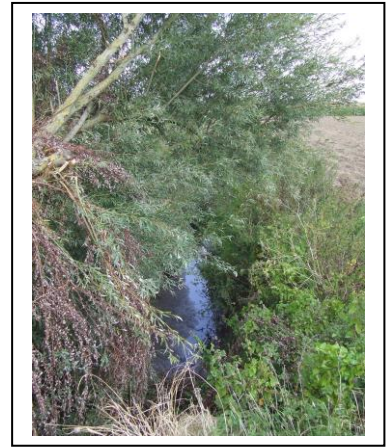
Private Dwyer was reported as having *died of wounds* on October 10, 1917, injuries suffered while serving with 'C' Company in the fighting of the previous day. He passed away in the same 61st CCS at Lozinghem.

(continued)

John Thomas Dwyer had enlisted at the age of nineteen years and seven months.

(Right above: *At times a placid, innocuous stream, the Broembek, in full spate in October, 1917, inundated and transformed its surrounds into a quagmire:* - photograph from 2010)

Private John Thomas Dwyer was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



J R Bennett Esq
Bell Island
C. Sectary
St. John's

Dear Sir

A few days ago I had a letter from My Son That is in Ayr, and He is very sick He got a terrible bad head and I just wants to know if you could do any thing with regards to getting him home for me because a sick boy in no good to the Army, He as been sick for about four months He was sent over to France but They had to Send him back again I am very anxious for you to do what you can in this respect

Will you do you very best for me will you please answer this note as I am anxious awaiting a answer I remain

Sincerely

Mrs Robert Dwyer
Wabana Mines
Bell Island