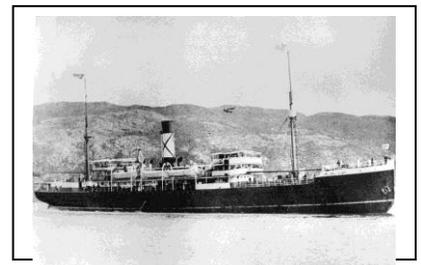




Private George Earle (Regimental Number 3684) is interred in Oxford Road Cemetery – Grave reference V. J. 32.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman earning a monthly \$26.00, George Earle was a recruit of the Fourteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at Headquarters at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on April 24 of 1917, he then enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attested on the following day.

Private Earle was not to depart from Newfoundland until May 19, when the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* (right) left en route to Halifax. His contingent of three officers and one-hundred eighty-two *other ranks*, and also ninety-nine recruits of the newly-formed Newfoundland Forestry Unit, then left Nova Scotia for the United Kingdom on board an unspecified\* vessel, on May 29.



(continued)

*\*The ship in question may well have been the White Star liner Olympic (right) – sister ship to Titanic – requisitioned as a troop transport during the war, which sailed on June 2 from Halifax with Canadian military personnel as well – there are no other departures on or about this date. May 29 may have been the date of embarkation by the Newfoundland contingent.*



Arriving in the English west-coast port of Liverpool on June 9 the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some two years. It was from here – since November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were being 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-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

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

The 34<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Earle among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port-city of Southampton on December 2, 1917, crossing the English Channel to reach the Norman capital of Rouen on December 4. There Private Moran's detachment disembarked to proceed to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot close by, there for a period of last-minute training and also to organize\* before seeking out the parent unit.



(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

*\*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.*

Private Earle is documented as reporting to duty with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on December 9 – although it may well have been the 11<sup>th</sup> when a detachment of fifty-five other ranks arrived from Rouen – as did a smaller contingent on the next day again.

(continued)

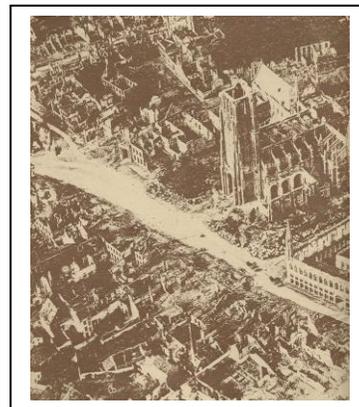
Only a week earlier, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had left behind it, on December 4, the theatre of – and with it the exertions of - the *Battle of Cambrai*. By the time of the newcomers' arrival the parent unit was billeted in the vicinity of the community of Humbercourt, a number of kilometres just to the south-west of Arras. The Newfoundlanders remained there until the 18<sup>th</sup> when they marched to Fressin, some fifty kilometres to the north-west. There they were to spend both Christmas and New Year.

The weather obliged and even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow, a bit too much at times apparently.

At the beginning of January of 1918, and after that snowy Christmas period spent to the west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been ordered into Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time.

There, as it was with the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences.

(Right: *an aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916 – from Illustration*)



Meanwhile, while the Allies built their defences, by the beginning of 1918 the Germans were preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking man-power after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them.



It was expected that the Germans would launch a spring offensive. While they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders continued to dig.

(Above right: *countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were to be stationed in March and early April of 1918 – photograph from 2011*)

On March 13, the Newfoundlanders were in the front-line and support trenches just beyond Zonnebeke, to the north-east of Ypres, having been posted there on March 7. The Regimental War Diary of that period makes no particular note of events on either the 12<sup>th</sup> or the 13<sup>th</sup>, and the entry of the 14<sup>th</sup> is minimal: *Battalion relieved by Lancs. Fusiliers, and moved to Haslar Camp. Total casualties during tour in line:- Killed in Action = 1 Officer, 11 Other Ranks, Missing B'ld K = 1 Other Rank, Wounded = 54 do.*

(continued)

Private Earle, while serving in the trenches with 'D' Company, was one of those wounded on March 13. He was evacuated from the front line and admitted into the 87<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, having incurred penetrating gun-shot wounds to the abdomen.

(Right: a *British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some* – from a vintage post-card)



The son of William Earle, fisherman - to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay - and of Mary Ann Earle (deceased January 7, 1898) of Moreton's Harbour, Notre Dame Bay, he was also brother to Emma-Jane, Edith, Archibald and to Jessie\*. Private Earle was reported as having *died of wounds* on the same March 13, 1918, in the same 87<sup>th</sup> FA.

George Earle had enlisted at the age of twenty-four years and eight months.

*\*This information is from three un-related sources and could do with some confirmation.*

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

