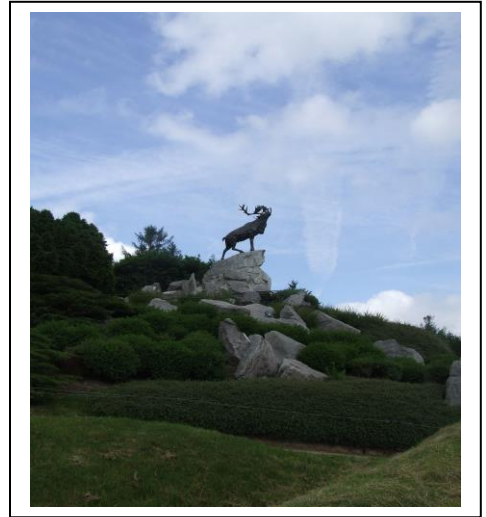




Private John Henry Ebbs (Regimental Number 2351), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a coachman\*, John Henry Ebbs 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 15, 1916, before enlisting for the *duration of the war* five days afterwards, on March 20 – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10. – He then attested\*\* on March 29.



*\*possibly the driver or ticket-collector of a tram or street-car such as used to exist in St. John's*

*\*\*A second source records him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

Private Ebbs 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.



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.

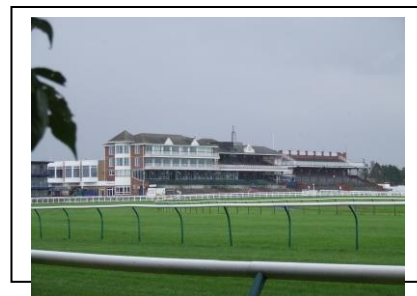
*\*Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport during another conflict, carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

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-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*)

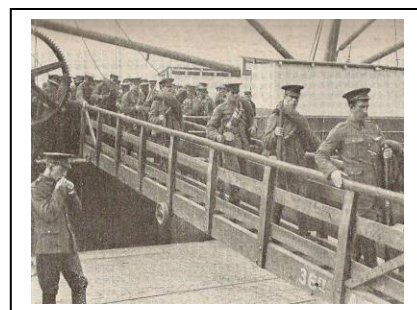
At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been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

*\*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, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

The contingent with which Private Ebbs 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*)



From November 17 to 21, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was stationed in front-line trenches not far removed from Gueudecourt. There had been, as was usually the case, little or no infantry activity but, also as usual, the soldiers in the trenches had suffered some prolonged heavy shelling during that time and the Regimental War Diary records ...*Total casualties while in line 5 killed and 15 wounded.*

The son of John Ebbs (former cabman, deceased by 1913) and of Agnes Ebbs - to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of fifty cents from his pay, and to whom he had willed his all - of 4, Fleming Street in St. John's, he was also brother to at least Walter and William.

Private Ebbs was reported as having been *killed in action* while serving with 'C' Company on November 21, 1916, a victim of the heavy enemy shelling of the Battalion trenches near the village of LesBoeuifs in the French *Département de la Somme*.

John Henry Ebbs had enlisted at the age of nineteen years and five months.

(Right above: *the Guards' Cemetery at LesBoeuifs and the surrounding countryside in the area of the fighting of November 21, 1916 - photograph from 2010*)

The photograph of Private Ebbs is from the *Provincial Archives*.

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

