



Private Albert Edgar (Regimental Number 2528) lies in Marcoing British Cemetery – Grave reference II. G. 6.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Albert Edgar was a recruit of the Ninth Draft. He both presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's and enlisted – engaged *for the duration of the war* and at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on April 15, 1916, before attesting three days later on April 18.

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

Some eight weeks after his attestation and six weeks again before his departure from Newfoundland for overseas service, Private Edgar, on June 9, received promotion to the rank of lance corporal.

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Private Edgar 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.

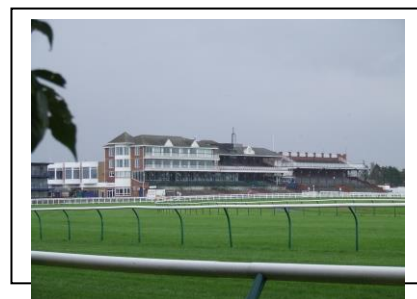
**Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport during another conflict, carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

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 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-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.

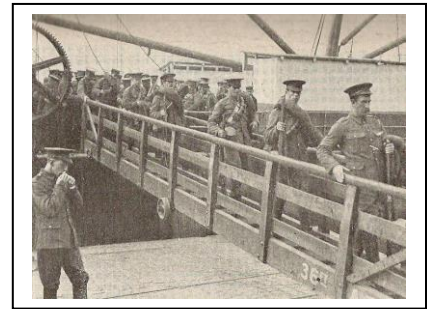


(Right above: *the new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photograph from 2012*)

The 13th Re-enforcement Draft – Lance Corporal Edgar one of the contingent of just ten *other ranks* - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on October 24 of 1916 on its way to the Continent and to *the Western Front*.

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The contingent disembarked in the Norman capital of Rouen on the next day, October 25, 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 above: *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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

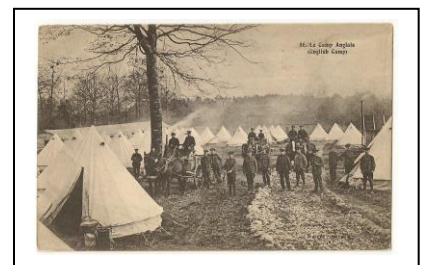
Lance Corporal Edgar's detachment from Rouen reported *to duty* on November 7 while 1st Battalion was behind the lines, re-enforcing and re-organizing after its recent efforts at Gueudecourt where once again the Newfoundlanders had incurred heavy losses. Twenty-four *other ranks* and eight officers comprised this particular contingent, one of several such detachments to arrive at Ville-sous-Corbie within the space of a week. 1st Battalion not to start to move again towards the front lines until November 15.

After the costly action of October 12 at Gueudecourt, 1st Battalion had remained in the same area of *the Somme* and was regularly into and out of the trenches. There were no further 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)

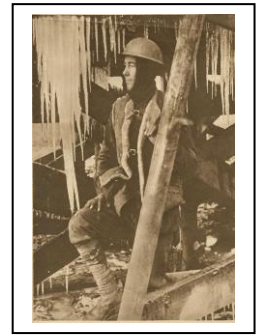
After that welcome six-week Christmas-time respite away from the front lines, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.



The only infantry activity involving 1st Battalion during that entire period – from the action in mid-October of 1916 at Gueudecourt, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and the beginning of March, an action which brought this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.

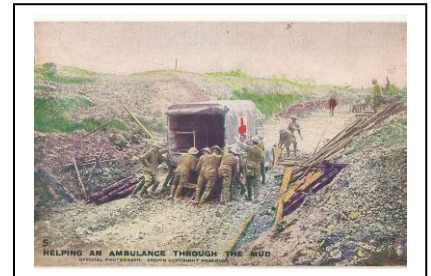


(Previous page: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time. - photograph from 2009(?)*)



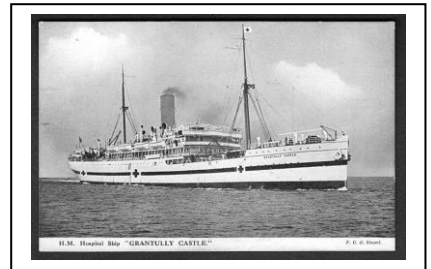
(Right above: *A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers stands in the cold of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel apparently enjoying a cigarette, during the late winter of 1916-1917, just prior to the arrival there of the Newfoundlanders who relieved them. – from Illustration*)

It was at Sailly-Saillisel, on March 3, during a day of heavy fighting, that Lance Corporal Edgar was wounded. He was evacuated from the field to the 60th Field Ambulance and thence later on the same day to the 55th (2/2 London) Casualty Clearing Station at Grovetown where, he was further treated for injuries inflicted by gun-fire to his left arm and right leg.



(Right: *transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

From the CCS he was transferred on March 5 to the 9th General Hospital at Rouen. On the following day yet again, Lance Corporal Edgar was embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Grantully Castle* (right) for the short crossing back to the United Kingdom.



Having arrived in England, Lance Corporal Edgar was transported to the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth where he was admitted on March 7. There he remained for just over a month.

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

On or about April 10, Lance Corporal Edgar was granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital in the United Kingdom. After this period of leave, on April 19, he reported to duty to the Regimental Depot in Scotland.

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(Page preceding: *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*)

Unfortunately for Lance Corporal Edgar, some three weeks after his return to Ayr, having accumulated a number of misdemeanours in the course of that short time – notably absences from parade and failure to salute an officer - he was deprived on May 9 of his NCO's stripe, and reverted to the rank of private.

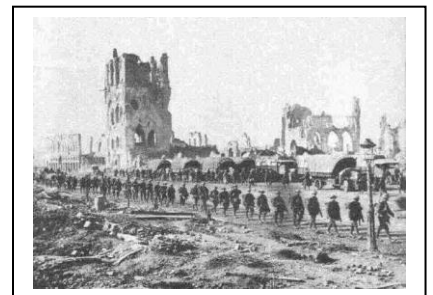
Sources differ as to whether the 28th Re-enforcement Draft, from Barry*, passed through the English Channel port of Folkestone and then Boulogne on the French side, or if it was Southampton then Rouen – in fact it was probably Folkestone then Rouen - but whatever the case, it is certain that Private Edgar was one of its number when it embarked for the Continent on August 5, arriving there two days following.

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been 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.*

Private Edgar was then one of the two drafts totalling one-hundred sixty-six personnel which arrived at Penton Camp, on the outskirts of the Belgian town of Poperinghe, on August 28. 1st Battalion had quit the line on the 24th and was not to return to the front for an entire month. This period, a planned lull in the fighting, was to allow the entire British Army time to reorganize and re-enforce.

Passchendaele recommenced for the Newfoundlanders in the front line on September 25, although they had suffered four wounded two days prior to that due to long-range artillery fire. In their trenches they prepared for the next offensive action. It came about two weeks later at the *Broembeek*.

Some two months previous to Private Edgar's return to *active service*, 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*)

(continued)

1st Battalion was to remain 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, by that time it had fought in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembeek* on October 9.



(Right above: *an unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

Private Edgar's draft of ninety-four *other ranks* arriving from Rouen on October 12, was days too late to play a role in the second of those two actions and by the time of its arrival, 1st Battalion had already been withdrawn from the line, anticipating deployment elsewhere.

A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*. They were ordered back south from Belgium into northern France on October 17 to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras.

The so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1st Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



(Above right: *the Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

He was the son of John Edgar* and Elizabeth Edgar (re-married, to W.J. Richards, grocer, of 35 Pennywell Road, St. John's) but latterly the step-son of Frederick Guy (former fisherman, deceased on February 4, 1920, a victim of influenza) and Betsy Ann (*Bessie*) Guy – to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Pilley's Island – which was also Private Edgar's given place of residence. He was step-brother to Russton(?) Guy – age two in 1921 - and also to Lester Pride - age eleven in 1921 - who was also adopted.

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Private Edgar was reported as having been *killed in action* on November 20, 1917, while serving with 'B' Company during the fighting near the French village of Masnières. His burial was reported by the Reverend T. Nangle, *Chaplain to the Forces* attached to 1st Battalion, as being in Marcoing Copse Cemetery from where his remains were later moved to where they repose today.



Albert Edgar had enlisted at nineteen years and nine months of age.

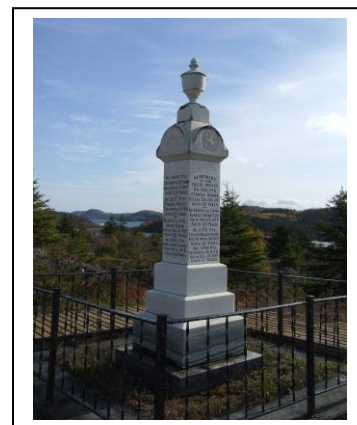
(Right above: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of 1st Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial.* – photograph from 2012)

The following is not watertight but likely: John Edgar (born 1847), master mariner and tug-boat captain (deceased April 1900 – age fifty-two years) first wife Diana (deceased 1881), married Hannah Elizabeth Goulding in 1885 – she then aged twenty-two years – in St. Thomas' Church, St. John's; sons George-Sydney (born April, 1889) and Lionel Bertram (born April, 1891), therefore brothers to Albert Edgar. After that, there seem to be no further baptismal record available.*

***Apparently there was an Albert Edgar from the first marriage.*

On several documents issued after his death, he was referred to as Corporal Edgar. However, there is no indication anywhere else that, after his demotion, that there was ever again any advancement in his rank. He apparently was still a private at the time of his death.

(Right: *The War Memorial on Pilley's Island honours the sacrifice of Private Albert Edgar Guy – the date of death on the Memorial cited as November 30.* – photograph from 2015)



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

