

Private Samuel Robert Edney (Regimental Number 1714), 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 clerk working for *Ayre & Sons* and earning \$4.00 per week, Samuel Robert Edney was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on July 16, 1915, he then both enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and attested three days later, on July 19.

Private Edney and the other personnel of 'G' Company – apparently in the company of several naval reservists and also some German prisoners (these latter presumably to remain in Canada) - left St. John's by train on October 27, to cross the island to Port aux Basques. The contingent then traversed the Gulf of St. Lawrence by ferry, and proceeded by train from North Sydney to Quebec City.

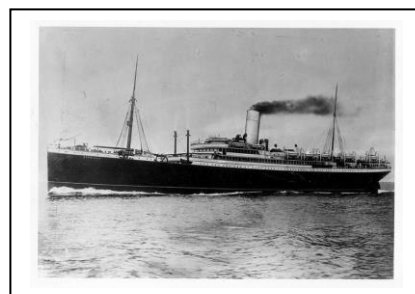
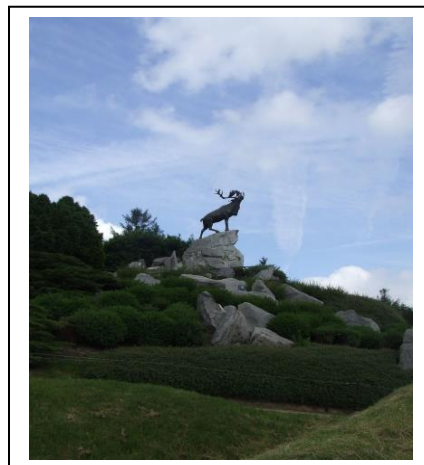
At Québec the Newfoundlanders boarded His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* (above) for the trans-Atlantic passage to the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport where they arrived on November 9.

By the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> the new arrivals had travelled by train and had gone north to Scotland. There they had been billeted in huts in a military camp at Gailles, not far removed from the new Regimental Depot where accommodation for the contingent was as yet not available.

That new Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland to serve as a 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 sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently 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)

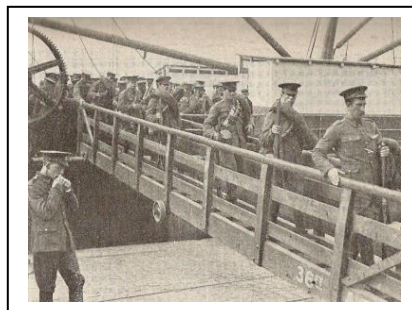
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It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot that on May 24, some three weeks before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Edney was prevailed upon to re-enlist *for the duration of the War*\*.

*\*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.*

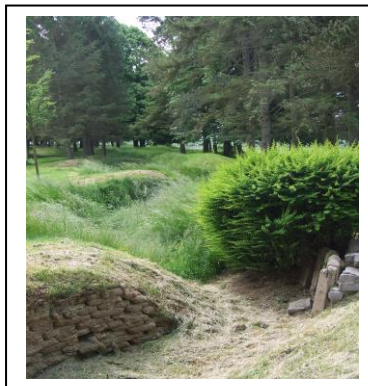
On June 14, 1916, the 6<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Edney among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the following day, the 15<sup>th</sup>, it disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and the site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot where the contingent spent time in final training and organizing\* before moving on to a rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> 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.*

A detachment of sixty-six *other ranks* from Rouen, a draft which included Private Edney, arrived to join the parent unit in the community of Louvencourt on June 30. At 9:15 that evening, those of the Newfoundlanders not of the fourteen officers and eighty-three *other ranks* assigned to the Re-enforcement Company, marched from there to their assigned *forming-up place trenches i.e. rear line of trenches in our usual sector* (Regimental War Diary).



(Right: *Just inside the entrance to the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel, this trench is reputed to be the one where 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion spent the night before launching its attack from there on July 1. – photograph from 2009*)

Private Edney was not one of those who figured in the fighting of the morning of July 1 with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at Beaumont-Hamel, but his name was included on the unit's nominal roll; it is therefore possible that he had been seconded to another unit or, more likely, that he was one of the ten per cent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three *other ranks* held at Louvencourt and not called forward until later in the day when the fighting had subsided.



***\*The well-known roll-call of July 2 of those who survived the battle unscathed was not officially recorded until two days later. The roll call of those who had been in the ten per cent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three men held back for most of the day at Louvencourt was apparently also recorded officially only later. Thus the inscription 'With Battalion 4/7/16' on certain records.***

***(Page preceding: a further part of the reconstituted battlefield, here showing the British front lines, in the Newfoundland Park at Beaumont-Hamel: today the wire serves only to keep the tourists out of the trenches. – photograph from 2010(?))***

**On July 27-28 of 1916, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after re-enforcement\* - moved north and entered into Belgium for the first time, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize. It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*. The Salient was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatal.**



***\*Regulation strength for a British battalion was approximately one thousand.***

**On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion moved south back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.**

***(Right above: the entrance to 'A' Company's quarters in the ramparts of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010)***



***(Right: the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card)***

**Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion went again to the offensive at a place called Gueudecourt, some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. It proved to be another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.**

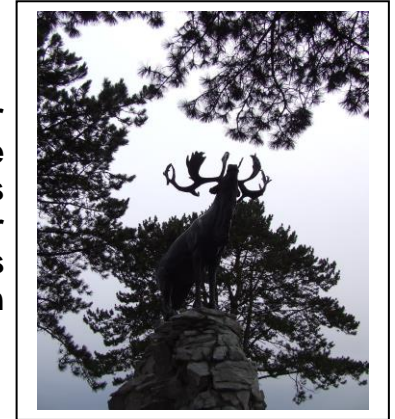


***(Right: This is the ground over which 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007)***

**The son of John T. Edney (former bricklayer, deceased January 16, 1912,) and Elizabeth Edney - to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay - of 15, William Street, St. John's, Private Edney was also brother to Violet, Ivy, Rose, Wesley, Hazel, Dulcie and Gladys.**

At first reported as *wounded\* and missing in action* on October 12, 1916, while fighting at Gueudecourt during *First Somme*, he may well have been officially *presumed dead* some six months later on or about May 4, 1917. Unofficially, due to a letter furnished by the *British Red Cross & Order of St John*, he was recorded as having been *killed in action*. The documentation seems to have remained in this unsatisfactory state of flux.

*\*The nature of his wounds appear not to have been recorded.*



Samuel Robert Edney had enlisted at eighteen years and eight months of age.

(Right above: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's furthest point of advance on October 12, 1916.- photograph from 2009(?)*)

Private Samuel Robert Edney was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



L. Bugden 1584  
S E Edney 1714

I saw both Bugden and Edney killed by the same shell just after we had gone over the top at Flers on date mentioned. They fell only a few yards from the parapet. This was about 2.0 pm

References: Cpl. C. P. Martin, 192  
Convalescent Camp, Rouen 7.2.17

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(continued)

Hon. J. Bennett  
Minister of Militia  
St. John's

15 William St.  
St. John's  
Oct 16/17

Dear Sir,

I called at your office this morning, to see about my deceased soldier son if I am intitle to hid full amount of money. I get the allotment \$18.00 eighteen dollars per month. But having such a heavy family of small children I find it very hard, six girls and a boy and myself and only two girls working and my husband dead.

My soldier son was my only dependants, and all my friends advised me to see you about it. My son is killed one year October 12 and this is my first time asking about it, things being so expensive eighteen dollars is not much for a family of eight if you can do anything for me I would be very thankful.

Hoping to receive a favourable reply

Yours respectfully  
Mrs Elizabeth Edney