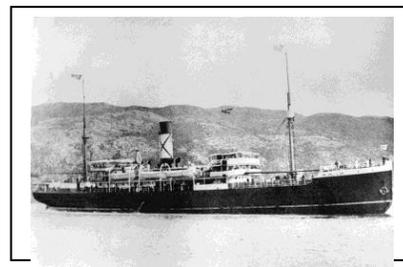




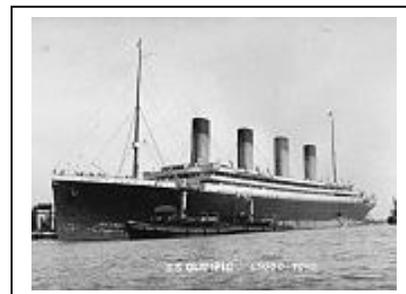
Private Hubert Frank Edwards (Regimental Number 3489) is interred in Duhallow A.D.S. Cemetery – Grave reference IV. J. 4.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a lumber surveyor and earning a monthly \$30.00, Hubert Frank Edwards was a recruit of the Fourteenth Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury on Harvey Road in St. John's on February 22, 1917, also enlisting - engaged *for the duration of the war* and at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and attesting on that same day.

Private Edwards 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.



**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 2nd (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 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*)

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (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.*

It was not to be until November 6, 1917, that Private Edwards took ship again; on this occasion he was on his way to the Continent, passing through the English south-coast port of Southampton as one of the one-hundred eleven *other ranks* of the 32nd Draft from Ayr. The Newfoundlanders disembarked in Rouen on the following day and made their way to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot there for a few days of final training and organizing* before making their way to a rendezvous with 1st Battalion.



(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.*

By that time, 1st Battalion had been withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign, on October 17, in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive. It moved back south from Belgium into northern France to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras.

It was there that, on November 14, four officers and one-hundred forty-one *other ranks* – one of them Private Edwards – reported from Rouen *to duty* with 1st Battalion.

That new offensive, 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)

It was on the first day of the fighting, November 20, that Private Edwards was wounded, having incurred gun-shot injuries to his left arm and to his back. He was evacuated from the field to the 89th Field Ambulance and by the following day was receiving treatment in the 21st Casualty Clearing Station at Ytres.



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

Six days later, on November 27, and by then receiving attention in the 18th General Hospital at Dannes-Camiers, Private Edwards was embarked onto an unidentified hospital ship for the cross-Channel journey back to the United Kingdom.



(Right above: *the railway station at Dannes-Camiers through which thousands of sick, wounded and convalescent military personnel passed during the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

Once having arrived in England he was transported to and admitted into – on that same November 27 - Richmond Military Hospital, Grove Road, Richmond, in the county of Surrey. After further treatment Private Edwards was sent to the convalescent hospital in the coastal town of Eastbourne on December 21, to be discharged from there on January 30 of the New Year, 1918.

(continued)

At that time he was granted the customary ten-day furlough accorded those service personnel upon release from hospital in the United Kingdom, before being immediately posted – on February 8 - to 'H' Company, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion, at Hazely Down.

2nd (Reserve) Battalion had only recently moved quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester. This transfer had been finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was there that Private Edwards would have been stationed when he was ordered to re-join the British Expeditionary Force.



(Right above: a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918 – from *The War Illustrated*)

The date of Private Edward's departure for France, with the 43rd or 44th Re-enforcement Draft was April 23. The detachment landed and made its way to the Base Depot in Rouen, there to spend those inevitable days of final preparation before he reported *to duty* with 1st Battalion on May 1, one of the draft of twenty-nine *other ranks* to arrive on that day at the community of *St-Josse*, where the Newfoundlanders were temporarily being billeted.

Only days after the crisis of the German spring offensive had passed and a week before Private Edward's arrival, on April 24, 1st Battalion said farewell to its comrades-in-arms of 88th Brigade and 29th Division. On the following day there was a recessional parade. 1st Battalion was to later be deployed to another unit, but for the summer of 1918 it was to move a world away from Flanders where it had just fought during the crisis of the German spring offensive, to be stationed on the west coast of France.

On April 29, the Newfoundlanders – 1st Battalion by now reduced to a total strength of just thirty officers and four-hundred sixty-four other ranks - took train in Belgium for the French coastal town of Étapes, where they arrived at eleven o'clock in the late evening. They still had a two-hour march ahead of them to their new quarters.

The summer of 1918 was to pass peaceably enough for the personnel of 1st Battalion. For the months of May, June and until early July, the unit was posted to Écuire, to the Headquarters of Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in Europe.



(Right: *Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force at the time of the Battalion's posting to GHQ – from Illustration*)

The cosmetic honour of this new role, however, masked the reality that the 1st Battalion of the recently-proclaimed *Royal Newfoundland Regiment* was no longer capable of serving in the field.

(continued)

****Although few at home cared to admit it publicly, the problem was that 1st Battalion had run out of reserves and was unable to continue as a fighting entity. It was to be September before even a battalion of reduced strength could return to active service. At home, mandatory military service was initiated – conscription by another name – but with limited results.***

The posting to Écuire completed, for most of July and all of August the Newfoundlanders were encamped in much the same area, close to the coastal village of Équièhen – itself not far removed from the large Channel port of Boulogne – and far to the rear of the fighting, of which there had been plenty elsewhere.



(Right above: a view of the sparsely-populated coastal community of Équièhen at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

There exists a single document in the files which records Private Edwards having been admitted to hospital during this period. Suffering from scabies, he was sent to the 1st Echelon Military Hospital on August 1, to be forwarded for further treatment on that same day to the 20th General Hospital at nearby Dannes-Camiers. From there he was released to duty at the depot at Étapes on August 9 and re-joined 1st Battalion only one day later.

The Newfoundlanders returned to the fray on Friday, September 13, as one of the three battalions of the 28th Brigade of 9th Scottish Division. 1st Battalion was once more to serve on the Belgian front where, some six weeks later, having advanced out of the *Ypres Salient*, it was to finish its war on October 26 at a place called Inghoyghem (today *Ingooigem*).



(Right: British troops and German prisoners in Flanders during the Hundred Days – from Illustration)

On September 28, the Belgian Army and the 2nd British Army broke out of their positions, overrunning the enemy lines. It was the start, for them, of the *Hundred Days Offensive**. On the following day, the Newfoundlanders were fighting at the Keiberg Ridge. After almost four years of stalemate, it was once again a conflict of movement.

****This offensive would prove to be the final campaign of the Western Front and would terminate with the Armistice of November 11. It had begun further to the south on July 18 on the French front on the River Marne, followed on August 8 by an onslaught by British and Empire troops near Amiens in what would also become known as 3rd Somme.***

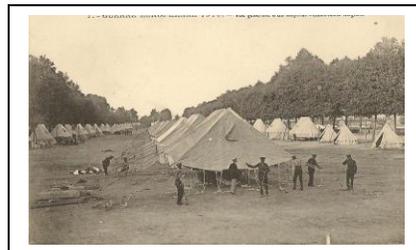
The advance, despite fierce resistance at times, was relentless. On the night of October 19-20, the Newfoundlanders crossed the Lys Canal – on barrel bridges and under fire - just to the east of Courtrai – today Kortrijk. They had followed up this success with an advance towards the village of Vichte, but the Germans were still resisting strongly and there was much hard fighting.



(Previous page: *the Lys – both canal and river – at a point not far from the crossing-place – right to left - of October 19-20, 1918 - The Harlebeke Caribou stands about one hundred metres behind the camera. – photograph from 2010*)

On October 23, Private Edwards was wounded and taken to the 36th Casualty Clearing Station stationed at Brielen.

(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 only son of Francis Edwards – to whom he had allotted (see below) a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Mill Town, at the head of Bay d'Espoir, he was reported as having *died of wounds* in the 36th CCS on that same October 23, 1918.

(Right: *The Caribou at Harlebeke – commemorates the crossing of the Lys Canal and the sacrifices of the last campaign of the War. – photograph from 2012*)



Hubert Frank Edwards had enlisted at the age of nineteen years and one month.

C Division

Eastbourne Convalescent Hospital

1/1/18

Sir –

My father do not need any of my money.

I need the whole myself and I want to know why I cannot have it. I understand what money I get I should have and I am not satisfied to make any allotment. I have no mother at home, No brother, No sister. I am simply alone and I want my money.

Yours Stc

E F Edwards

Note No further action.

Allotment to remain in force*

8/1/18

**Where separation allowance was payable to a dependant of a soldier, the soldier was required to allot at least fifty per cent of his pay.*

(continued)

Private Hubert Frank Edwards was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

