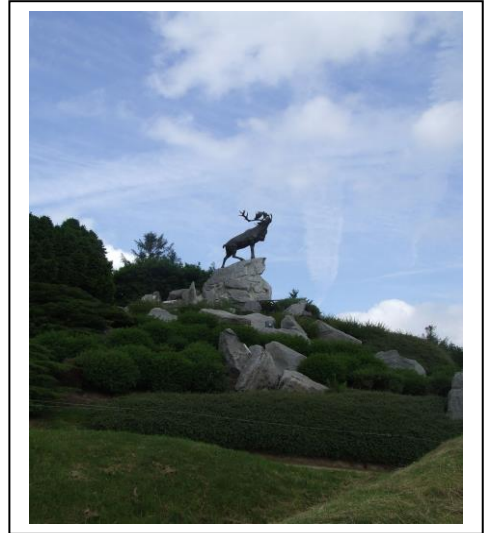


ELLIOTT, G.

Private George Elliott (Regimental Number 2737), 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 fisherman, George Elliott was a recruit of the Ninth Draft. He enlisted *for the duration of the war* at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on May 5, 1916, before presenting himself for medical examination on the following day. He then attested six days later again, on May 12.



Private Elliott 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.*

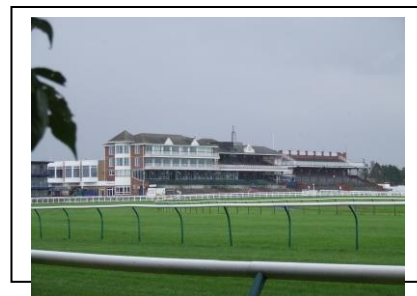
The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers arriving from home were 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*)

(continued)

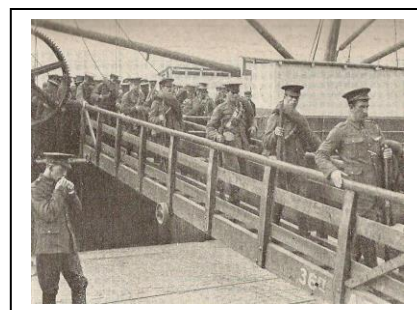
At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been 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 11th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Elliott 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 1st 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 Elliott 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 1st 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 14th, 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.

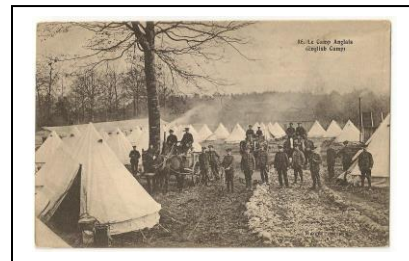
(Right: *This is the ground over which 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. This is also the area of the positions into which the re-enforcements of October 12-14 were posted. – photograph from 2007*)



For the remainder of that autumn of 1916, 1st Battalion remained in the same area of *the Somme* and was regularly into and out of the trenches. There were no 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.

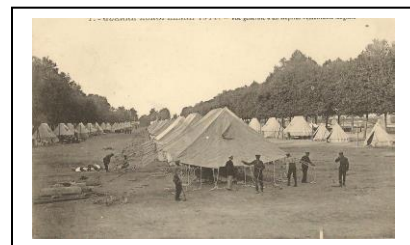
Private Elliott did not have to suffer the winter conditions prevalent at the time for very long: the Regimental War Diary for January 27 reports... *Enemy shelled the whole area very heavily in the evening. Batt moved to Intermediate Line. Casualties 7 killed 17 wounded. Men of 'C' Company also acted as stretcher-bearers at this time, although this photograph is not of them.*



(Right above: *Stretcher-bearers not only shared the dangers of the battlefield with their armed comrades, but they were often exposed for longer periods as they made their way back and forth.* – from *Illustration*)

Although his wounding was recorded as being of the 28th, Private Elliott is likely to have been one of those seventeen injured on the previous day as it seems as though the Battalion was no longer in the area of the front line on the 28th. Several of those casualties had been acting as stretcher-bearers at the time.

He was immediately evacuated from the field to the 89th Field Ambulance for treatment to a gun-shot wound to the nose before being transferred to an unidentified casualty clearing station. From that CCS, on February 2, he was forwarded to the 10th General Hospital at Rouen where he was admitted for further treatment.



(Right above: a *British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when necessary – being established somewhere on the Continent* – from a vintage post-card)

(continued)

In hospital in Rouen, Private Elliott was diagnosed as also having contracted trench-fever and it was decided to transfer back him back to the United Kingdom. On March 7 he was placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Panama* (right) for the short crossing of the English Channel.



Once having landed in England, Private Elliott was transported on the next day to the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth, where he was to remain – some of that time in quarantine as he had been exposed to diphtheria on board *Panama* - until April 30.

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

On that April 30, Private Elliott was granted the customary ten-day furlough accorded to military personnel upon discharge from hospital in the United Kingdom. Following that short period of leave he was immediately posted to the Regimental Depot back in Scotland where he reported for duty on May 9.



(Right: *the High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo*)

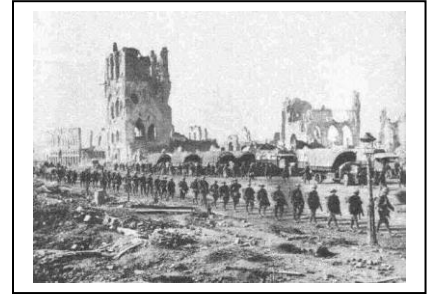
The 28th Re-enforcement Draft from Barry* passed through Folkestone on August 5, and disembarked at Rouen two days later – although the records are somewhat confused. Private Elliott next spent the best part of a month at the Base Depot in Rouen in training before being sent as one of a contingent to seek out 1st Battalion.

This he and the twenty-five other *other ranks* did at Penton Camp, near the Belgian town of Poperinghe on September 3.

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of the city 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.*

(continued)

In the meantime, 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*)

1st Battalion remained 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 it fought in two major engagements, at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembeek* on October 9, although Private Elliott could have served at only the latter.



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

By the time of Private Elliott's arrival, the Newfoundlanders had already withdrawn temporarily from the front lines - on August 24 - and were not 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 – as witness the arrival of Private Elliott's contingent on September 3.

Passchendaele recommenced for 1st Battalion 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 forward trenches they prepared for the next offensive infantry action: it came about two weeks later.

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.

For eight days during this period, Private Elliott was once more in need of medical attention: on this occasion it was for treatment for a mild case of scabies. He was admitted into the 88th Field Ambulance on October 23 and from there was discharged back *to duty* with 1st Battalion on November 1.



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

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.



(Right above: *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*)

The son of Alexander Elliott and Elizabeth Elliott (née *Fry* also *Frye*) – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Happy Adventure, Bonavista Bay, he was the first of seven children: Rosannah, Charles H., John, Rachel, Elizabeth A. and Arthur his siblings.

At first apparently reported as *missing in action* on December 3, 1917, while serving with 'C' Company in fighting close to the French villages of Marcoing and Masnières, he was later documented as having been *killed in action* – on what authority is not recorded.



George Elliott had enlisted at twenty-four years and three months of age: date of birth January 20, 1891, according to the 1911 census.

(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*)

(Right: *The War Memorial in the community of Eastport honours the sacrifice of Private Elliott. – photograph from 2013*)

(continued)



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

