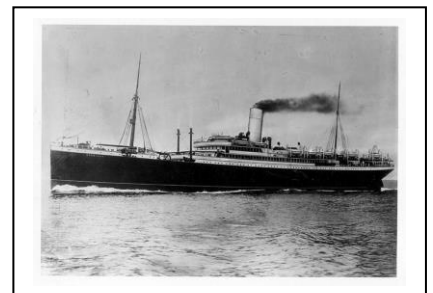




**Lance Corporal William Elliott (Regimental Number 1786) is buried in Sully-Saillisel British Cemetery – Grave reference V. C. 9.**

**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a lumberman, William Elliott was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. Having enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier’s rate of \$1.10 – at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John’s on August 23, 1915, he then presented himself for medical examination on the following day, August 24. He attested two days later again, on the 26<sup>th</sup>.**

**Private Elliott 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.**



**(continued)**

At Québec the Newfoundlanders boarded His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* (previous page) 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 Gales, 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*)

It was also during this posting to the Regimental Depot that on June 19, a mere six days before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Elliott 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 25, the 7<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, Private Elliott numbered among the other ranks, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the morrow, the 26<sup>th</sup>, the detachment disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot which had been established there. There the draft spent time in final training and organization\* before proceeding on to its 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, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*



This meeting was effected on July 11 (recorded elsewhere as the 12<sup>th</sup>) while the parent unit was just behind the line, being quartered in huts in the remnants of the village of Mailly-Maillet. It was here that Private Elliott and a further one-hundred twenty-six *other ranks* of a re-enforcement contingent from Rouen reported *to duty*.

Even with this additional man-power, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion still numbered only *11 officers and 260 rifles* after the disaster of Beaumont-Hamel, a quarter of regulation battalion strength.



(Right above: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John's East. – photograph from 2009*)

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.

It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel of July 1. *The Salient* was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatal. 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*)

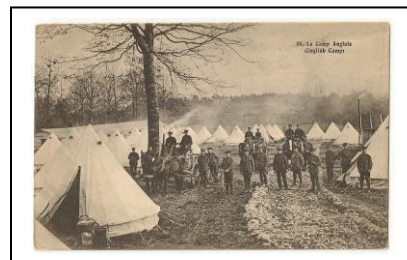


Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion went again to the offensive at a place called Gueudecourt, some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. It proved to be another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little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



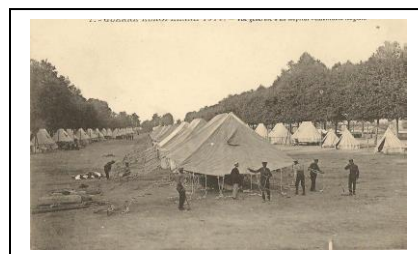
After Gueudecourt, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period broken only by the several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period, encamped well behind the lines and close to the city of Amiens.



(Right: a typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card)

It was not, however, to be an unbroken period for all, and certainly not for the now-Lance Corporal Elliott who had been promoted from the rank of private on December 3, thus earning an additional five cents per day. Some three weeks after this promotion he was admitted, on December 22, suffering from tonsillitis and/ or gastritis, into the 88<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance.

From there, on the 26<sup>th</sup>, Boxing Day, he was evacuated to the 39<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Allonville, just outside the city of Amiens, where the diagnosis was amended to that of influenza. Then on January 2 of the New Year, 1917, he was again transferred, on this occasion to the 11<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital in Rouen for treatment for pleurisy. A four-day stay – January 17 to 21 - at a convalescent depot in Rouen was followed by a discharge and posting to Base Depot.



(Right above: a British casualty clearing station – the one shown here under canvas for mobility if the need should arise – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

In the meantime, after that welcome six-week Christmas respite spent in *Corps Reserve*, the Newfoundlanders had *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23, 1917, 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 directly involving 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion during the entire period from the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917, was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and beginning of March, an action which brought this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.



(Right above: 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(?))

(continued)

On February 17, Lance Corporal Elliott re-joined 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion *in the field*, one of a draft of fifty-nine *other ranks* to do so on that date the community of Coisy. The next day the Newfoundlanders were on the march again, en route to the trenches which they then occupied on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The son of Samuel Elliott, lumberman, to whom he had willed his all, and of Honor Elliott - to whom he allocated a daily allowance of fifty cents from his pay – formerly of Burnt Arm, but their place of residence recorded as Norris Arm at the time of enlistment - he was reported as having been *killed in action* while serving with ‘A’ Company on March 3, 1917, during the fighting at Sailly-Saillisel.



At home, it was the Reverend Eugene Vaters who was requested to bear the news to his family.

William Elliott had enlisted at eighteen years and eleven months of age.

(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*)

Lance Corporal William Elliott was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

