

Private James Ellsworth (found as *Ellsworth* elsewhere, including his signature and his mother's writing) (Regimental Number 625) lies in Azmak Cemetery at Suvla – Grave reference II. B. 15.

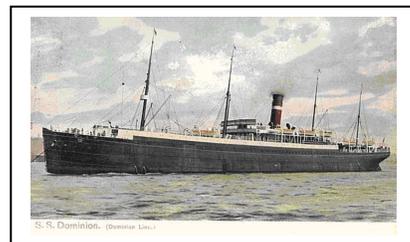
His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman* working for some two-hundred dollars per annum, James Ellsworth presented himself for medical examination on December 10, 1914, at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*. He was to be a recruit of the Second Draft.

Four days later James Ellsworth was to return to the *C.L.B. Armoury*, there to enlist – engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar a day plus a ten-cent *Field Allowance*. It appears that he also attested on that same December 14.

Where Private Ellsworth was to spend the several weeks after his enlistment appears not to have been documented. There are several files of other recruits which show that those from outside St. John's were often boarded in the city while awaiting departure for *overseas service*. This arrangement was subsidized by the Newfoundland government even if it was a family member who was hosting the new soldier. But Private Ellsworth's papers reveal nothing.

(continued)

On the fourth day of February of 1915, the first reinforcements – this was ‘C’ Company - for the Newfoundland contingent, which by this time was serving in Scotland (see further below), were to embark via the sealing tender *Neptune* onto the SS *Dominion* – the vessel having anchored to the south of St. John’s, off Bay Bulls, because of ice conditions.



The vessel was then to sail - and Private Elsworth thus departed Newfoundland for overseas service - a day later again, on February 5, for trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom.



(Right above: *The image of the steamer ‘Dominion’ - launched in 1894 as the ‘Prussia’ - is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. An older vessel, she was to be requisitioned during the latter part of the Great War as a store and supply ship. She survived the conflict to be scrapped in 1922.*)

*\*There appears to be some confusion in certain sources as to whether these troops were ‘C’ or ‘D’ Company. However, ‘D’ Company was to go overseas some time later on ‘Stephano’ to Halifax and then on ‘Orduña’ to Liverpool.*

(Right above: *The photograph of personnel of ‘C’ Company on board the ‘Neptune’ on the way to the harbour at Bay Bulls is from the Provincial Archives.*)

Having disembarked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool, the Newfoundlanders entrained for Edinburgh, the first Newfoundland Regiment contingent having by this time been posted to the historic Castle in Scotland’s capital city. There they were to provide the garrison, thus being the first unit from overseas ever to do so.



Private Elsworth and the other new-comers reported to duty at Edinburgh Castle on February 16.

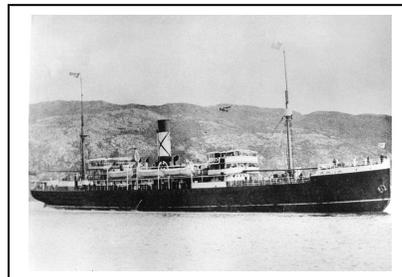
(Right above: *Edinburgh Castle dominates the city from its position on the summit of Castle Hill. – photograph from 2011*)

\* \* \* \* \*

Five to six months before that time, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of some five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John’s for the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment’s first recruits - to become ‘A’ and ‘B’ Companies - during which time the authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment’s transfer overseas.

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This first Newfoundland contingent was to embark on October 3, in some cases only days after enlistment and/ or attestation. To become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees*, on that day they had boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John's Harbour.



The ship would sail for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island.

(Right above: *The image of Florizel at anchor in the harbour at St. John's is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

(Right: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)



In the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915: firstly in southern England on the Salisbury Plain; then in Scotland at *Fort George* – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; and lastly at Edinburgh Castle – where, as recorded beforehand, it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles – and where 'C' Company and Private Elsworth, as also cited beforehand, would arrive from Newfoundland on February 16 of 1915.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some three months later, on May 11, and three weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundlanders unit was ordered moved to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent received the reinforcements from home – 'F' Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength\*. The now-formed 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered eligible to be sent on 'active service'.

*\*This was approximately fifteen hundred, enough to furnish four 'fighting' companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches past on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



(continued)

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot. This force, now the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, was thereupon attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.



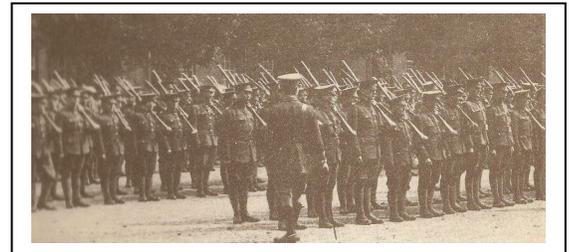
Meanwhile the two junior Companies, 'E' – last arrived at Edinburgh - and the aforementioned 'F', were ordered transferred to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion.

(Right above: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India* – the photograph is from *Bain News Services* via the *Wikipedia* web-site.)

It was during this period at Aldershot, on August 15, that Private Elsworth was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion 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.*

(Right: *Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, prior to its departure to active service on the Gallipoli Peninsula* – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)



On August 20, 1915, Private Elsworth and the Newfoundland unit embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks. There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion landed at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

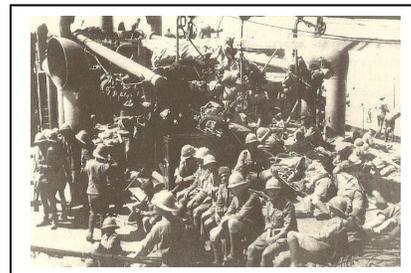


(Right above: *The image of Megantic, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

(Right: *Kangaroo Beach, where the Newfoundland Regiment's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach.* – photograph taken in 2011)



**(Right: Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros: either Megantic on August 29, Ausonia on September 18, or Prince Abbas on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – from Provincial Archives)**



**(Right below: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to serve during the autumn of 1915 – photograph from 2011)**

**When the Newfoundlanders landed from their transport ship at Suvla Bay on that September night of 1915 they were to disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.**



**Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire Gallipoli Campaign, including the operation at Suvla Bay, had proved to be little more than a debacle:**

**Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command\* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and those of the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only Suvla Bay but the entire Gallipoli venture.**



**(Right: No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives)**

**(Right below: An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives)**

**\*Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.**



\* \* \* \* \*

**It was decided today to take possession of a sniper's post midway between ours & the Turks' firing lines. ...it naturally followed that "C" Coy (Company) was given this to do. Lt. Donnelly (his story found elsewhere among these files) with 6 men and an NCO went out about 4 p.m. and occupied, or rather took up their position in this post... (Excerpts from the personal diary of Lieutenant Owen Steele)**

When the Turks later approached their former sniper's post there followed several hours of confused fighting, and casualties were incurred by both sides.

The son of Henry Elsworth, former fisherman (died of exposure April 8, 1907) and of Amelia Ellsworth (she later *Sheppard*) of Carmanville, he was brother to William-Thomas.

Private Elsworth was reported as having been *killed in action* on November 4, 1915, while serving with 'C' Company during the action at *Caribou Hill*. He had been struck by a bullet in the chest.

James Henry Elsworth had enlisted at a *declared* twenty-five years of age: date of birth in Western Arm, Fogo, Newfoundland, January 27, 1889 (from a copy of Methodist Parish Records).

(Right: *This is the area around about – but not necessarily exactly - Caribou Hill as it exists a century later, looking towards the Turkish positions. – photograph from 2011*)



(Right: *A photograph taken at the time of Caribou Hill, scene of the engagement mentioned above: Since that time it has been difficult to re-trace and to identify the exact site, even though the terrain has not changed a great deal. – from Provincial Archives*)



*Private Elsworth was buried in Borderers' Gully Cemetery as were several other Newfoundlanders. After the War his remains, and theirs, were transferred to Azmak Cemetery.*

(The photograph of Private Elsworth is from Provincial Archives.)

(First page: *In the panoramic photograph of the Suvla Plain may just about be perceived a horizontal white trace in the centre of the image: this is Azmak Cemetery. - photograph from 2011*)



Private James Henry Elsworth was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



(continued)

Department of Militia  
1921

September 29,

St. John's N.F.

Gentlemen,-

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the photograph of the grave of my soldier boy No 625 James Ellsworth for which I thank you very much

Yours truly

Amelia Elsworth-Sheppard

**The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to [criceadam@yahoo.ca](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 10, 2023.**