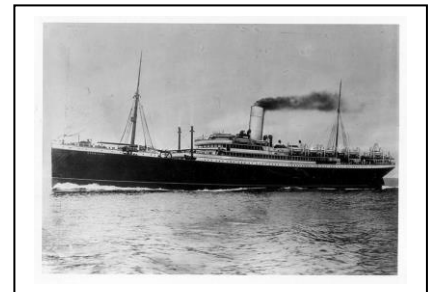
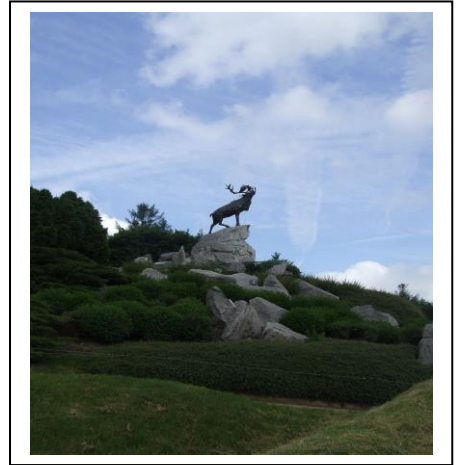




Private Gordon Etheridge (Regimental Number 1858), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a teacher, Gordon Etheridge was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on September 27, 1915, he then both enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and attested on September 28, the following day.

Private Etheridge and the other military 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 10th 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 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 sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently 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)

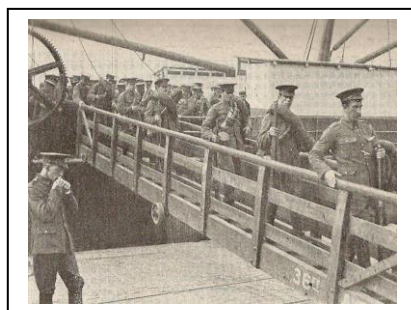
It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot that, on March 27, and only a single day before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Etheridge was prevailed upon to re-enlist *for the duration of the War**.

**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 March 28, Private Etheridge, as a soldier of the 3rd Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton and boarded His Majesty's Transport *Archangel* (right above) on his way to join 1st Battalion on the Continent.

Disembarking one day later, on the 29th, in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, the contingent had made its way to the Depot by the 30th for several days of final training and organization* before leaving to seek out the parent unit.



(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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

On April 15, a detachment from Rouen of two-hundred eleven *other ranks* – accompanied by two officers – reported to *duty* with 1st Battalion already billeted in the village of Englebelmer some three kilometres behind the lines of the *Western Front*. Private Etheridge is documented as being among that number, a contingent which included not only personnel from Ayr, but others from the Middle East whose departure from there had been delayed.

Only two days prior, on April 13, 1st Battalion had *itself* marched into the village of Englebelmer – thus completing a month-long transfer from Egypt. There the Newfoundlanders were billeted, welcomed those re-enforcements of the 15th, from Rouen and, on that same day, were sent – along with the new-comers - to work in the communication trenches not so very far away.



(Right: *part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the meandering river that flowed – and today still flows - innocuously through the southern part of the region to which it lends its name, *the Somme*.



(Right: *the Somme as it still flows today between the town of Albert and the city of Amiens – photograph from 2009*)

It was at Louvencourt, where 1st Battalion was billeted at the time of the offence, that Private Etheridge stained an otherwise spotless record. Being found *deficient of cap*, he was obliged to pay for its replacement.



The son of John Etheridge, fisherman, and Priscilla Etheridge (née *Batson*, deceased February 1906) – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of fifty cents from his pay - of Champneys East in the District of Trinity, he was also brother to Margaret (Maggie), Mabel, Patience, Donald, John (deceased at the age of one year), John-Charles - and was step-brother to Edith*.

Private Etheridge was reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with 'A' Company, during the fighting on the first day of *the Somme*. Some six months later, on December 31, he was officially *presumed dead*.

Gordon Etheridge had enlisted at the age of twenty-three years and three months (birthdate June 2, 1892).



**After Priscilla's passing, John Etheridge re-married Joanna Hart (widow, née Walters).*

(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel - looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences - The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009*)

(Right above: *a grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from ...*)

Private Gordon Etheridge was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

