



Private Frank Fillier (Regimental Number 1377), 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 earning \$200.00 per annum, Frank Fillier enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 - on April 3, 1915. He apparently only then presented himself for medical examination, on April 6, before attesting three days later again, on April 9.



**A second source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

Private Fillier of 'E' Company embarked in St. John's on board the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* (right above – from the *Provincial Archives*) less than two weeks later again, on April 22, 1915.

The ship sailed to Halifax where his contingent took ship on His Majesty's Transport *Missanabie* (right) – likely with Canadian troops - for the crossing to Liverpool – the ship departed Halifax on April 25. From Liverpool they travelled by train to Edinburgh where the Newfoundlanders arrived on May 2. 'E' Company was to have but a few days to savor the charms of the Scottish capital.



Only nine days later, on May 11, the entire Battalion was posted for training from Edinburgh to a tented Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick.

(Right: the Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp on June 10, the day it received its Colours – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)



From Stobs, some thirteen weeks later again, in early August, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the senior Companies now become 1st Battalion, the Newfoundland Regiment, were transferred to Aldershot in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before departing on active service to the Middle East and to the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

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'E' and 'F' Companies – the latter having arrived at Stobs Camp on July 10 - were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were to form the nucleus of the newly-formed 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

When he was apprised of his transfer seems not to be recorded, but Private Fillier was one of a number from 'E' Company who were to swell the ranks of the units posted to Aldershot - thus he became a soldier of 'D' Company. It was during the period while he was at Aldershot, and as was the case with the great majority of the Newfoundland troops, that Private Fillier was prevailed upon to re-enlist *for the duration of the war*. This he did on August 15*.

**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 August 20, 1915, Private Fillier took ship on board the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (right above) for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting in Gallipoli where, a month later – of which two weeks had been spent billeted at the British barracks at Abbassia, near the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, 1st Battalion landed on the beach at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

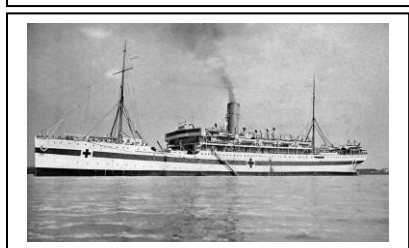
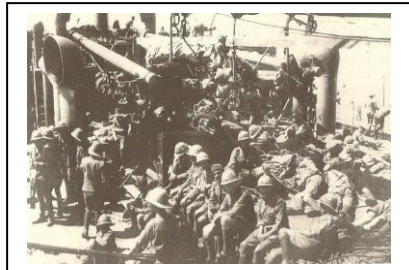
(Right above black & white: Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros, either *Megantic* on August 29, *Ausonia* on September 18, or *Prince Abbas* on September 19 – *Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli.* – from Provincial Archives)

(Right: 'Kangaroo Beach', where 1st Battalion landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph from 2011)

(Right: almost a century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Fillier served during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)

On December 10, Private Fillier was evacuated from Suvla on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Delta* (right) and taken to Egypt where he was admitted into the 15th General Hospital in Alexandria, suffering from frostbitten feet.

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On the 10th of December he was transferred to Mustapha Convalescent Depot where he remained for the next six weeks before being discharged to duty – most likely to the Sidi Bishr Base Depot in Alexandria - on January 19 or 29 - of the New Year, 1917. It was to be a further six weeks again before Private Fillier would return to 1st Battalion which he eventually did on March 1.



(Right above: *a main thoroughfare in the Egyptian city of Alexandria at or about the time of the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

In the meantime, when the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, 1st Battalion was sent to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. From there the Newfoundlanders were transferred, almost immediately, south to Suez where they were to await further orders. To that point it seems that the theatre of the future posting of 29th Division was still uncertain.



(Right above: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders, employed as the rear-guard, were among the last to leave on two occasions.* – photograph taken from the battleship *Cornwallis* from *Illustration*)



(Right above: *Port Tewfiq (see paragraph below) at some time just before the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

It was at Suez that Private Fillier was re-united with 1st Battalion. Then only two weeks later, on March 14, the officers and men of 1st Battalion embarked through Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the Suez Canal onto His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* (right) for the voyage to the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles, en route to the *Western Front*.



(Right: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles.* – from a vintage post-card)

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy.

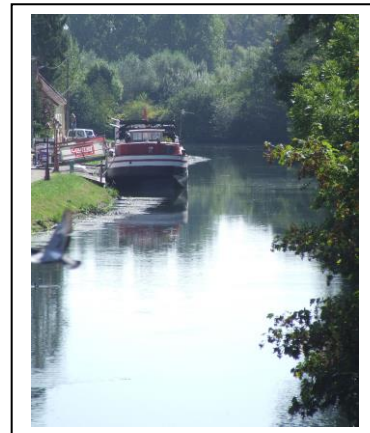


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It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them travelling unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the station at two in the morning the Newfoundlanders still had a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

(Right: *the Somme seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy as it flows through the community – photograph from 2010*)

It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers paid much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge that they passed on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would be a part of their history.



On April 13, 1st Battalion marched into the village of Englebelmer – three kilometres behind the lines and perhaps some fifty kilometres in all distant from Pont-Rémy – where it was billeted, welcomed re-enforcements from Rouen on the 15th and, on that same day, was introduced into the British lines where the Newfoundlanders were then put to work making improvements to the communication trenches.

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that same meandering river which flowed through the region, *the Somme*.

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



The son of Thomas Fillier, fisherman, of Petty Harbour in the District of St. John's West, and also the nephew of George Chafe – to each of whom he had allotted a daily allowance of twenty-five cents from his pay - he was reported as having been *killed in action* at Beaumont Hamel on July 1, 1916, while fighting with 'D' Company on the first day of *the Somme*.

Frank Fillier had enlisted at the age of eighteen years.

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



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Private Frank Fillier 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).

