



(Above left: *This photograph taken from a distance shows the area of the Newfoundland positions, ringed by the hills occupied by the Turkish forces; in the centre of the image may be discerned a white horizontal strip: Azmak Cemetery. – photograph from 2011*)

Private John Martin Fitzgerald (Regimental Number 295) lies in Azmak Cemetery at Suvla Bay – Grave reference II. C. 20.

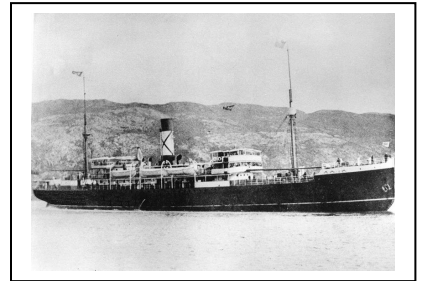
His occupation prior to enlistment recorded as that of a *druggist* (also called *chemist* at the time) and *manager of Channing's Drug Store*, working for a salary of sixty-five dollars a month, John Martin Fitzgerald was to be a recruit of the First Draft. A member of the *Catholic Cadet Corps* for fourteen years, he presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on August 26, 1914, just some three weeks after the *Declaration of War*; it was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*fit for foreign service*.

It was then to be two weeks less a day before he enlisted at the same venue – there to be engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (this including a ten-cent per diem field allowance) - on September 8 – although a second official source cites August 26.

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Some three weeks later again – having trained during that interim period - Private Fitzgerald attested on October 1 before then embarking on October 3 with the others of the *First Five Hundred* onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting them in St. John's Harbour.

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



The ship sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island where she was to join the convoy transporting the 1st Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

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



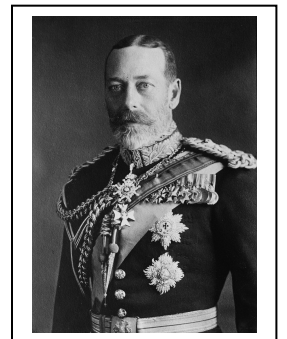
In the United Kingdom Private Fitzgerald trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh Castle – where it provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.

(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', were then sent south to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot; meanwhile the two junior Companies, the later-arrived 'E' and 'F*', were sent to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

(Right: *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 – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia*)

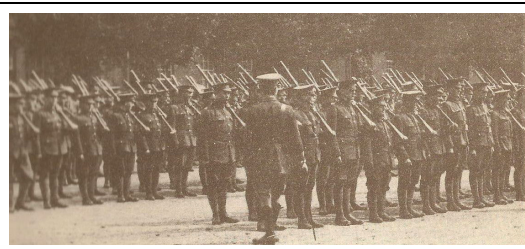


**On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service.*

The 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

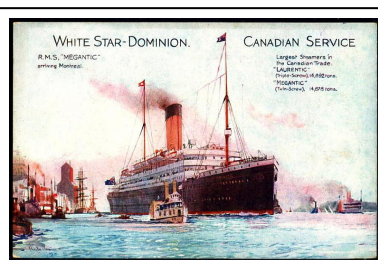
It had then been during the period spent at Aldershot that Private Fitzgerald of 'A' Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 14, to re-enlist *for the duration of the war**.

**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.*



(Right above: Some of the men of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915 – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)

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



On August 20, 1915, Private Fitzgerald and his comrades-in-arms 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 where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he disembarked with the 1st Battalion at Suvla Bay on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right above: *Kangaroo Beach*, where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, 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: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1st Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)

(continued)

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, would prove 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.

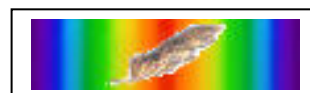


(Right above: *An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives*)

**November 26 had seen a freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm strike the Suvla Bay area and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days survival rather than the enemy was to be the priority.*

***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.*

Private Fitzgerald was to be *Mentioned in Dispatches**, the citation for which reads... *Action Gallipoli, 1915 - For distinguished and gallant service rendered in Gallipoli during the period of General Sir Charles Munro's command of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. He belonged to the Ambulance Section and laid down his life while binding up the wounds of others under enemy fire outside the trenches at Suvla Bay, on the Gallipoli Peninsula, on December 1st, 1915. - London Gazette, July 13th, 1916***



(Right above: *A photograph taken from the Newfoundland positions showing No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay in 1915 – from the Provincial Archives*)

**The award – not quite regarded as a decoration - was not a medal but rather an oak-leaf cast in bronze which was to be worn, as above, on the ribbon of the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal). In the few instances where the recipient was not entitled to this medal, it was affixed to the ribbon of the British War Medal (see further below).*

***Unlike other awards – such as the MM or DSO, for example - the 'Mentioned in Despatches' is not to be written appended to the name of its recipient although, apparently it - 'MiD' – is occasionally to be thus found. Perhaps ironically, even though regarded as less than a decoration, it was one of only two which at the time could be awarded posthumously, the Victoria Cross being the other.*

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The son of John Fitzgerald (former *grocer* and *cooper*, deceased August 24, 1886*) and of Mary Ann Fitzgerald (née *Crowdell*) – to whom as of October 3, 1914, he had allocated a daily seventy cents from his pay and also to whom he had willed his all - of 20, Carter's Hill in St. John's – this Private Fitzgerald's own address as well – she, by 1920, of 5964, Baum Boulevard, East Liberty, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. - he was also brother of Michael and of James, both living in the United States by the time of the *Great War* - the latter later volunteering for service with the American Forces in 1918.



**This is from the records of Belvedere Roman Catholic Cemetery in St. John's; his widow on an allowance form appears to have cited the year as 1916 – likely to be a mistake according to a Will dated 1886.*

The above photograph of Private Fitzgerald is from the Provincial Archives.

Private Fitzgerald of the Ambulance Section was reported as having been *killed in action* by a *bullet to the body*, on December 1, 1915, while serving as a stretcher-bearer with 'A' Company. He is also recorded as having been initially interred in the small, not-so-distant, *Borderers' Ravine Cemetery*, before being later transferred to lie at rest where he remains today, at Azmac.



(Right above: More of the area where were the Newfoundland positions at Suvla Bay, close to where Private Fitzgerald was killed, and also in the proximity of Azmac Cemetery – photograph from 2011)

John Martin Fitzgerald had enlisted at a *declared* twenty-six years of age: date of birth in St. John's Newfoundland, September 19, 1884 (from Belvedere Cemetery Roman Catholic Records).

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



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. Last updated – February 11, 2023.