



Private Alphonsus Fitzpatrick (Regimental Number 1904) is buried in Ayr Cemetery, Ayrshire: Grave reference G.2.1.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman*, Alphonsus Fitzpatrick was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. He presented himself at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on October 13 of 1915 for a medical examination. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as being...*fit for Foreign Service.*

On the same day as that medical assessment, October 13, and at the same venue, the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, he was next to enlist. Alphonsus Fitzpatrick was thereupon to be engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar, to which was to be added a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

And it was then to be only hours afterwards again that there then came about the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On that same October 13 he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, at which moment Alphonsus Fitzpatrick became...*a soldier of the King.*

A final waiting-period was now in store for the recruits of this draft, designated as 'G' Company, before they were to depart from Newfoundland for...*overseas service.* Private Fitzpatrick, Regimental Number 1904, was not to be again called upon until October 27, after a period of exactly two weeks. Where he was to spend this intervening time appears not to have been recorded although it is highly unlikely that he returned either to work or to spend any time at his home at Conche on the eastern side of the Northern Peninsula*.

**It is likely that some of the recruits, those whose home was not in St. John's or close to the city, or those who had no friends or family to offer board and lodging, were quartered in the curling rink at Fort William in St. John's, a building which at that time was to serve as a barracks.*

On the above-mentioned date of October 27, 'G' Company left St. John's by train to cross the island to Port aux Basques, the other passengers on board reportedly having included several naval reservists and also some German prisoners-of-war. The contingent then traversed the Gulf of St. Lawrence by ferry – documented as having been the *Kyle* - and afterwards proceeded again by train from North Sydney as far as Québec City.

There the Newfoundlanders joined His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* for the trans-Atlantic voyage to the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport where they arrived on November 9. The vessel had departed Montreal on October 30 with Canadian troops on board before stopping at Québec: the 55th Canadian Infantry Battalion and the Second Draft of the (1st?) Divisional Signals Company.



(Right: *The image of Corsican is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Launched in 1907 for the Allan Line, one of the largest private shipping companies of the time, she spent much of her early career chartered to the Canadian Pacific Line which in 1917 was to purchase the entire Allan Line business. She was employed as a troop-ship during much of the Great War which she survived – only to be wrecked near Cape Race on May 21, 1923.*)



(continued)

By the morning of November 10, Private Fitzpatrick's 'G' Company had again travelled by train, to Scotland where it had been billeted in huts in a military camp at Gales, not far removed from the evolving Newfoundland Regimental Depot at Ayr where accommodation for the new arrivals was as yet not available.

(Preceding page: *The once-busy Royal Navy facility and harbour of Devonport almost a century after the Great War – photograph from 2012(?)*)

* * * * *

More than a year prior to that November 10 of 1915, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914, the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's and elsewhere in the city, and were formed into 'A' and 'B' Companies.



During that same period the various authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

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

This first Newfoundland contingent was to embark on October 3, in some cases only days after a recruit's 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 had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island.

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



Once having disembarked* 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 it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.



**It was to do so at Devonport through which 'G' Company was to pass eleven months later.*

(Right above: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011*)

Only days after 'A' and 'B' Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 of 1915, 'C' Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent - would arrive directly – through Liverpool of course - from Newfoundland. On the final day of the month of March it had been the turn of 'D' Company to arrive – they via Halifax as well as Liverpool – to report...to duty...at Edinburgh, and then 'E' Company five weeks less a day later again, on May 4*.

**These five Companies, while a contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.*

Seven days after the arrival of 'E' Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent had been ordered elsewhere. On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit had been dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.



(Right above: *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 of Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

Two months less a day later, on July 10, 'F' Company would march into *Stobs Camp*.

This had been an important moment: the Company's arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment's numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength* of a battalion which could be posted on...active service.



**A number sufficient for four 'fighting' companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(Right above: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – original photograph from the Provincial Archives*)

From *Stobs Camp*, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the four senior Companies, having now become the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, had been transferred to *Aldershot Camp* in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before the Battalion's departure to the Middle East and to the fighting on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(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.*)

(continued)

The later arrivals to the United Kingdom, 'E' and 'F' Companies, were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were eventually to form the nucleus of the soon to be formed 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.

(Right: An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were quartered the 'other ranks', is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)



(Right below: The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower – it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo.



The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer and the early autumn of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as a base for the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 – that the new-comers were sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion*.

**The first such draft was, in fact, to depart from Ayr for service on the Gallipoli Peninsula, only five days after the arrival in Scotland of Private Fitzpatrick's 'G' Company, on November 15.*

This then had been the situation at the time of Private Fitzpatrick's arrival there: the new Regimental Depot had still been in the throes of its establishment when he and his comrades-in-arms of 'G' Company were to finish their journey to Scotland on November 10 of 1915; thus, as related in a preceding paragraph, the new-comers were required to be quartered at Gales, some sixteen kilometres further up the coast – but apparently more than sixty kilometres distant by road.

Private Fitzpatrick was likely admitted into the *Croftshead Hospital, Ayr*, on January 22 of 1916* where he was diagnosed as suffering from pneumonia, asthenia (loss of strength) and measles.

**There is no precise record of this, only that certain charges and allotments were paid to him from this date until that of his death.*

(Right: A further view of the Newfoundland Plot in Ayr Cemetery – photograph from 2011)



(continued)

The son of John Fitzpatrick* and Mary Fitzpatrick (deceased by the time of her son's enlistment), he was also nephew to James Fitzpatrick, grandson of Bridget Fitzpatrick (*named as next of kin*, deceased July, 1917), and cousin of Miss Nellie Fitzpatrick - to whom he had bequeathed the accrual of fifty cents per diem from his pay - of Conche on the *French Shore*.

Private Fitzpatrick died in hospital in Ayr on January 29, 1916. At home it was the Reverend G.A. Thibault who was requested to bear the news to his family.

(Right: *The sacrifice of Alphonsus Fitzpatrick is honoured on the War Memorial which stands in the community of Conche. – photograph from 2020*)



**Possibly he who is recorded as having passed away at the age of thirty-five years on July 28, 1901 (confirmation required).*

An auction held on February 11 of his few effects realized the sum of 14/9 (fourteen shillings and nine-pence).

Alphonsus Fitzpatrick had enlisted at a *declared* eighteen years and three months of age.

Private Alphonsus Fitzpatrick was entitled to the British War Medal for his...*overseas service*.



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 – January 19, 2023.