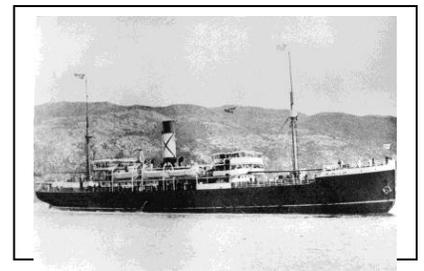




Private Albert Folks (Regimental Number 3490) is buried in Nine Elms British Cemetery – Grave reference X. C. 1.

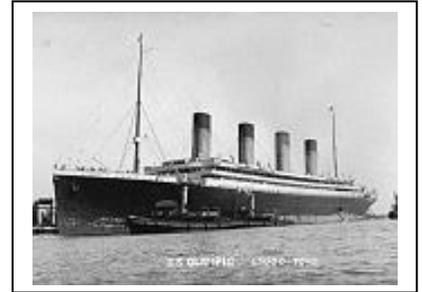
His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a labourer earning a weekly \$8.00, Albert Folks was a recruit of the Fourteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury on Harvey Road in St. John's on February 22, 1917, he also enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and attested on that same day.

Private Folks was not to depart from Newfoundland until May 19, when the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* (right) left en route to Halifax. His contingent of three officers and one-hundred eighty-two *other ranks*, and also ninety-nine recruits of the newly-formed Newfoundland Forestry Unit, then left Nova Scotia for the United Kingdom on board an unspecified* vessel, on May 29.



(continued)

**The ship in question may well have been the White Star liner Olympic (right) – sister ship to Titanic – requisitioned as a troop transport during the war, which sailed on June 2 from Halifax with Canadian military personnel as well – there are no other departures on or about this date. May 29 may have been the date of embarkation by the Newfoundland contingent.*



Arriving in the English west-coast port of Liverpool on June 9 the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some two years. It was from here – since November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were being despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.

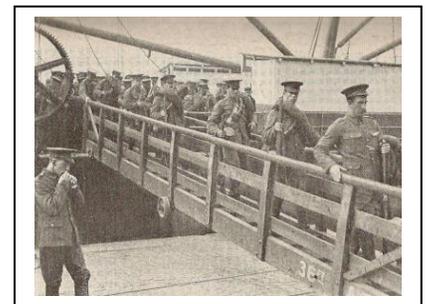


(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

Private Folks was to remain longer in Ayr* for perhaps more time than planned due to a bout of diphtheria. He was admitted into the Dundee War Hospital on September 28 and was to remain there until being released on October 30.

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion was transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of Dundee. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.*

The 34th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Folks among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port-city of Southampton on December 2, 1917, crossing the English Channel to reach the Norman capital of Rouen on December 4. There Private Folks' detachment disembarked to proceed to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot close by, there for a period of last-minute training and also to organize* before seeking out the parent unit.



(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route 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.*

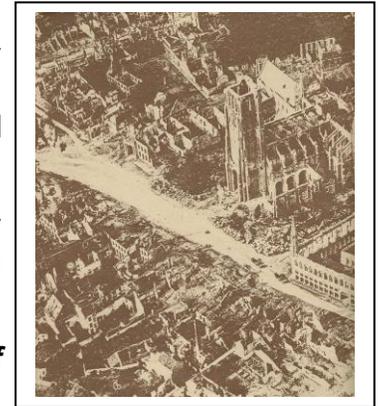
When Private Folks' contingent of fifty-five *other ranks* reported *to duty* on December 11, 1st Battalion had left behind it – on December 4 - the theatre and the exertions of the *Battle of Cambrai*. On the day of the newcomers' arrival the unit was billeted in the vicinity of the community of Humbercourt, a number of kilometres just to the south-west of Arras. The Newfoundlanders remained there until the 18th when they marched to Fressin, some fifty kilometres to the north-west. There they were to spend both Christmas and New Year.

The weather obliged and even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow, a bit too much at times apparently.

At the beginning of January of 1918, and after that snowy Christmas period spent to the west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had been ordered into Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time.

There, like the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences.

(Right adjacent: *an aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916 – from Illustration*)



Meanwhile, while the Allies built their defences, by the beginning of 1918 the Germans were preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking man-power after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them.



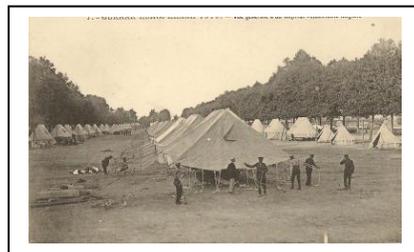
It was expected that the Germans would launch a spring offensive. While they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders continued to dig.

(Above right: *countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were stationed in March and early April of 1918 – photograph from 2011*)

On March 13, the Newfoundlanders were in the front-line and support trenches just beyond Zonnebeke, to the north-east of Ypres, having been posted there on March 7. The Regimental War Diary of that period makes no particular note of events on either the 12th or the 13th, and the entry of the 14th is minimal: *Battalion relieved by Lancs. Fusiliers, and moved to Haslar Camp. Total casualties during tour in line:- Killed in Action = 1 Officer, 11 Other Ranks, Missing B'ld K = 1 Other Rank, Wounded = 54 do.*

Private Folks was among those casualties. He was wounded while serving with 'D' Company on March 13 and evacuated to the 3rd Australian Casualty Clearing Station at the Rémy Sidings, Poperinghe, on that same day, having incurred multiple wounds inflicted by shell-fire to both legs, to the left arm and to the face.

(Right: a British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War – from a vintage post-card)



The son of William Folks, fisherman, and Janet Folks* – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Little Bay, Notre Dame Bay – he was also brother to Beatrice, Herbert, Arthur and Pearce.

Private Folks was reported as having *died of wounds* in the same 3rd Australian CCS on March 13, 1918.

Born in March of 1899, according to the 2011 census, Albert Folks had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and eleven months. His papers record a *declared* age of *twenty* years and eleven months.

(Right above: Oxford Road Cemetery is adjacent to the community of Wieltje, where 1st Battalion de-trained to march to the positions they were to hold in mid-March, 1918. The spires of Ypres may be just perceived on the western horizon. – photograph from 2013)

*According to the 1911 Census, William Folks was born in 1874 and his wife, Janet in 1885. It is unlikely, if this be correct, that Beatrice (born 1894), Herbert (b. 1897), Albert (b. 1899) or Arthur (b. 1901), were Janet's children. Pearce (b. 1908) might be.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no further information available from any likely source.

Private Albert Folks was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

