



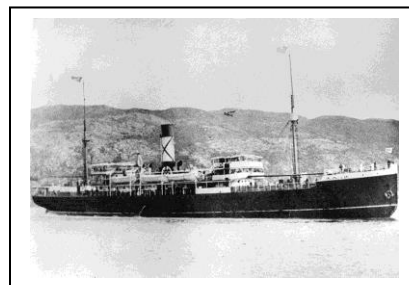
**Private Stephen Fortune (Regimental Number 3146) is buried in the Rocquigny-Équancourt Road British Cemetery – Grave reference IV. B. 22.**

**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman earning a monthly \$40.00, Stephen Fortune was a recruit of the Twelfth Draft. He presented himself for medical examination and also enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's – *for the duration of the war* and engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – on October 12, 1916, before attesting a day later, on October 13.**

**While in St. John's awaiting orders to travel overseas, Private Fortune was to fall victim to the measles virus – as well as to venereal disease – and became a patient of the Military Hospital for Infectious Diseases in St. John's from November 21 until January 13 of the New Year, 1917.**

**(continued)**

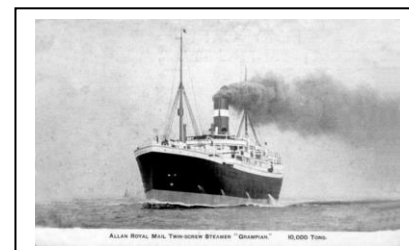
Private Fortune was one of the approximately three hundred twenty *all ranks* to leave St. John's for *overseas service* on the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* (right), bound for Halifax, on January 31, 1917, from there to take ship to the United Kingdom.



Immediately upon its arrival in Nova Scotia, however, this detachment was forwarded to accommodation in the town of Windsor where it was soon to be quarantined because of an epidemic of measles and mumps.

It was not before a lapse of some two-and-a-half months after its arrival that transport could be arranged for the trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom for the so-called *Windsor Draft* – minus the twenty-five or so personnel still unable to travel.

On April 16, Private Fortune embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Grampian* (right), one of three ships carrying the Newfoundlanders to sail two days later, in a convoy from Halifax. The vessels were also carrying Canadian reinforcements to the English west-coast port of Liverpool, where the ships docked on April 29.



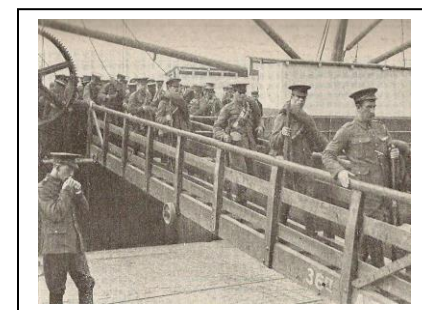
Arriving in England the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence to serve as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for two years. It was from here – since November of 1915 and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



By the time that the Windsor Draft arrived at the Regimental Depot, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion was becoming critically short of personnel.

(Right above: *the new race-course at Ayr – opened in 1907 – where men of the Regiment were billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photo from 2012*)

On June 11, 1917, the 25<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Private Fortune in its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to France. On the following day, June 12, the contingent disembarked in the Norman capital, Rouen, where time was spent at the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, to be organized and to undergo final training\* before moving onward to its eventual rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

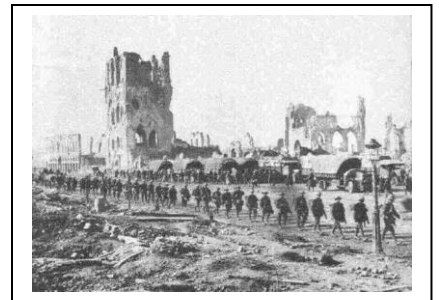


(Preceding page: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

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

The *Regimental War Diary* makes no mention of any incoming personnel on July 13 – nor does it for either the 14<sup>th</sup> or the 15 – likely because any re-enforcements arriving would have been kept behind the lines, whereas the four fighting companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on those particular days were working forward in the support trenches. Nevertheless, his own records document Private Fortune reporting *to duty* with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Only some two weeks before, at the end of June, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had once again moved north into Belgium and once again to the area of *the Ypres Salient*. This had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



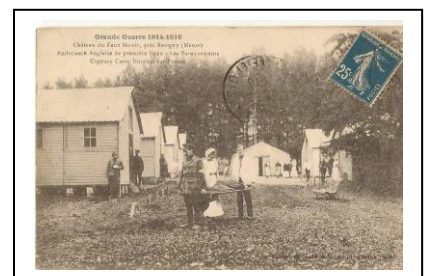
(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion remained in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army which floundered its way across the sodden countryside of Flanders. Notably it fought in two major engagements, at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembeek* on October 9.



(Right: *an unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

The only individual record of Private Fortune during this period is that of the three days when he reported to the 88<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance with a seemingly mild case of tonsillitis, from September 11 to 14, whereupon he was discharged *to duty* back to his unit.



(Right: *a British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some – from a vintage post-card*)

(continued)

A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*. They were ordered back south from Belgium into northern France on October 17 to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras – some even being granted a ten-day furlough back to the United Kingdom.

The so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained.

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



(Right above: *the Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

It was on November 21, the second day of the offensive, that Private Fortune, while serving with 'B' Company, was seriously wounded, suffering gun-shot wounds to the hip. He was evacuated from the field to the 89<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance and from there was forwarded to the 48<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Ytres.



(Right: *transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

The foster-son - and only child - of James, fisherman, and Mary Ann Fortune (née *Gilliam*) – to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Jeffery's Bay in the District of St. George's, he was reported as having *died of wounds* on November 22, 1917, at the same 48<sup>th</sup> CCS.



At home it was the Reverend E. A. Butler of Sandy Point who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Stephen Fortune *declared* his age upon enlistment as eighteen years and two months. (However, the 1911 Census documents his birth date as July 11, 1900.)

(continued)

**(Preceding page: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial.* – photograph from 2012)**

**Private Stephen Fortune was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).**

