



Private William Fortune (Regimental Number 1194), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation previous to his military service recorded as that of a fisherman working for an annual \$550.00, William Fortune presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on March 6, 1915. He then enlisted two days later – engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem - on March 8, before attesting some eight days later again, on March 16.



Private Fortune of 'E' Company embarked in St. John's on board the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* (preceding page – from the *Provincial Archives*) some two months 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 the Newfoundlanders travelled by train to Edinburgh where they 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 three months training, from Edinburgh to a tented Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick.

(Right above: *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. The Depot was to be Private Fortune's home for the next three months.

The Regimental Depot was being established during that summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland to serve as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were to be sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



(Right: 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)

It was not until the fourteenth day of November that the 1st Reinforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Fortune among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport to embark onto His Majesty's Transport *Olympic*, sister ship of *Britannic* and the ill-fated *Titanic*, en route to Gallipoli.



(Right above: HM Transport *Olympic* on the right lies at anchor along with HM Hospital Ship *Aquitania*, centre, at Mudros Bay in the autumn of 1915. – from a photograph from the Imperial War Museum, London)



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



Less than three weeks later, on the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned Suvla Bay, the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, forming a part of the rear-guard on that occasion. 1st Battalion was transferred two days later to Cape Helles on the western tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

(Right above: Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the mis-named Achi Baba, positions which were never breached. The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011)



(Right: 'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration)

(Right: 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces and the Newfoundlanders, rear-guard also on this second occasion: vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen – photograph from 2011)



(Right below: 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)



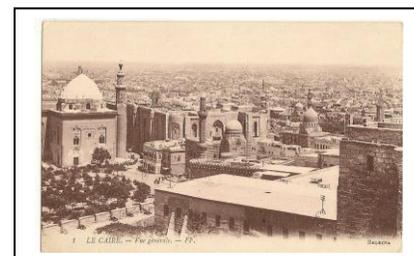
When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, 1st Battalion had been sent to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. From there the Newfoundlanders were transferred, almost immediately, south to Suez. To that point it seems that the theatre of the future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



On February 2, Private Fortune was evacuated from Suez to the other side of the Canal where he was admitted into the 17th Stationary Hospital at Port Tewfiq suffering from jaundice.

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

There may well have been a second problem as, almost five weeks later on March 24, he was apparently transferred to the 27th General Hospital at Abbassia, Cairo. The complaint was diagnosed as NYD – Not Yet Determined.



(Right: Cairo, the Egyptian capital city, at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

As was the case of several hospitals, casualty clearing stations and field ambulances, older names were retained at the same time that new labels were being introduced: thus the *British Red Cross Hospital* seems to have been synonymous with *7th Government Convalescent Hospital*, Private Fortune being reported as discharged into both of them from the 27th General Hospital on May 19.

(Right: British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseille. – from Illustration)



Having been discharged to duty at Base Depot, Sidi Bishr, on June 1, and having then embarked at Alexandria on the 10th, Private Fortune reached the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles eight days later, on the 18th of the same month, and proceeded on his way, via the Base Depot at Rouen, to re-join 1st Battalion.

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This he – one of a draft of sixty-six *other ranks* - did on the day that some eight-hundred Newfoundland personnel from 1st Battalion contingent were to make their way from Louvencourt to play their part in the events of the morrow. The date was June 30*.

**June 30 had been, in fact, the original date planned for the first day of the offensive; however poor weather had resulted in the attack being postponed for twenty-four hours.*

(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery atop part of the German front-line defences - The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009*)

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

On the next day, July 1, the first day of *the Somme*, Private Fortune was wounded at Beaumont-Hamel while serving with 'A' Company. Evacuated on July 2 to the 87th Field Ambulance suffering from a gun-shot wound to the left hand and shoulder, he was subsequently invalided back to the United Kingdom via an anonymous casualty clearing station, the 8th Stationary Hospital at Wimereux, and per the Belgian hospital ship *Jan Breydel* (right), on the 3rd.

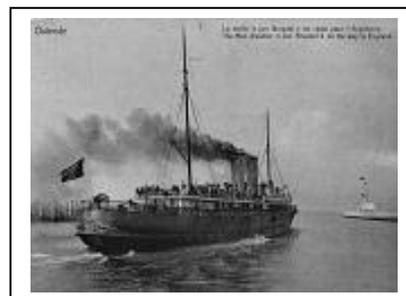
Upon arrival in England, Private Fortune was transported to the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth where he was admitted on that same July 3.

(Right: *The main building of what became 3rd London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1st, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)



(Above far right: *Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing at 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

Following treatment he was accorded the customary ten-day furlough - on this occasion from July 20 to 29 – which was granted to military personnel upon release from hospital. There followed a posting to the Regimental Depot at Ayr for which Private Fortune reported *to duty* on August 1. There he remained for more than four months.

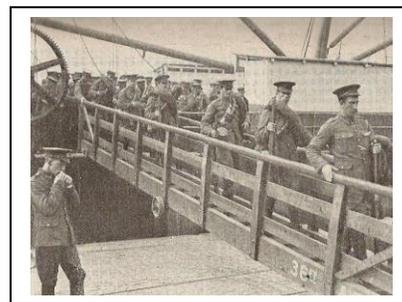


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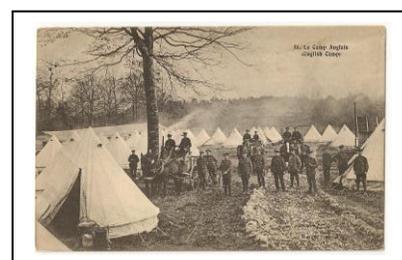
On December 12, Private Fortune, as a soldier of the 15th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on his way to re-join 1st Battalion on the Continent. Arriving on the following day, the 13th, in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, the Draft was posted there for several days of final training and organization* before leaving to seek 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.*

The Regimental War Diary reports two contingents reporting to duty at about the same time while 1st Battalion was preparing for Christmas at Camps-en-Amienois: one-hundred twenty new re-enforcements on Christmas Eve; fifty *returning wounded* on Christmas Day. It was as a member of this latter draft that he re-joined his unit although it is not recorded whether the new-comers had arrived in time to share in that Christmas dinner washed down with *real ale*.



(Right above: *a British camp, in not particularly clement conditions, somewhere on the Continent during the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

After the welcome six-week Christmas respite that they had spent in *Corps Reserve*, the Newfoundlanders *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23, 1917, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred their first casualties of 1917.

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The only infantry activity directly involving 1st Battalion during that entire period – from the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and beginning of March, an action which brought this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.



(Right above: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time. - photograph from 2009(?)*)

After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March was a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events. They even had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris (right), the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



On March 29, 1st Battalion began to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, their march to finish amid the rubble of the village of Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right: *the remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War – from Illustration*)

On April 9 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties it was the most expensive operation of the War for the British, its only positive episode being the Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday. The French offensive was a disaster.



(Right above: *the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

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1st Battalion was to play its part in the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at a place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After Beaumont-Hamel, Monchy-le-Preux was to prove the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties on April 14 alone.



(Right above: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the western – in 1917, the British – side of the community. The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

The son of Sylvester Fortune, fisherman – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay – and Hannah Fortune of Tor's Cove in the District of Ferryland, he was brother to at least Helena (Mrs. Michael J. Keefe of Tors Cove).

Private Fortune was reported as having been *killed in action* on April 14, 1917, while fighting at Monchy-le-Preux during the *Battle of Arras*.

William Fortune had enlisted at the age of twenty-four years.

(Right above: *The Caribou at Monchy-le-Preux stands atop the vestiges of a German strongpoint in the centre of the community. – Photograph from 2012*)

Private William Fortune 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).

