

Corporal Richard Fowlow (Regimental Number 886) lies in Ta' Braxia (*Pieta*) Military Cemetery on the island of Malta – Grave reference D. VIII. 6.

His occupations previous to military service recorded as those of *clerk* and *draper* and earning a monthly forty-five dollars, Richard Fowlow presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on December 10, 1914. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

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It was to be twenty-six days following this medical assessment before, on January 5, he then enlisted – engaged at the private soldier’s rate of a single dollar per diem plus a daily ten-cent *Field Allowance*. However, whereas attestation for others had come about on the day of enlistment, Richard Fowlow was now to await a further two weeks and two days, until January 21, before *that* final formality would come to pass.

For Private Fowlow, Number 886, there followed an eight-week period of seeming inaction. How he occupied himself during that period is not recorded among his papers; he may, of course, have temporarily returned to work but this is only speculation.

During that period, however, he received a promotion, on February 24 to put up his lance-corporal’s stripe.

(Right above: *The image of the Bowring Brothers’ vessel ‘Stephano’, sister-ship of ‘Florizel’, passing through ‘the Narrows’ of St. John’s Harbour is from Provincial Archives.*)



Unlike the two previous contingents to have departed Newfoundland (see below) for...overseas service, Private Fowlow’s ‘D’ Company was not to sail directly to the United Kingdom. On March 20, it embarked onto the Bowring-Brothers’ vessel *Stephano* for the short voyage to Halifax, capital city of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, where it was thereupon to board a second vessel, the newly-launched *Orduña* for the trans-Atlantic crossing*.



(Right above: *The image of Orduña is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. The vessel was not to be requisitioned during the Great War but would be used by the Cunard Company to operate on its commercial service between Liverpool and New York.*)

Having then sailed from Nova Scotia on March 22 for Liverpool, Lance Corporal Fowlow and his draft landed there eight days later, on the 30th. Once disembarked in Liverpool, the two-hundred fifty men and officers of ‘D’ Company were thereupon transported on the same date by train directly to Edinburgh, the Scottish capital, to join the Newfoundland Regiment’s ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ Companies.

These units were by this time stationed at the historic Castle, ‘A’ and ‘B’ having recently been posted from Fort George and ‘C’ having arrived directly from home (see further below). After ‘D’ Company’s arrival at the end of that month of March, the Newfoundlanders were now to remain at Edinburgh for the following six weeks.

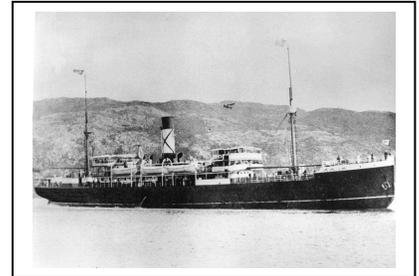


(Right above: *From its vantage point on Castle Hill, the venerable fortress overlooks the city of Edinburgh where in 1915 the Newfoundlanders were to provide the first garrison to be drawn from outside the British Isles. – photograph from 2011*)

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Five to six months before that time, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of some five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's for the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits – these to become 'A' and 'B' Companies - during which time the authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

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

(Right adjacent: *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 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, as recorded beforehand, it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

Only days after 'A' and 'B' Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 'C' Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent* - would arrive directly from Newfoundland.

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

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As seen in a previous paragraph, for the month of April and the first days of May of 1915, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies, now united, were to furnish the garrison – the first troops from outside the British Isles to do so - of the guardian of Scotland's capital city. Then, during the first week of May, 'E' Company was to report there...*to duty*...from home. Four days later again, on May 11, the Newfoundland contingent was ordered elsewhere.

On that day, three weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundland unit was dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent would eventually receive the re-enforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength*. The now-formed 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered available to be sent on ‘active service’.

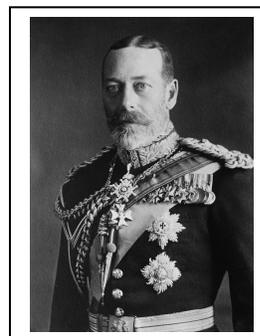
And it was also to be at *Stobs Camp*, on July 2, that Lance Corporal Fowlow received a further promotion, on this second occasion to be appointed to the rank of corporal and to put up a second stripe.

(Right: *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 Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



**This was approximately fifteen hundred, sufficient to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot. This force, now the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.



Meanwhile the two junior Companies, ‘E’ – last arrived at Edinburgh - and the aforementioned ‘F’, were ordered transferred to Scotland’s west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

(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.*)

It was while the Newfoundland Battalion was in training during those weeks at Aldershot, on August 15 that Private Fowlow would be prevailed upon to enlist for the duration of the conflict.

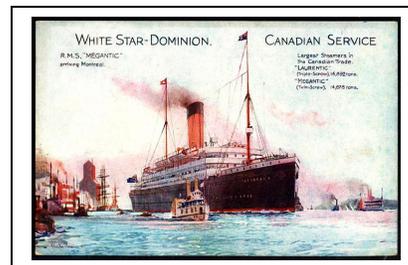
**At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.*



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(Preceding page: Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, prior to its departure to active service on the Gallipoli Peninsula – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)

On August 20, 1915, Corporal Fowlow and his Newfoundland unit 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. There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1st Battalion was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



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

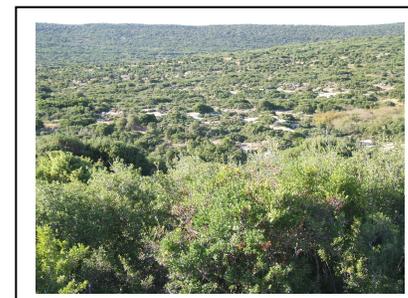
(Right: *Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph 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 Bay, and where the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to serve during the autumn of 1915 – photograph from 2011*)



When the Newfoundlanders landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* on that September night of 1915 they were to disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, was proving to be little more than a debacle:



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(Preceding page: *No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives*)

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

**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.*

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Corporal Fowlow of 6 Platoon was evacuated from Suvla on October 10 and – likely at first ferried to the Greek island of Lemnos – was embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Nevasa*. He was suffering from dysentery.

(Right below: *The image of HMHS 'Nevasa', here it would seem clad in her war-time hospital-ship garb, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries. A ship of the British Steam Navigation Company, she plied routes between Great Britain and India until the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 when she was to serve as a troopship. In January of 1915 the vessel was converted to a hospital ship before in 1918, once again becoming a troopship, a role she was to play again twenty years later during the Second World War. 'Nevasa' was laid up and scrapped in 1948.*)

He was then transported for further treatment to the British-held Mediterranean island of Malta. Admitted to the Military Hospital of *Cottonera*, on the 14th, Corporal Fowlow once there was additionally diagnosed as having contracted typhoid as well as para-typhoid, and was deemed as *dangerously ill*.



(Right below: *One of the several now-disused – abandoned since Malta's independence in 1964 - British military hospital facilities which still stand on the island – photograph from 2011*)

The son of Thomas Jenkins Fowlow, fisherman, and of Elizabeth Fowlow (née *Fowlow* (sic))* – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of 70 cents from his pay - of Trinity East (they today lie together in Port Rexton Cemetery) – he was also brother to Margaret, Edgar, Ronald, Pearce, Elsie, Louis (*Lewis*), Alexander, Ethel, Hilda, Archibald, Leon and to Gertrude.



**The couple married on December 30, 1890.*

Corporal Fowlow was reported by the Commandant of the island of Malta, as having *died of sickness – para-typhoid* - in hospital on Malta on November 23, 1915.

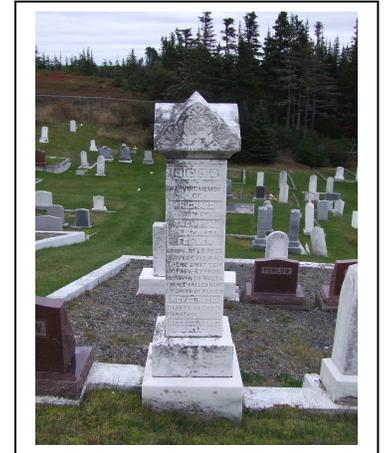


At home it was the Reverend A. Pittman of Trinity East who was requested to bear the news to his family.

(Right above: *The entrance to the Grand Harbour at Valetta, capital city of Malta, at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Richard Fowlow had enlisted at a *declared* twenty-two years of age: date of birth at Port Rexton, Newfoundland, January 18, 1893 (from Church of England Parish Records).

Private J. K. Foster of the Royal North Devon Hussars and Sergeant J. W. Warrington, of the Royal Field Artillery, share his tomb and tombstone.



(Right above: *A family memorial which stands in Port Rexton Cemetery commemorates the sacrifice of Corporal Richard Fowlow. – photograph from 2014*)

(*The photograph of Private(?) Fowlow is from the Provincial Archives.*)



Corporal Richard Fowlow 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) (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 8, 2023.

