



Lance Corporal James Bramwell Freake (Regimental Number 1611) lies in Knightsbridge Cemetery – Grave reference H. 9.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a railroad conductor earning a monthly \$65.00, James Bramwell Freake was a recruit of the Fifth Draft. He enlisted – engaged at the daily rate of \$1.10 – at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John’s on June 6, 1915, before presenting himself for medical examination three days afterwards, on the 9th. He then attested a day later again, on June 10.



**A second source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

(continued)

Private Freake embarked on board His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* (previous page – original photograph from the *Provincial Archives*) on June 20 in St. John's Harbour and sailed (*almost**) directly to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two men of 'F' Company and eighty-five naval reservists to take passage on that day.

**Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the journey of about a week. Not only was Calgarian escorting three submarines, but she sailed by way of the Portuguese Azores and then Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders apparently even having the time to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. She reached Liverpool on July 9.*



(Right above: *the Crown Colony of Gibraltar in pre-War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background.* – from a vintage postcard)

On the day after its arrival in the United Kingdom, 'F' Company marched from the railway station and reported *to duty* at Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick on the evening of July 10. It was an important moment: the Newfoundland Regiment, as of that day counting fifteen hundred personnel, was now at fighting strength and could be posted on *active service*.



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

From Stobs, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the senior Companies, having now become 1st Battalion of 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.

'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 become home to Private Freake for the following seven 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.



It was during this period while stationed at Ayr, on February 2, that Private Freake received promotion from the rank of private to that of lance corporal.

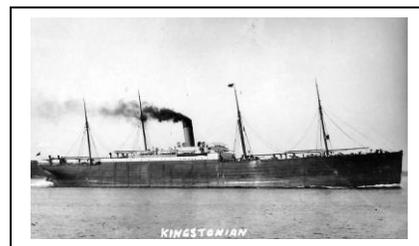
(Previous page: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was on March 13, almost six weeks after his promotion, that Lance Corporal Freake, as a non-commissioned officer of the 2nd Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, passed through the naval establishment of Devonport on the English south coast, en route – although no-one knew it at the time – for France.

The Newfoundlanders - somewhat surprisingly - were to travel by way of Egypt*. By that time Lance Corporal Freake had re-enlisted at Ayr, on February 1, some six weeks before his departure from there.**

**At the time there was some confusion as to whether 1st Battalion would stay in the Middle East or not, and this draft apparently had orders to set sail for Egypt. However, there was surely a bureaucratic foul-up as 1st Battalion embarked in Egypt on only the following day for passage to France. The two ships presumably passed each other in the Mediterranean Sea, going in opposite directions.*

One can only suppose that the ship from Devonport was carrying supplies, equipment and/ or other personnel that were needed in the Middle East and therefore could not be turned around – either that or the vessel had no radio. The 1st Draft then voyaged to Marseilles from Alexandria on HMT Kingstonian (right).



***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.*

(Right: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage post-card*)

The draft of one-hundred forty *other ranks*, under the command of Captain Ledingham, having disembarked in the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles on April 3, joined 1st Battalion on April 8 in the small town of Louvencourt where the parent unit – still on its march towards the front - had already been billeted for two days.



Five days later, on April 13, 1st Battalion marched into the village of Englebelmer – situated at some three kilometres behind the front - where the Newfoundlanders were billeted, welcomed re-enforcements from Rouen on the 15th and, on the evening of that day, were ordered forward into the British lines to work in some of the communication trenches.



(continued)

(Page preceding: a part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?))

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the meandering river that flowed – and today still flows – innocuously through the southern part of the region to which it lends its name, *the Somme*.

The son of Henry William Freake, labourer of Lewisporte – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay – and Sarah Ellen Freake*, he was reported as having been *killed in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with 'B' Company during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. He was buried on that same day by the Reverend H. S. Reid attached to 87th Brigade.



James Freake had enlisted at a *declared* twenty-one years of age: date of birth, September 19, 1893 (from *Vital Statistics*).

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



(Right: a grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from ...)

**It may be she is the Ellen Freake who died in childbirth on August 18, 1899. If this be the case, Henry William Freake is likely he who is recorded in the 1921 Lewisporte Census as being married to Annie Anstey (Anstey her former married name) and the father with her of a family of five sons.*

(Right: A plaque on the wall of the municipal building in Lewisporte commemorates the sacrifice of Lance Corporal Freake... (see also below) – photograph from 2013)



Lance Corporal James Bramwell Freake was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

(continued on following page)



Lewisporte
Nov.17/21

Mr Harvey,

I haven't received any money from my son that was killed in the war. I should have been getting my money ever since the war and I want it and I must have it. I haven't got any money to buy food for my family. Please look it up and send me some as soon as you can. Please reply my return and oblige

Yours Truly
Mr Henry Freaake
Lewisporte

(Right: ...a sacrifice also honoured by the community's War Memorial. – photograph from 2013)

