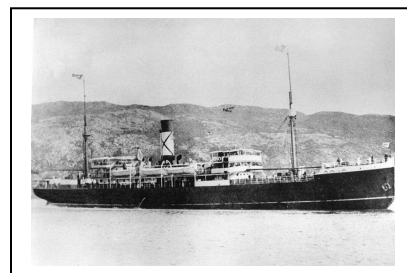




**Private Fred (Frederick) Garf (Regimental Number 125) is interred in Ancre British Cemetery – Grave reference VI. E. 20.**

**His prior employment being that of a *clerk* with *Nicholle, Inkpen & Chafe, Dry Goods Merchants* of 315, Water Street, St. John's, Newfoundland, and earning \$30.00 per month, Fred Garf enlisted on September 2, 1914 - at the daily rate of \$1.10 (including a daily ten-cent field allowance) - as a recruit of the First Draft.**



**(continued)**

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

Having attested on October 1, Private Garf embarked onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* on October 3. *Florizel* sailed on the following day, October 4, to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island to cross the Atlantic in convoy with the ships transporting the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division overseas.



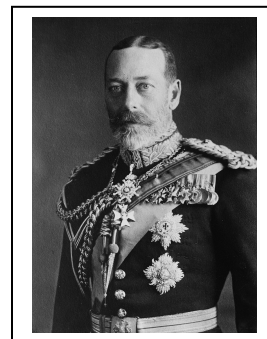
In the United Kingdom Private Garf trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England, then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness - at Edinburgh Castle – where it provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles - and later again at *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick.



(Right above: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment parades at Stobs Camp and is presented its Colours on June 10, 1915. – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies\*, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' were then sent south to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot; meanwhile, the two junior Companies, 'E' and 'F', were ordered to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion.



(Right: *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 – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia*)

*\*On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.*

It was to be during that time spent at Aldershot that Private Garf – he amongst many others - had been prevailed upon, he on August 13, to re-enlist *for the duration of the war\**.



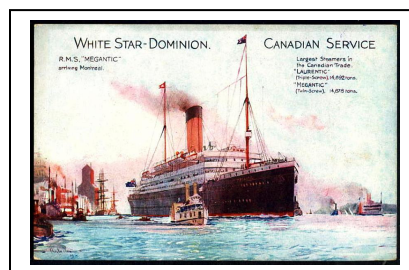
(continued)



*\*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.*

*(Preceding page: Some of the men of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915 – from The Fighting Newfoundlander by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)*

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

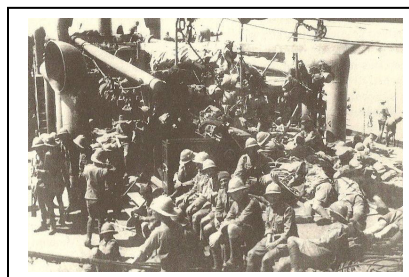


On August 20, 1915, Private Garf and his comrades-in-arms embarked in Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he disembarked with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



*(Right: Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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, and where Private Garf was to serve in the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*



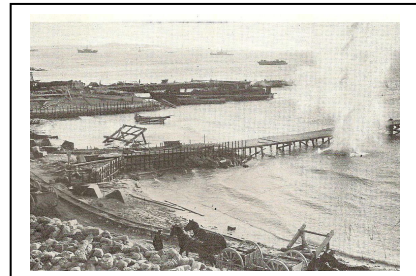
On the night of December 19-20, the British abandoned Suvla – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, were to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel was evacuated to the nearby island of Imbros, some to Lemnos, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration; the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was transferred only two days later to the area of Cape Helles, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

*(continued)*

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



The British and the Anzac forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps also served at Gallipoli – were now only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Gallipoli Peninsula was undertaken. The operation took place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion providing some of the rear-guard for this second withdrawal as well\*.



*\*Lieutenant Owen Steele of St. John's, Newfoundland, is cited as having been the last soldier of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to step into the final small boat to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.*

**(Right above: '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 by the Newfoundlanders who were the last soldiers off the beach: vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011)**



**(Right: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were among the last to leave on two occasions, at Suvla Bay and at Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)**



When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, Private Garf and his 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were sent to the British Base Depot at Alexandria, arriving there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month. The Newfoundlanders were immediately transferred southward to Suez, one of the ports at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders as, at the time, the subsequent destination of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division had not yet been decided\*.

*\*Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.*

**(Right above: Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card)**



**(Right: British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseille. – from a vintage postcard)**



On March 14, the Newfoundlanders embarked through Port Tewfiq (see preceding page), also at the southern end of the *Suez Canal*, for passage to the French port of Marseilles, and disembarked there on March 22, en route to the *Western Front*.

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold and miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having travelled unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the local station at two in the morning, the Newfoundlanders still had a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

(Right: *the Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)

It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they marched on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would become a part of their history.

On April 13, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to march into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where they would be billeted, would receive reinforcements and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the trenches of the *Western Front*.

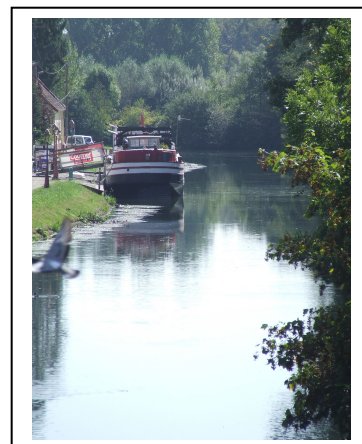
The Newfoundlanders would also soon be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that meandering river, *the Somme*.

(Right: *A part of the re-constructed trench system in the Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)

If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later\*.

*\*Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion's casualties was to be incurred during the advance from the third line of British trenches to the first line from where the attack proper was to be made, and while struggling through British wire laid to protect the British positions from any German attack.*

(continued)



(Preceding page: *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*)

There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand were recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds*.

It was to be the largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the killing of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.

(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village. – photographs from 2010 & 2015*)

*In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man's-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.*



The son of Charles Garf (*sailor, former fisherman* and emigrant from Sweden, by 1914 an employee of the *Reid Newfoundland Company*), and of Laura Garf (*née Whitten*) of 27, Power Street in St. John's – the couple married on June 3, 1893 -, he was also brother\* to Janet Maud, Alexander\*\*, Elsie(?), William-James, Beatrice, Emma-Louise, Robert-Charles, Violet-Sheridan and to Gladys-May.

*\*Walter John Frederick Garf is to be found in the Newfoundland Birth Register on two occasions: born May 10, 1894, Number 629567, baptized and registered on the same May 10, 1894; born May 9, 1895, Number 600688, baptized may 10, 1895, and registered May 26, 1895 – all of the entries made by a Reverend Cowperthwaite.*



*\*\*Alexander Garf apparently served during the Great War in the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve (Number 3018x).*

*Much of the above family information is from a web-site entitled...Descendants of William James Whitten – Angelfire.*

(Right above: *Looking from the British lines at Beaumont-Hamel 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 2009*)

(continued)



Private Garf was at first reported as *missing in action* on July 1, 1916, while serving with 'B' Company during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme* on the field at Beaumont-Hamel. Some six months later, on December 31, he was officially *presumed dead*.

However, his remains having subsequently been found and identified thanks to his identity disc, Private Garf was subsequently reported by the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps Burial Officer to have been interred\* on December 1, 1917. His file was therefore amended so as to read...*killed in action or died of wounds on or shortly after July 1, 1916*.



Walter John Frederick Garf had enlisted at twenty-two years (from attestation papers) of age: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, May 9-10, 1894 or 1895 (see previous page).

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

*\*While his grave is to be found in Ancre Cemetery, the records in the Newfoundland Archives record his resting-place as Y Ravine. Maybe they do not mean the Cemetery of that name – which would not have existed then as it does today. Many of the dead had been buried at the time where they had fallen in No-Man's-Land just in front of Y Ravine - which before the battle had been incorporated into the 1916 German front line. It may also well be that it was not until after the later fighting of 1918 that he was transferred from there to Ancre Cemetery.*



(The photograph of Private Garf is from Provincial Archives.)

Private Fred (Frederick) Garf was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 13, 2023.