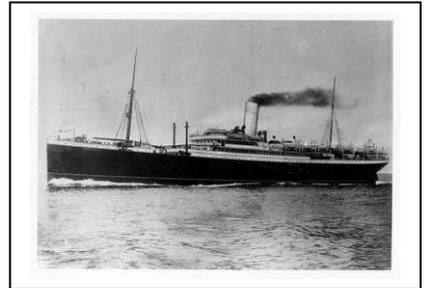




Corporal Edward Peter Grant (Regimental Number 1797), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Edward Peter Grant was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. Enlisting at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on August 30, 1915 – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – he then both attested and underwent his medical examination on the same day.

Private Grant and the other personnel of 'G' Company – apparently in the company of several naval reservists and also some German prisoners (these latter presumably to remain in Canada) - left St. John's by train on October 27, to cross the island to Port aux Basques. The contingent then traversed the Gulf of St. Lawrence by ferry, and proceeded by train from North Sydney to Quebec City.



At Québec the Newfoundlanders boarded His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* (above) for the trans-Atlantic passage to the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport where they arrived on November 9.

By the morning of the 10th the new arrivals had travelled by train and had gone north to Scotland. There they had been billeted in huts in a military camp at Gailles, not far removed from the new Regimental Depot where accommodation for the contingent was as yet not available.

That new Regimental Depot had been established during the 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 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers arriving from home were sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.

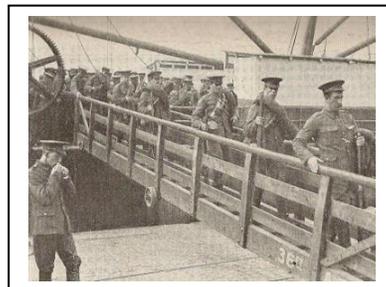


(Right above: an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)

It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot that, on July 4, a mere five days before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Grant was prevailed upon to re-enlist *for the duration of the War**. It was also at this time that he was awarded a first promotion, on June 19, to the rank of lance corporal.

**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.*

On July 9, the 8th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, Lance Corporal Grant among its non-commissioned officers, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the morrow, the 10th, the detachment disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot which had been established there. There the draft spent time in final training and organization* before proceeding on to its rendezvous with 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

There must have been a sense of urgency at the time: 1st Battalion had suffered terribly at a place called Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, and on July 6 its depleted strength, reported by the Regimental War Diary, still numbered no more than one-hundred sixty-eight *other ranks*, less than one-fifth on normal battalion strength.

Lance Corporal Grant was one of the contingent of sixty *other ranks* from Rouen to report to *duty* on July 24 – the War Diary says July 25 – in the small rural town of Beauval, far removed from the front. 1st Battalion had been there since only the day before and it was to stay there for only two more days before marching the twenty kilometres to Candas on the 26th to board a train.

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1st Battalion - still well under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after re-enforcement - moved north and entered into Belgium for the first time. It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize. *The Salient* was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatal.



On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, 1st Battalion moved south back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – the Somme.

(Page preceding: *the entrance to 'A' Company's quarters in the ramparts of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

(Right: *the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card*)



Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1st Battalion went again to the offensive at a place called Gueudecourt, some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. It proved to be another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

(Right: *This is the ground over which 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007*)



After Gueudecourt, 1st Battalion continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period broken only by the several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period, encamped well to the rear and close to the city of Amiens.



And it would be as Corporal Grant – further promoted from the rank of lance corporal on November 23 – that he would leave the front line on or about December 11 for that well-earned respite.

(Right above: *a typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card*)

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

The only infantry activity directly involving 1st Battalion during that entire period – from the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until Monch-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.



(continued)

(Previous page: *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(?)*)

However, only days before the encounter at Sailly-Saillisel, on February 26 of 1917, Corporal Grant was admitted into the 34th Casualty Clearing Station at Grovetown, Meaulté, and furthered on from there - on the 28th - to the 1st Stationary Hospital, Rouen, with a that frequently-diagnosed medical problem NYD - *Not Yet Determined*.

Whatever the problem may have been, it was apparently not anything too serious as he was discharged to Base Depot, Rouen, on March 3 and sent back to report *to duty* to 1st Battalion on either the 12th or the 13th of April – perhaps one of the fourteen other ranks recorded as arriving during the day of the 14th in the Regimental War Diary.

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 a village called Monchy-le-Preux.

(Right: *the remnants of the Grande Place of the city of Arras in early 1916 – from Illustration*)



Then on April 9, the British Army had 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 to be 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*)

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*)

(continued)

It seems not to be recorded whether Corporal Grant played a role on April 14 at Monchy-le-Preux. It surely is more likely that he became involved only later on during that episode at some point before it drew to a close at *Les Fosses Farm*.

(Right: *Windmill Cemetery stands about mid-way between Monchy-le-Preux – about three hundred metres behind the photographer – and Les Fosses Farm – three hundred metres to the right along the main road to Arras. – photograph from 2007*)



The Newfoundlanders were being temporarily billeted at Bayencourt, out of the line, on April 30, and Corporal Grant was taking part in lessons in the use of a Lewis Gun when he was the victim of an accident:

‘L/Cpl. S. Janes* was instructing a class on working of Lewis Gun. At time of accident he was attempting to show the class how to extract a cartridge, when the bolt left his hold and exploded the cartridge, bullet passing through fleshy part of arm of Corp. E. P. Grant who was sitting in front of Lewis Gun. Wound slight’

** Janes lost his stripe for ‘Negligence in use of firearms’.*

Corporal Grant was immediately admitted into the 88th Field Ambulance – reported as *accidentally wounded* - to be treated for this accidental chest – the records are contradictory – wound. He was then transferred on May 1 to the 2/1 Northumberland Casualty Clearing Station at Doullens for what had by now was being categorized as *a gun-shot wound to the shoulder*. On May 3 his next stop was at the 26th General Hospital in Étaples.



(Right above: *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*)

Discharged from Étaples to the 29th Division Base Depot on June 2, Corporal Grant returned to his unit *in the field* on June 29. He was most likely one of the two-hundred *other ranks* to be recorded in the Regimental War Diary as joining the parent unit on July 1 at Woesten, Belgium.

For the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion, May of 1917 – while Corporal Grant was receiving medical attention - had been a period when they found themselves moving hither and thither on the Arras front, in and out of the trenches. Apart from the ever-present artillery, there was little infantry activity – except for the marching.

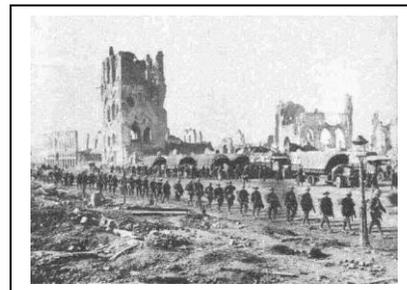


(continued)

At the beginning of June, 1st Battalion retired from the line to Bonneville and spent its time re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.

(Preceding page: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville in early June of 1917 – from The War Illustrated*)

The Newfoundlanders had then once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of Ypres. This had been selected as 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*, borrowing 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*)

1st 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 *Broembek* on October 9. Corporal Grant was to play a part at only the former.



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

The son of Michael Grant, general dealer, and Mary Ann Grant (deceased in July, 1901) of Lawn on the Burin Peninsula, he was also brother to Lilian Grant to whom he allocated a daily allowance of sixty cents, and to whom he had willed his all with the proviso that she take care of their brother Ignatius (unfortunately drowned in January, 1920).



There were also step-siblings Mercedes, Catherine, Alfred, Emily and two infants who had died young, by Michael Grant's second wife, Rosaly.

Corporal Grant was reported as having been *killed in action** on August 16, 1917, while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting at the *Steenbeek*, Belgium, in the earlier stages of *Third Ypres: Passchendaele*. At home, it was the Reverend A. J. Maher of St. Lawrence who was requested to bear the news to his family.

**He was recorded as having been buried to the west of the village of Langemarck, close to Signal Farm. Later, however, it proved impossible to find his grave, it most likely having been destroyed in the prolonged fighting of Passchendaele or during that of the year 1918.*

Edward Peter Grant had enlisted at the age of twenty-two years and six months.

(Page preceding: *This is the area of the Steenbeek – the stream runs close to the trees - and also close to where 1st Battalion fought the engagement of August 16, 1917. It is some eight kilometres distant from a village called Passchendaele. – photograph from 2009*)

(Right: *The sacrifice of Corporal Edward Peter Grant is honoured on the War Memorial in the community of Lawn. – photograph from 2015*)

Corporal Edward Peter Grant was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

