



Private Abel Haliday – elsewhere *Halliday* - (Regimental Number 1885) lies in Bailleul Road East – Grave reference III. G. 19.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of an engineer, Abel Haliday was a recruit of the Seventh Draft. He presented himself for medical examination, at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and attested, all on October 5 of 1915.

Private Haliday was one of the one hundred men who comprised the first contingent of 'H' Company to travel for overseas service. The draft left St. John's by train for Port aux Basques on December 18. After the short sea-voyage across the Gulf of St. Lawrence the detachment entrained once again for Saint John, New Brunswick.



The Atlantic voyage was effected from there on board the Royal Mail Ship *Corinthian* (above – the ship was later wrecked in the Bay of Fundy in December of 1918) and the draft reported to the Regimental Depot at Ayr on January 4 of the New Year, 1916.

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Transferred to 'G' Company, the new arrivals were quartered in the barracks of the Royal Scots Fusiliers who had not yet vacated the premises due to an epidemic of measles at the time. It was not long before the disease had also taken its toll on the Newfoundlanders among whom – although Private Haliday was not to be one of that number - there were to be fatalities.

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

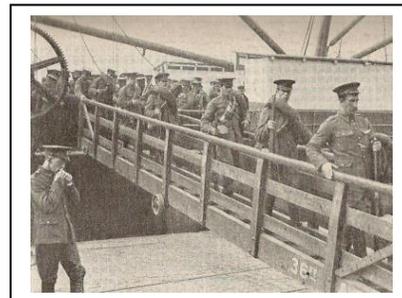


(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot that, on July 11, only some five days before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Haliday was prevailed upon to re-enlist *for the duration of the War**.

**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 16, Private Haliday, as a soldier of the 9th Reinforcement Draft from Ayr, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on his way to report to 1st Battalion on the Continent. Arriving on the following day, the 17th, 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 being ordered to report to the parent unit *in the field*.



(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.*

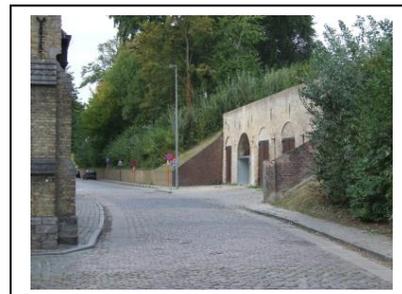
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Private Haliday, however, was not to undergo the rigours of Base Depot with his comrades-in-arms, at least not for the moment. He was instead admitted into the 12th General Hospital in Rouen, suffering from what was often termed NYD (*Not Yet Determined*). On the following day the records report that he was transferred to the 39th General Hospital*, perhaps in Le Havre at the time.

**However, since it is not clear that this hospital even existed at the time – it apparently was there, but at a later date - this may be a clerical error. It was possibly either the 9th General or 9th Stationary, both in Rouen.*

Wherever he may have been receiving treatment at the time, Private Haliday next was discharged to duty on August 18 back to the Base Depot, Rouen, and thence to 1st Battalion which he nominally joined on September 4, but *in the field* only on September 23 (any arrival on that day unrecorded in the War Diary), during its posting to Ypres. At the time the Newfoundlanders were in the line and working to strengthen defences under the watchful eyes of the Royal Engineers.

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1st Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after reinforcement – had 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 after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel. 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.

(Right above: *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*)



During this first Belgian posting Private Haliday is recorded as having been admitted into the 15th Casualty Clearing Station at Hazebrouck on two occasions: on September 10, re-joining his unit on the 23rd; and then on October 6, to be re-united with 1st Battalion on or about October 23. On both occasions Private Haliday was seeking medical attention to counter conjunctivitis.

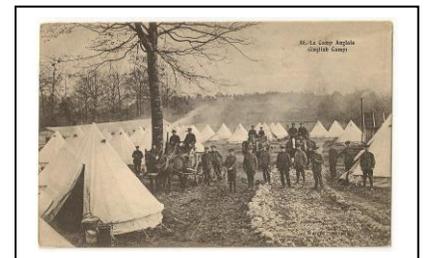
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Only four days after its return to France on October 8, 1st Battalion had been ordered to pass to the offensive, on this occasion on the outskirts of the ruined village of Gueudecourt perhaps a dozen kilometres or so to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. Here, on October 12 – and during a heavy enemy bombardment of the previous evening – the Newfoundlanders again lost heavily – two-hundred thirty-nine casualties in all during those two days - with little reward for the sacrifice.



(Right above: *the fields across which the Battalion advanced on October 12, towards the copse of trees on the far right horizon; they are where the Gueudecourt Caribou today stands - photograph from 2009.*)

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 behind the lines and close to the city of Amiens.



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

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



(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 a village called Monchy-le-Preux.



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

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 John Haliday and Rachael Haliday – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of fifty cents from his pay - of Britannia Cove – today Britannia - Trinity Bay - his own place of residence being recorded as Smith's Sound - he was reported as *missing in action* in the fighting at Monchy-le-Preux on April 14, 1917, during the *Battle of Arras*. On November 17, 1917, some thirty weeks later, he was officially *presumed dead*.



However, at some time before or during the month of August of 1923, the body of Private Haliday was found, was identified, and was subsequently transferred to the British cemetery of Bailleul Road East, close to St-Laurent-Blangy, where he lies today. This burial place is to be found perhaps twenty-kilometres distant from where the body was discovered but, apparently, by 1923, all the other cemeteries in the area had been closed to further interments. His record was thus amended so as to read *killed in action 14/4/17*.

Abel Haliday had enlisted at twenty-two years and two months of age.

(Previous page: *The Caribou at Monchy-le-Preux stands atop the remains of a German strongpoint in the centre of the re-constructed village.* – photograph from 2009(?))

(Right: *A family memorial stands in Britannia United Church Cemetery to the memory and sacrifice of Private Haliday – the name here spelled Halliday.* – photograph from 1914)

Private Abel Haliday was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



**Mrs Rachael Haliday
Smith's Sound
Britannia Cove, T B.**

Aug. 17th, 1923

Dear Madam

I am in receipt of a letter from the Director of Graves, Registration and Enquiries for Newfoundland forwarding an Identity Disc taken from the body of your late son 1885, Pte. A. Haliday, Royal Newfoundland Regiment.

The body is reported to have been found at approx. 51 b. O. 1. C. 35. 30 near the village of Monchy-le-Preux and exhumed to Bailleul East British Cemetery, St. Laurent-Blagny about 21/2 miles N.E. from Arras, Plot 3, Row 'G', Grave 17. A photograph of the grave will be forwarded in due course.

Trusting that the above information and contents will give you some solace in your renewed bereavement, believe me to be, dear madam,

Your obedient servant

xxxxxxx Lieut.*

Officer i/c Records

**No signature is available as this is a copy of the original.*