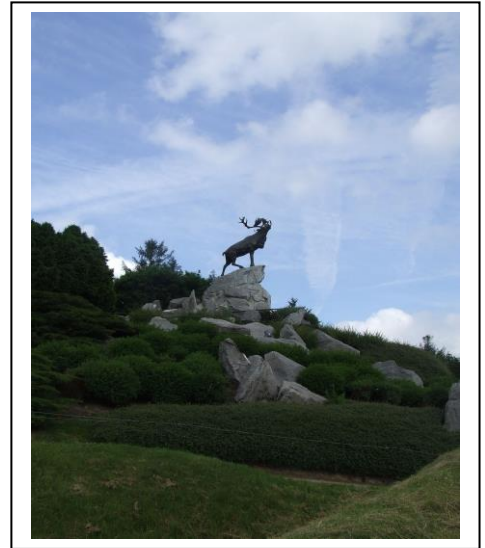




Private James Hall (Regimental Number 1935), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a labourer, James Hall was a recruit of the Seventh Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on October 22, 1915, then enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on that same day. He attested on the following day again, the 23rd.



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

Private Hall was one of the one hundred men who comprised the first contingent – a number which apparently included his brother William - of 'H' Company to travel overseas. The draft left St. John's by train for Port aux Basques on December 18, crossing the island and then the Gulf of St. Lawrence en route to Saint John, New Brunswick.



The Atlantic voyage was effected from there on His Majesty's Transport *Corinthian* (above) and the draft reached the Regimental Depot at Ayr on January 4 of the New Year, 1916.

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 – although it would seem that Private Hall was not one of those affected.

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 there – 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.

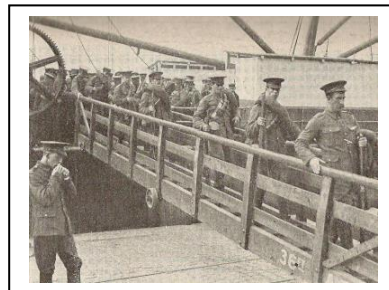


(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on-Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot that, on June 19, a mere six days before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Hall 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 June 25, the 7th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, Private Hall among its ranks, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the morrow, the 26th, 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.*

This meeting was effected on July 11 (recorded elsewhere as the 12th) while the parent unit was just behind the line, being quartered in huts in the remnants of the village of Mailly-Maillet. It was here that Private Hall and a further one-hundred twenty-six *other ranks* of a re-enforcement contingent from Rouen reported *to duty*.

Even with this additional man-power, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1st Battalion still numbered only *11 officers and 260 rifles* after the disaster of Beaumont-Hamel, a quarter of regulation battalion strength.

(Right: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John's East. – photograph from 2009*)

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1st Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after re-enforcement – moved north and entered into Belgium for the first time.



(continued)

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 fatalities.



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*)



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.



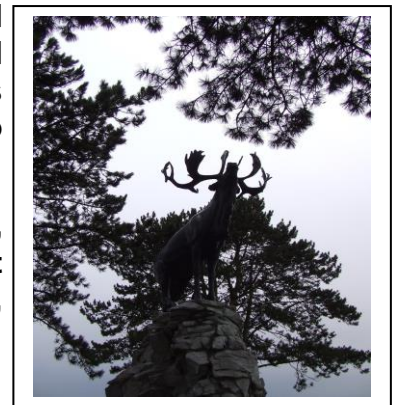
(Right above: *This is the ground over which 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007*)

The son of Michael Hall, farmer, and Mary Hall – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of fifty cents from his pay - of Old Broad Cove Road in St. John's East – Old Portugal Cove Road is also cited - he was also brother to William*, to Edward, to two sisters both deceased by 1919, and, most likely, to Patrick.

Private Hall was reported as *missing in action* on October 12, 1916, while serving with 'D' Company in the fighting at Gueudecourt. Some thirty weeks later, on or about May 3 of 1917, he was officially *presumed dead*.

James Hall had enlisted at the age of twenty-two years.

(continued)



****His brother William (Private, Regimental Number 1949) later died of wounds on October 27, 1918, in Bethnal Green Military Hospital, London. He is interred in Brookwood Military Cemetery in the English county of Surrey.***

(Previous page: The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of advance by 1st Battalion on October 12, 1916 – photograph from 2012)

Private James Hall was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

