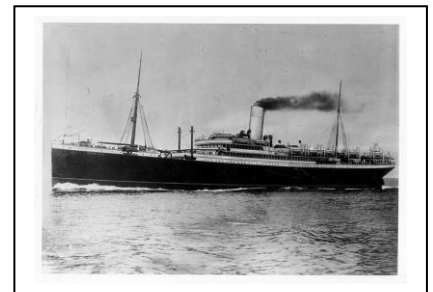
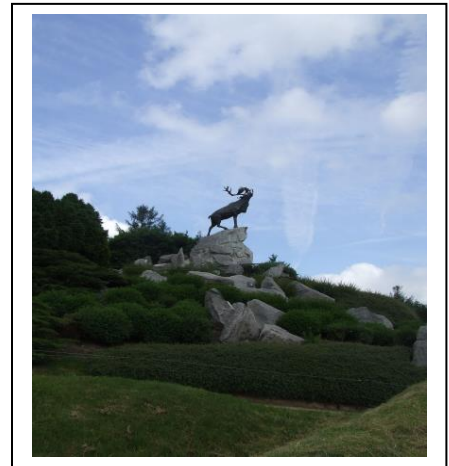




Private Albert Hancock (Regimental Number 1853), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Albert Hancock was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. He both enlisted - at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 - and attested at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on September 28, 1915.

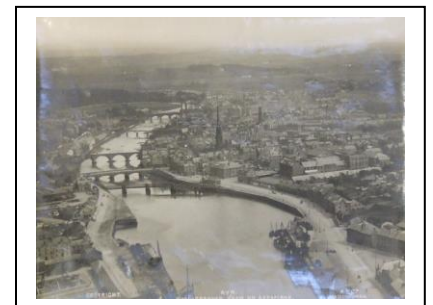
Private Hancock and the other personnel of 'G' Company - apparently in the company of several naval reservists and also some German prisoners (these latter presumably to remain in Canada) - left St. John's by train on October 27, to cross the island to Port aux Basques. The contingent then traversed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



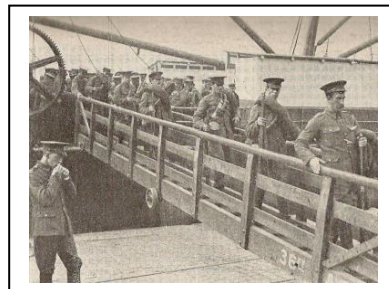
(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr - probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. - courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

(continued)

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 Hancock 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 Hancock 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 Hancock 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 re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel of July 1. *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*)

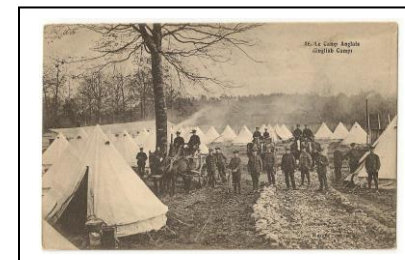


Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1st Battalion went again to the offensive at a place called Gueudecourt, some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. It proved to be another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.



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

(continued)

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

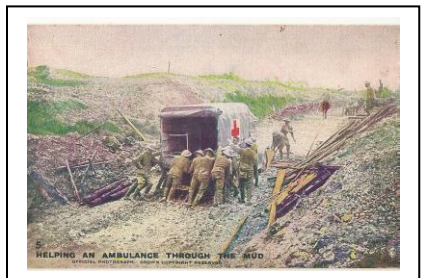


(Right above: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time. - photograph from 2009(?)*)

(Right: *A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers stands in the cold of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel apparently enjoying a cigarette, during the late winter of 1916-1917, just prior to the arrival there of the Newfoundlanders who relieved them. – from Illustration*)

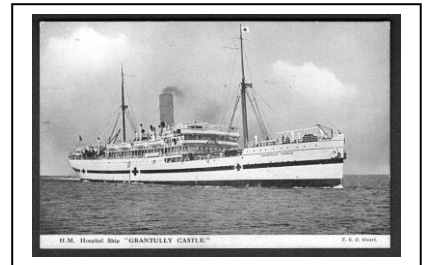


It was at Sailly-Saillisel that Private Hancock was wounded on March 2 when *all our trenches were subjected to a heavy and accurate bombardment during the day particularly B Company in PALZ TRENCH in the afternoon* (Regimental War Diary).



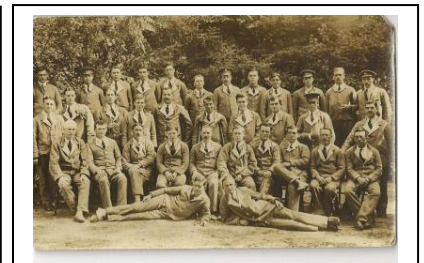
(Right above: *transferring wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and manpower – from a vintage post-card*)

Suffering injuries to both legs and thighs – although there were apparently no fractures - Private Hancock was evacuated on that same day to the 2/2 London (55th) Casualty Clearing Station at Grovetown, Meaulté. From there he was transferred to the 9th General Hospital in Rouen on an unspecified date, before being embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Grantully Castle* (right) on March 6 for the short crossing back to the United Kingdom.



Upon arrival on March 7 in England, Private Hancock was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth (right), where he was to remain for three months. On June 6 he was transferred to the Holborn Military Hospital in Mitcham, Surrey, this most likely a convalescent home, before being discharged on or about August 18.

(Right: *The main building of what became 3rd London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1st, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)



(Preceding page far right: *Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing at the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth* – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

The customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital in the United Kingdom was granted to Private Hancock from August 18 to 27. This was followed immediately by the almost-inevitable posting to the Regimental Depot, at the time provisionally *Barry Camp* in Forfarshire, to which he apparently finally reported *to duty* on August 29. He was to spend the next three months there, and then at Ayr once more, as a soldier of the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.



(Right above: *the High Street in Ayr, dominated then as it still is today by the imposing Wallace Tower, as shown on a postcard of the time sent home by a Newfoundland soldier* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo)

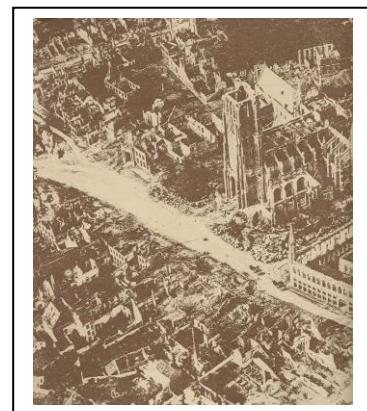
**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of Dundee. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.*

On December 5 the 35th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Hancock one of its number – passed through the ports of Southampton and Rouen – those final days of training having been spent there - in quest of 1st Battalion. A detachment of fourteen *other ranks* from Rouen found the parent unit a week later, on the 12th, in the community of Humbercourt to which it had temporarily retired after the sacrifices of the *Battle of Cambrai*.

They also found snow, there being more than sufficient during that period to make the Newfoundlanders feel at home.

At the beginning of January of 1918, after that snowy Christmas period spent to the south-west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had returned to Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time. There, like the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences.

(Right: *an aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916* – from *Illustration*)



In the meantime, the Germans had been preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking man-power after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them. It was expected that they would launch a spring offensive. While they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders dug.

On March 7, 1st Battalion moved up to the line again, not far from the ruins of Passchendaele, relieving units of the Royal Berkshires and the Rifle Brigade. Their work was to be defensive, strengthening positions and carrying supplies, all the time subjected to enemy artillery fire. In their turn, on the 14th, the Newfoundlanders were relieved by the Lancashire Fusiliers.



In his summary entered on that day, the Regimental War Diarist wrote of the... *Total casualties during tour in line:- Killed in Action = 1 Officer 11 Other Ranks; Missing B'ld K. = 1 Other Rank; Wounded = 54 do. (ditto)*

(Right above: countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) where the Newfoundlanders were stationed on March 10 of 1918 – photograph from 2011)

The son of William Hancock, fisherman-farmer from Brooklyn, Bonavista Bay, and Bessie Hancock – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay - of St. Anthony, he was also brother to Arthur, Bessie, Bertha, Edward-Gordon and Charles. Private Hancock was reported as having been *killed in action* while serving with 'B' Company on March 10, 1918.

Albert Hancock had enlisted at eighteen years and three months of age.

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

