



Sergeant Francis (*Frank*) J. Hannon (Regimental Number 2184), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in the Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a paper-maker at the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company in Grand Falls, Frank Hannon was a recruit of the Ninth Draft.

Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade armoury in St. John's on February 21, 1916, he then enlisted - *for the duration of the war* and at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on February 29 – 1916 was a leap-year – before attesting on that same day.

By the time he left Newfoundland, Private Hannon had already received two promotions: to the rank of lance corporal on May 9; and to that of acting sergeant a month later, on June 9. Whether he became Corporal Hannon in the interim seems not to be recorded.

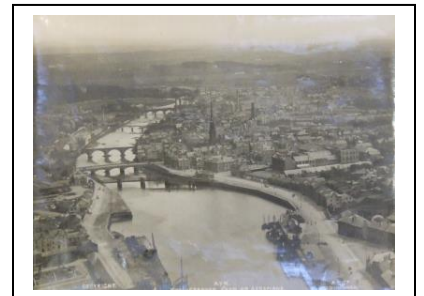
Sergeant Hannon sailed from St. John's for overseas service on July 19 on board His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian** (right). The ship - refitted some ten years previously to carry well over one thousand passengers - had left the Canadian port of Montreal on July 16, carrying Canadian military personnel.



It is likely that the troops disembarked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool; however, it is *certain* that upon disembarkation the contingent journeyed north by train to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot.

**Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport during another conflict, carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

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 the 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.



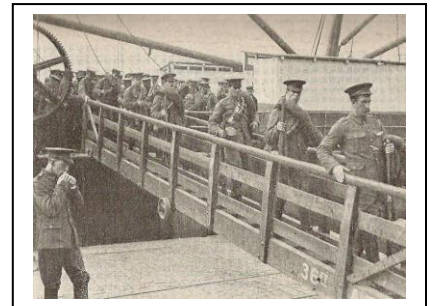
(Previous page: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been billeted at Newton Park School and either in the grandstand or in a tented camp at the racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr.



(Right above: *the new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photo from 2012*)

The 11th Re-enforcement Draft – Sergeant Hannon one of its non-commissioned officers - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on October 3 of 1916 on its way to the Continent and to the Western Front. It disembarked in the Norman capital of Rouen on the next day, October 4, and spent time at the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot located there, in final training and organization*, before making its way to a 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, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

It was a large detachment of two-hundred sixty-six *other ranks* – a number which included Sergeant Hannon - that reported from Rouen to the 1st Battalion transport lines on October 12. This was also the day on which 1st Battalion made its attack on the enemy positions at Gueudecourt, again sustaining heavy casualties – some two-hundred thirty-nine all told - and gaining little in return.

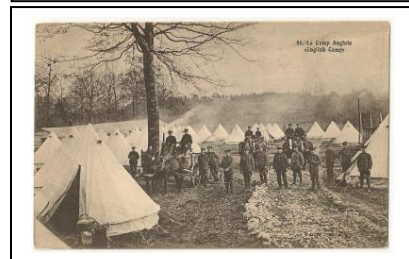
Thus it was that the new-comers remained behind the lines until the 14th, two days later, when they were moved up to *Switch Trench* and parcelled out to the Battalion's four depleted fighting companies. Consequently, the date of their arrival is often recorded not as October 12 but as October 14.

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(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. This is also the area of the positions into which the re-enforcements of October 12-14 were posted. – photograph from 2007)



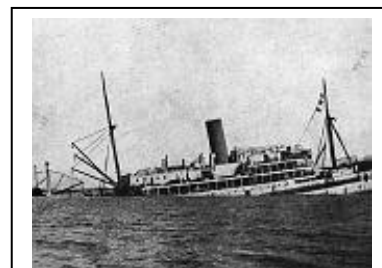
After the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1st Battalion had continued its watch in and out of the trenches of the Somme – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter. This was a period to be broken only by the several weeks – as of December 11-12 - spent in Corps Reserve during the Christmas period.



The Newfoundlanders were withdrawn well behind the lines during that time and encamped 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)

During this period, on December 29, Sergeant Hannon was admitted into the 88th Field Ambulance, from there to the 88th Brigade Rest Station, then forwarded to the New Zealand Stationary Hospital at Amiens – according to the documents, all on the same day - with a sprained ankle. Twelve days later he was placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Glenark Castle* for the crossing back to the United Kingdom, on January 10.



(Right above: Hospital ships were not always inviolate: *Glenark Castle* was torpedoed in 1917. – from the *Old Ships Photos* site)

Having arrived in England, Sergeant Hannon was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth on the 11th, his sprained ankle by now having been diagnosed as involving a fractured left tibia as well.

(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)



(Above far right: Newfoundland patients convalescing at 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

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Treatment and convalescence followed for more than six weeks before Sergeant Hannon was released from Wandsworth and granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon discharge from medical care in the United Kingdom, a period of leave beginning on or about March 19. This was inevitably followed by a posting to the Regimental Depot in Scotland, where he reported *to duty* on March 28.



(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*)

Just prior to his re-joining 1st Battalion in France, confirmation was received – on June 1 – of his status as sergeant, this only two days before he left Ayr as a non-commissioned officer of the 24th Re-enforcement Draft. There seems to be some discrepancy in the records as to whether this contingent passed through Southampton and Rouen, or through Folkestone and then Boulogne – or even Folkestone and then Rouen – with the likelihood being Folkestone then Boulogne.



(Right above: *the French port of Boulogne at or about the period of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

In any case, the majority of the draft kept its rendezvous, after the compulsory time spent in final preparation at the Base Depot in Rouen - with the parent unit on June 19 when a detachment of one-hundred eighteen *other ranks* from Rouen reported *to duty* in the community of Bonneville.

In the meantime, after the ordeals of the month of April at and close to Monchy-le-Preux, May of 1917 had been a period when the Newfoundlanders were moved 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.

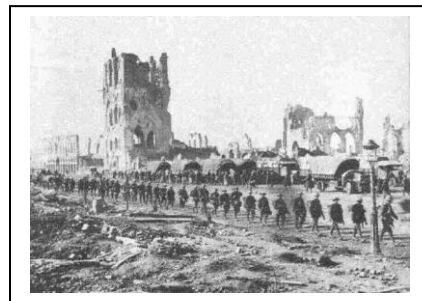


(Right above: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville in early May of 1917 – from *The War Illustrated**)

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

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The Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of Ypres. This had been selected by the High Command to be 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 *Broembeek* on October 9.



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

The son of Patrick Hannon* and Bridget Hannon (née *O'Donnell*, later married to Patrick Gorman/ O'Gorman in September of 1900, he deceased by December, 1917) – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of fifty-five cents from his pay and to whom he had willed his all - of Harbour Main, he also had two brothers and two sister (see below).



Sergeant Hannon was reported as having been *killed in action* on October 9, 1917, while serving with 'B' Company during the fighting at the *Broembeek*, Belgium.

Frank Hannon had enlisted at twenty-three years and five months of age – birthdate, September 17, 1892.

(Right above: *A placid stream pictured here, in the autumn of 1917 the Broembeek was a torrent overflowing its banks in October of 1917 and transforming the surrounds into a quagmire. – photograph from 2009*)

**The only marriage of a Bridget O'Donnell in the parish records is the one of 1881 to Patrick Harman. There is also the record of a deceased Patrick Harman in May of 1894 – after 1892 no more children were born to Bridget. Patrick David, John Anthony, Mary Theresa, Bridget and Francis J. are registered as being offspring of Patrick Hannon and Bridget O'Donnell. Might Patrick Hannon and Patrick Harman have been the same person?*

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Sergeant Francis J. Hannon was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

