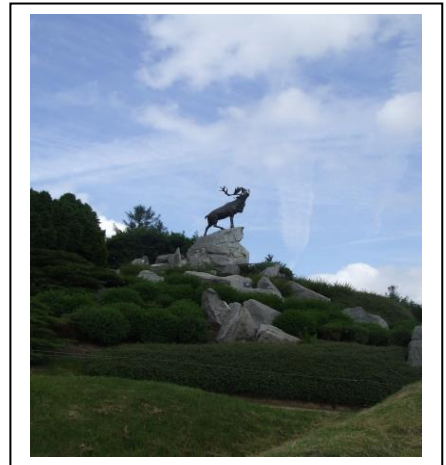




Private Edward Hickey (Regimental Number 1920), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a Fisherman, Edward Hickey was a recruit of the Seventh Draft. He enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on October 11, 1915, before presenting himself for medical examination three days later, on the 14th, and attesting on the 16th, two days later again.



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

Private Hickey was one of the one hundred men who comprised the first contingent 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* (right) 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.

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 sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



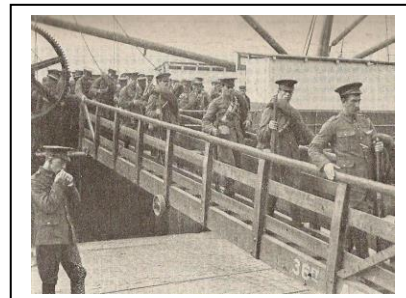
(Right above: an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on-Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)

It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot that, on May 24, some three weeks before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Hickey was prevailed upon to re-enlist *for the duration of the War*^{*}.

(continued)

**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.*

The 6th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Hickey among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to the Continent on June 14, 1916. It arrived in the Norman capital of Rouen on the following day, June 15, whereupon the contingent was received into the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, there to continue final training* and to organize before moving onwards towards the front and 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.*

A draft of sixty-six men from Rouen – Private Hickey one of that number - most having travelled from Ayr with the 6th Re-enforcement Draft, arrived to join the parent unit at Louvencourt on June 30. At 9:15 that evening, most of 1st Battalion marched from there to its assigned *forming-up place trenches i.e. rear line of trenches in our usual sector* (Regimental War Diary). On the next morning they were to go over the top at Beaumont-Hamel.

Private Hickey was not to figure in that number, however, having been hospitalized almost immediately upon arrival in France. Admitted to the 12th General Hospital in Rouen on June 16, he remained there only a day before being transferred to the 9th Stationary Hospital, also in Rouen, whence he was discharged to the Base Depot on either the 27th or 29th of that same month.

It was on July 11 (recorded elsewhere as the 12th), while the parent unit was just behind the line, quartered in huts in the village of Mailly-Maillet that Private Hickey joined 1st Battalion. He reported for duty as one of the one-hundred twenty-six *other ranks*, mostly men of the 7th Re-enforcement Draft, the next detachment to arrive from the United Kingdom. It was, of course, only eleven days since the events of the first day of *the Somme* and Beaumont-Hamel, and even with this addition, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1st Battalion still numbered only *11 officers and 260 rifles* – just one-quarter of regulation battalion strength.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The re-constructed village of Maily-Maillet – its Monument aux Morts (War Memorial) 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 reinforcement - 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 proved to be 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*)



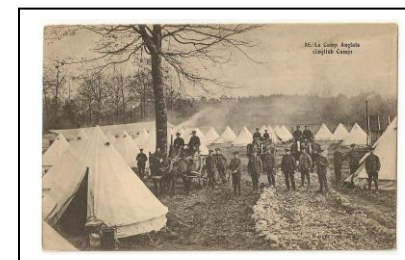
(Right: *the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card*)

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 and interrupted just prior to that, on November 22, for Private *Hickey* by his admission into the 14th *Corps Rest Station* for medical attention to a case of *red-eye*.



He was discharged back to duty with 1st Battalion on the 28th, six days later, in plenty of time to prepare for the upcoming Christmas respite – and Christmas dinner.

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

On January 16 of the New Year, 1917, while still posted to *Corps Reserve*, Private Hickey was admitted into the 36th Casualty Clearing Station at Heilly and diagnosed as suffering from *gastroptosis* – the stomach out of its normal position in the abdomen - before being transferred to the 10th General Hospital at Rouen on the 18th. The complaint was by then simply PUO (*Pain of Unknown Origin*). He was discharged to Base Depot on January 31 and then *to duty in the field* with 1st Battalion on February 24 at a time when the Newfoundlanders had moved forward into the intermediate trenches near Bronfay. On the 28th of February, they were back in front-line positions at Sailly-Saillisel.

In the meantime, 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.

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 – and just after Private Hickey's return to the unit - 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 of 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.



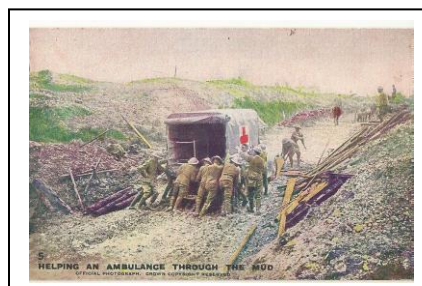
(Right above: *the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

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*)

It was during that first assault of April 14 that Private Hickey was wounded. He was taken to the 87th Field Ambulance on that same day suffering from injuries to his left leg inflicted by gun-fire and then to an unspecified casualty clearing station.



(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*)

By the following evening, the 15th, Private Hickey had apparently been transferred through the 6th Stationary Hospital at Frévent, taken by ambulance train, and was a patient in the 18th General Hospital at Camiers. By April 18 he was (probably) in the 7th Canadian General Hospital at Étaples.



(Right: *the railway station at Dannes-Camiers through which thousands of sick, wounded and convalescent military personnel passed during the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

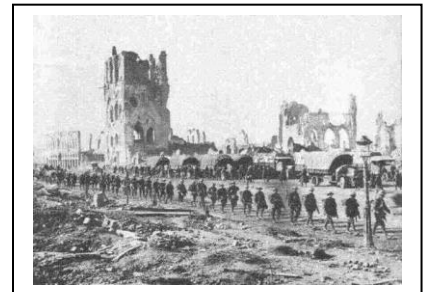
Apparently his injury was none too serious, for Private Hickey was soon being forwarded from the 6th Convalescent Depot to the 5th CD at Cayeux – on April 22 – to Base Depot on May 25 and back to duty with 1st Battalion on June 14. He was one of a small draft of three officers and three other ranks to arrive at Bonneville on that day.

May of 1917 had been a period when the Newfoundlanders were 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. At the beginning of June, 1st Battalion retired from the line to Bonneville – there to be re-joined by Private Hickey - 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.



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

The Newfoundlanders 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 *Broembeek* on October 9.



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

A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*. They were ordered back south from Belgium into northern France on October 17 to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small rural community some dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras.

The so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

(continued)

The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1st Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



(Above right: *the Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas (*of Richard*) Hickey (the father deceased after July of 1918 but by the middle of 1922), former fisherman – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of forty cents from his pay - of Barren Island (later becoming *Bar Haven*) in the District of Placentia, he was also brother to Richard.

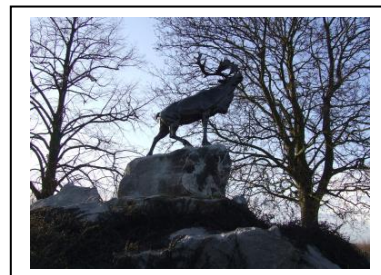
Private Hickey was at first reported as *missing in action* on December 3, 1917, during the fighting retreat of the last days of the *Battle of Cambrai*, close to the French villages of Masnières and Marcoing.

However, a subsequent official German burial list forwarded through the Geneva Red Cross Graves Society on March 14 of 1918, affirmed that Private Hickey had been *killed in action or died of wounds on or about 3/12/17* and buried by the Germans in the cemetery at Seranvilles, close to Cambrai. His record was therefore amended to read as such.

Apparently the grave of Private Hickey was destroyed in later fighting or its whereabouts forgotten.

Edward Hickey had enlisted at the age of twenty years.

(Right: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of 1st Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012*)



On December 2 I saw 1920 Pte E Hickey lying dead on road near strongpoint near the village of Masnières and took bag back which I gave to Lt Langmead I believe Hickey was killed on November 29/1917 - #2385 Gillis (17/1/18)

(continued)

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

