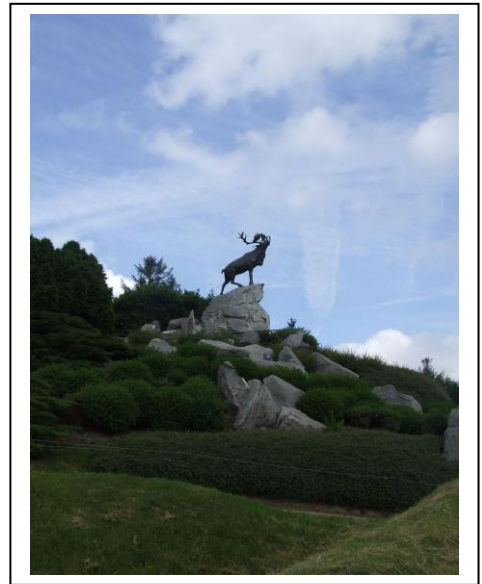




Private Alfred Scott Hiscock (Regimental Number 3447), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of an engineer working for the *Baine Johnson Company* and earning a monthly \$40.00, Alfred Scott Hiscock was a recruit of the Eleventh Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on January 23 of 1917, he also enlisted – *for the duration of the war* and at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and attested on that same day.



Private Hiscock was one of the contingent of one-hundred four *other ranks* to leave St. John's on March 17, St. Patrick's Day of 1917, for the journey to Halifax. The means of their departure, however, is not clear: in one source, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, the claim is that it was on board the Bowring Brothers vessel *Florizel*; the files of the soldiers themselves record that it was... *Embarked S.S. Train to Halifax 17/3/17...* presumably via Port-aux Basques and thence by ferry and train again to Halifax. Other sources have not proved helpful.

It was from Halifax that the detachment made its trans-Atlantic crossing in the company of Canadian troops on board His Majesty's Transport *Missanabie* (right), sailing from Nova Scotia on March 28. Thus this draft was to reach the United Kingdom two weeks or so before the ill-fated *Windsor Draft** which had left Newfoundland at the end of January, some ten weeks earlier.



**This was the name given to the draft of about three-hundred twenty all ranks which had left St. John's on January 31, 1917, en route to Halifax from where they were to sail to the United Kingdom. This contingent would eventually make that voyage, but about thirteen weeks later than envisaged. They were quarantined at Windsor as the result of a measles and mumps epidemic that claimed two of their number – and maybe a later third. In the meantime, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion at Ayr was running low on man-power.*

Missanabie having docked in Liverpool on April 6, the Newfoundland contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence to serve as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for two years.

(continued)

It was from Ayr – since November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from Newfoundland were to be despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



By the time that the Windsor Draft arrived at the Regimental Depot, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion was becoming critically short of personnel.

(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*)

On June 11, the 25th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Hiscock among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to the Continent. The detachment disembarked in Rouen on the following day, the 12th, and made its way to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot there for a few days of final training and organization* before proceeding on its way to a rendezvous with 1st Battalion.



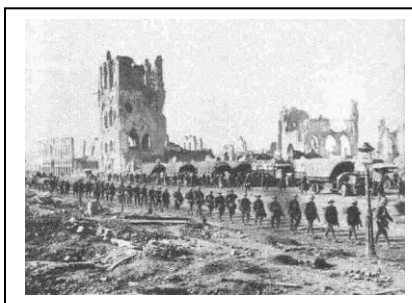
(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

**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, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

The records show that it was on July 2 – the *Regimental War Diary* says, in fact, on the day before - that Private Hiscock's contingent of two-hundred fifty *other ranks* reported to duty at Caribou Camp, behind the lines near Woesten in Belgium. For the next few days – and nights – 1st Battalion supplied working parties for road-mending and for the construction of infantry tracks. For that purpose, several of the Newfoundlanders were attached temporarily until July 20 to the 173rd Company of the Royal Engineers.

Only days before, at the end of June, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had once again moved north into Belgium 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*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



(continued)

(Page preceding: *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 was to remain 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 a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras – some personnel even having been granted at the time a ten-day furlough back to the United Kingdom.

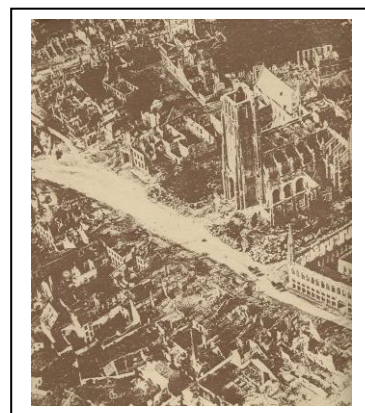
The so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

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*)

At the close of the *Battle of Cambrai* at the beginning of December of 1917, 1st Battalion – once again badly under-strength due to the heavy casualties incurred – had been withdrawn from the area of the front lines to re-enforce and to re-organize. The following weeks had been spent at first to the south-west of the city of Arras, at Humbercourt and then at some distance to the north-west, at Fressin.



The weather obliged and even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow, a bit too much at times apparently.

(continued)

At the beginning of January of 1918, and after that snowy Christmas period spent to the west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had been ordered into 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 above: *an aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916 – from Illustration*)

Meanwhile, while the Allies built their defences, by the beginning of 1918 the Germans were 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 the Germans would launch a spring offensive. While they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders continued to dig.

(Above right: *countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were stationed in March and early April of 1918 – photograph from 2011*)

From March 7 to 14, the *Regimental War Diary* reports 1st Battalion as being *in the line* to the north-east of Ypres. On the 11th enemy activity was presumably heavier than usual as there is an entry: “C” Coy. *heavily bombarded during raid on our right, casualties slight.*

But *slight* or not, there were always *dead* and *wounded* as the Diary reveals on the 14th after 1st Battalion’s relief by the Lancashier Fusiliers: *Total casualties during tour in line:- Killed in action = 1 Officer, 11 Other Ranks, Missing, B’ld Killed = 1 Other Rank, Wounded = 54 do.*

Private Hiscock was one of that number.

The son of James Hiscock, sailor, and Harriet Ann Hiscock (née *Waterman*) – his family from Fogo - and also husband* of Hilda Hiscock (later address by 1921 *Springfield Massachusetts, U.S.A.*; she later again *Slater(?)*) – to whom he had allocated a daily eighty cents from his pay – the young family living on Fleming Street, St. John's, he was also father to young Harley(?), born June 15, 1916(?). He, Alfred Hiscock, likewise had siblings, at least the following: Myrtle-Louise, Walter-Waterman and Cecil-George.



Private Hiscock was reported as having been *killed in action* while serving with ‘B’ Company on March 14, 1918.

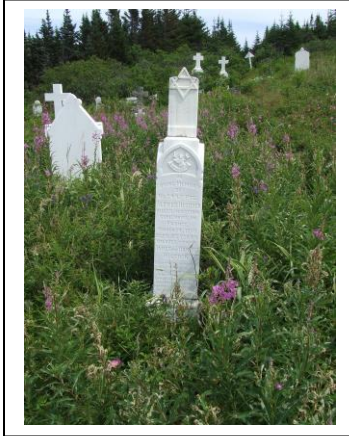
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Alfred Scott Hiscock had enlisted at the declared age of twenty-three years and four(?) months: date of birth *March 14, 1893*, according to parish records.

**They had been married on or about June 12, 1916.*

(Previous page: *Oxford Road Cemetery is adjacent to the community of Wieltje, where 1st Battalion de-trained en route to the posting of March 7. The spires of Ypres may be perceived on the western horizon. – photograph from 2013*)

(*The sacrifice of Private Hiscock is today commemorated on the Roll of Honour in St. Andrew's Church (right above), on the Fogo Town War Memorial (far right), and also by a family memorial in the Anglican Cemetery. – photographs from 2013*)



Private Alfred Scott Hiscock was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

