



Private Patrick Holden (Regimental Number 555) is entombed in Santa Marija Cimiterju (Addolorata): Grave reference, E. EA. E. 685..

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *sailor* working for a monthly wage of twenty-five dollars, Patrick Holden was a volunteer of the First Recruitment Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on September 15, 1914. It was a procedure which would find...*Fit for Foreign Service*.**

****The building was to serve as the Regimental Headquarters in Newfoundland for the duration of the conflict.***

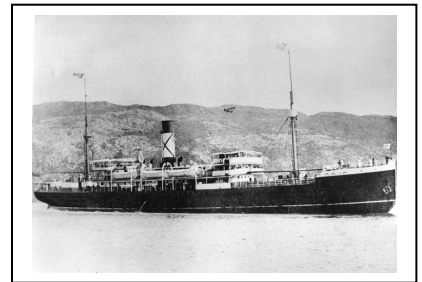
It was to be on the day following that medical assessment, September 16, and at the same venue, that Patrick Holden was now to be enlisted. He was engaged...*for the duration of the war**...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

**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. Later recruits – as of or about May of 1916 - signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.*

Some two further weeks were then to go by before there came to pass, once more at the **CLB Armoury** on Harvey Road, the final formality of enlistment: attestation. On the third day of that October he and a goodly number of fellow recruits pledged their allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon at that moment Patrick Holden and his comrades-in-arms officially entered the service of the King.

(Right: The image of '*Florizel*' at anchor in the harbour at St. John's is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.)

Later in the day of that October 3, the Newfoundland contingent – it was not as yet a battalion – of 'A' and 'B' Companies was to parade through the city, to the waterfront. There it embarked onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* which was awaiting in the harbour.



These first soldiers of the Newfoundland Regiment to depart for *overseas service*, the *First Five Hundred* – also to be known to history as the *Blue Puttees* – were now to sit on board ship for the best part of a day as it was not to be until the morrow that *Florizel* would sail to the south coast of the Island and to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the Canadian Division to the United Kingdom.

(Right below: Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011)

In the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915: firstly in southern England on the Salisbury Plain; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; and lastly at Edinburgh Castle where the unit was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.



Some three months later, on May 11, and some seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundland unit – by now 'A' and 'B' Companies re-enforced by 'C', 'D', and 'E' - was ordered moved from the Scottish capital to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

(Right: *The venerable Edinburgh Castle dominates the city from its position on the summit of Castle Hill. – photograph from 2011*)



It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent received the re-enforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength*. The now-formed 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered ready to be ordered on ‘active service’.

**The number was about fifteen hundred, sufficient to provide four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*



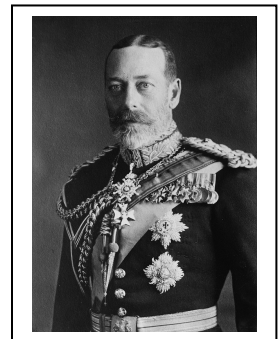
(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches past on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ – Private Holden among their ranks - were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot.

This force, now designated as the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

Meanwhile the two junior companies, the later-arrived ‘E’ and the aforementioned last-arrived ‘F’, were ordered transferred to Scotland’s west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the first re-enforcement to eventually be despatched to the aforementioned 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.

(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – the photograph is from Bain News Services via the Wikipedia web-site.*)



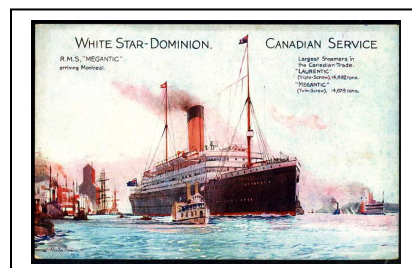
It was also during this period while at Aldershot that on August 13 Private Holden was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion for the *duration of the war**.

(Right: *Some of the personnel of ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, prior to its departure to active service on the Gallipoli Peninsula – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)*



(continued)

While 'E' and 'F' Companies were beginning their posting to the Regimental Depot at Ayr, on August 20 of 1915 the 1st Battalion embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Plymouth-Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks.



(Right adjacent: *The image of Megantic, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1st Battalion was to land at Suvla Bay on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right: *Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph taken in 2011*)

(Right: *Newfoundland troops seen on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros: either Megantic on August 29, Ausonia on September 18, or Prince Abbas on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli – Dardanelles to the French, Çanakkale to the Turks. – from Provincial Archives*)



(Right: *A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1st Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011*)



When the Newfoundlanders landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* on that September night of 1915 they would disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, had proved to be little more than a debacle:

Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and those of t their allies,

the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

(Right: *No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives*)

(Right: *This is Anzac Bay in the fore-ground with the Salt Lake in the centre further away. The bottom of Suvla Bay is just to be seen on the left and adjacent to the Salt Lake, and further away again. The hills in the distance and the ones from which this photograph was taken were held by the Turks and formed a horse-shoe around the plain surrounding the Salt Lake - which was where the British and Newfoundlanders were stationed. – photograph from 2011*)



(Right below: *An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives*)

**Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*



November 26 would see the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at *Gallipoli*; a freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm was to strike the *Suvla Bay* area and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival rather than the enemy had been the priority.

There were to be many casualties on both sides, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, had been those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite...although Private Holden was not to be one of that number.



But two weeks and two days later, he too would become a casualty of *Suvla Bay*.

On Sunday, December 12, while serving with 'B' Company in the forward area and a day on which the Turks heavily bombarded the Newfoundland positions, using new heavy guns for the first time, Private Holden was wounded in the head and evacuated immediately from the front, likely to the 24th Casualty Clearing Station – itself close to *the Front*.



(Right above: *At Suvla Bay, Turkish artillery still stands on guard to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

On the following day - having been evacuated from the *Gallipoli Peninsula* to the 26th Casualty Clearing Station on the Greek island of Lemnos - he was embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Gloucester Castle* on or about the 15th day of the month. It was while on board this vessel that his condition worsened and he was considered as being...*dangerously ill*...on December 21. (A second source has the hospital ship as having been '*Hunslet*'.)

(Right: The image of '*Gloucester Castle*' clad in her war-time hospital-ship garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Completed in 1911 for the Union-Castle Line, the vessel was requisitioned by the British in September of 1914 and converted to serve as a hospital ship with a capacity for four-hundred ten sick and wounded. '*Gloucester Castle*' was torpedoed on March 30 while carrying three-hundred ninety-nine casualties but she refused to sink and was eventually towed into port for repairs with a loss of 'only' four lives.



She served during much of the twenty-year period after the Great War. In the Second World War she was used commercially until July of 1942 when she was sunk by a German raider. On this occasion ninety-three lives were lost.)

The hospital ship carried Private Holden to the British-held Mediterranean island of Malta. The place had by that time become an important medical centre – it was to remain so for the remainder of the War - and it was there that he was admitted for further treatment, into Valetta Military Hospital in the capital city, on December 22.

(Right below: One of the many former British Royal Navy medical facilities which still stand on Malta, the buildings mostly abandoned since the island's independence in 1964 – photograph from 2011)

The son of Joseph Holden (former labourer, deceased from pulmonary tuberculosis on December 10, 1911) and of Mary Alice Holden (née *Nugent**) – to whom he had allotted a weekly four dollars from his pay - of 446, New Road, Riverhead, (South Side Road) in St. John's, he was also brother to Peter and Richard (see further below) and to Mary-Maud – the last two of whom he documented as...*partial dependants*.



**The couple had married in St. John's on April 2, 1894.*

On December 26, Private Holden was again deemed to be...*dangerously ill*...and would be continuously so until the end.

(Right: The photograph of Private Holden is from the Provincial Archives.)



He was reported as having...*died of wounds*...a month later, on January 29, 1916 – a further source has the date being January 31. He shares his tombstone and grave with Sergeant J. Prunty of the Yorkshire Regiment and Private T. Hewson of the South Wales Borderers.

Patrick Holden had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen years: date of birth on the Southside, St. John's, Newfoundland, March 1, 1895 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

(Right: A family memorial which stands in Mount Carmel Cemetery in St. John's commemorates the sacrifice of Private Patrick Holden and that of his brother, Gunner Richard Holden*. – photograph from 2015)



**Gunner Richard Patrick Holden died on April 23 (The book 'More Fighting Newfoundlanders' cites April 22) of 1943 while serving with the 166th Field Artillery Regiment in North Africa during the Second World War.*

Private Patrick Holden was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 30, 2023.