



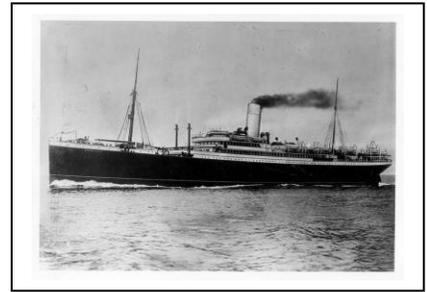
**Private Michael John Holland (Regimental Number 1634) lies in Y Ravine Cemetery – Grave reference D. 5.**

**Michael John Holland, his occupation prior to military service recorded as being that of a clerk, was a recruit of the Sixth 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 June 18 of 1915, before presenting himself for medical examination on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the following day. He then attested on July 12\*, some three weeks later again.**

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

**(continued)**

Private Holland 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.



There the Newfoundlanders boarded *His Majesty's Transport Corsican* (above) for the trans-Atlantic voyage to the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport where they arrived on November 9.

By the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> they had again travelled by train, to Scotland, and had been billeted in huts in a military camp at Gailes, not far removed from the Regimental Depot where accommodation for the new arrivals was as yet not available.

The 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 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 – that the newcomers were sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

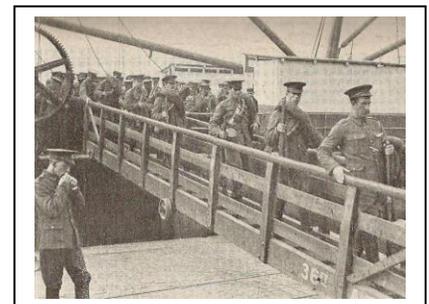


(Right: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot that, on May 24, and three weeks before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Holland 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.*

It was not until June 14, 1916, that the 6<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the following day, the 15<sup>th</sup>, it disembarked in Rouen. Capital city of Normandy any the site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot where the contingent spent time in final training and organizing\* before moving on to a rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



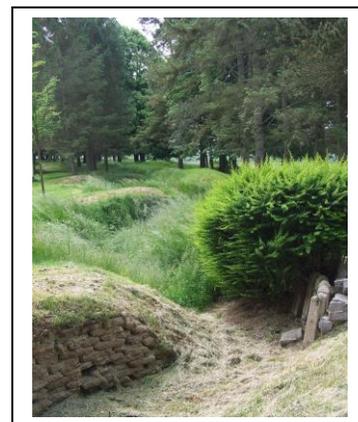
(continued)

(Preceding page: *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.*

A draft of sixty-six men from Rouen arrived to join the parent unit at Louvencourt on June 30. At 9:15 that same evening, most of the Newfoundlanders – minus the ten per cent reserve company but including many of the new-comers - marched from there to their assigned *forming-up place trenches i.e. rear line of trenches in our usual sector* (from the Regimental War Diary).

(Right: *Just inside the entrance to the Newfoundland Memorial Park is to be found the re-constituted forming-up trench from where 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion attacked on the morning of July 1. – photograph from 2010*)



Meanwhile, in the weeks preceding the arrival of Private Holland's detachment, the Newfoundlanders had been preparing for the upcoming British campaign of that summer. It was to be fought on the ground named for the meandering river that flowed – and today still flows - innocuously through the southern part of the region to which it lends its name, *the Somme*. Originally scheduled to begin on June 30, bad weather had decided the commanders to postpone the attack for twenty-four hours, until July 1.



(Right above: *the Somme as it still flows today between the town of Albert and the city of Amiens – photograph from 2009*)

The son of Richard Holland and Jane Holland of 37, Freshwater Road in St. John's, his place of birth King's Cove, Bonavista Bay, Private Holland\* was at first reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with 'B' Company during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. On December 31, 1916, six months afterwards, he was officially *presumed dead*.

However, a subsequent report submitted by the General Officer Commanding 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, reported his burial on or about July 21, 1917. The records were thus amended so as to read *killed in action*.



*\*He was apparently also on terms with Reverend Nangle (the Regimental Chaplain?) – address 'The Palace', St. John's – to whom, as of April, 1917, he allotted the sum of a daily allotment of seventy-five (later fifty) cents from his pay.*

Michael John Holland had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and ten months.

He shares a grave marker with a comrade-in-arms of the Newfoundland Regiment, Private William White, Regimental Number 345.

*(Previous page: Beaumont-Hamel - looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences - The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009)*



*(Right: a grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from ...)*

Private Michael John Holland was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

