

Lieutenant Robert Palfrey Holloway (referred to as *Bert*), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



Bert Holloway had been well-known as a professional *photographer* and partial *proprietor of Holloway Studios** in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, before applying for an Imperial Commission on or about Christmas Eve of 1915. He received it – appointed to the rank of second lieutenant - on January 11 of the New Year, 1916. On February 7 he then received an allowance of two-hundred fifty dollars towards the purchase of his kit – a luxury restricted to officers.

**It was at Holloway Studios that the photographs of the Regimental personnel, individuals and groups, were taken.*

Prior to this time, Robert Palfrey Holloway had apparently been a junior officer – but with only local authority - according to documentation showing him as having been posted *to duty* in the Newfoundland community of Harbour Deep on or about August 30, 1915. His Imperial Commission granted in early 1916 gave him licence to act as an officer on *Foreign Service*.



Also during this period he had been busy as a photographer: As a part of his heritage R.P. Holloway has left a series depicting the departure of 'D' Company on board the SS *Stephano* in St. John's Harbour in mid-March of 1915 on its way to Halifax where it was to board the SS *Orduna* for passage to the United Kingdom.

(Right above: *One of the above-mentioned series of 'D' Company on board Stephano which was taken by Robert Palfrey Holloway while working for Holloway Studios in St. John's – from Provincial Archives*)

It would appear that Second Lieutenant Holloway was to remain posted at St. John's until on or about July 20 of that summer of 1916: on March 31, 1916, he was in St. John's penning his last will and testament in front of witnesses; and there exist a number of receipts issued for monetary advances to him in St. John's during that period.

Then from August 28 until September 12 later that year he was apparently in Edinburgh, capital city of Scotland, as it was from there that he submitted a claim to the *Newfoundland Pay & Record Office* at Victoria Street in London for two pounds and ten shillings to cover his ration allowance for that period.

He may well have then returned to the Regimental Depot at Ayr for the next little while since it was then apparently to be from London that he would eventually leave the United Kingdom to join the British Expeditionary Force on the *Western Front* on October 28 of 1916. He arrived with a group of seven other officers and a draft of twenty-four *other ranks* to report to *duty* on November 7, while the 1st Battalion was billeted in Ville-sous-Corbie.



(Right above: *The centre of the city of Edinburgh as seen from the ramparts of the Castle where the Newfoundland Regiment was stationed during the late winter and spring of 1915 – photograph from 2011*)

**Officers who were eventually promoted from the ranks may be identified from their Regimental Number. Other officers who were not from the ranks received the King's Commission, or in the case of those in the Newfoundland Regiment, an Imperial Commission, and were not considered as enlisted. These officers thus had no Regimental Number allotted to them.*

And since officers did not enlist, they were not then required to re-enlist 'for the duration', even though, at the beginning, as a private, they had volunteered their services for only a limited time – twelve months.

The Regimental Depot had been established in the Royal Borough of Ayr on Scotland's west coast as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in the summer of 1915 some fourteen months previously and it was from there that re-enforcements were – as of November, 1915 up until January of 1918 – to be despatched to bolster the fighting Companies of the 1st Battalion, at first to the Middle East, and then later to the *Western Front*.



As seen above, it was likely from Ayr, after a wait of almost six weeks, that Second Lieutenant Holloway was ordered to *active service* in October of 1916.

(Right above: *An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on-Ayr, where the 'other ranks' were quartered, is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

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Two years before Second Lieutenant Holloway's arrival on the Western Front, and late in 1914, the original contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, comprising 'A' and 'B' Companies and known collectively to posterity as *The First Five Hundred*, after a short period of training in the vicinity of Quidi Vidi Lake in St. John's, had embarked on October 3, onto the SS *Florizel*, sister-ship of *Stephano*, in the harbour at St. John's.

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From there the vessel had sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island with the convoy transporting the 1st Canadian Division and other Canadian units to the United Kingdom.

The convoy had docked in the harbour and Royal Navy facility of Plymouth-Devonport on the south coast of England some ten days after having sailed. There several more days were to be necessary before all the force could eventually be landed, thence to be taken by train to camps on the Salisbury Plain.

Having then spent a month in filthy weather in training, 'A' and 'B' Companies of the Newfoundland Regiment had been transferred north, to Scotland, and near to the city of Inverness – likely best-known for its nearby loch and its legendary inhabitant – to Fort George where it was now to spend most of the impending winter. At least, so some of the Newfoundland soldiers were reported to have said, even if they were still cold, they were now indoors – on the Salisbury Plain they had survived in tents.



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

Then, as briefly seen above, the Newfoundlanders, in the month of February, were ordered to be posted to Edinburgh Castle where they were to provide the first garrison of the place to be drawn from forces from outside the British Isles. From there on May 11, and with the coming of more clement weather conditions, the contingent was transferred to the tented *Stobs Camp* near the Scottish town of Hawick - to the south-east of Edinburgh - where it was not only to train but to await the arrival of yet further re-enforcements from home.

(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment – still awaiting the arrival of 'F' Company - on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

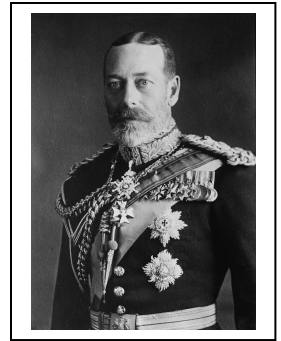


On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service.

The 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, comprising the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', were then sent south to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot; meanwhile the two junior Companies, the later-arrived 'E' and 'F', were sent to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to furnish the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

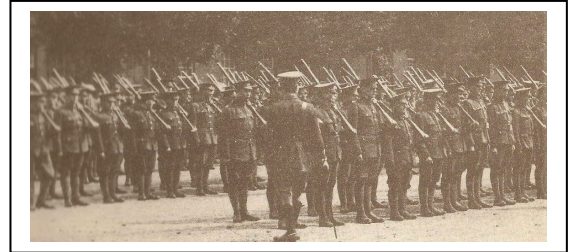
(Right: George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia)



It had then been during the period spent at Aldershot – on or about the 13th and 14th day of the month - that the majority of the 1st Battalion personnel was to be called 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.



(Right above: Some of the men of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915 – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)

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



On August 20, 1915, the four Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he disembarked with the 1st Battalion at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



(Right above: *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 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.* – by courtesy of the Provincial Archives)



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

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, would prove 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 the French.



Thus it would finally be decided by the same High Command to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

(Right below: An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from the 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 Bay, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

November 26 was to see a freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm 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 was to be 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, were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

Those officers and men of the Newfoundland Battalion not to be evacuated at that time in need of medical treatment, and having recovered from the wrath of nature which had struck *Gallipoli* on that November 25 and subsequently, were to remain stationed at *Suvla Bay* for only a further twenty-five days.

By that time they were to have served there for exactly three months to the day.

On the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Newfoundland Battalion personnel had been evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration; the 1st Battalion was to be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

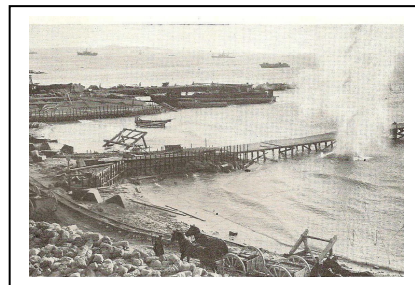
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(Right: Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached. The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011)



The British and the Anzac forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps were also to serve at *Gallipoli* – were now only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* was undertaken.

This operation would take place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion to furnish part of the rear-guard on this second occasion also.



(Right: 'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration)

****Lieutenant Owen Steele of St. John's, Newfoundland, is cited as having been the last soldier of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to step into the final small boat to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.***



(Right: 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in that January of 1916 and by the Newfoundlanders who were to be the last soldiers off the beach: Vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011)

When the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city Alexandria, having arrived there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to Suez, a port at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.



****Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.***

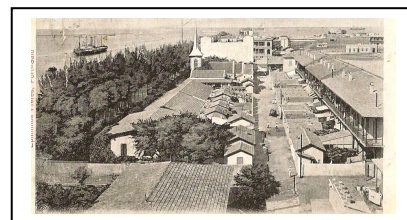
(Right above: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)

After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st Battalion had boarded His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq on March 14, from there to sail up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France.

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The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards, in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles, on March 22.

(Right: *Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



(Right: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage post-card*)

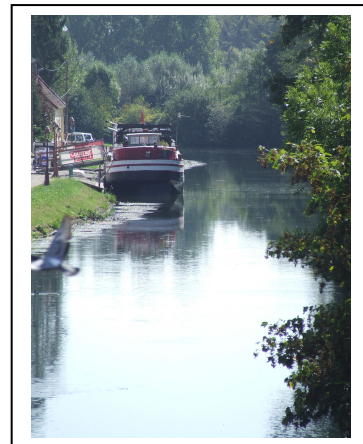


Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train had found its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having travelled unused in a separate wagon.

Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure the long, dark march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they had then marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to become a part of their history.

(Right: *A languid River Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)



On April 13, the 1st Battalion had marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where they would be billeted, would receive reinforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front*, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit was to then be ordered to move further up for the first time into forward positions on April 22.

**It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment Battalion, were the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, that flowed – and still does so today – through the region.

If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later*.

**Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion's casualties was to be incurred during the advance from the third line of British trenches to the first line from where the attack proper was to be made, and while struggling through British wire laid to protect the British positions from any German attack.*

(Right above: *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 above: *Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel* – photograph from 2009(?))

There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand were recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds*.

It was to be the largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, *the Somme* butchery was to continue for the next four and a half months.



(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village.* – photographs from 2010 & 2015)

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

In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man's-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.



After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it had been feared that a German counter-assault might well annihilate those of the British Expeditionary Force who had survived that first day.

The few remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion – and of the other depleted British units - had thus remained in the trenches perhaps fearing the worst, and at night searching for the wounded and burying the dead. It was to be July 6 before the Newfoundlanders were to be relieved from the forward area and to be ordered withdrawn to Englebelmer.

It had then been a further two days before the unit had marched further again to the rear area and to billets in the village of Mailly-Maillet.

(Right: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John's East. – photograph from 2009*)

There on July 11, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven reinforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – had reported to duty. They had been the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional manpower having arrived, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1916, the 1st Battalion still numbered only...11 officers and 260 rifles...after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.



On July 27-28 of 1916, the 1st Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after further re-enforcement – had moved north and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.

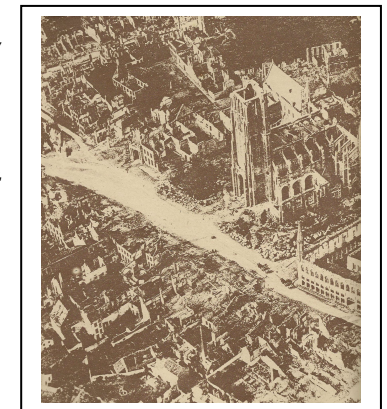
It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel.



(Right above: *The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

(Right: *An aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916: it is described as the 'Ville morte'.* – from *Illustration*)

The Salient – close to the front lines for almost the entire fifty-two month conflict - was to be relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there; yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.



Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the 1st Battalion had been ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

There, four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had again been ordered once more to the offensive; it was at a

place called Gueudecourt, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel.

The encounter had proved to be another ill-conceived and costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

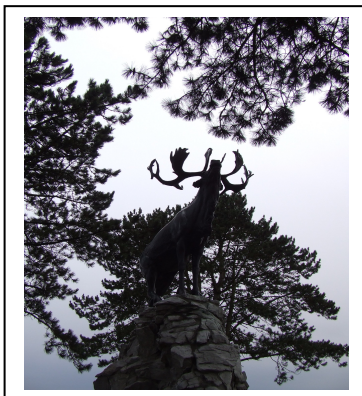
(Right: *This is the ground over which the 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon.* – photograph from 2007)



(Right: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of the Newfoundland Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916.* – photograph from 2012)

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At the time of Lieutenant Holloway's arrival in France, the Newfoundlanders were still recovering from that latest action against the Germans. On October 12, having incurred heavy casualties in the bombardment of October 11, they had then attacked at Gueudecourt on the morrow and – as seen above – had sustained more losses. The Newfoundland unit had been withdrawn soon afterwards.



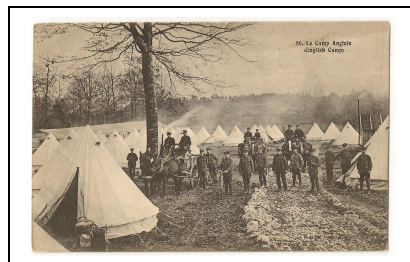
(Right: *One may just about perceive the Gueudecourt Caribou in the midst of that same copse.* – photograph from 2014)

After Gueudecourt, the 1st Battalion continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – and not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period to be followed by the several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during that Christmas period, encamped well behind the lines.



(Right: *A British camp, in not particularly clement conditions, somewhere on the Continent during one of the early winters of the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

Apparently, the accommodation may not have been as bad as it appears in the photograph at right, at least not for the officers. In a letter dated December 31, 2nd Lieutenant Holloway wrote:



...At Present, as you know we are living on the fat of the land, we are by no means doing nothing as the training goes merrily on, but we are comfortable and away from the rattle & Bang...

After their six-week Christmas respite, the Newfoundlanders *officially* returned to *active* service on January 23, although they had apparently already been back serving in the trenches by that date and had suffered their first casualties – and the Battalion's first fatality - of the New Year.

The Regimental War Diary entry of January 27 reads as follows: *During the attack on Jan'y 27th our Stokes Mortars kept up a hurricane bombardment on the enemy's right for ten minutes. 2/Lieutenant Holloway (sic) went out immediately after the advance and established communication between left of attacking unit and our right. He brought in valuable information and six prisoners*.*

For this action Second Lieutenant Holloway was mentioned in...*Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch of April 9th, 1917. Has consistently displayed great gallantry and initiative as Battalion Sniping and Intelligence Officer. On 27th of January he was sent to locate the exact position gained by troops who had made an attack.*

*At great personal risk, he visited all the positions and brought back most valuable information. - London Gazette, June 1st, 1917***



**It was not the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment which had made the attack. However, its personnel had acted as stretcher-bearers and had carried up materials to consolidate captured positions. The Newfoundlanders were also to take several prisoners, notably CSM Gardner (see elsewhere among these files) who had single-handedly convinced some sixty enemy soldiers to surrender. They had also taken casualties: seven killed, seventeen wounded.*

**The award – not quite regarded as a decoration - was not a medal but rather an oak-leaf cast in bronze which was to be worn, as above, on the ribbon of the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal). In the few instances where the recipient was not entitled to this medal, it was affixed to the ribbon of the British War Medal (see further below).*

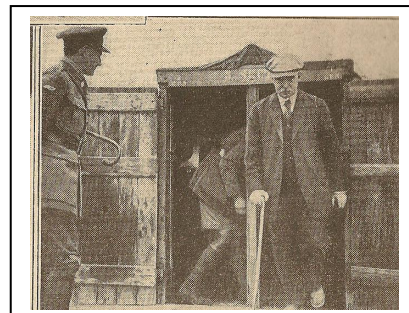
Unlike other awards – such as the MM or DSO, for example - the 'Mentioned in Despatches' is not to be written appended to the name of its recipient although, apparently it - 'MiD' – is occasionally to be thus found. Perhaps ironically, even though regarded as less than a decoration, it was one of only two which at the time could be awarded posthumously, the Victoria Cross being the other.

The only infantry activity directly involving the 1st Battalion during that 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, an action which would bring 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 had been a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they had now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events, with Second Lieutenant Holloway overseeing the Lewis-gunners and snipers. They even had had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



(Right above: *The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1st Battalion encamped at Meaulté – from The War Illustrated*)

It was during this time that Second Lieutenant Holloway was appointed to the rank of First Lieutenant. The date was March 15, a day on which four other such promotions were made.



On March 29, the 1st Battalion had begun to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond. The march was 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 after some eighteen months of bombardment – from Illustration*)

(Right below: *The Canadian National Memorial which has stood on Vimy Ridge since 1936 – photograph from 2010*)

On April 9 the British Army had launched an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was to be the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a major French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties, this attack was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, its only positive episode to be the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the attack, Easter Monday, 1917.



While the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

The 1st Battalion was to play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at the 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, the ineptly-planned action at Monchy-le-Preux would prove to be the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties all told on April 14 alone*.



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**It was also an action in which a DSO, an MC and eight MMs were won by a small group of nine personnel of the Battalion – the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) awarded to the unit's Commanding officer. An MM for the same action was also presented to a private from the Essex Regiment who was to fight with the Newfoundland unit.*

(Preceding page: 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)

During the attack at Monchy-le-Preux of April 14, it had been planned that Lieutenant Holloway, in his role of Intelligence Officer, would lead a party of scouts and snipers forward – to the right of 'B' Company's advance - towards the enemy strong point known as *Bois du Vert* so as to ascertain enemy strength. *The Intelligence Officer also was hit on his way back to report (that) BOIS DU VERT was impossible, he passed Lieut. Langmead...but did not get back.* (Excerpt of Regimental War Diary entry for April 14, 1917)

*Also: I have received your letter dated September 7th asking me if I knew anything about (Lieut) R.P. Holloway. The last I saw of him, he was on his way back to our lines. He was wounded in the arm. What happened to him after I don't know. – Signed, Arthur Jesseau**

**Regimental Number 249, Lance Corporal Arthur Jesseau had been taken prisoner at Monchy-le-Preux on April 14, 1917, and wrote this letter from a prisoner-of-war camp near Limberg, Germany, on February 14 of 1918.*

The son of Robert Edwards Holloway (former Principal of the Wesleyan Academy in St. John's – see also further below – and deceased on September 4 of 1904 from consumption) and of Henrietta Holloway (née *Palfrey*) of 168, Gower Street*, St. John's, Newfoundland – the couple married on June 25, 1878 - he was also younger brother to Elizabeth-Mary (also known as *Elsie*) and Kate.

Lieutenant Holloway was the husband of Agnes Isabel Holloway** – the couple having married November 6, 1911 in Toronto where she would later betimes reside - and was also the father of Robert Andrew and Agnes Macil(?).

Lieutenant Holloway was at first reported as *missing believed killed in action* on April 14, 1917, in the conduct of his duties as Battalion Intelligence Officer during the fighting at Monchy-le-Preux. Some thirty weeks later, on November 16, 1917, he was officially *presumed dead*, the belief and hope that he had been taken prisoner having been proved to be without foundation.

Corroboration was received by the *British Red Cross* in the form of the following correspondence, dated December 12, 1917: 'Number 122 Curran states that he saw Lt. Holloway hit April 14, and in an attempt to crawl in, a machine-gun was turned on him. Curran thinks Holloway was killed. – confirmed by 2280 Frampton, POW at Heilsberg'



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The Caribou which stands atop a former German strongpoint in the centre of the re-constructed village of Monchy-le-Preux. – photograph from 2012*)

Lieutenant Holloway's death was subsequently officially confirmed by authority of the *International Committee of the Red Cross*, Geneva, as of April 16, 1918, and his record amended on that date so as to read *killed in action 14/4/17*.

Robert Palfrey Bert Holloway had received his Imperial Commission at the age of twenty-eight years: birth date in St. John's, Newfoundland, November 15, 1887).



His father, Robert Edwards Holloway, a teacher at Methodist College in St. John's, had also been a keen photographer. Some of his work was to appear on stamps and on two-dollar bills issued by the Dominion of Newfoundland; the Methodist College building on Long's Hill was later named Holloway School in his honour.

**While Lieutenant Holloway cites Gower Street as his address, another 1913 source has him listed as the owner of 'Little Dorset' on Waterford Bridge Road in St. John's.*

***She and their children also spent time in the United Kingdom during Lieutenant Holloway's time of service with the Newfoundland Regiment.*

(The above photograph of Lieutenant Holloway is from the Provincial Archives.)

(Right: A family memorial which stands in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's commemorates the sacrifice of... Robert Palfrey – missing at the Battle of Monchy... – Photograph from 2015)



Lieutenant Robert Palfrey Holloway was entitled to the British War Medal (centre) and to 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 – February 11, 2023.

