



Lance Corporal Cecil Jameson Hunt (Regimental Number 3384) is buried in Glasgow Western Necropolis: Grave reference, P.2375.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *clerk* and earning nine dollars and fifty cents per week, Cecil Jameson Hunt was a volunteer of the Thirteenth Recruitment Draft. He presented himself for medical examination on December 5 of 1916 at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury** in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service.*

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

For no apparent reason to be gleaned from amongst his personal records, it was to be on the thirtieth day following that medical assessment, January 4 of 1917, and at the same venue, that Cecil Jameson Hunt would enlist. He was thus 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.*

Only a few further hours were now to follow before there then came to pass, while still at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On the same fourth day of the New Year he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Cecil Jameson Hunt became...*a soldier of the King*.

Private Hunt, Number 3384, was not then scheduled to sail to the United Kingdom until a lengthy span of thirteen weeks and two days had then elapsed. How he was to spend the first months of this prolonged interval after his attestation appears not to have been documented. He may have returned temporarily to work and spent time with his mother at the family residence on Barnes Road in the city, or even that he might have chosen – or *been chosen* - to remain in barracks, although there was apparently little in the way of military training undertaken, and to be billeted in the city* - but this is only speculation.

**A number of the recruits, those whose home was not in St. John's or close to the capital city, or those who had no friends or family to offer them board and lodging, were to be quartered in the curling rink in the area of Fort William in St. John's, a building which was at the time to serve as barracks.*

He would eventually remain for over three months in Newfoundland before his departure for...*overseas service*...by which time he was a non-commissioned officer, having been promoted to the rank of lance-corporal on April 5, only two days before the aforesaid departure.

On April 7 of 1917, he and a small draft boarded a train in St. John's for the cross-island journey to Port aux Basques. From there a ferry and another train transported Lance Corporal Hunt and his fellow travellers to Halifax. Apparently it had been hoped that the fifty personnel of this detachment – Lance Corporal Hunt one of that number - would be joining the *Windsor Draft* (see further below) on April 16, 17 or 18 when it was to board one of the three transports awaiting in Halifax Harbour, from there to depart in convoy for the United Kingdom.

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This plan, however, was not to be for whatever the reason, and it was not until the final days of the month of April that this small contingent finally sailed from Halifax. It may, in fact, have taken passage on His Majesty's Transport *Olympic* which sailed - but because of her speed, not in convoy - at that time from Halifax with a multitude of Canadian troops** on board to the United Kingdom.

(Right: The image of 'Olympic' – also known as 'The Old Lady' – was one of the largest vessels afloat at the time and capable of transporting some six-thousand passengers. Sister-ship to 'Britannic', sunk by a mine in the eastern Mediterranean in November of 1916, and also to the ill-starred 'Titanic', the vessel was to survive the conflict, having served as a troop-transport during and afterwards, and then continued her commercial work for a further ten years. – from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site)



****This Newfoundland contingent had taken passage with eight under-strength Canadian Infantry battalions, an infantry and an artillery draft, a company of cyclists of the 4th Canadian Division and a draft of the 1st Canadian Pioneer Battalion.**

Olympic docked in the English port-city of Liverpool on May 7 before most of the troops disembarked on the morrow. While the Canadians were dispatched to various Canadian camps in England, Lance Corporal Hunt's draft entrained for the west coast of Scotland.

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***In the meantime, a draft of approximately three hundred twenty...all ranks...had departed St. John's on January 31 of 1917 for overseas service on the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel*. The vessel had been on its commercial schedule and bound for Halifax from where the detachment had been ordered to take ship to the United Kingdom on board *Saxonia*.**

However, preparations for this crossing had gone awry and thus, immediately upon arrival in Nova Scotia, the contingent was forwarded to accommodation – apparently cramped - in the town of Windsor where the Newfoundlanders were soon to be catching measles, influenza and then the mumps, two of them to become fatalities during what was by then an epidemic. The detachment was ordered to remain in Windsor and to be quarantined...and in fact, a number of this contingent was to be hospitalized with measles or mumps during this period.

As for the beleaguered Windsor Draft, it was not until after a lapse of some two-and-a-half months following the its arrival in Nova Scotia that transport could be arranged for a trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom for the contingent – minus those twenty-five or so personnel still unable to travel and who were to remain in Nova Scotia.

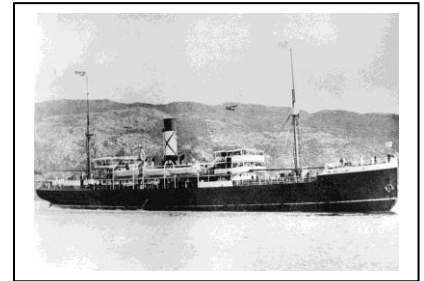
On April 16 and 18, the personnel of the Windsor Draft embarked onto the three ships which were to carry the Newfoundlanders from Halifax to the further side of the Atlantic (see further above). The vessels were also transporting a myriad of Canadian soldiery to

the English west-coast port of Liverpool, where all the vessels docked on April 29, just over a week before Lance Corporal Hunt on 'Olympic' was to enter port.

Having arrived in England, while their Canadian comrades-in-arms departed for Canadian establishments in southern England, the Newfoundland contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland and to the town of Ayr where the Regimental Depot had by this time been established for close on two years.

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Some two years and seven months prior to that month of May of 1917 when Lance Corporal Hunt was to find himself in Scotland, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's and elsewhere in the city, and were formed into 'A' and 'B' Companies.



During that same period the various authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

(Right above: The image of 'Florizel' at anchor in the harbour at St. John's in October of 1914 is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.)

This first Newfoundland contingent was to embark on October 3, in some cases only days after a recruit's enlistment and/ or attestation. To become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees*, on that day they had boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John's Harbour.

The ship had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island. Once having disembarked 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 it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

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

Only days after 'A' and 'B' Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 of 1915, 'C' Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent - would arrive directly – through Liverpool of course - from Newfoundland. On the final day of the month of March it had been the turn of 'D' Company to arrive – they via Halifax as well as Liverpool – to report...to duty...at Edinburgh, and then 'E' Company five weeks less a day later again, on May 4*.



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****These five Companies, while a contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.***

(Right: The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011)

Seven days after the arrival of 'E' Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent had been ordered elsewhere. On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit had been dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.

(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 of Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

Two months less a day later, on July 10, 'F' Company would march into *Stobs Camp*.

This had been an important moment: the Company's arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment's numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength* of a battalion which could be posted on...active service.

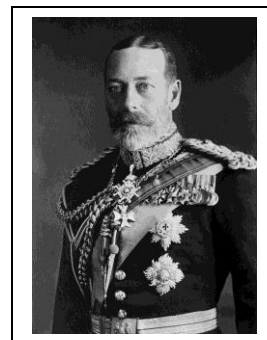
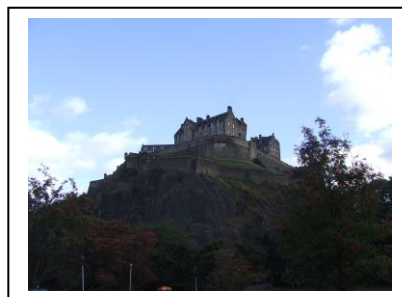
****A number sufficient for four 'fighting' companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.***

(Right above: The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – from Nicholson's Fighting Newfoundlander, original photograph from the Provincial Archives)

From *Stobs Camp*, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the four senior Companies, having now become the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, had been transferred to *Aldershot Camp* in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before the Battalion's departure to the Middle East and to the fighting on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

The later arrivals to the United Kingdom, 'E' and 'F' Companies, were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were eventually to form the nucleus of the soon to be formed 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.

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(Preceding page: 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.)

(Right: An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were quartered the 'other ranks', 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)



Ayr was a small town on the west coast of Scotland whose history precedes the year 1205 when it was established as a Royal Burgh (Borough) by the crown of Scotland, an appointment which emphasized the importance of the town as a harbour, market and, later, administrative centre.

By the time of the Great War centuries later it was expanding and the River Ayr which had once marked the northern boundary of the place was now flowing through its centre; a new town to the north (Newton-on-Ayr), its population fast-increasing, perhaps encouraged by the coming of the railway, was soon to be housing the majority of the personnel of the Newfoundland Regimental Depot.



(Right above: The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower – it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo.

That November 15 of 1915 was to see not only the departure of the 1st Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr to the Middle East and to the fighting of the Gallipoli Campaign but also, only five days prior, the arrival from Newfoundland of 'G' Company which would be obliged to take up quarters at Gales Camp, some sixteen kilometres up the coast from Ayr itself – but just over sixty if one went by road.

A further seven weeks plus a day were now to pass before the first one-hundred personnel of 'H' Company, having sailed in mid-December as recorded in an earlier paragraph, were to present themselves at the Regimental Depot on January 4, some of them to be affected, even fatally, by an ongoing measles epidemic of the time.

After that there was then to be an interlude of three months plus several days before the second detachment of 'H' Company reported on April 9, 1916, to the Regimental Depot.

Note: Until as late as the spring of 1916 it had been the intention to form a 2nd Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment to fight on the Continent. In fact it would seem that the last-mentioned contingent of one-hundred sixty-three recruits was to form the nucleus of that unit, while the personnel already at the Depot by this time would form a reserve battalion to serve as a re-enforcement pool for both the fighting units.

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It could not have been long before a change of plan came about as very soon men of that designated contingent (the second half of 'H' Company) were being sent to strengthen the 1st Newfoundland Battalion already on the Continent – maybe Beaumont-Hamel had something to do with it.

A further draft from Newfoundland arrived at Ayr towards mid-summer, this comprising a two-company detachment and some naval reservists, sailors who, having disembarked from *Sicilian* in Devonport, were to remain there in England.

Some weeks later again *Sicilian* would sail from Newfoundland once more to arrive in England in the first week in September, 1916, with two-hundred forty-two recruits on board. By the 5th day of the month the new-comers, formerly 'C' Company of the 3rd Battalion stationed back in St. John's, had reported to the Regimental Depot.

There was now to be a particularly protracted interval before any large numbers re-enforcements were to arrive from Newfoundland – a problem which was later to affect the capabilities of the parent 1st Battalion fighting on the Continent.

The main cause of the difficulty, as seen further above, would be those troops which had been dispatched from St. John's and had reached Halifax on board *Florizel* at the end of January, 1917, only to be then held there for some three months before they were to arrive in Scotland where the regulation fourteen weeks of training then awaited them – although in the case of most of this draft, this period was to be much shorter as will be seen.

A week after the arrival of the *Windsor Draft* in Scotland, Lance Corporal Hunt had done likewise after his trans-Atlantic crossing on board *Olympic*. But after a further contingent of one-hundred eighty-five departed from home at the end of May, the number of potential recruits to be found in Newfoundland was by now diminishing.

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There was to be only a single exception to the above sequence of departures of re-enforcement contingents from Newfoundland and their arrival at the Regimental Depot in Scotland and that was the dispatch of the Eleventh Recruitment Draft. As seen above, because of the quarantine in Windsor, Nova Scotia, imposed upon those who had sailed from home on January 31 of 1917, the subsequent contingent, the above-mentioned Eleventh Draft which had left Newfoundland's shores in mid-March had thus leap-frogged the Windsor Draft to dock in Liverpool and report to Ayr three weeks and two days ahead of it.

By this time the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment serving on the Continent, particularly after the fighting of April 14 at Monchy-le-Preux (see further below) was becoming critically short of personnel and the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion at Ayr was hard-pressed to find replacements for these losses.

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The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, and was to eventually serve as the 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 despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *Wellington Square seen here almost a century after it hosted the officers of the Newfoundland Regiment – photograph from 2012*)

(Right: *The new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the other ranks of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they were to replace some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photograph from 2012*)



At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to be able to accommodate the number of new arrivals – plus men from other British regiments which were still being billeted in the area...and a measles epidemic which was to claim the life of several Regiment personnel – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in the town-centre of Ayr itself, and the *other ranks* had been billeted at Newton Park School and otherwise in the grandstand or a tented camp at the newly-built racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr – on the far side of the river.

Lance Corporal Hunt, unfortunately, was not to experience the attractions of Scotland for long: on May 17, he was admitted into the County Hospital, Ayr, and there diagnosed as suffering from vascular disease, from myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscles), and from chronic laryngitis.

The son of James Gill Hunt (of *J.G. Hunt, Commission Agents & Brokers*, deceased of cancer on June 5 of 1908) and of Mary Julia Hester Hunt (née *Noonan**, deceased of uterine cancer on April 23, 1919) – to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay - of 88, Barnes' Road in St. John's, he was also brother to Charles-Edward, Hilda-Isabel, Alice-Mildred, to Nicholas-Prout and to two male siblings who died in their infancy.



*The couple had married in St. John's on November 29 of 1882.

(Right above: *The High Street in Ayr much as seen further above, the buildings little changed, except cosmetically, from a century ago, and with the imposing Wallace Tower still keeping watch – photograph from 2012*)

Lance Corporal Hunt was reported as having...*died in hospital*...on June 7, 1917, the immediate cause of death being cited as syncope (a sudden loss of consciousness and cerebral function due to a malfunctioning heart).

He was buried on June 15.

(Right: A family memorial – seen in the centre of the photograph - which stands in the Old Anglican Cemetery on Forest Road in St. John's, commemorates the sacrifice of Private Cecil Jameson Hunt. – photograph from 2015)

Cecil Jameson Hunt had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen years, seven months: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, May 21, 1897 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

Private Cecil Jameson Hunt was entitled to the British War Medal for his services overseas.

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 1, 2023.

