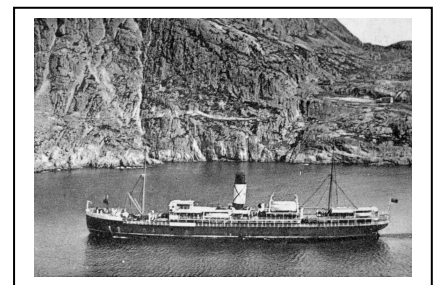




Private Arthur William Hurdle (Regimental Number 1091) is buried in the Rocquigny-Équancourt Road British Cemetery – Grave reference II. F. 10.

His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a fisherman earning an annual \$300.00, Arthur William Hurdle presented himself for medical examination at Trinity on February 3, 1915. Having then travelled to the capital city, he then enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's – engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem - on February 8, 1915. He attested eleven days later again, on February 19.



(continued)

Private Hurdle embarked with Number 8 Platoon of 'D' Company, just more than four weeks later again, onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* (previous page – from *Provincial Archives*) on March 20, 1915, for passage to Halifax and for overseas service. From Halifax he took ship on His Majesty's Transport *Orduna* (right) for the trans-Atlantic crossing to Liverpool.



Sailing from Nova Scotia on March 22 for Liverpool, the draft landed there eight days later, on the 30th, and entrained to Edinburgh, arriving at the historic Castle on the same day. For the next six weeks, having been united with 'A', 'B' and 'C' Companies already stationed there, the Newfoundlanders formed the garrison – the first troops from outside the British Isles to do so - of the guardian of Scotland's capital city.

(Right: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the skyline of the Scottish capital city from the summit of Castle Hill.* – photograph from 2011)



On May 11 the Newfoundlanders were transferred to Stobs Camp, near Hawick, to the south-east of Edinburgh. There they remained for some three months until the beginning of August when the senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' – now to become 1st Battalion, the Newfoundland Regiment - were sent south to Aldershot in the south of England. There they received final training – and a royal inspection - to prepare for *active service* in Gallipoli.



(Right above: *the Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp on June 10, the day it received its Colours* – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

The later arrivals, 'E' and 'F' Companies, were sent to the new Regimental Depot recently being established at Ayr, on the west coast of Scotland. There they were to become the nucleus of the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.



It was during this period at Aldershot, on August 15, that Private Hurdle was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion 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.*



(continued)

On August 20, 1915, Private Hurdle took ship on board the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (right top) for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting in Gallipoli where, a month later – of which two weeks had been spent billeted at the British barracks at Abbassia, near the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, 1st Battalion landed on the beach at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



(Previous page right black & white: *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. – from Provincial Archives*)

(Above top: 'Kangaroo Beach', where 1st Battalion landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph from 2011)



(Above right: *almost a century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Hurdle served during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011*)

On December 8-9, Private Hurdle was admitted to the 54th Casualty Clearing Station at Suvla suffering from jaundice. There appears to be no further record until the middle of January, but it is unlikely that he remained all that time in what was the battle zone – and, of course, the place was abandoned by the British on the night of December 19-20. It is certain therefore that he was evacuated from Suvla, but whether it was to Lemnos, to Malta or to Egypt, seems not to be documented.

Eventually, however, after treatment and convalescence, Private Hurdle was posted *to duty* at the Sidi Bishr Base Depot in Alexandria. It was there that he reported back with 1st Battalion on January 16 of the New Year, 1916.

When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, 1st Battalion was sent to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month – where it was joined on the morrow by Private Hurdle. From there the Newfoundlanders were transferred, almost immediately, south to Suez where they were to await further orders. To that point it seems that the theatre of the future posting of 29th Division was still uncertain.



(Right above: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders, employed as the rear-guard, were among the last to leave on two occasions. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration*)

(Right: *Port Tewfiq (see paragraph below) at some time just before the Great War – from a vintage post-card)*

On March 14, the officers and men of 1st Battalion embarked through Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the Suez Canal onto His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* (right) for the voyage to the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles, en route to the *Western Front*.

(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 Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy.

It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them travelling unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the station at two in the morning the Newfoundlanders still had a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

(Right below: *the Somme seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy as it flows through the community – photograph from 2010)*

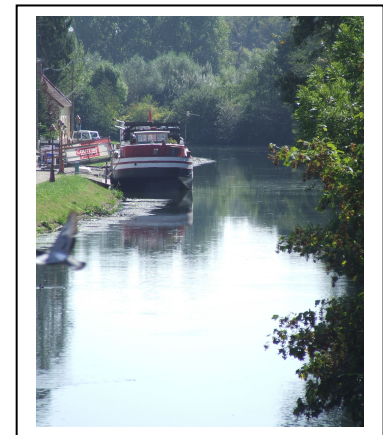
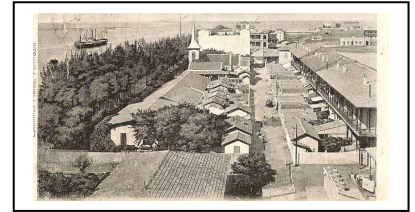
It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers paid much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge that they passed on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would be a part of their history.

On April 13, 1st Battalion marched into the village of Englebelmer – three kilometres behind the lines and perhaps some fifty kilometres in all distant from Pont-Rémy – where it was billeted, welcomed re-enforcements from Rouen on the 15th and, on that same day, was introduced into the British lines where the Newfoundlanders were then put to work making improvements to the communication trenches.

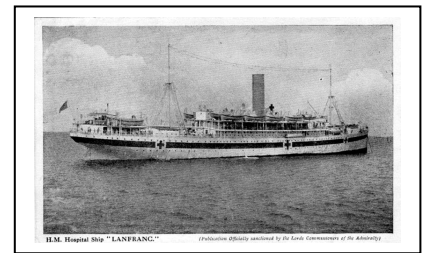
The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that same meandering river which flowed through the region, *the Somme*.

(Right: *a part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)

(continued)



May 19 saw Private Hurdle admitted into 87th Field Ambulance and diagnosed with an abcess on a kidney. Three days later he was discharged *to duty* but then, on June 5, he was in the 2nd General Hospital in LeHavre. On this further occasion he was suffering from periostitis (inflammation of the membrane surrounding a bone) of the jaw.



The stay in LeHavre was short: on June 6, he was on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Lanfranc* (right above) en route back to England. On the following day Private Hurdle was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.

(Right: *The main building of what became 3rd London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1st, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)



(Above far right: *Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing at 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

After treatment and convalescence the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital was granted to Private Hurdle, from July 8 to 17. This was followed by an immediate posting to the Regimental Depot where he arrived on the same July 17. And there he seems to have remained for just over a year.

* * * * *

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 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.

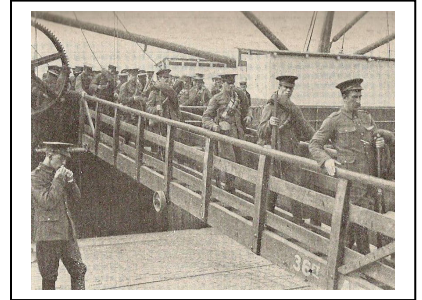
(Right: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)



Some twelve months later, on August 5 of 1917, Private Hurdle, as a soldier of the 28th Reinforcement Draft from Barry*, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on his way to re-join 1st Battalion on the Continent. On the 7th the contingent landed in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, where the Draft was posted for several days of final training and organization**.

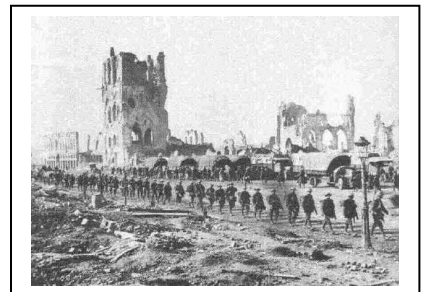
(Right below: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

****In the summer of 1917, the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion moved to the town of Barry. Intended to be permanent, the transfer lasted only until the third week of September before the pressures mounted to return to Ayr. The victory was nevertheless short-lived, as the Newfoundlanders were to find themselves in southern England by the end of January, 1918, in a camp on Hazely Down near Winchester.***



*****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 Newfoundlanders by then had once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of Ypres. This had been selected as 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*, borrowing that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



(Right above: *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 remained 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. But Private Hurdle, by a margin of three days, was not to serve at *Passchendaele*.



(Right above: *an unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

Private Hurdle's draft of ninety-four *other ranks* arrived to report to *duty* on October 12 only a day after the 1st Battalion had been withdrawn from the lines in the area of the *Broembeek* and only five days before it was to be withdrawn from Belgium altogether in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*. The Newfoundlanders moved back south from Belgium into northern France 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 the city of Arras.

(continued)

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.



The 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)

The son of Charles Hurdle, fisherman, and Jessie Hurdle – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents – later reduced to thirty - from his pay, and to whom he had willed his all - of Dunfield (Cuckold's Cove) Trinity Bay, he was also brother to Alonzo and Garland.



On November 21, 1917, he was reported by 48th Casualty Clearing Station at Ytres as having *died of wounds* suffered while serving with the re-enforcement detachment during the fighting near the French villages of Marcoing and Masnières.

(Right above: *transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power* – from a vintage post-card)



Private Hurdle is recorded by the CWGC as having passed away at the age of twenty-two years. His own record shows that he *enlisted* at age eighteen.

(Right above: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on high ground just to the north of the village. The capture of this terrain, 1st Battalion's final objective of November 20, was probably never realized.* – photograph from 2012)

(Right: *The War Memorial in Trinity honours the sacrifice of Private Hurdle.* – photograph from 2012)



(continued)

Private Arthur William Hurdle was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as 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 14, 2023.