



Private Frederick James Jacobs (Regimental Number 1297), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a clerk at *Marshall Bros., General Importers* of Water Street, and earning one dollar and twenty-five cents per day, Frederick James Jacobs presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on March 20 of 1915. It was a procedure which would pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

Frederick Jacobs was to return to the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road on March 22, two days following his medical assessment, on this second occasion to enlist. He was thereupon engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was added a ten-cent per diem *Field Allowance*.

It was to be a further eight days, the date March 30, before he was to undertake his attestation, to swear his *Oath of Allegiance*, the concluding official formality. At that moment Frederick James Jacobs became...*a soldier of the King*.

There now passed a further lengthy period of three weeks and two days before, on April 22, 1915, Private Jacobs, Number 1297, embarked in the harbour of St. John's for...*overseas service*...with the two-hundred forty-nine officers and...*other ranks*...of 'E' Company onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* en route for Halifax.

There appear to be no details of how or where he may have spent that final waiting-period before taking ship for...*overseas service*; Private Jacobs may have returned temporarily to work – but this is mere speculation.

Having arrived in Halifax, on April 24 at eleven-thirty in the evening the detachment began its trans-Atlantic passage on board the trans-Atlantic liner SS *Missanabie* from Nova Scotia to Liverpool. The vessel arrived in that English west-coast port-city on May 2 or 3 – the two dates are recorded although the second may well have been the date of disembarkation.



The Newfoundlanders on this occasion had sailed from Halifax in the company of the Canadian Army Service Corps *Railway Supply Depot*.

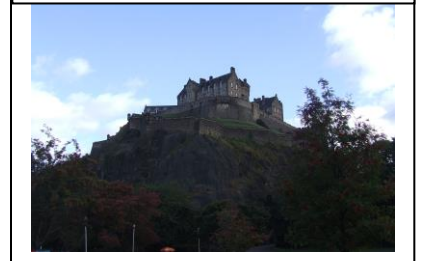
(Preceding page: *The image of 'Stephano' passing through the Narrows of St. John's Harbour is shown by courtesy of the Provincial Archives.*)

(Right: *The image of 'Missanabie' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website. The vessel was of the Canadian Pacific Line and, although transporting troops during the Great War, did so as part of her commercial services which continued during the conflict. On September 9, 1918, she was torpedoed and sunk off the south coast of Ireland with the loss of forty-five lives.*)



From Liverpool the contingent travelled northwards by train to the Scottish capital, Edinburgh where, on May 4, 'E' Company joined 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies which had already taken up station as the garrison at the historic Castle, the first troops from outside the British Isles ever to do so.

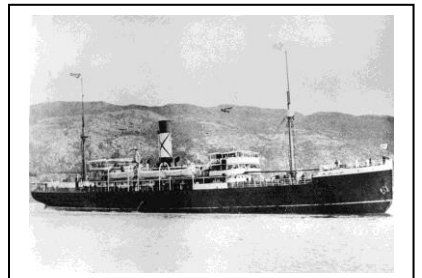
(Right: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011*)



Private Jacobs' 'E' Company, however, was to have but a few days to savour the charms of the Scottish capital.

* * * * *

Some seven months before that May 4, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's for the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits – these to become 'A' and 'B' Companies - during which time the authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.



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.



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

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.

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

(continued)

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, as recorded beforehand, it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

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.*

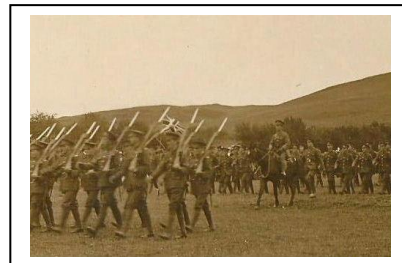
**This contingent, while a part of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.*

* * * * *

Seven days after the arrival of Private Jacobs’ ‘E’ Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent was ordered elsewhere.

On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit was dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

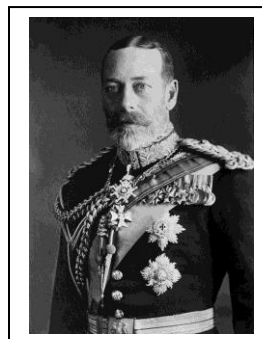
It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent would eventually receive the re-enforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength*. On that date the newly-formed 1st Battalion of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



(Right above: *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*)

**This was approximately fifteen hundred, sufficient to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at *Camp Aldershot*. This force, now the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.



(Right above: *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.)*

Meanwhile the two junior Companies, 'E' – as seen, the last arrived at Edinburgh - and the aforementioned 'F', were ordered transferred to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

Private Jacobs, however, although having left Newfoundland as a soldier of 'E' Company, was not to be posted to the Regimental Depot but to southern England.

When he had been apprised of this change in plans seems not to be recorded – nor why he was selected - but Private Jacobs was one of the few from 'E' Company who were to swell the ranks of the units posted to *Aldershot* - thus he became a soldier of 'C' Company. And it was during the period while he was at *Camp Aldershot*, and as was the case with the great majority of the Newfoundland troops there, that Private Jacobs was prevailed upon to re-enlist...*for the duration of the war*. This he did on August 15*.

**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 a limited period of a single year. As the War progressed, however, this would likely cause problems and they were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.*



(Right above: 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.)

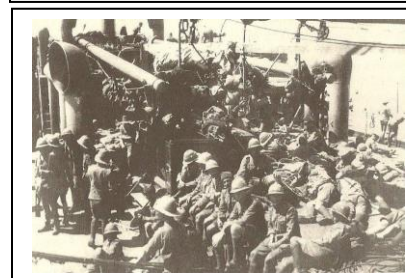


(Right above: The image of *Megantic*, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the *Old Ship Picture Galleries* web-site.)

On August 20, 1915, Private Jacobs and his 1st Battalion 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. 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 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)



(continued)

(Preceding page: 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)

(Right below: 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* they were to disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion were 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 been proving 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, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

(Right: 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 what was perhaps the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at *Gallipoli*; there was to be 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, had been those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

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



By this time the situation there had daily been becoming more and more untenable; thus on the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the entire area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, ordered to form a part of the rear-guard.

Some of the 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 would be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(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, Indian and *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had now only been marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* could be undertaken.

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



(Right above: '*W*' Beach at Cape Helles as it was only 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 above: '*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)

Immediately after the British evacuation of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*, the Newfoundland unit had been ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria. On January 14, the Australian Expeditionary Force Transport *Nestor* had arrived there with the 1st Battalion on board. The vessel was to sail just after mid-day on the 16th, on its way southwards down the Suez Canal to Port Suez where she arrived on the morrow and where the Newfoundlanders landed and marched to their encampment.



(continued)

There they were to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.

(Preceding page: *The image of the Blue Funnel Line vessel Nestor is from the Shipspotting.com web-site. The vessel was launched and fitted in 1912-1913 and was to serve much of her commercial life until 1950 plying the routes between Britain and Australia. During the Great War she served mainly in the transport of Australian troops and was requisitioned once again in 1940 for government service in the Second World War. In 1950 she was broken up.*)

**Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was already becoming a theatre of war.*

(Right: *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 that two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st Battalion were to board His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage back up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France. The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseille, on March 22.



(Right above: *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 Marseille. – from a vintage post-card*)

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseille.



It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably 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 which they then traversed on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* would become part of their history.

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

On April 13, the 1st Battalion subsequently marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where it was billeted, received re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, two days later, was 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 then the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*

(Right: *A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?)*)

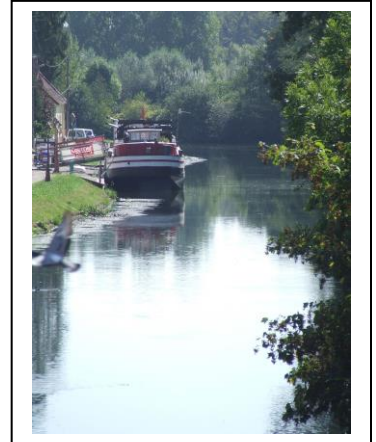
Having then been withdrawn at the end of that April to the areas of Mailly-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing for the upcoming British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering 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*.

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

(continued)



**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.*

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 greatest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the carnage of the *First Battle of the Somme* was to continue for a further four and a half months.

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

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.



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

Private Jacobs was not one of those who figured in the fighting of the morning of July 1 with the Newfoundland Battalion at Beaumont-Hamel, but his name is to be found included on the unit's nominal roll; it is therefore possible that he had been seconded to another unit or, more likely, that he was one of the ten per cent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three *other ranks* held at Louvencourt and not called forward until late in the afternoon of that day when the fighting had subsided.



**The well-known roll-call of July 2 of those who survived the battle unscathed was not officially recorded until two days later. The roll call of those who had been in the ten per cent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three men held back for most of the day at Louvencourt was apparently also recorded officially only later. Thus the inscription 'With Battalion 4/7/16' on certain records.*

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it was to be feared that any German counter-assault might well annihilate what had managed to survive of the British Expeditionary Force on *the Somme*.

The few remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion – and of the other depleted British units - 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 would then be a further two days before the unit marched further again into 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 re-enforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – reported *to duty*. They were to be the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power 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 establishment battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after further re-enforcement – 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.

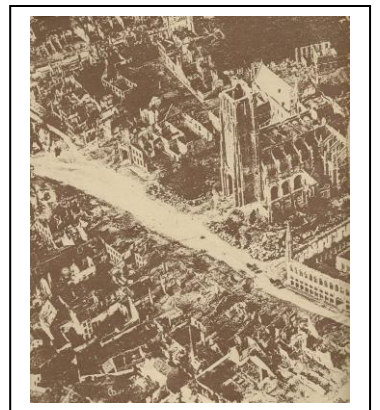
(Right: *The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)



In the meantime, a month after having arrived in Belgium, on August 29, for reasons seemingly un-recorded among his papers, Private Jacobs was deprived of fifteen days' pay. It ends there.

Then only a short time later, on September 15, he was admitted into the 29th Divisional Rest Station with an abscessed right leg. Private Jacobs was discharged from there back...*to duty*...on the 23rd, eight days after his admission.

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.



(continued)

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

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

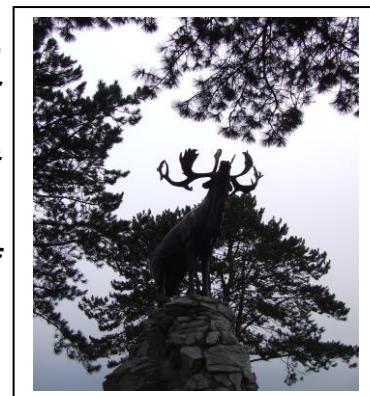
Four days after that return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had again been ordered to the offensive; it was to be at a place called Gueudecourt, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel.

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



(Right above: *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)

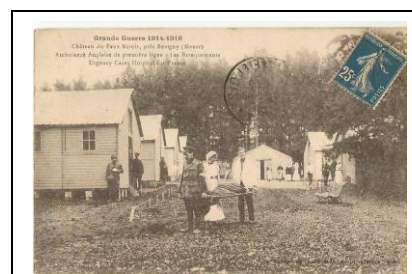


Private Jacobs was to be one of those wounded.

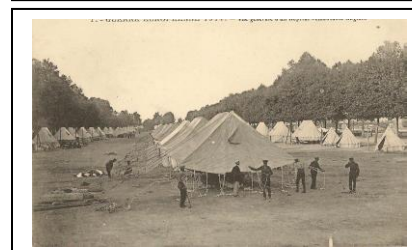
* * * * *

Having incurred injuries inflicted by artillery-fire to the head, to his arms, and to a foot, Private Jacobs would be subsequently evacuated to the 140th Field Ambulance before being forwarded on the same day to an unspecified casualty clearing station.

(Right *A British field ambulance, of a much more permanent nature than some* – from a vintage post-card)



(Right: *A British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and whenever the necessity were to arise – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War. Other such medical establishments were often of a much more permanent nature*. - from a vintage post-card)



He was transferred on His Majesty’s New Zealand Hospital Ship *Maheno* to England on the 16th day of that month and forwarded across the Irish Sea on the 18th to be admitted into the *Mater Infirmorum* in the city of Belfast.

(Right below: *The image of HMNZHS 'Maheno' clad in her war-time garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Launched in Scotland in 1905, she was to be operated on the other side of the globe by a New Zealand Company, her routes to include the Australian cities of Melbourne and Sydney as well as Hobart, the capital of the Australian state of Tasmania. The vessel was converted into a hospital ship at the beginning of the conflict and as of August of 1915 would serve as such at Gallipoli before serving on the cross-Channel run at the onset of 'First Somme'. After December of that 1916 she completed her service as a hospital ship by ferrying wounded New Zealand soldiers back home. At the end of the ship's working career, she ran aground in 1935, her wreck on Fraser Island off Australia's east coast still attracting sight-seers to this day.)*

His treatment completed in Ireland, on December 4-5 Private Jacobs was transferred back to England, to the Woodcote Park (Canadian) Convalescent Hospital at Epsom – Division 'C', Hut 25 - not far distant from London. There he remained until February 8 of 1917.

On that same date he began the customary ten-day furlough granted to military personnel in the United Kingdom upon discharge from hospital. This leave was spent at Number 3, Wellington Street, in the Scottish town of Hawick.

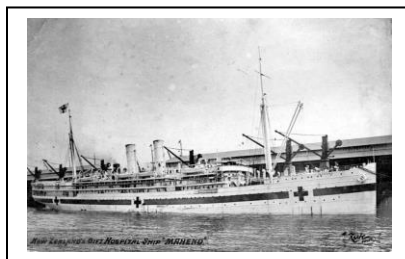
On February 17 Private Jacobs arrived at the Regimental Depot at Ayr to begin what was to become a year-long posting there, punctuated nonetheless by two visits to the 3rd Scottish General Hospital in nearby Glasgow – from the 26th of February until March 29 and again from July 6 to September 24. The problem was again a venereal complaint.

(Right above: *The High Street in Ayre – the Wallace Tower dominant then as it still is today - as shown on a postcard of the time – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo)*

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 soon to be formed 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment. 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 bolster the four fighting companies of the Newfoundland Battalion.

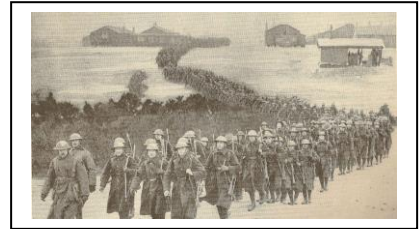
(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)*

During the summer of 1917 the 2nd (Reserve Battalion) was sent to the town of Barry which had been designated as the new site for the Newfoundlanders' Regimental Depot. However, the protest was such that it was to be only a temporary move and, by the end of



the third week in September, Private Jacobs found himself back in Ayr. This was also to be only a short-lived stay, however, as, at the beginning of 1918, a more permanent move would come about.

The 2nd (Reserve) Battalion was then ordered to transfer quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the venerable cathedral city of Winchester. This transfer was finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was there that Private Jacobs would have found himself at the beginning of March when he was despatched to re-join the British Expeditionary Force.

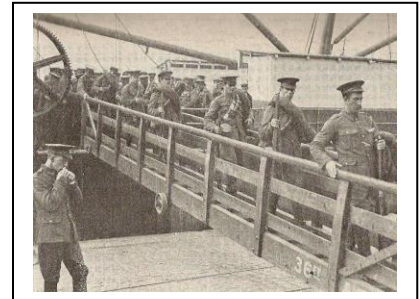


(Right above: *A bleak-looking Hazely Down at some time during the winter of 1918 – from The War Illustrated*)

(Right: *The Newfoundland Plot in Magdalen Hill Cemetery, Winchester, wherein are interred the personnel of the Regiment who died in service at Hazely Down – photograph from 2011(?)*)



Private Jacobs was one of the fifty *other ranks* comprising the 39th Re-enforcement Draft from Hazely Down that passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on March 1, 1918, en route to the *Western Front*. It disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot on the 2nd, proceeding to the Depot for several days of final training and organization*.



(Right: *British troops at an earlier time during the War 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.*

While his records apparently do not record the date on which Private Jacobs reported... *to duty*...with the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment on the Continent – the War Diarist of the day has not documented any new arrivals with the Battalion in either March or early April - it was almost certainly during this time while the Newfoundlanders were in the area of Zonnebeke, in and out of the line in a sector not far distant from the remnants of the village of Passchendaele.

* * * * *

More than seventeen months earlier, just after the time of Private Jabobs' evacuation from the field at Gueudecourt the Newfoundland Battalion had remained *in situ* in its positions

in the area of...*the Somme*. Nevertheless, the unit was not to be directly involved in any further concerted infantry action in the immediate area of Gueudecourt although, on October 18, it would supply two-hundred fifty men to act as stretcher-bearers in an attack undertaken by troops of two British regiments, the Hampshires and the Worcestershires, of the 88th Brigade.

(Right: *Stretcher-bearers not only shared the dangers of the battle-field with their arms-bearing comrades, but they often spent a longer period of time exposed to those same perils. This photograph was likely taken during First Somme. – from Illustration*)



On October 30, the Newfoundland unit had eventually been retired to rear positions from the Gueudecourt area. It had been serving in front-line and support positions for three weeks less a day.

The Newfoundlanders were now to spend two weeks withdrawn to the area of Ville-sous-Corbie, re-enforcing and reorganizing. It was not to be until November 15 that the 1st Battalion began to wend its way back up to the front lines.



There it continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period broken only by another several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period, encamped well behind the lines and in close proximity to the city of Amiens.

(Right above: *A typical British Army Camp during rather inclement winter conditions somewhere on the Continent – from a vintage post-card*)

It had been on January 11 that the Newfoundland Battalion was ordered out of *Corps Reserve* and its lodgings at *Camps en Amienois* from where it would make its way on foot to the community of Airaines. From the railway station there it was to entrain for the small town of Corbie where it had thereupon taken over billets which it had already occupied for a short period only two months before.

After that recent six-week Christmas respite spent in *Corps Reserve* far to the rear, the Newfoundlanders were to *officially* return to *active service* on January 23, although they apparently had already returned to the trenches by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

Those casualties, however, were only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig casually referred to as *wastage* as the Newfoundland unit had not ventured from its trenches.



(Right above: *A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers, their unit to be relieved by the Newfoundlanders on March 1, enjoys his cigarette in the cold and ice of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel during the winter of 1916-1917. – from Illustration*)

In fact, the sole infantry activity *directly* involving the Newfoundland unit during that entire period – from Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in mid-April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and the beginning of March, an action which would bring this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.



(Right: *The fighting during the period 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 were now to spend their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and in training for upcoming events. They had even 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 of the Newfoundland Regiment, encamped at Meaulté* – from The War Illustrated)



On March 29, the Newfoundlanders had begun to make their way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, the march to finish amid the rubble of the village of Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right above: *The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War, in early 1916* – from Illustration)

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

On April 9 the British Army was to launch 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 – just over four thousand - this offensive 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 battle, Easter Monday, 1917.



(continued)

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

(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*)

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*.

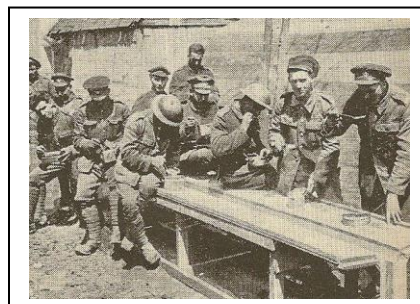
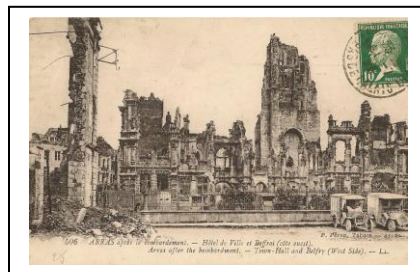
**It was also an action in which a DSO, an MC and eight MMs were won by a small group of nine personnel of the Battalion – the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) awarded to the unit's Commanding officer. An MM for the same action was also presented to a private from the Essex Regiment .*

After this further debacle the remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion had remained for a short period in the area of Monchy-le-Preux. The unit's casualty count had been high enough to warrant that it and the Essex Regiment, which had also incurred heavy losses, be amalgamated into a composite battalion until such time as incoming re-enforcements would allow the two units' strengths to once more resemble those of bona fide battalions.

The final action in which the Newfoundland Battalion was to be involved during the five-week long *Battle of Arras* would be the engagement of April 23 at *Les Fosses Farm*. This was in fact an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5th, 3rd and 1st Armies. It was apparently not to be a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1st Battalion, several of the adjacent units reporting having been driven back by German counter-attacks, actions accompanied by heavy losses.

Late on that same evening the Newfoundlanders had retired to the relative calm of Arras.

(Right above: *The City Hall of Arras and its clock-tower in 1919 after some four years of bombardment by German artillery – from a vintage post-card*)



(Right above: *Newfoundland troops just after the time of Monchy-le-Preux – from The War Illustrated*)

That month of May was to be a period when the Newfoundlanders would move hither and thither on the *Arras Front*, marching into and out of the trenches. While there was to be the ever-present artillery-fire, concerted infantry activity, particularly after May 15 – officially the last day of the *Battle of Arras* – had been limited, apart from the marching.

(continued)

At the outset of June, the 1st Battalion had retired from the line to Bonneville, there to spend its time again re-enforcing, re-organizing and in training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.

(Right: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville – not Bonneville - in early May, perhaps the 7th, of 1917 – from The War Illustrated*)



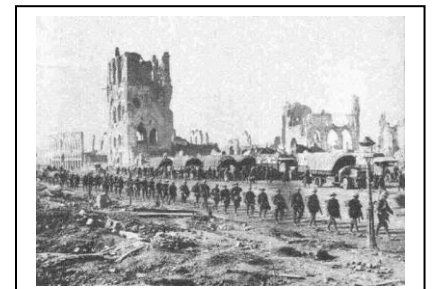
The Newfoundlanders had then soon once again been moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the vicinity of Ypres and...*the Salient*, their first posting to be to the banks of the *Yser Canal* just to the north of the city.

(Right: *The Yser Canal at a point in the northern outskirts of Ypres almost a century after the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, manned its eastern bank: East is to the right – photograph from 2014*)



This low-lying area, Belgian *Flanders*, the only part of the country unoccupied by German forces, had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917.

(Right: *Troops arriving from the railway station in single file, march past the vestiges of the historic Cloth Hall and through the rubble of the medieval city centre of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer or early autumn of 1917. – from Illustration*)



Officially designated as the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign was to come to be better known to history simply as *Passchendaele*, having adopted that name from a small village on a not-very high ridge to the north-east that later was to be cited as having been – *ostensibly* - one of the British Army's objectives.



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

(Right: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1916, after two years of war – from Illustration*)

The Newfoundland Battalion was to remain in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army. This had been or was also to be the case with the Australians, the New Zealanders and the Canadians, all of whose troops had floundered or would soon flounder their way across the sodden and shell-torn countryside of Belgian Flanders.



Notably the Newfoundland Battalion at *Passchendaele* was to fight in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16; and at the *Broembeek* (see both immediately below) on October 9.

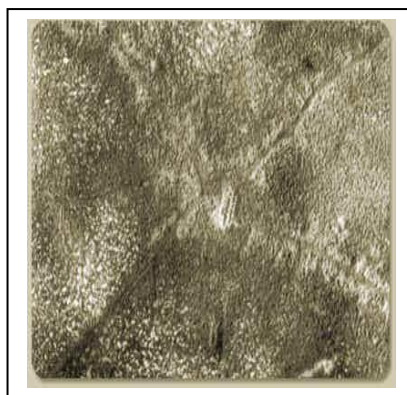
At the former it had incurred nine *killed in action*, ninety-three *wounded*, and one *missing in action*; at the *Broembeek* the cost had been higher: forty-eight *killed or died of wounds*, one-hundred thirty-two *wounded* and fifteen *missing in action*.

(Right: *This is the area of the Steenbeek – the stream runs close to the line of trees - and is therefore near to where the Newfoundland Battalion fought the engagement of August 16, 1917. It is some eight kilometres distant from a village called Passchendaele. – photograph from 2010*)



(Right: *The once-village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1917, after the battle of that name – from Illustration*)

It was to be only two days after this last-mentioned confrontation that the 1st Battalion had marched to the railway station at Elverdinghe from there to be transported to *Swindon Camp* in the area of Proven. Having remained there for five days to be both re-enforced and bombed, on the morning of October 17 the unit was once more to board a train.



By ten-thirty that same evening, the Battalion had arrived just to the west of the city of Arras and would now march the final few kilometres to its billets in the community of Berles-au-Bois.

The Newfoundlanders had still been there, at Berles-au-Bois, four weeks and two days later when, on November 17, the 1st Battalion would be ordered once again onto a train, on this occasion to travel in a south-easterly direction to the town of Peronne. From there it had begun to move further eastward, now on foot, towards the theatre of the battle now imminent.

On November 19, while still on the move, the unit had been issued as it went with...*war stores, rations and equipment*. For much of that night it had marched up to the assembly areas from where, at twenty minutes past six on that morning of November 20 – *Zero Hour* – the Newfoundland unit, not being in the first wave of the attack, was to move forward into its forming-up area. From those forward position, some hours later, at ten minutes past ten, bugles blowing, the 1st Battalion had advanced to the fray.



(Right above: *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*)

This new offensive – apparently initially conceived to be no more than a large-scale raid - 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 to be directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle was to begin well for the British who had used tanks on a large scale for the first time, but opportunities had been squandered. There were to be no troops available to exploit what was, admittedly, a hoped-for yet unexpected success, and by the close of the battle, the Germans had counter-attacked and the British had relinquished as much – more in places - territory as they had originally gained.

The Newfoundland Battalion had once again been dealt with severely, in the vicinity of Marcoing, Masnières - where a Caribou stands today - and in the area of the Canal St-Quentin which flows through both places: of the total of five-hundred fifty-three officers and men who had advanced into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of only the second day*.



(Right above: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of the 1st Battalion on November 20; however, whether its capture was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012*)

***At five-hundred fifty-three all ranks – not counting the aforementioned ten per cent reserve - the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment even at the outset of the operation was operating at just over fifty per cent of establishment strength: not that it would have been any consolation had it been known, but a goodly number of battalions in all the British and Dominion forces – with perhaps the exception of the Canadians - were encountering the same problem.**



(Right above: *A number of graves of soldiers from the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in Marcoing Military Cemetery. Here, as is almost always the case elsewhere, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, has identified them as being Canadian. – photograph from 2010*)

After the exertions of *Cambrai*, the Newfoundlanders were to be withdrawn from the line, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment by then numbering the strength of only a single company - whereas a complete battalion comprises four. The unit had then remained in the vicinity of Humbercourt, to the west of Arras, until December 18 when it was to march to Fressin, some fifty kilometres to the north-west. There the unit would spend both Christmas and New Year. The weather had obliged and had even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow - a bit too much at times apparently.

(continued)

At the beginning of January of 1918, after that snowy Christmas period spent to the south-west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of the 1st Battalion had returned to Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time. There, like the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences.



(Right above: *By 1918 Ypres was looking like this; some of these broken buildings had been a school which had served as a shelter for troops in the earlier days of the conflict. – from a vintage post-card*)

In the meantime, the Germans had been preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking man-power after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them. It was expected that they would launch a spring offensive - which they did – in fact they were to unleash several of them*.



**There were also to be several assaults by the Germans on French forces during that spring. They all met with varying degrees of success at the outset, but eventually they would be thwarted by Petain's divisions, aided at times by the newly-arriving Americans.*

In the sector where the 1st Battalion was stationed, the blow was not to fall until April. Thus, while they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders were to continue to dig.

(Right above: *Some of the countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were stationed in March and early April of 1918 – photograph from 2011*)

It was during this relatively calm period while the Newfoundland Battalion was serving in the area of Zonnebeke – as recounted in a previous period – that Private Jacobs would report from...*to duty*...with his unit from the new Regimental Depot at Hazely Down.

* * * * *

The Germans did as was expected. Ludendorff's armies had already launched a powerful thrust on March 21, striking at first in the area of *the Somme*, overrunning the battlefields of 1916 and beyond; for a while the advance seemed unstoppable.



Then a second offensive, *Georgette*, was launched in the northern sector of the front, in Flanders, where the Newfoundlanders were stationed: the date was April 9. Within two days the situation of the Allies was desperate.

(Preceding page: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918 – from Illustration*)

On the day after the first heavy bombardments, April 10, as the Germans approached the towns of Armentières and Nieppe, troops were deployed to meet them. The Newfoundlanders, due to come out of the line and move back to the Somme, boarded buses at three o'clock in the afternoon and were suddenly directed southward, towards Nieppe. They were in action, attempting to stem this latest offensive, three hours later.



(Right above: *the area of La Crêche - the buildings in the background - where the Newfoundlanders de-bussed on April 10 to meet the Germans in the area of Steenwerck and its railway station – photograph from 2010.*)

The British were pushed back to the frontier area of France and Belgium. On the 12th of April the Newfoundland Battalion, fighting in companies rather than as a single entity, was making a series of stands.

On April 13, during the defensive stand near the De Seule crossroads on the Franco-Belgian border, one platoon of 'C' Company was obliterated while trying to check the German advance. The remainder of 'C' Company took up defensive positions along a light railway line and, with 'A' Company, stopped a later enemy attack. 'B' and 'D' Companies – in a failed counter-attack on that evening - were equally heavily involved.



(Right above: *ground just to the east of Bailleul where 1st Battalion fought during the period April 12 to 21 – photograph from 2013*)

What exact role Private Jacobs played is not known – apart from the Regimental Diary entry below - it is recorded only that he was a soldier of 'C' Company - but from April 10 to 21 was to be a difficult eleven days for all of 1st Battalion's personnel. Nevertheless, somehow, the German breakthrough never materialised and the front would finally stabilise.

The Regimental War Diary cites : *...the remainder of 'C' Coy. under Capt. Paterson, M.C. and Hqrs. took up a position along a light railway line and prepared to fight to a finish. ...there can be no doubt that it was Hqrs., 'A' & 'C' Coys. that by their resistance saved what would have been at least a very serious position for the whole 34th Division*.*

**The 1st Battalion was transferred very briefly at the time to the 34th Division from the 29th Division with which it had served since Gallipoli.*



(Preceding page: *These are the De Seule crossroads, lying astride the Franco-Belgian frontier, the scene of fierce fighting involving 1st Battalion on April 12 -13, 1918. Today there are several houses and a convenience store. – photograph from 2009(?)*)

The son of James Jacobs, part-time cobbler working for *P.J. Fortune, Dry Goods Merchant* of Water Street, and to whom was willed his son's all, and of Rachel Jacobs (née *Barter*)* – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay - of 17, College Square, St. John's, he was also brother to Evelyn, to Elsie-May, Mary-Margaret, William-John, to Lillie - and to Willie who had died young in 1901.

**The couple had been married on November 22 of 1881.*

Private Jacobs was reported as having been...*killed in action*...on April 12, 1918, while fighting with 'C' Company near the French town of Nieppe on the Franco-Belgian border, during *Georgette*, the German spring offensive.

Frederick James Jacobs had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, February 6, 1895 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

***There was also a close friend, a Private C.W. Lawson, in England with the 51st Canadian Battalion, who wrote to the Newfoundland Pay & Record office to enquire as to the welfare of Private Jacobs. Also, he had become friends with Mrs. Mary Shaw and family at 9, Burns' Statue Square in Ayr, with whom he apparently stayed from time to time.*

Private Frederick James Jacobs 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).

(continued on following page)



Pay and Record Office
58 Victoria Street
London

4th May 1918

Dear Sir – I would esteem it a great favour if you could let me have any information concerning Pte. Fred J. Jacobs (1297) 1st Royal N.F.L.D. Regt. He went to France at the end of Feb., but since the 6th of April we have had no word from him.

Trusting you will oblige and thanking you in anticipation for your trouble.

I remain

Yours sincerely

Ara L. (?) Bain

Langley Bank
Carrick Rd.
Ayr, Scotland

Noted on letter: *KIA 12/4/18*

(Right above: *This as Langley Bank, now a guest house, on Carrick Road in Ayr. – photograph from 2011*)



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 6, 2023.