

Company Serjeant*-Major Albert Evelyn Janes DCM (Regimental Number 702) lies in Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery – Grave reference XXVI. F. 4.

**Often spelled in this fashion at the time*

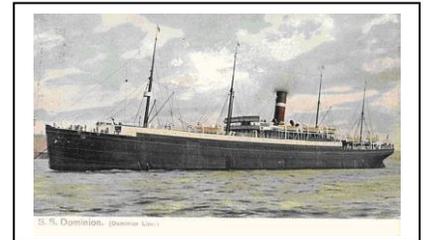
His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a *civil engineer* and *surveyor* earning forty dollars a month, Albert Janes presented himself for both enlistment – engaged at the private soldier’s daily rate of a single dollar a day plus a ten-cent *Field Allowance* - and attestation on December 15 of 1914, at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John’s, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. He was a recruit of the Second Draft*.

**Whereas most of the new recruits had – logically – already undergone a medical examination prior to enlistment, there is no record of Albert Evelyn Janes having done so. What may have transpired is that he was examined by a private doctor in his home town of Hant's Harbour, Trinity Bay, before then having taken the train to St. John's for the formalities that then followed on December 15.*

Now for Private Janes, Number 702, there was to be a seven-week waiting period, but where he was to spend that time is not clear.

There exist a number of files of other recruits which show that those from outside St. John's were often boarded in the city while awaiting departure for overseas service. This arrangement was subsidized by the Newfoundland government even if it were a family member who was hosting the new soldier. It may of course be that he returned home after enlistment to await the summons to proceed on overseas service, but Private Janes' papers appear to reveal nothing of this ilk.

On the fourth day of February of 1915, the first reinforcements – this was 'C' Company - for the Newfoundland contingent – it was not yet at battalion strength - which by this time was serving in Scotland (see further below), were to embark via the sealing tender *Neptune* onto the SS *Dominion* – the vessel having anchored to the south of St. John's, off Bay Bulls, because of ice conditions.



The vessel was then to sail - and Private Janes thus departed Newfoundland for overseas service - a day later again, on February 5, for trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom.

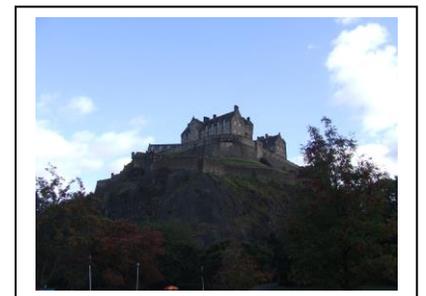
(Right above: The image of the steamer 'Dominion' - launched in 1894 as the 'Prussia' - is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. An older vessel, she was to be requisitioned during the latter part of the Great War as a store and supply ship. She survived the conflict to be scrapped in 1922.)



**There appears to be some confusion in some sources as to whether these troops were 'C' or 'D' Company. However, 'D' Company was to go overseas some time later on 'Stephano' to Halifax and then on 'Orduña' to Liverpool.*

(Right above: The photograph of personnel of 'C' Company on board the 'Neptune' on the way to the harbour at Bay Bulls is from the Provincial Archives.)

Having disembarked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool, the Newfoundlanders entrained for Edinburgh, the first Newfoundland Regiment contingent having by this time been posted to the historic Castle in Scotland's capital city. There they were to provide the garrison, thus being the first unit from overseas ever to do so.



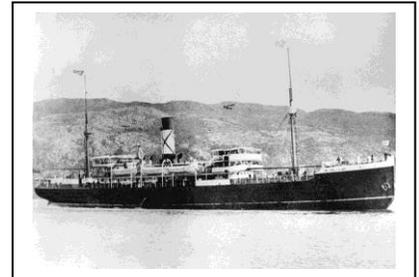
Private Janes and the other new-comers of 'C' Company reported to duty at Edinburgh Castle on February 16.

(Preceding page: *Edinburgh Castle dominates the city from its position on the summit of Castle Hill.* – photograph from 2011)

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Five to six months before that time, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of some 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 - 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 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 would sail 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: *The image of Florizel at anchor in the harbour at St. John's is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

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



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 – and where 'C' Company and Private Janes, as also cited beforehand, would arrive from Newfoundland on February 16 of 1915.

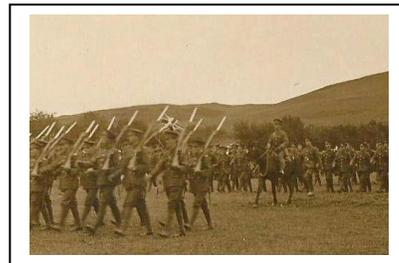
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Some three months later, on May 11, and three weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundlanders unit was ordered moved to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent received the reinforcements from home – 'F' Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength*.

The now-formed 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered eligible to be sent on 'active service'.

(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 Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



**This was approximately fifteen hundred, sufficient to furnish 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 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.



Meanwhile the two junior Companies, 'E' – 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.

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

It was during this period at Aldershot, on August 15, that Private Janes 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.*

(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.)*

On August 20, 1915, Private Janes and the Newfoundland unit 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 landed at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

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While it had been Private Janes who had embarked onto Megantic in Devonport, it had been *Lance Corporal* Janes who had stepped ashore in Alexandria. During the voyage he had received a first promotion, one source having recorded August 26 as the date, a second file having documented three days earlier, August 23.



(Right adjacent: *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.*)

(Right: *Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph taken in 2011*)



(Right: *Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros: either Megantic on August 29, Ausonia on September 18, or Prince Abbas on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – 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 of the Newfoundland Regiment was to serve during the autumn of 1915 – photograph from 2011*)



When the Newfoundlanders landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* on that September night of 1915 they were to disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was 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 proved 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 above: *No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives*)

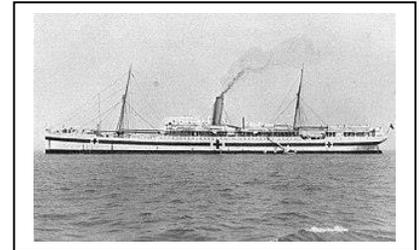
**Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*



(Right: An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives)

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Less than four weeks after having set foot onto the sand and stone – mostly the latter – of *Kangaroo Beach*, on October 15 Lance Corporal Janes was to be evacuated from *Suvla Bay* and taken on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Glenart Castle* – possibly having been transferred through the Greek island of Lemnos.



He was suffering from pyrexia (a high temperature).

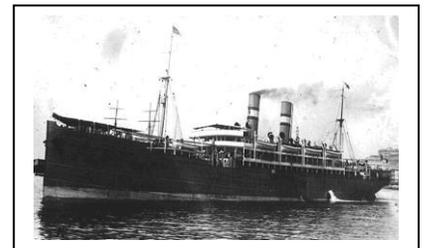
(Right above: The image of Glenart Castle in her war-time hospital-ship garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Built in 1900 as 'Galician', she was re-named in 1914 to 'Glenart Castle' prior to being requisitioned for her role as a hospital ship. The vessel was not to survive the conflict as she was torpedoed and sunk on February 26 of 1918.)



The vessel was to transport him to the British-held Mediterranean island of Malta. Upon his arrival there Lance Corporal Janes was admitted, on the 20th, to St. David's Hospital where he was thereupon diagnosed as having pharyngitis.

(Right above: One of the many now-abandoned British medical facilities which still stand on the island of Malta – independent since 1964 – photograph from 2011)

Some six weeks later – three of which he had spent in bed - on December 5 he was again placed on board a hospital ship; on this occasion it was the *Regina d'Italia* and Lance Corporal Janes was taking passage back to the United Kingdom. There he was hospitalized on December 14 at the Royal Victorian Hospital, Netley (below right), for treatment for debility (general weakness).



(Right above: 'Regina d'Italia' was an Italian passenger ship used on trans-Atlantic routes before and after the War between Genoa and ports in both North and South America. After Italy's entry into the conflict in 1915 she played the roles of troop-transport and also hospital ship. The vessel survived the Great War and continued to work until 1928 when she was scrapped. – image from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site)

(continued)

Exactly one month later, on January 14 of the New Year, 1916, he was discharged and granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital in the United Kingdom.

This period of leave he spent in Edinburgh – at 8, Rosie Place, Easter Road - before being posted to the Regimental Depot at Ayr where he reported *to duty* on January 23. Lance Corporal Janes was to remain there for some seven weeks.

At the end of this summer of 1915, the once-Royal Borough of Ayr on Scotland's west coast was to begin to serve as the overseas base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment from where – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 - re-enforcement drafts from home were to be despatched to bolster the 1st Battalion's numbers, at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.

(Right above: *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)

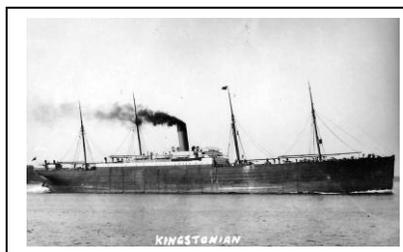
(Right: *The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower – it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo.

Lance Corporal Janes, attached to 'E' Company, was now to wait those afore-mentioned seven weeks before being summoned once again to *active service*. It was not to be until March 13 of that year, 1916, that he embarked at Devonport to join the Newfoundland Battalion...*in the field*. With him was the 2nd Reinforcement Draft from Ayr, a detachment en route for the Middle East and – as it thought - Egypt.

However, three weeks later, by this circuitous route, the detachment arrived *from Alexandria* in the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles on board His Majesty's Transport *Kingstonian*, on April 3-4, there to join - not the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in Egypt but - the British Expeditionary Force in France*.

(Right above: *The image of the transport ship Kingstonian is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

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Four days later, on April 8, Commanding Officers Captain Ledingham and Lieutenant W. J. Pippy arrived by train from Marseilles with their re-enforcement draft of one-hundred forty *other ranks* – Lance Corporal Janes among that number - to report to *duty* with the 1st Battalion in the village of Louvencourt, in the northern *Département de la Somme*.

**At the time there was some confusion as to whether 1st Battalion would stay in the Middle East or not, and this draft had likely already set sail for Egypt before the 1st Battalion was ordered to France from Egypt. It may be their vessel had no wireless or it may be that some of the other units on board were needed in the Middle East, but no official reason seems to have been documented. The ships likely passed each other en route.*

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In the meantime, during the short period which had followed Lance Corporal Janes' departure for medical attention, things had been worsening at *Gallipoli** for the British in general and the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in particular.

**The French know the campaign as 'Les Dardanelles' while the Turks call it 'Çanakkale'.*

November 26 of 1915 had seen 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, were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

As the days, weeks and months had passed at *Suvla Bay*, the British position there was to become more and more untenable and thus on the night of December 19-20, they had abandoned the area – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard.

Some of the Battalion personnel were to be evacuated to the nearby island of Imbros, some to Lemnos, further away; but in neither case had the respite been 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 above: *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)



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

(continued)

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

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

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

(Right: 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in 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 had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, to arrive there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders had then immediately been transferred southward to the vicinity of Suez, a port at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.

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

(Right: 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)



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



After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and other ranks of the 1st Battalion had boarded His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage through the *Suez Canal* en route to France. The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles, on March 22.

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



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

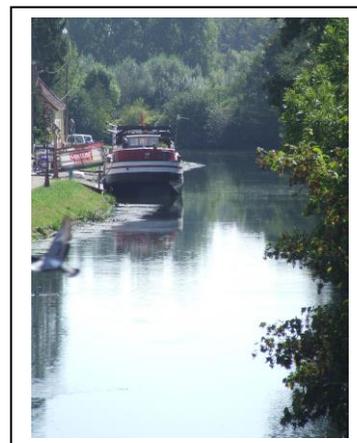
It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they then had marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to have become a part of their history.

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

It had been during this march of the next number of days that on April 8, during the period of a few days spent in billets in and in the vicinity of the community of Lovencourt, Lance Corporal Janes' 2nd Reinforcement Draft had arrived from Ayr – via Egypt – to report *to duty*.

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



Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front*, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit was then 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(?)*)



(continued)

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(?)*)

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



(Right: *Wounded at the Somme being transported in hand-carts from the forward area for further medical attention – from Le Miroir*)

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

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



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

(continued)

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.

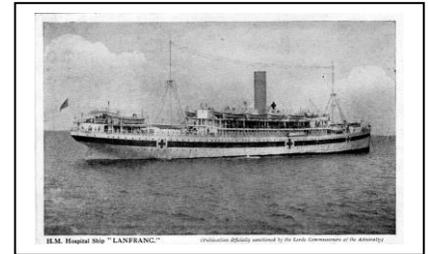
(Right: A grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland - dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from...?)

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At Beaumont-Hamel Lance Corporal Janes incurred gun-shot wounds to the right shoulder-blade, to the spinal cord and to the right leg, during the fighting on July 1, the first day of *the Somme*. And, as will be seen below, it appears that he may also have lost a part of a finger.



Where Lance Corporal Janes was treated (or not) during the period before his transfer to England on board His Majesty’s Hospital Ship *Lanfranc* on July 8 appears not to be recorded, but by the 9th he had been admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth and, later again, on July 25, for convalescence, to the Brooklands Military Hospital at Weybridge.



(Right above: The image of HMHS Lanfranc clad in her war-time garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. A small ocean-going passenger-liner – small enough to navigate the Amazon River, she was requisitioned during the Great War to serve as a hospital ship, a role that was played until April 17, 1917, when she was torpedoed and sunk with a loss of forty lives of which eighteen were wounded German prisoners-of-war.)

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



(Right below: A party of Newfoundland patients, dressed in hospital uniform but otherwise unfortunately unidentified, seen here convalescing in the grounds of the 3rd London General Hospital at Wandsworth – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)



Another ten-day furlough – August 29 until September 7 – followed hospitalization and convalescence, as did the almost-inevitable posting to the Regimental Depot at Ayr; but also with it came two promotions: to the rank of corporal on October 27; then to that of sergeant on January 17 of the New Year, 1917.

There is at this juncture a medical report issued by the Ayr County Hospital of a situation which appears nowhere else among the papers of his dossier and of which the recorded dates are a little incongruous. It appears to presume a previous injury or wound as will be seen from the excerpts which follow: *Number of days in hospital – 28; Admitted 5/9/16; Discharged 2/10/16... Bone projecting from stump of middle finger... Amputation performed...*

It was then during the spring of 1917, on April 24-25, that Sergeant Janes returned to the *Western Front*, ordered there as a non-commissioned officer of the 23rd Re-enforcement Draft.

(Right: *The Newfoundland Plot in Ayr Cemetery wherein lie fourteen Newfoundlanders whom the Commonwealth War Graves Commission persist in referring to as Canadians – here and elsewhere – photograph from 2014(?)*)



The contingent, having left Ayr on the 24th, embarked from the port of Southampton on that second date en route to the Norman capital city of Rouen where the ship docked on the following day again: there was to be no visit to Egypt of course on this occasion, but in its stead were to be a few days spent at the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot in the vicinity of Rouen for final training and organization*.



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

Sergeant Janes, however, was obliged to be admitted into the 1st Stationary Hospital on April 28; on this occasion he was to be treated for a *mild* venereal problem.

**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.*

Transferred to the 2nd Convalescent Depot at Rouen on June 5, Sergeant Janes was discharged...*to duty...*at the Base Depot on June 19 and was there appointed as (*Acting*) Company Sergeant-Major on the day of his return to the Newfoundland Battalion. This, however, was not to occur until some four months later, on October 12 - so says the Battalion War Diarist, contradicting other sources - when he was one of a draft of ninety-four *other ranks* dispatched to re-enforce the unit to arrive from Rouen, the Newfoundlanders having just been withdrawn from the line after the engagement at the *Broembek* during *Passchendaele*.

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By the time of (Acting) Company Sergeant-Major Janes' return...to duty...with the 1st Battalion, some fifteen months had passed since his evacuation from the field at Beaumont-Hamel, and the shattered Newfoundland unit, having re-enforced and re-organized, had, during the months that had followed, had been engaged in several major operations. But at the outset, rehabilitation had been the priority.

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it had been feared that a German counter-assault might well annihilate 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 - had thus remained in the trenches perhaps fearing the worst, and at night searching for the wounded and burying the dead. It was to be July 6 before the Newfoundlanders were to be relieved from the forward area and to be ordered withdrawn to Englebelmer.



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

(Right above: *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 – had reported to duty. They had been 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 – had moved north and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.

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

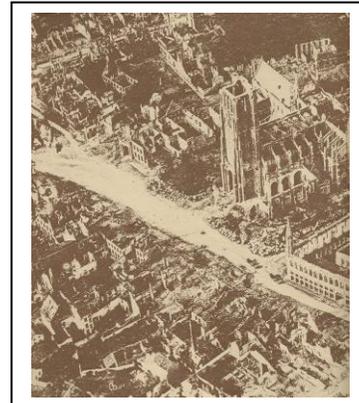


(Right above: *The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

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

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

(Right: *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.

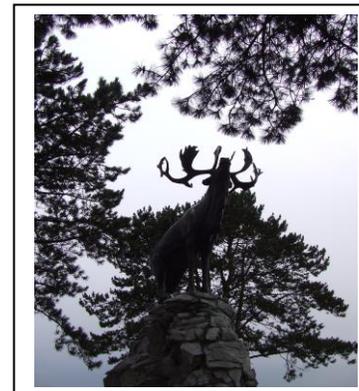
The encounter had proved to be another ill-conceived and costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

(Right: *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)

The Newfoundland Battalion 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.

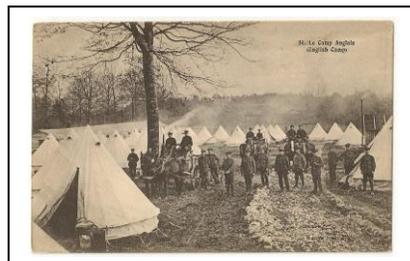


The Newfoundlanders were now to spend two weeks withdrawn to the area of Ville-sous-Corbie, re-enforcing and reorganizing. It was not to be until November 15 that the 1st Battalion began to wend its way back up to the front lines.

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

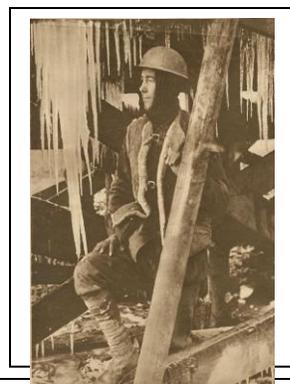
It had been on January 11 that the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered out of *Corps Reserve* and its lodgings at *Camps en Amienois* from where it would make its way on foot to the community of Airaines. From the railway station there had entrained for the small town of Corbie where it had thereupon 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 was to casually refer to as *wastage*, as the Newfoundland unit had not ventured from its trenches.

In fact, the sole infantry activity which had *directly* involved 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 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*)

(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.



(continued)

They had even had the pleasure of a visit from Ayr of the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.

(Preceding page: *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: *The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War – from Illustration*)

(Right below: *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 attack would be the most expensive operation of the entire *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.



And while the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* had been yet a further disaster.

(Right: *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 had begun at the place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which had finished some 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 had proved 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 in the area of Monchy-le-Preux. Its casualty count had been high enough to warrant that it and

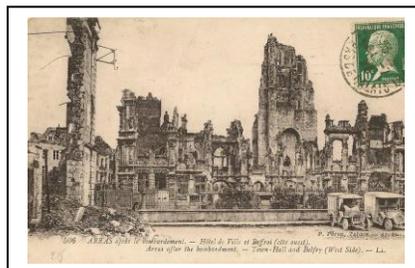
the Essex Regiment, which had also incurred heavy losses, be amalgamated into a composite battalion until such time as incoming re-enforcements would allow the two units' strengths to once more resemble those of bona fide battalions.

The final action in which the Newfoundland Battalion was to be involved during the five-week long *Battle of Arras* had been 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 had apparently not been 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 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.

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*)



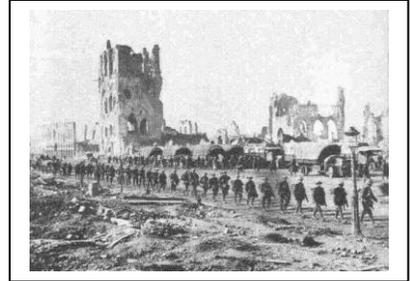
The Newfoundlanders had then soon once again been moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the vicinity of Ypres and...*the Salient*, their first posting to be to the banks of the *Yser Canal* just to the north of the city.

(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*)



(continued)

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

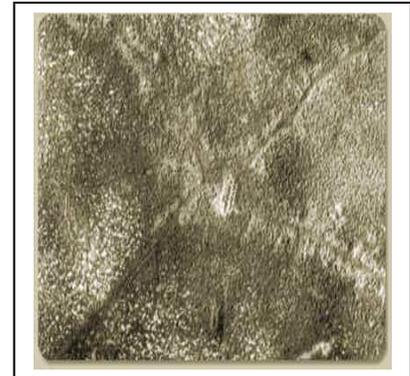
(Right: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1916, after two years of war – from Illustration*)



The 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment 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 *Broembek* (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 *Broembek* the cost had been higher: forty-eight *killed or died of wounds*, one-hundred thirty-two *wounded* and fifteen *missing in action*.



(Right above: *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*)

(continued)

(Preceding page: *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.

* * * * *

And as seen in an earlier paragraph, it was during that brief period spent at *Swindon Camp* that, on October 12, Company Sergeant Major Janes returned after fifteen months of absence to the Newfoundland Battalion.

Having remained at the camp for five days, there 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 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 were still 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 then began 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 was to be issued as it went with... *war stores, rations and equipment*. For much of that night it then 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 advanced to the fray.

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 employed tanks on a large scale for the first time, but opportunities were then 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 1st 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*.

(Preceding page: *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*)

(Right: *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: *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*)

Although, as was normally the case, the awarding of his decoration was declared well after the event, Company Sergeant-Major Janes was to receive the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his conduct on that November 20, 1917:

...for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He was one of the first to charge across a bridge. When a temporary check occurred owing to enfilade machine gun fire at short range, he reorganized the attack and led the men forward.’ – extract of Honours & Awards received from Pay & Record Office, London, dated March 7, 1918. The official mention of the award appeared in the London Gazette on April 3, 1918.



**There is some confusion as to where the crossing(s) of the Canal took place: either at the road bridge – from where the photograph on the previous page was taken - which traverses the Canal in the middle of Masnières or on the small foot-bridge over the lock, about one kilometre to the west of the village and the first bridge.*



(Right above: *The Canal St-Martin lock where Company Sergeant Major Janes possibly won his DCM, although the original buildings have obviously been replaced since that time – photograph from 2010*)

(continued)

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 full battalion comprises four. The unit 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 appears to have obliged and even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow - a bit too much at times apparently.

There was a present of sorts during this Christmas period for Company Sergeant Major Jane: a further promotion, on this occasion to the rank of (Acting) Regimental Sergeant Major.

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 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 the sector where the Newfoundland 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*)

The Germans then did as was expected of them: Ludendorff's armies had already launched a powerful thrust on March 21, the first day of that spring of 1918, having struck at first in the area of and just south of, *the Somme*, there to overrun the battlefields of 1916 and beyond; for a while their advance had seemed unstoppable.



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

For a number of reasons, after two weeks it had begun to falter and would eventually halt; but then, just days afterwards, a second offensive, *Georgette*, was to be launched in the northern sector of the front, in Belgian Flanders, where the Newfoundlanders had been stationed: the date April 9. Within only two days the situation of the British was to become desperate*.

**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.*

On the day after the first heavy bombardments, April 10, and as the Germans approached the towns of Armentières and Nieppe, troops were to be deployed to meet them. The Newfoundlanders, having been due to come out of the line and to move back to the area of *the Somme*, were instead to board buses at three o'clock in the afternoon, thereupon to be directed southward, towards the border town of Nieppe. They were to be 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 would now be pushed back to the frontier area of France and Belgium. On the 12th of April the 1st Battalion, fighting in companies rather than as a single entity, was to make a series of desperate stands.

On April 12-13 – the dates in the 1st Battalion's War Diary are not clear - 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 had taken up defensive positions along a light railway line and, with 'A' Company, then stopped a later enemy attack. 'B' and 'D' Companies – in a failed counter-attack on that evening – were to be equally heavily involved.



(Right above: *Ground just to the east of Bailleul where the 1st Battalion was to be in action during the period April 12 to 21 – photograph from 2013*)

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**.



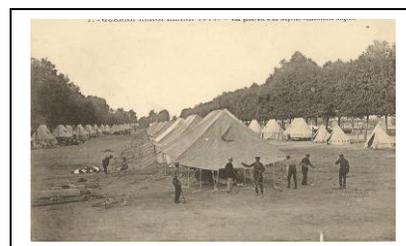
The period from April 10 to 21 was to be a difficult eleven days for all of the 1st Battalion's personnel. Nevertheless, somehow, the German breakthrough never had materialised and the front had finally been stabilised*.

**The 88th Brigade – and therefore the Newfoundland Battalion – was to be seconded to the 34th Division from the 29th Division during this critical period.*

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

Regimental Sergeant-Major Janes suffered gun-shot wounds to the chest on April 13, 1918, while serving with 'C' Company in the fighting He was evacuated from the field to behind the lines and to the 2nd Canadian Casualty Clearing Station at the *Rémy Sidings** just outside the Belgian town of Poperinghe.

(Right above: 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)



**Named thus for the numerous railway sidings constructed there to transport the wounded into and away from the medical facilities. It was a very large operation witnessed – alas – by the large adjacent cemetery where RSM Janes would be laid to rest.*

The son of James Watson Janes, magistrate, and of Jane Ann Janes (née *Short*, deceased April 26, 1906)* of Hant's Harbour in Trinity Bay (then *he* apparently of Greenspond, Bonavista Bay, as of 1921) he was also brother to Arthur-Chesley, to Edgar-Cecil, to Leonard-Frank, to Fred-Watson, to Lemuel-Willey, to Lily-Mabel, to Walter-Harold, to Alice-Maud, to Edith-Agnes...and to Eda-Clare who left Newfoundland on November 14 of 1916...to engage in the work of First Aid Nurse.

**The couple was married on December 20, 1878.*

Sergeant-Major Janes* was reported as having *died of wounds* on the following day, April 14th, at a quarter to five in the morning, in the same 2nd Canadian CCS.

Albert Evelyn Janes had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-four years: date of birth, December 7, 1890 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



(Right above: The photograph of Private(?) Janes is from the Royal Canadian Legion publication... 'Lest We Forget'.)

(continued)

Sergeant Major Albert Evelyn Janes, DCM, 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 8, 2023.