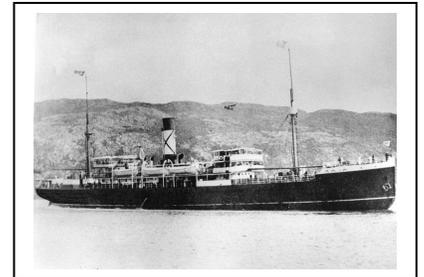


Private Thomas Joseph Kelly (Regimental Number 178), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



His occupation prior to enlistment recorded as being that of a sailor working for a monthly wage of \$28.00, Thomas Joseph Kelly enlisted on September 13, 1914 – at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem (including a daily ten-cent field allowance) – at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, during the First Draft.



Having then attested on October 1, he embarked two days later on October 3 onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel*. The ship sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island where she was to join the convoy transporting the 1st Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

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



In the United Kingdom Private Kelly trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh Castle – where it provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.

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

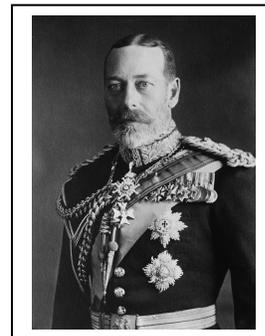


(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment parades at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

(continued)

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

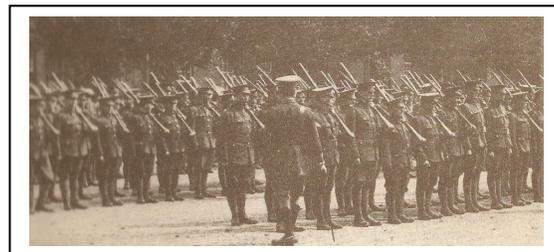
(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India* – photograph from *Bain News Services* via *Wikipedia*)



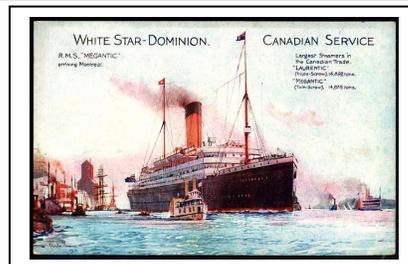
**On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service. The 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.*

During that short training period spent at Aldershot, Private Kelly of 'A' Company – he was not alone to do so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 14, to re-enlist *for the duration of the war**.

**At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.*



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



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

On August 20, 1915, Private Kelly and his comrades-in-arms embarked in Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in the British Abassia Barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he disembarked with the 1st Battalion at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *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)

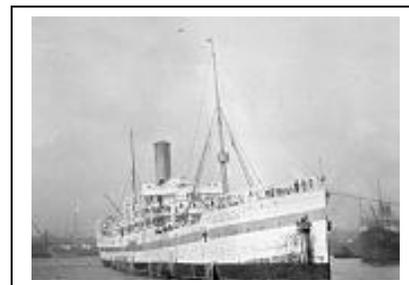


(Right above: Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros: either *Megantic* on August 29, *Ausonia* on September 18, or *Prince Abbas* on September 19 – *Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli.* – from Provincial Archives)

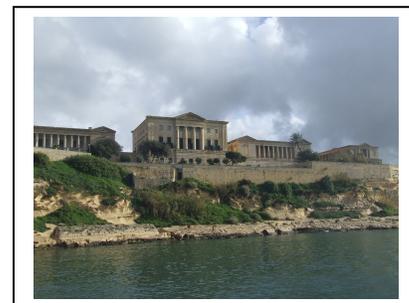


(Right: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Kelly was to serve during the first sixteen days of the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)

Just over two weeks after his disembarkation at *Suvla Bay*, on October 6, Private Kelly was evacuated away from the *Gallipoli Peninsula*, on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Dunluce Castle* for further medical attention at an unrecorded hospital on the British-held Mediterranean island of Malta where he arrived three days later, on October 9. There he was diagnosed as suffering from enteric (*gastric*) fever.



(Right above: *The image of HMHS Dunluce Castle is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. The vessel was to survive the Great War.*)



(Right: *One of the many British military hospitals, now abandoned on the former British possession of Malta – independent since 1964 - that were used during both World Wars* – photographs 2011)

* * * * *

On November 6 Private Kelly sailed once more, invalided from Malta back to the United Kingdom, to travel there on board HM Hospital Ship *Hunslet*. Upon arrival in England on the 16th day of the month, he was admitted into the Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley*, in close proximity to the port-city of Southampton on the south coast.



**Whenever possible, wounded and sick Newfoundland service men were sent to hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth, south London (see further below), thanks to an agreement struck by the British and Newfoundland governments. Private Kelly was an exception.*

(continued)

(Preceding page: *The image of the SS Hunslet, shown here in peace-time, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries. Originally named as Tannenfels before then Basilan (during which period, 1914, she was first requisitioned), she became Hunslet in 1915. The vessel was broken up in 1933.)*



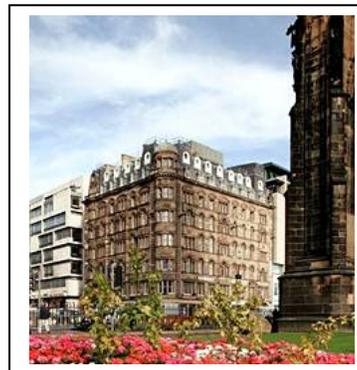
(Right: *The Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley whose construction, begun in 1856, had been encouraged by Queen Victoria herself. – The image is from the Wikipedia web-site.)*

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



One month later, on December 17, Private Kelly was transferred to another infirmary, *Addington Park War Hospital*, on the southern outskirts of London, for a four-week period of convalescence. On January 15 he was then granted the six-week furlough allowed to discharged enteric patients.

In theory Private Kelly was now on leave until February 25, but it appears that he reported to the Base Depot at Ayr (see below) on or about February 8 whereupon he was attached to ‘E’ Company. In the meantime, the records show that at some time just prior to this he had spent some time at the *Waverley Hotel* in Edinburgh.



(Right: *It was popular with the soldiery because during the entire conflict the owners of the Waverley allowed special rates in all its hotels to military personnel. – The image is from the Wikipedia web-site.)*

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



(Right above: *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 lived the officers, is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)*

On the 28th of March, 1916, Private Kelly left Ayr with the 3rd Re-enforcement Draft* from Ayr, to embark onto His Majesty’s Transport *Archangel* in the English south-coast port of Southampton for the short sea-voyage to Rouen, the capital city of Normandy.

(continued)

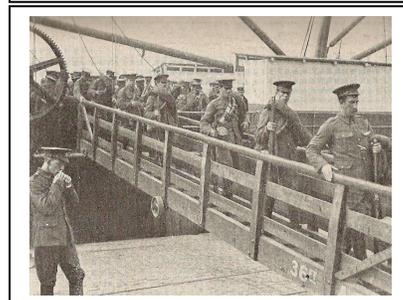
****This was the first re-enforcement contingent to leave Ayr to go to the Western Front.***

The Newfoundland contingent landed in Rouen on March 30 and proceeded to the nearby British Expeditionary Force Base Depot for ultimate training and organization* before its rendezvous with the parent unit.

(Right: The image of a troop-laden 'Archangel' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

(Right: British troops disembark at Rouen on their way to the Western Front. – from Illustration)

****Apparently the standard length of time for this final training 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, camps that became known as the Bull Rings.***



Private Kelly – one of a detachment of two officers and two-hundred eleven *other ranks* - reported to duty from Rouen to the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, stationed temporarily by then in a village, Englebelmer, of the French *Département de la Somme*, on April 15, just behind the lines, and where work was about to be undertaken by the Newfoundlanders in the communication trenches.

* * * * *

In the meantime, during the period of Private Kelly's hospitalization and convalescence in England, and then his subsequent posting to the Base Depot in Scotland, his 1st Battalion was to spend a difficult time at *Suvla Bay* before eventually having been ordered despatched from the Middle East to the *Western Front*.

The Middle East campaign was to be a debacle: Flies, dust, disease, frost-bite, floods – plus the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command* had ever anticipated – had eventually overwhelmed the British-led forces and it would soon afterwards be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

****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.***

On the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, were 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 had been transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(continued)

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

The British and the Anzac forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps also served at Gallipoli – had now only been marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Peninsula was to be undertaken. The operation had taken place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion having provided some of the rear-guard for this second occasion as well*.



***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 at Cape Helles as it was days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration)



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



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



When the British had evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, having arrived there on the 15th of that month.

The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to Suez, one of the ports at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders as, at the time, the subsequent destination of the 1st Battalion's 29th Division had not yet been decided*.



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

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

(continued)

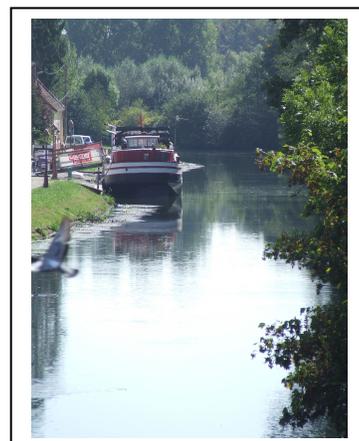
(Right: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage postcard*)



After a two-month interim, on March 14, the Newfoundlanders had embarked through Port Tewfiq, this town also at the southern end of the *Suez Canal*, for passage to the French port of Marseilles where they were to disembark on March 22, en route to the *Western Front*.

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train had arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having travelled unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the local station at two in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were still to face a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

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



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

On April 13, 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to parade into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where its personnel would be billeted, would receive re-enforcements – Private Kelly among their number - and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the trenches of the *Western Front*.

The Newfoundlanders would also soon be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that meandering river, *the Somme*.

* * * * *

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



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*.

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



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



The son of James Kelly, fisherman, and of Mary Ann Kelly (née *Griffin*)* of Jersey Side, Placentia, he was also brother to John, to Leo-Joseph, to Mary (also found as *May*)-Elizabeth, to James-Joseph, to Edward-Joseph and to Patrick.

****The couple married January 6, 1886.***

Private Kelly was reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. Some six months later, on December 31, 1916, he was officially recorded as *presumed dead*.



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

Thomas Joseph Kelly had enlisted at the declared age of twenty-three years: date of birth at Jersey Side, Placentia, October 10, 1890 (from Roman Catholic Parish records).



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The sacrifice of Private Kelly is honoured on the Placentia War Memorial.*
– photograph from 2013)

Private Thomas Joseph Kelly was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



War Hospital
Addington park
Croydon Dec 18/15
Paymaster Newfoundland
Contingnt

Dear Sir

Please pardon me for troubling you with this note There is two of us NFLD boys and we got no tobacco or money we would like to know if you would be kind enough to make arrangements for we to get we don't mind if its reducted from our pay. Pte W thistle 1207 would like to know if you need his paybook he gave it in at the RV Hospital Netley and Oblige

No 178 Pte TJ Kelly
1st Newfoundland Reg
War Hospital
Addington Park
Croydon

By the way sir I still holds my paybook I gave it in at BRC hospital and it was gave back to me again

**He wrote this letter on December 18, 1915, the day after entering Addington Park Hospital.*

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 – January 31, 2023.