



**Private Martin Keough (Regimental Number 1584) lies in Flesquières Hill British Cemetery: Grave reference III. A. 38.**

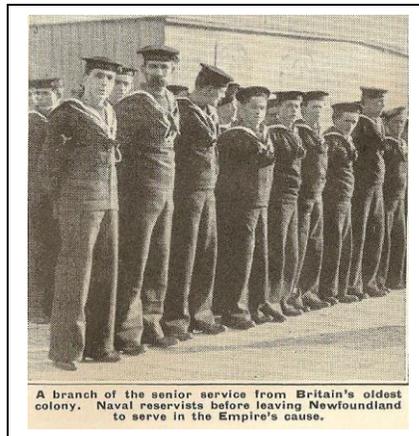
**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *labourer* earning a monthly twenty-nine dollars, Martin Keough was a recruit of the Fifth Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on June 2 of 1915. It was a procedure which would pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.**

**Two days following his medical assessment, on June 4 Martin Keough returned to the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, on this second occasion to enlist. He was thereupon engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar to which was to be added a ten-cent per diem field allowance.**

Twenty-four hours later again, on June 5, he swore the oath of allegiance, habitually the final formality of enlistment, to George V, whereupon, at that precise moment, Martin Keough became...*a soldier of the King.*

*\*A second source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

There thereupon followed a further waiting period of two weeks plus a day before Private Keough, Regimental Number 1584, was to embark onto His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* on June 20 in St. John's Harbour and sail (*almost\**) directly to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two personnel of 'F' Company and eighty-five naval reservists to take passage on that day.



A branch of the senior service from Britain's oldest colony. Naval reservists before leaving Newfoundland to serve in the Empire's cause.

(Right above: *Naval reservists from Newfoundland, during the early days of the Great War, before their departure for the United Kingdom - from The War Illustrated*)

Where Private Keough was to spend the interim between his attestation and his departure on...*overseas service...*is not clear – and is not documented among his papers.

It may be that he was to return temporarily to work and surely likely that he was to spend at least some of that time at his home in the capital city - but this of course is only speculation.



(Right above: *The photograph of Newfoundland military personnel in tenders on their way to board 'Calgarian' is from the Provincial Archives. 'Calgarian' was not a requisitioned troop transport but in September of 1914 had been taken over by the British government to serve as an armed merchant-cruiser. She did, however, as on this occasion, at times carry troops and civilian passengers across the Atlantic. She was later torpedoed and sunk by U-19 off the north of Ireland on March 1, 1918.*)

*\*Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the journey of about a week. Not only was Calgarian escorting three submarines, but she sailed by way of the Portuguese Azores and then Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders apparently even having the time to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. She reached Liverpool on July 9.*



(Right above: *The British Crown Colony of Gibraltar in pre-Great War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background beyond the harbour and Royal Navy dockyard. – from a vintage postcard*)

On the day after its arrival in the United Kingdom, 'F' Company travelled from Liverpool by train to Hawick from where the detachment marched and then reported...*to duty...at Stobs*

**Camp** on the evening of July 10. It was an important moment: the Newfoundland Regiment, as of that day counting fifteen hundred personnel\*, was now at establishment strength and could be posted on...*active service*.

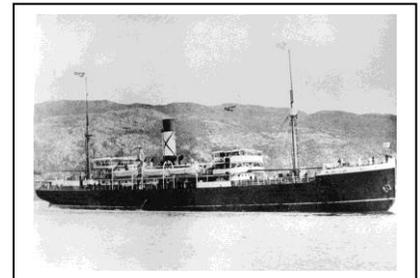
**\*A number sufficient to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.**

**(Right: The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – original photograph from the Provincial Archives)**



\* \* \* \* \*

Almost nine months before that June 20 of 1915, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914, the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment’s first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John’s and elsewhere in the city, they to become ‘A’ and ‘B’ Companies.



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

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

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

The ship had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island.

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



Once having disembarked in the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915: firstly in southern England on the *Salisbury Plain*; then in Scotland at *Fort George* – on the *Moray Firth* close to Inverness; and lastly at *Edinburgh Castle* – where it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

Only days after ‘A’ and ‘B’ Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 of 1915, ‘C’ Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent - would arrive directly – through Liverpool of course - from Newfoundland. On the final day of the month

of March it had been the turn of 'D' Company to arrive – they via Halifax as well as Liverpool – to report...*to duty...*at Edinburgh, and then 'E' Company five weeks less a day later again, on May 4\*.

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

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



Seven days after the arrival of 'E' Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent 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, close to the town of Hawick.

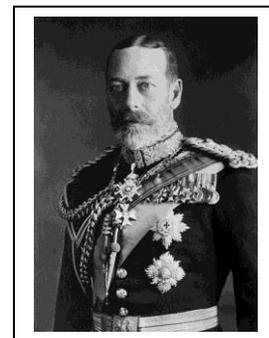
(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches past on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and of Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



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

\* \* \* \* \*

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



(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.*)

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

The Depot was to be Private Keough's home for the more than eight months which were now to follow.

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 what was to become the 2<sup>nd</sup> (*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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's numbers, at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.

(Right: *An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were quartered the 'other ranks', is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)



(Right below: *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.*)

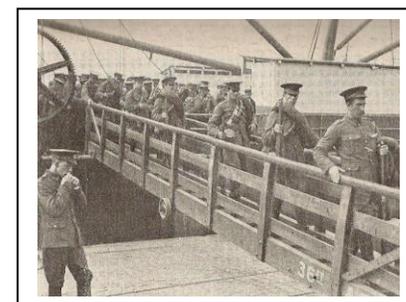


It was at the end six of those aforesaid eight months while at Ayr, on February 1 of 1916, and still almost ten weeks before his departure to join the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, the unit by then in France, that Private Keough was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion...*for 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. Later recruits signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.*

By the time of his eventual departure, Private Keough had witnessed the despatch of the first three re-enforcement drafts from Ayr: the first in mid-November of 1915 which had joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on December 1 at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*; the second which had sailed for Egypt in mid-March only to be ordered back to the French port of *Marseille*; and the third which had left Scotland at the end of March to go directly to the Continent, to France.

On April 8, Private Keough, as a private soldier of the 4<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, passed through the English south-coast port of *Southampton* on his way to report to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on the Continent. Arriving on that same day, the 8<sup>th</sup>, in *Rouen*, capital city of *Normandy* and site of the large *British Expeditionary Force Base Depot*, the Draft was posted there for several days of final training and organization\* before being dispatched to seek out the parent *Newfoundland Battalion*.



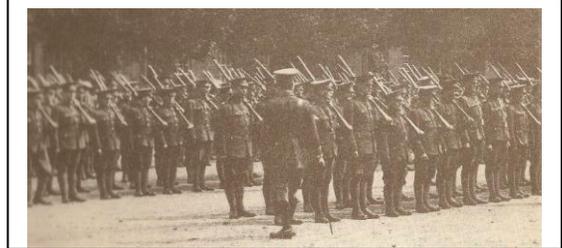
This rendezvous occurred on April 26 while the Newfoundland unit was undertaking its first tour in the trenches of the *Western Front*.

(Right above: *British troops 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 Private Keough's 'F' Company had been beginning its time of training at Ayr in the summer of 1915 the aforementioned four senior companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', of the Newfoundland Regiment, having now become the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, had thereupon been attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and was soon to be dispatched to...active service.**



**(Right above: *Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.)***

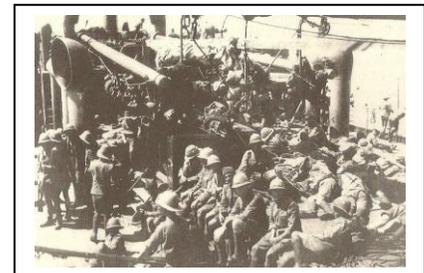


**(Right above: *The image of Megantic, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)***

**On August 20 of 1915, the Newfoundland Battalion had 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.**



**(Right above: *'Kangaroo Beach', where the officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 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)***

**(continued)**

**(Right: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)**



**When the Newfoundlanders had 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 would now 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 their allies, the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only Suvla Bay but the entire Gallipoli venture.**

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

**(Right: 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.**

**November 26 would see what perhaps was to be 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.**

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



**(continued)**

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.

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, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel had thereupon 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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)



The British, Indian and *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had by now simply 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: *'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* and beyond and had thus once more taken ship.

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On January 14, the Australian Expeditionary Force Transport *Nestor* had arrived at Alexandria with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on board. The vessel was to sail just after mid-day on the 16<sup>th</sup>, on its way southwards down the Suez Canal to Port Suez where she had docked early on the morrow and where the Newfoundlanders had landed and marched to their encampment.

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

(Right: *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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

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



The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseille, on March 22.

(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.

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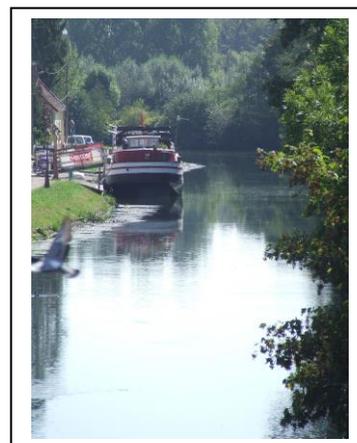
It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably travelled unused in a separate wagon.

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 had then traversed on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* would become a part of their history.

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

On April 13, the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion – including the 2<sup>nd</sup> Re-enforcement Draft having arrived from Egypt - subsequently marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where it would be billeted, would receive re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would 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 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.*

And as related in an earlier paragraph, it was during this period of the Newfoundland Battalion's first tour in the trenches of the *Western Front*, that Private Keough's draft arrived from Rouen on April 26 to report...*to duty*.



(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 tour 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.*

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 Somme* was to continue for 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: *A grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland - dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from...?)*

However, Private Keough was not to be involved in the holocaust which was Beaumont-Hamel.

Three days before the attack of that July 1, Private Keough had been admitted, on June 28, into the 87<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance to be treated for boils. Transferred from there on the same day to the 1/1 South Midlands Field Ambulance and to a Divisional Rest Station, he is next recorded as being *on duty* on July 4\*, back with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, the Newfoundlanders still in the trenches despite the losses incurred on the first day of *the Somme*.



(Right above: *A British field ambulance – somewhere on the Continent – this one of a more permanent nature than were many – from a vintage post-card*)

*\*With Battalion July 4...is a misleading entry in that many of those recorded as such had been serving in some capacity on July 1 and afterwards – they had never been off duty. In the case of Private Keough, having been under medical care, he in fact did report back to the Newfoundland unit on that very date.*

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such was then to be the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it had been 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 - 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 would then be a further two days before the unit 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 – reported *to duty*. They were the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power having reported, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was still to number 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion - still under establishment battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong – maybe even fewer - even after further re-enforcement – moved north and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.

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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*.

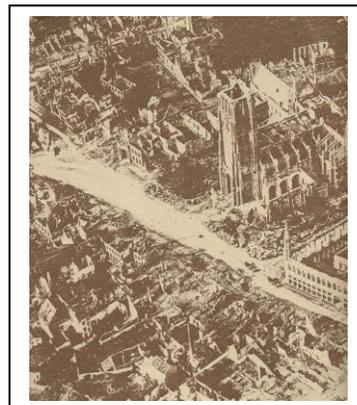
(Right: *The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)



*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 would incur casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.

Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the Newfoundland Battalion was ordered to return south, back into France - back into the area of and therefore 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*)



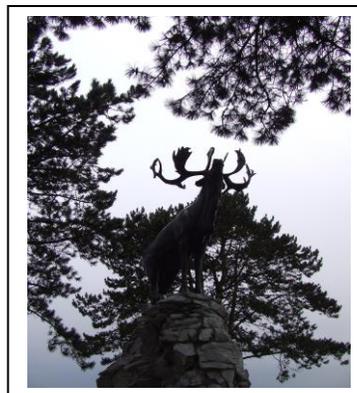
Four days after that return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment would again be ordered to the offensive; it was at a place called *Gueudecourt*, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of *Beaumont-Hamel*.

The encounter was to prove 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 *Keough* was to be one of those wounded at *Gueudecourt*, having incurred penetrating gun-shot injuries to the chest. Two days later, on the 14<sup>th</sup>, he was admitted into the 38<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance for treatment and, five days later again, would be forwarded and taken into the 8<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in *Rouen*.



**(Preceding page: Wounded troops being evacuated in hand-carts from the forward area during the First Battle of the Somme – from Le Miroir or Illustration)**

**(Right: The image of HMHS ‘Asturias’ clad in her war-time hospital-ship garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website. The vessel was constructed in 1907 for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and, before the onset of hostilities, plied the commercial route between Great Britain and Argentina. Upon the Declaration of War, she was requisitioned and converted into a hospital ship with accommodation for just fewer than nine-hundred sick and wounded.**



**In March of 1917 she was torpedoed off the English coast with a loss of thirty-five lives; however, she was beached although was not to be employed for anything other than ammunition storage until the end of the conflict. She was then repaired and became a Cruise Liner, re-named ‘Arcadian’, and operated as such until 1930. Three years later she was scrapped.)**



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



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

**Having been discharged from medical care at Wandsworth on November 27, Private Keough was immediately granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel in the United Kingdom upon discharge from hospital. On December 6, after this period of leave, he received the almost-inevitable posting back to Scotland, and was to report...to duty...there on that same date to the Regimental Depot at Ayr. There he was now stationed for the four months to follow, until April.**



**(Right above: The new race-course at Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden – photo from 2012)**

**On April 25 Private Keough was once more a soldier in a contingent on its way to France, on this occasion it was the 23<sup>rd</sup> Re-enforcement Draft which, as had its predecessors, passed through Southampton and Rouen, the latter city on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the month, before there was the obligatory interlude to be spent at the BEF Base Depot there.**

He re-joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on June 7, one of a detachment of fourteen officers and ninety-two *other ranks* which arrived on that date from Rouen to report to the unit in the town of Bonneville.

\* \* \* \* \*

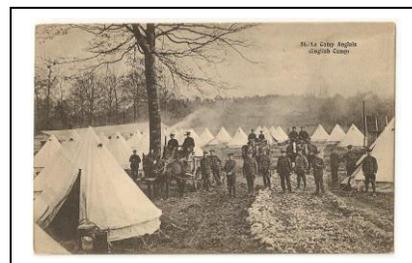
In the meantime, after the action of October 12 some eight months earlier, and a wounded Private Keough's subsequent evacuation from the field, the Newfoundland Battalion was not to be directly involved in any further concerted infantry action in the immediate area of Gueudecourt although, on October 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 88<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had begun to wend its way back up to the front lines.



There it had 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 would be ordered out of *Corps Reserve* and from its lodgings at *Camps en Amienois* to 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.

(continued)

Those casualties, however, were to be only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig somewhat cavalierly referred to as *wastage* since the Newfoundland unit had not ventured from its trenches during those several days.

However, that winter period – as had been and was to be the case of all the winter periods of the Great War – would be a time of relative calm, although cold and uncomfortable for most of the combatants of both sides. It had been a time of sickness, and the medical facilities were kept busy, particularly, so it seems - from at least Canadian medical documentation - with thousands of cases of dental work.

And as has been related in an earlier paragraph, this period also provided the opportunity to undergo training and familiarization with the new practices and weaponry of war; in the case of the Newfoundland Battalion this had at least partially been undertaken in the vicinity of the communities of Carnoy and Coisy.

On February 18 the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion began a five-day trek back from Coisy to the forward area where it went back into the firing-line on February 23, relieving a unit of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers. It was at a place called Sailly-Saillisel and the reception offered by the Germans was lively: after only two days the Battalion had incurred four dead, nine wounded and three gassed without there having been any infantry action. The Newfoundlanders were withdrawn on February 25 to return three days later.



They carried with them orders for a...*bombing raid*...on the enemy positions at Sailly-Saillisel...to be carried out on March 1.

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 that 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, his 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. 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.

(Preceding page: *The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment 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 below: *The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War, in early 1916 – from Illustration*)



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 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.



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

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



(Right below: *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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 .*

(continued)

After this further debacle the remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion had remained for only a short period 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* 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 5<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Armies. It was apparently not to be a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 of April 23, the Newfoundlanders had retired the dozen or so kilometres 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*)



That month of May of 1917 was to be a period when the Newfoundland Battalion would move hither and thither on the *Arras Front*, marching into and out of – mostly away from - 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.



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

At the outset of June, the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 above: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville – not Bonneville - in early May, perhaps the 7<sup>th</sup>, of 1917 – from The War Illustrated*)

And it was, of course, and as related in an earlier paragraph, at Bonneville that Private Keough reported with a his re-enforcement draft on June 7.

\* \* \* \* \*

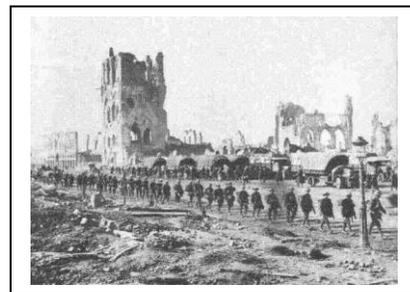
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From Bonneville the Newfoundlanders were then soon once again to be moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the vicinity of Ypres and...*the Salient*, their first posting to be to the banks of the *Yser Canal* just to the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



(Right: *The Yser Canal at a point in the northern outskirts of Ypres almost a century after the 1<sup>st</sup> 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: *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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 *Broembeek* (see both immediately below) on October 9.

(continued)

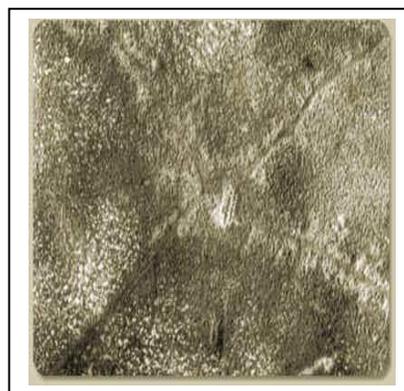
At the former it incurred nine *killed in action*, ninety-three *wounded*, and one *missing in action*; at the *Broembeek* the cost was to be higher: forty-eight *killed or died of wounds*, one-hundred thirty-two *wounded* and fifteen *missing in action*.

(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 then only two days after this last-mentioned confrontation that the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 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 arrived just to the westward 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to 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 would be issued as it went with...*war stores, rations and equipment*. It was to spend much of that night marching up to the assembly areas from where, at twenty minutes past six on that morning of November 20 – *Zero Hour* – the Newfoundland unit, not having been in the first wave of the attack, then moved forward into its forming-up area. From those forward position, some hours later, at ten minutes past ten, bugles blowing, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 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*)

(continued)

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 were to use tanks on a large scale for the first time, but opportunities would be 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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)*



(Right: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The last of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's objectives of November 20, it is doubtful that this area was ever reached. – photographs from 2009)*

The son of Richard Keough, former fisherman then employee with the *Reid Newfoundland Company*, and of Bridget Joseph Keough (perhaps née *Hollins*; deceased on July 18 of 1920) - to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay - of 17, Pleasant Street in St. John's, he was also perhaps brother to John, to Mary-Ann and to James.

Private Keough was reported as having been...*killed in action*...while serving with 'C' Company on November 20, 1917, during the first day of the fighting near the French villages of Marcoing and Masnières.

Martin Keough had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen years and five months.

(Preceding page: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The last of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's objectives of November 20, it is not clear whether this area was ever reached.* – photographs from 2009)

(Right: *A family memorial which stands in Mount Carmel Cemetery in St. John's, commemorates the sacrifice of Private Keough, and also recalls to mind his mother.* – photograph from 2015)



Private Martin Keough was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 5, 2023.

