



Lieutenant George Langmead Junior (Regimental Number 14*) is buried in the Rocquigny-Équancourt Road British Cemetery – Grave reference VIII. B. 29. He shares a last resting-place with Gunner H.R. Chambers of the Royal Field Artillery.

**Officers who were eventually promoted from the ranks may be identified from their Regimental Number. Other officers who were not from the ranks received the King's Commission, or in the case of those in the Newfoundland Regiment, an Imperial Commission, and were not considered as enlisted. These officers thus had no Regimental Number allotted to them.*

And since officers did not enlist, they were not then required to re-enlist 'for the duration', even though, at the beginning, as a private, they had volunteered their services for only a limited time – twelve months.

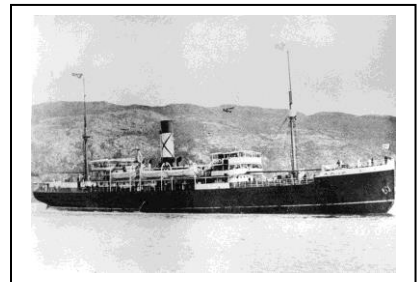
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His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a *jeweller* – working with his father at the family business at 294, Water Street – and earning an annual \$300.00, George Langmead presented himself for medical examination on August 27 of 1914, just more than three weeks after the *Declaration of War*. It was a procedure which was to pronounce his as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

He then enlisted at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* – the venue of his medical examination - on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, six days later, on September 2, 1914 – engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar plus a ten-cent per diem *Field Allowance*. George Langmead was a recruit of the First Draft.

The month of September was to be a period of training for the new recruits as they underwent exercises on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the East End of St. John's. On the 21st day of that month George Langmead was promoted directly to the rank of sergeant – although another official document suggests that it was on October 3, the same day that he was to take ship.

Sergeant Langmead subsequently attested, as did many others, on October 1. Two days later, on October 3, as a non-commissioned officer of the *First Five Hundred* – also to become known as the *Blue Puttees* – he embarked onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting the contingent – the force was not yet a battalion - in St. John's Harbour.



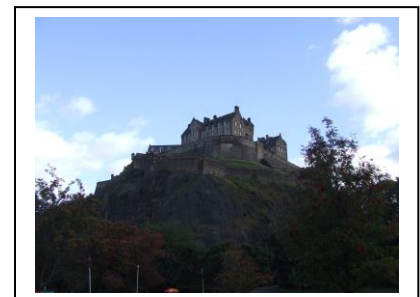
The ship would sail for the United Kingdom on the following day, October 4, via its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island.

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

(Right: *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 during the following six months Sergeant Langmead trained with the Newfoundland contingent at three locations: firstly in southern England on the Salisbury Plain; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to the city of Inverness; then at Edinburgh Castle – where it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

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



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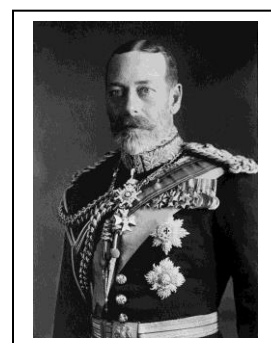
On May 11 the by-now five companies of the Newfoundland Regiment were transferred to a tented *Stobs Camp*, in the vicinity of the Scottish town of Hawick, where they were to undergo further training and exercises for some three months – and where on July 31 Sergeant Langmead was to be appointed to the position of Company Quartermaster Sergeant.

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



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.

Meanwhile, the two junior Companies, 'E' and the only lately-arrived 'F', were ordered posted 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 enabling it to be ordered to active service.*



(Right: 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, just prior to its departure to the campaign in Gallipoli – from The Fighting Newfoundlander by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)

On August 20, 1915, 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 disembarked from tenders at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(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.*)

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



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

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion would serve but, ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, was to prove 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 which 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 below: *An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives*)

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

It was to be on November 11, while he was serving at *Suvla Bay*, that for some undocumented reason CQMS Langmead chose to revert to the rank of platoon sergeant.

November 26 would see 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 would wreak 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 drowned in their trenches – although no

Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, would be those to be afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

On the night of December 19-20, the British abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, ordered to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel were evacuated to the nearby island of Imbros, some to Lemnos, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration; the 1st Battalion would be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



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



This final operation was to 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 – with General Maude - 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 evacuation by the British of the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, to arrive there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately 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*.



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

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

After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st Battalion were to board His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage 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 above: Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal as it was just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

(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 was to find 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.

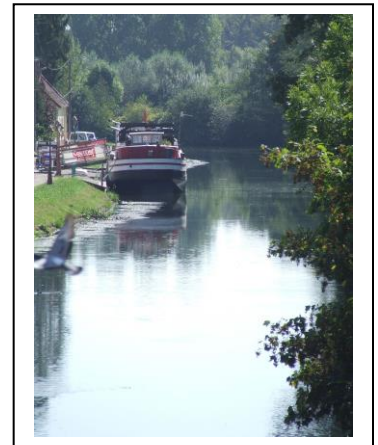


Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure the long, dark march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

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



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Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front*, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit was to then be ordered to move further up for the first time into forward positions on April 22.

**It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment Battalion, were then the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*

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



Having then been withdrawn, at the end of that April after the completion of their first tour in the trenches 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 now-impending British campaign of that summer, this to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, flowing sedately – 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.*

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

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

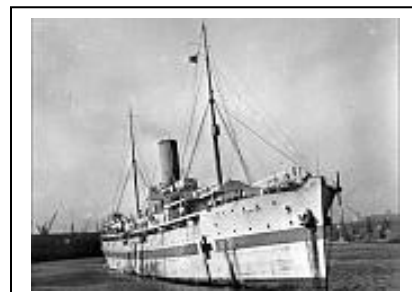
It was to be the largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the butchery of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.

**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...?)



On July 1, 1916, Sergeant Langmead incurred severe gun-shot wounds to the back, shoulder and *to the thorax* on the field at Beaumont-Hamel during the fighting of that first day of *the Somme*. Evacuated to the 35th Casualty Clearing Station in the town of Doullens and thence to the 2nd General Hospital in Le Havre, on July 4 he was placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Panama* for the crossing back to the United Kingdom.



(Right above: *The photograph of HMHS Panama is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. She apparently was to serve as a hospital ship during both world conflicts.*)

Once having returned to England, Sergeant Langmead was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the southern Borough of Wandsworth on July 5.

There he remained for almost two months before being discharged *to duty* on September 29. On that same date the 3rd London Hospital Medical Board decided that he would be unfit for any sort of service for at least six weeks.

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



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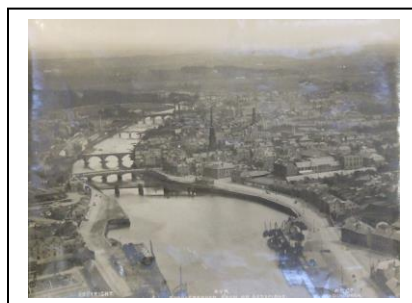
(Preceding page: *Dressed in hospital uniform, a group of Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing in the grounds at the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

It would be during his time in hospital that a Regimental Order was issued on August 8, by the the Governor of Newfoundland – and also Commanding Officer of the Newfoundland Regiment – Lieutenant Colonel Sir Walter E. Davidson, granting Sergeant Langmead an Imperial Commission and an accompanying appointment to the rank of second lieutenant.

The order was retroactive to July 1 of 1916. Thus it was now to be Second Lieutenant Langmead who was posted to the Regimental Depot at Ayr. Whether or not he had received the customary ten-day furlough granted military personnel upon release from medical care seems not to be recorded; nor, apparently is the date of his posting to Scotland.

The Regimental Depot at the once-Royal Borough of Ayr had been established in the summer of 1915 to be the overseas base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment from where – as of November of that 1915 up until January of 1918 - re-enforcement drafts 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: *An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were billeted 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)



On December 1 a second medical board – in Edinburgh - decided that even though...*The wound is healed and movements are practically normal; there is really no disability...*that it might be yet a further month before Second Lieutenant Langmead would be fit for *general service*. As it transpired, it was the Board of February 24, at Ayr, that finally decided – almost three months afterwards - that...*he has recovered and is fit for General Service*.

On March 3, Second Lieutenant Langmead* was re-attached to the British Expeditionary Force and then ordered to re-join the Newfoundland Battalion - at the time stationed for two days in the community of Vignacourt - on the 30th of the same month, as one of a draft of five officers and thirty-two *other ranks* to arrive from the 29th Division Base Depot at Rouen.



(Right above: *Vignacourt during the time of the Great War* – by courtesy of the *Australian War Memorial Archives*)

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After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916 – the day on which Sergeant Langmead had been wounded - not only the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, but the entire British Fourth Army had been shattered. Indeed, such had then been 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 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*)

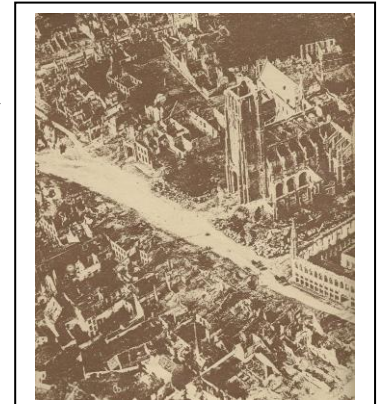
There on July 11, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven re-enforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – had reported *to duty*. They had been the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power having arrived, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1916, the 1st Battalion 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 1st Battalion - still under 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 – 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 had nonetheless incurred casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.



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

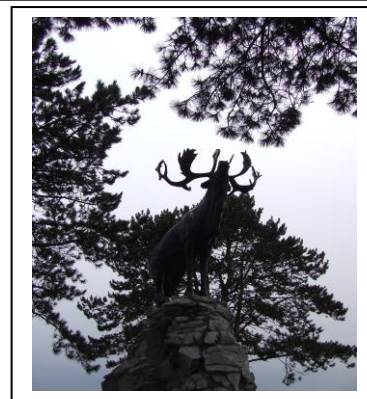
Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the 1st Battalion had been ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

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

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

(Right above: *This is the ground over which the 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007*)

(Right: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of the Newfoundland Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916. – photograph from 2012*)



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 below: *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.

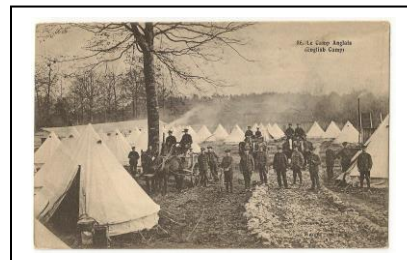
The Newfoundlanders were now to spend two weeks withdrawn to the area of Ville-sous-Corbie, re-enforcing and reorganizing. It was not to be until November 15 that the 1st Battalion had begun to wend its way back up to the front lines.



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

After that welcome 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 had apparently already returned to the trenches by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.



Those casualties, however, had been only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig casually referred to as *wastage*. The sole infantry activity *directly* involving the Newfoundland unit during that entire period – from Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in mid-April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and the beginning of March, an action which would bring this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.



(Right: 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 was a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events. They were even to have the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



(Right: The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, encamped at Meaulté – from *The War Illustrated*)

On March 29, the 1st Battalion had begun to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, and for planned training exercises en route. The first two days of training at Vignacourt completed – and Second Lieutenant Langmead having reported to *duty* - on April 1 the move had continued, 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 – La Grand’Place - in Arras as it already was by 1916, only the second year of the Great War – from Illustration*)

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(Right below: *The Canadian National Memorial which has stood 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 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.

While the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* was to be 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 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 .*

The few that now remained of the Newfoundland Battalion had continued to serve in the area of Monchy-le-Preux. The unit's casualty count had been high enough to warrant that it and the Essex Regiment, which had also incurred extremely 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*.

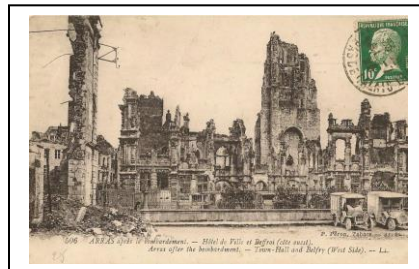
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This confrontation was in fact an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5th, 3rd and 1st Armies. The action was apparently not to be a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1st Battalion, several of the adjacent units reporting having been driven back by German counter-attacks, actions accompanied by heavy losses.

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

(Right below: *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 was to be a period when the Newfoundlanders would be moved 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 – the end of the *Battle of Arras* – and apart from the marching, was limited.



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

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



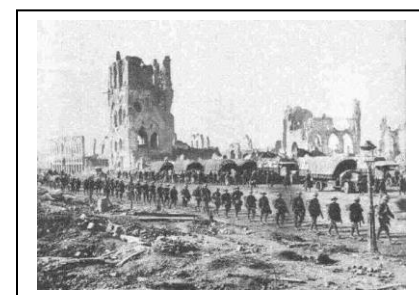
The Newfoundlanders had then soon once again been moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the vicinity of Ypres and...*the Salient*, their first posting to be to the banks of the *Yser Canal* just to the north of the city.

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



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

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



(continued)

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 below: *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 – as were to be by then the Australians, the New Zealanders and the Canadians – all of whose troops had floundered their way across the sodden and shell-torn countryside of Flanders.

Notably the Newfoundland Battalion at *Passchendaele* was to fight in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16; and at the *Broembeek* (see both immediately below) on October 9. At the former it had incurred nine *killed in action*, ninety-three *wounded*, and one *missing in action*; at the *Broembeek* the cost would be higher: forty-eight *killed or died of wounds*, one-hundred thirty-two *wounded* and fifteen *missing in action*.

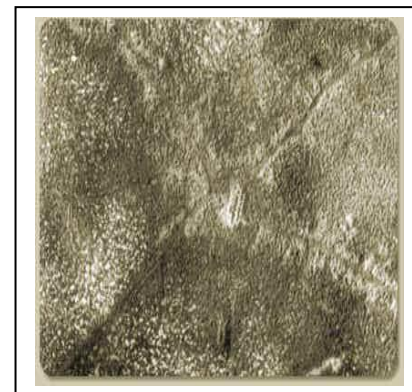
(Right: *This is the area of the Steenbeek – the stream runs close to the line of trees - and is therefore near to where the Newfoundland Battalion fought the engagement of August 16, 1917. It is some eight kilometres distant from a village called Passchendaele. – photograph from 2010*)

At the *Steenbeek*, Second Lieutenant Langmead was the second-in-command of 'A' Company.

In the second wave of the attack and on the right flank, 'A' Company passed through 'B' Company of the first wave who had taken the Battalion's first objective, and continued on to the second – and final – objective, there to abet in the capture of two enemy machine-guns and in the consolidation of the position. Second Lieutenant Langmead survived the day unscathed.

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

(continued)



There seems to be no record as to whether or not Second Lieutenant Langmead served during the engagement of October 9 at the *Broembeek*.

It was to be only two days after this last-mentioned confrontation that, on October 11, the 1st Battalion would march to the railway station at Elverdinghe, from there to be transported to *Swindon Camp* in the area of Proven. 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 had arrived just to the west of the city of Arras and would now march the final few kilometres to its billets in the community of Berles-au-Bois.

Some of the other officers who had served during the *Third Battle of Ypres* were now granted leave back to United Kingdom – whether this opportunity was offered to any of the *other ranks* is not sure – nor in the case of Second Lieutenant Langmead can this be confirmed.

(Right: *London – in fact the City of Westminster – in the area of Marble Arch, in or about the year 1913, just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



However, if not, there may have been some forthcoming compensation: On November 1 during this period there was to be a further promotion, to the rank of full lieutenant.

The Newfoundlanders were still there, at Berles-au-Bois, four weeks and two days later when, on November 17 the Battalion was once again to travel by train, on this occasion in a south-easterly direction to the town of Peronne. From there it began to move further eastward on foot towards the theatre of the battle now imminent.

On November 19, while on the move once more, the unit was issued as it went with... *war stores, rations and equipment*. For much of that night it was to march 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, moved up 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.



(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*)

The battle was to begin well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered, there were 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 was again dealt with severely, in the vicinity of Marcoing, Masnières - where a Caribou stands today - and the Canal St-Quentin which flows through both places: of the total of five-hundred fifty-three officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of only the second day*.

(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.

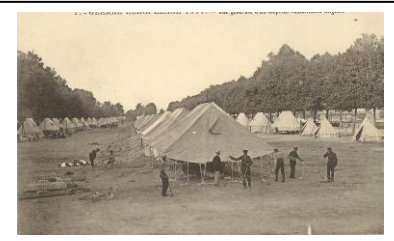


(Right above: *A number of graves of soldiers from the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in Marcoing Military Cemetery. Here, as is almost always the case elsewhere, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, has identified the* photograph from 2010)

Gradually the Germans were to become more and more in charge of the situation. December 2 was a relatively quiet day, the Regimental War Diary reporting...*very little shelling during night and next day* (December 2). *Snipers and Machine-Guns active*...quiet maybe, but just the same, it was the day on which Lieutenant Langmead was reported wounded – with the possibility that it, in fact, happened on December 3rd.



(Right above: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on high ground which was the last of the Newfoundland Battalion's first-day objectives, an objective possibly in fact never realized.* – photograph from 2012)



(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)

The son of George Langmead, watchmaker and jeweller, and of Agnes Langmead (née *Thomson*, deceased June 26, 1920) of 294, Water Street in St. John's, he was also brother to Barbara-Thomson, to Mary L., and to Agnes H.J..

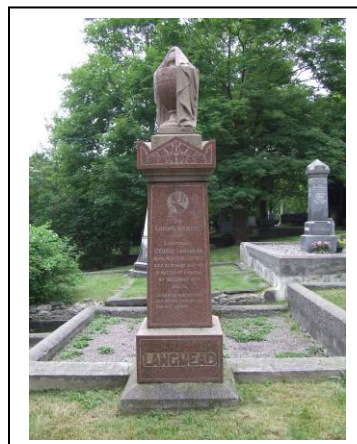
He was reported as having *died of wounds* on December 8, 1917, in the 21st Casualty Clearing Station at Ytres. Lieutenant Langmead succumbed to gun-shot wounds to the right chest and left leg, injuries incurred on December 2-3 while serving with 'A' Company in the fighting retreat from Marcoing and Masnières, during the final days of the *Battle of Cambrai*.

George Langmead had enlisted at the age of twenty years; date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, March 21, 1894 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

(Right above: *This monument commemorating the life and death of Lieutenant George Langmead stands in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's.* – photograph from 2010)

(*The photograph of Lieutenant Langmead is from the Provincial Archives.*)

Lieutenant George Langmead was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as the British War Medal (centre) and 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 11, 2023.