



Captain James Allan Ledingham (Regimental Number O-19*), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



**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.

His occupation prior to enlistment recorded as that of accountant with the *Furness Withy Company* in the *City Chambers* on Water Street, James Ledingham was granted an Imperial Commission and an accompanying appointment as a full lieutenant only weeks after recruitment had begun, on September 24, 1914.



However, he was to remain in Newfoundland for the next seven months while 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies went overseas. Lieutenant Ledingham was to eventually sail from St. John's on April 22 of 1915 on the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* en route to Nova Scotia as second-in-command of 'E' Company.

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

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



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

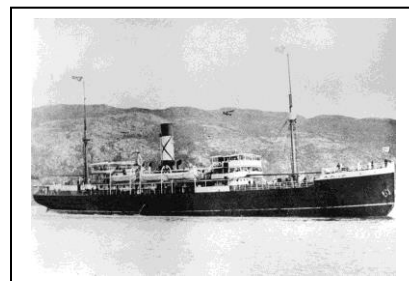
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Seven months before that time, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of some five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's for the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits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

As has been seen in the preceding page, Lieutenant Ledingham was already serving with the Regiment at that time, but had remained behind in Newfoundland when this first contingent was despatched overseas.

This aforesaid first Newfoundland contingent – not yet a battalion - was to embark on October 3, in the case of some soldiers only days after enlistment and/ or attestation.

To become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees*, on that date they had boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting them 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 below: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

Once 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 would provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles – and where the first reinforcements, 'C' Company had arrived from Newfoundland on February 16 of 1915.



There had then followed 'D' Company and, later again, Lieutenant Ledingham's 'E' Company which, as recorded above, had joined the full Newfoundland contingent at Edinburgh Castle on May 4 of that 1915.

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

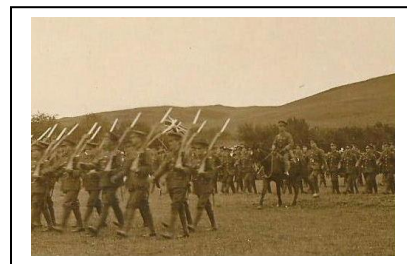


Only one week later, on May 11, the entire Newfoundland force was posted to *Stobs Camp* near the Scottish town of Hawick where it was now to remain under canvas to undergo further training until the end of July. It was at *Stobs Camp* that Lieutenant Ledingham received further promotion, to the rank of captain, on July 28, 1915*.

**A second source among his papers indicates the promotion awarded towards the end of September of 1915.*

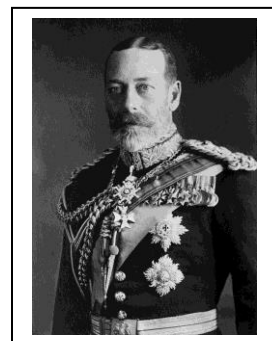
(Right above: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

It was then to be only days later that 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, the later-arrived 'E' – Captain Ledingham's - and then 'F'*, were ordered stationed 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.*



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'E' Company - with a few exceptions of personnel who were drafted into the first four Companies which were to travel to the Middle East – and Captain Ledingham thus remained in Scotland to be ordered posted to the newly-established Regimental Depot at the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland.

This was 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 - reinforcement 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*.

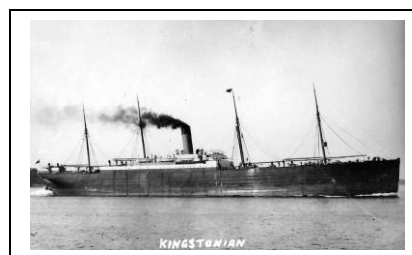
(Right: *An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were billeted the ‘other ranks’, is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right.* – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)



(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)



Captain Ledingham was once again obliged to wait and to watch as others – the 1st Re-enforcement Draft of November 14 – departed on *active service*. It was not to be until March 13 of 1916 that he embarked at Devonport to join the 1st Battalion. With him was the 2nd Reinforcement Draft from Ayr en route for the Middle East and Egypt, a draft of which he was the Commanding Officer.



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

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

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

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



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

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The parent 1st Battalion had itself arrived on HMT *Alaunia* in Marseilles on March 22 after seven months of *active service* at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, during the voyage having passed its re-enforcements going in the opposite direction.

During those same seven months while Captain Ledingham had been posted to Ayr, the four senior companies of the Newfoundland Regiment, having become the 1st Battalion, had thereupon been attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and had been despatched to *active service*.



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

On August 20, 1915, the Newfoundland unit 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 1st Battalion had landed 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.)*



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



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



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

(continued)

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion would serve but, even 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.*

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 had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival rather than the enemy was to be the priority.



There were to be many casualties on both sides, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, had been those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

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



(Right 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.

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



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.

**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 above: *'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in that January of 1916 and by the Newfoundlanders who were to be the last soldiers off the beach: Vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011*)

Immediately after the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, arriving 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*.



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

(Right above: *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*)

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.

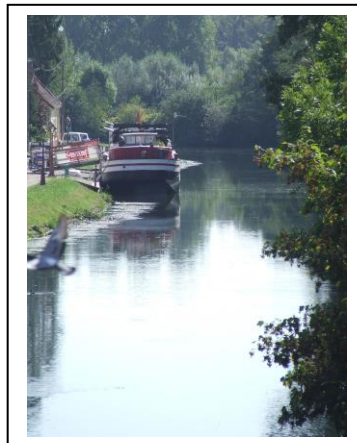
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Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure the long, dark march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

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

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



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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 further 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 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 Maily-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing – this to include the construction of a light railway in the Louvencourt area - for the now-impending British campaign of that summer to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, flowing through the region on its journey to the sea.



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

If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered, they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later*.



(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 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.



(Right above: *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...?*)



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Captain Ledingham was one of the many of those wounded during the fighting at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, the first day of *the Somme*: *While advancing in action he was hit by three machine-gun bullets at short intervals (1) Right arm – a flesh wound (2) L arm, on inner side, passing through the biceps (3) R thigh inner aspect passing obliquely outwards and backwards...*(excerpt from a later medical report).

Where he received immediate attention remains unclear but by July 3 he had been admitted into the 7th Stationary Hospital at Boulogne, on which same date he was subsequently evacuated – at half-past two in the afternoon - on the Belgian hospital ship *Jan Breydel* to England, there to be treated at the *Royal Free Hospital* in London.



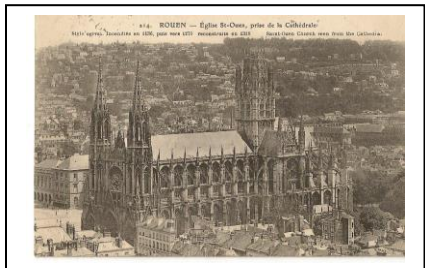
(Right: *The picture of the 'Jan Breydel' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

On August 8 Captain Ledingham was apparently granted disability leave – the medical board predicting that he would be...*unfit for service*...for a period of two months. His whereabouts for the next while are not altogether certain, although certain medical documents suggest he was most likely back if not at Ayr then in Scotland, by the end of the month of August.

He was certainly at Ayr when a medical board there declared that he was...*recovered and fit for general service*...on November 20, some three months later. On this occasion he had not long to wait before he was to make his way back to the Continent.

On this occasion the documents seem to be contradictory as there are two reports of when he crossed the English Channel: the first says November 30; the second cites December 12 – each one *could* be correct. Nevertheless, on either the 1st or the 13th of December, Captain Ledingham disembarked in Rouen and made his way to the British Expeditionary Force Base Depot.

There he apparently was appointed to be *acting adjutant* and was to spent the next six months, this to be followed by a period of leave back in the United Kingdom before his return to re-join the Newfoundland Battalion.



(Right: *The venerable gothic cathedral stands in the centre of the capital city of Normandy, Rouen. – from a vintage post-card*)

Captain Ledingham is recorded in telegrams sent to his sister and to a Miss Story in St. John's as expecting to return to the 1st Battalion *in the field* on May 15. This was a time during which his unit had been re-organizing in the battered city of Arras before, two days following, it began to move up to the forward area once more.

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After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, - the day on which Captain Ledingham had been wounded at Beaumont-Hamel almost eleven months previously - such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it had been feared that a German counter-assault might well annihilate what had managed to survive of the British Expeditionary Force on *the Somme*.

The few remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion – and of the other depleted British units - had thus remained in the trenches perhaps fearing the worst, and at night searching for the wounded and burying the dead. It was to be July 6 before the Newfoundlanders were to be relieved from the forward area and to be ordered withdrawn to Englebelmer.

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



(Right above: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John's East. – photograph from 2009*)

There on July 11, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven re-enforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – had reported *to duty*. They had been the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power having arrived, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1916, the 1st Battalion was still to number only...*11 officers and 260 rifles*...after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.

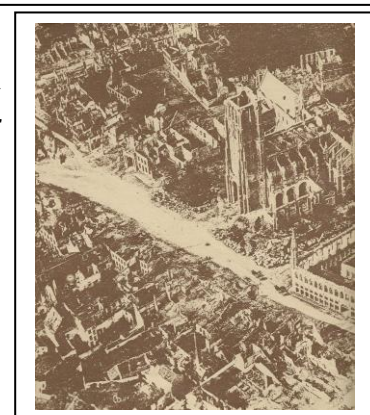
On July 27-28 of 1916, the 1st Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after further re-enforcement – had moved north and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.

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 eastern ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in August of 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.



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

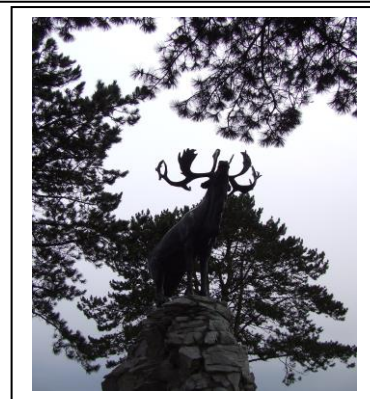
Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the 1st Battalion had been ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

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*)

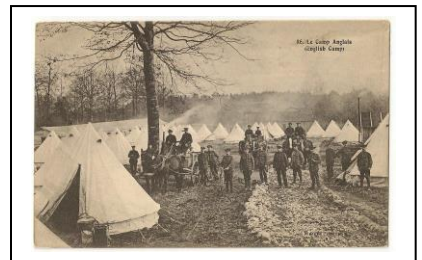
On October 30, the Newfoundland unit had eventually been retired to rear positions from the Gueudecourt area. It had been serving in front-line and support positions for three weeks less a day.

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 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: 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 had been a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they would now spend 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 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.



(Preceding page: *The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras as it already was by early 1916 – from Illustration*)

(Right: *A restored part of the centre of Arras as it is today – photograph from 2019*)

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

On April 9 the British Army had launched 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 more than four thousand - this attack would 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 had proved 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 remaining few 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* had been the engagement of April 23 at *Les Fosses Farm*. This in fact had been an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5th, 3rd and 1st Armies.

(continued)

It was apparently not to be a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1st Battalion, several of the adjacent units to report having been driven back by German counter-attacks, actions accompanied by heavy losses.

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

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



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, had been limited.

And of course, May 15, apart from *officially* heralding the end of the *Battle of Arras*, was the day on which Captain Ledingham had re-joined the Newfoundland Battalion in Arras itself after an absence of some ten and a-half months.

* * * * *

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*)



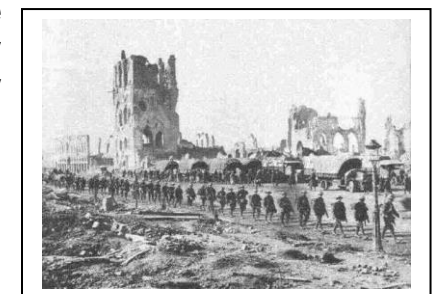
The Newfoundlanders had then soon once again been moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the vicinity of Ypres and...*the Salient*, their first posting to be to the banks of the *Yser Canal* just to the north of the city.

(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 of Ypres on the way to the front in the late summer or early autumn of 1917.* – from *Illustration*)



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

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

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

The 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to remain in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army – 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 above: *This is the area of the Steenbeek – the stream runs close to the line of trees - and is therefore near to where the Newfoundland Battalion fought the engagement of August 16, 1917. It is some eight kilometres distant from a village called Passchendaele. – photograph from 2010*)

On October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundland Battalion attacked in two waves: 'A' Company, with Captain Ledingham in command, was in the first wave, on the right. In a later report...2040 Corpl. Tansley stated that Capt. Ledingham was killed instantly by a bullet through the head in front of Pascal Farm in Belgium...

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

(continued)



The son of John Ledingham, marine engineer deceased July 25, 1897, and of Anna Maria Brown Ledingham (née Rogers)*, deceased June 18, 1895, of 35, Military Road in St. John's, he was also brother to Alexander-Rogers, to Bessie, John-Émile, Agnes-Allen, Robert-Rogers-Allen, Anna-Maria-Jane and perhaps one other sibling.

**The couple was married at Newton-on-Ayr, Scotland – later the site of the Regimental Depot – on July 17, 1877.*

Captain Ledingham was reported as having been *killed in action* on October 9, 1917, during the fighting at the *Broembeek*.

He was twenty-nine years of age at the time of his death: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, July 25, 1888 (from a copy of Presbyterian Parish Records).

(Right above: *An innocuous stream, the Broembeek had burst its banks in the autumn of 1917 and had transformed its surrounds into a morass.* – photograph from 2010)

(The above photograph of Lieutenant(?) Ledingham is from the Provincial Archives.)

Captain James Allan Ledingham was entitled to the British War Medal and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



(Right: *A family memorial which stands in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's commemorates the sacrifice of Captain Ledingham.* – photograph from 2015)

30/12/16

Dear Hughie,

Would you please cause any mail for me to be re-directed to c/o 29th Infantry Base Depot, Rouen. I have been taken on the staff here as acting adjutant. It is only a temporary appointment owing to the C.O. going sick and I don't just know how long it will last.



I think I could do with it for the duration but can hardly expect that owing to so many 'permanent base' men going about. It is a fairly cushy job and the quarters are very comfortable. I think you were here to or from your way to the battalion, were you not? Dr. Frew is at No 11 base hospital just across the road from here & and I see a good deal of him. There are just ten of the regiment here. I have been unable to get any news from the regiment & don't know where they are just now.

Kind regards

Yours Jim L.

I will let you know when I move up so that this address may be cancelled. Have had no mail since leaving.

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.