



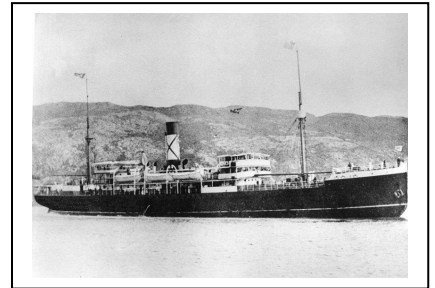
Lance Corporal Augustus Lilly (Regimental Number 194) is interred in Y Ravine Cemetery – Grave reference D. 13.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a carpenter working for annual earnings of \$800.00, Augustus Lilly was a recruit of the First Draft. Having undergone a medical examination on August 31 of 1914 – a procedure which found him to be...*fit for foreign service* – he presented himself for enlistment three days later, on September 3.

(continued)

The formalities took place in the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, the capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, where he was thereupon engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 daily (including a daily ten-cent field allowance) for a single year's service (see further below).

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



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

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

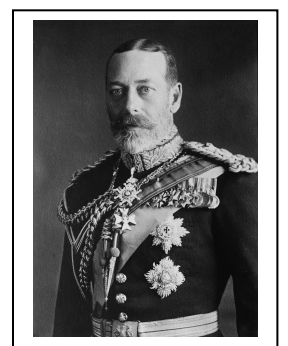


(Right above: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

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



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



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

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

* * * * *

Even though he was a soldier of 'A' Company, however, Private Lilly did not travel back south to England, to Aldershot. He apparently suffered with varicose veins and was to be hospitalized at the 2nd Scottish General Hospital at Craighleith, Edinburgh, from July 30 to August 25 for their removal; from then until September 8 he was at St. Leonard's Convalescent Hospital, this also in Edinburgh.

At that point Private Lilly was ordered posted to the new Regimental Depot where 'E' and 'F' Companies had been sent after Stobs Camp and where new arrivals from home were from now on to be stationed. They were to provide the nucleus of now-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from Newfoundland – as well as returning sick and wounded, now cured - were to be despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and then later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1st Battalion.



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

While at Ayr, on October 1 Private Lilly re-enlisted, on this occasion signing on *for the duration of the present war or until my discharge** - this contradicts another file among his papers which has him doing so at Aldershot on August 14, an impossibility since he was never stationed there.

***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.*

It was not until November 14 of 1915 and more than two months since he had reported to the Regimental Depot, that the 1st Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr - Private Lilly one of that number – travelled by train and then embarked in the English south coast naval harbour of Devonport onto His Majesty's Transport *Olympic* - sister ship of *Britannic* and the ill-fated *Titanic*.



(Right above: *The image of Olympic – also known as 'The Old Lady' – is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

(continued)

Olympic sailed directly for the Middle East and, after having transferred to a smaller vessel at Mudros Bay on the nearby Greek island of Lemnos where the British and French forces had established a large base, Private Lilly's re-enforcement detachment set foot at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula* on December 1.



(Right above: 'A' Beach at *Suvla* and, at the far end, *Kangaroo Beach* where 1st Battalion landed on the night of September 19/20 – Private Lilly and the others of his draft also went ashore in this vicinity on December 1. – photograph from 2011)

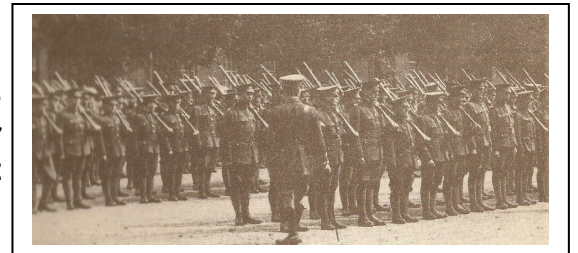
(Right: An unidentified Newfoundland soldier at his post in the trenches at *Suvla Bay* – from Provincial Archives)



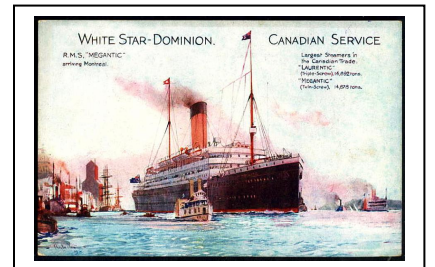
The 1st Battalion, having travelled in August from Aldershot, had been posted to *Suvla Bay* since September 20. The newcomers from Ayr would be there for only a brief three weeks before the British were to evacuate the entire area.

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During the period of Private Lilly's hospitalization, convalescence and subsequent posting to the Regimental Depot, the four aforementioned senior Companies had completed their training at Aldershot and had set sail for the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea.

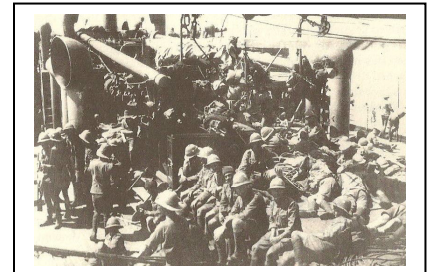


(Right above: Some of the men of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915 – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)



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

On August 20, 1915, the Newfoundland Battalion had embarked in Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, it had landed at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(continued)

(Preceding page: 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)

The campaign was to be a debacle: Flies, dust, the difficult terrain, disease, frost-bite, floods – and 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 it would be decided to abandon not only Suvla Bay but the entire Gallipoli venture.

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



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

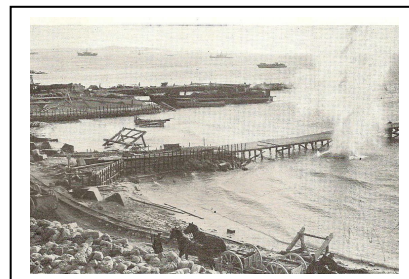
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A bare three weeks after Private Lilly's arrival there, on the night of December 19-20, the British abandoned the area of Suvla Bay – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel was 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 was 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 were also serving at Gallipoli – were now only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Peninsula could be undertaken. The operation eventually took place on the night of January 8-9 with the Newfoundland Battalion providing some of the rear-guard for this second occasion as well*.



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

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

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



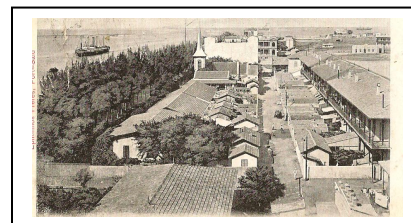
(Right below: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1st Battalion were among the last to leave on two occasions, at Suvla Bay and at Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration*)



When the British evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, Private Lilly and his 1st Battalion were ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then immediately transferred southward to Suez, one of the ports at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders as, at the time, the subsequent destination of the 1st Battalion's 29th Division had not yet been decided*.

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

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



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



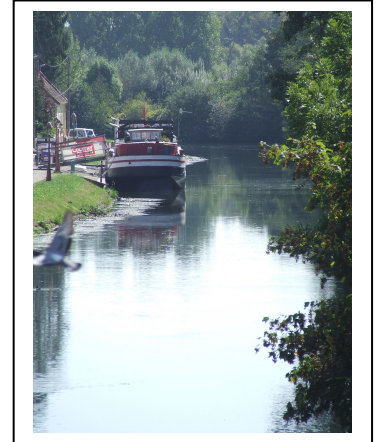
After a two-month interim, on March 14 the Newfoundlanders embarked through Port Tewfiq, also at the southern end of the *Suez Canal*, for the French port of *Marseilles*, and disembarked there on March 22, en route to the *Western Front*.

**At some point Private Lilly was promoted to the rank of lance corporal but the records seem to provide no date of promotion except to note...L/Coprl 1916. Several such promotions were made during the period spent at Suez, but there is no confirmation.*

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

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

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



On April 13, Lance Corporal Lilly's 1st Battalion paraded into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where its personnel would be billeted, would receive re-enforcements and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the trenches of the *Western Front*.

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

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



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

(Right: *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*)



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

There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand were recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds*. It was to be the largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the killing of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.



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

In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man’s-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.

The son of George Augustus Holbrook Lilly*, carpenter and builder – to whom on June 14 of 1916 he had willed his everything - and of Olivia Lilly (likely née *Hills*) deceased July 31, 1886) of Quidi Vidi Road (today *the Boulevard*) in the District of St. John’s East, he was brother to Jessie, perhaps to May and also likely brother/ or half-brother to Harold, carpenter as well.

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

**George Augustus Lilly re-married soon after Olivia’s passing, to Harriett Newhook, on August 4, 1887.*

However, his remains were soon thereafter recovered and identified, the Officer Commanding the Third Army Mobile Grave Registration Unit subsequently reporting his burial as having taken place on or about June 17, 1917. Lance Corporal Lilly’s record was thus amended so as to read *killed in action or died of wounds on or shortly after July 1, 1916*.

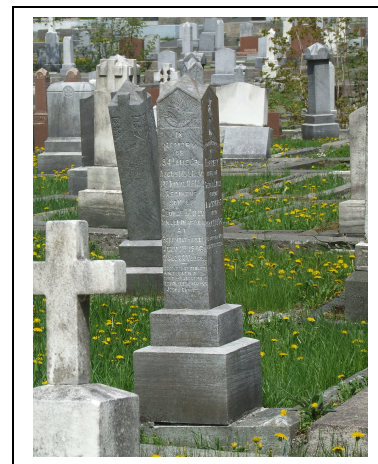
He shares a grave marker with a Private Thompson of the Royal Iniskilling Fusiliers.

Augustus Lilly had enlisted at the *declared* age of thirty-two years: date of birth in St. John’s, Newfoundland, June 15, 1883.

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

(Right: A *family memorial which stands in the Old Anglican Cemetery on Forest Road in St. John’s, commemorates the sacrifice of Lance Corporal Lilly.* – photograph from 2015)

Lance Corporal Augustus Lilly was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



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.