Corporal Thomas Lynch (Regimental Number 1355), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a cooper working for Richard Kearney, Cooper, and earning $2.00 per day, Thomas Lynch presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John’s on March 31, 1915. He then enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier’s rate of $1.10 – on April 1, the following day, apparently also being attested on that same April 1.

Private Lynch of ‘E’ Company embarked in St. John’s on board the Bowring Brothers’ vessel Stephano just three weeks later again, on April 22, 1915.

(Right above: The photograph of Stephano sailing through the Narrows of St. John’s Harbour is by courtesy of the Provincial Archives.

The ship sailed to Halifax where his contingent then boarded His Majesty’s Transport Missanabie for the crossing to Liverpool. The Newfoundlanders were not to be the only military personnel taking passage to the United Kingdom; two units of the Canadian Army Service Corps also embarked in Halifax: the Railway Supply Depot and the Field Bakery.

The vessel departed Halifax on April 24 at half-past eleven in the evening and, according to the Railway Supply Depot’s War Diary, docked in Liverpool at mid-night of May 2-3. From Liverpool Private Lynch’s draft travelled by train to Edinburgh where the Newfoundlanders surely arrived on May 3 – although a second source cites May 2. Whatever the correct version of things, ‘E’ Company was to have but a few days to savor the charms of the Scottish capital.

(Right above: The photograph of Missanabie is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website. She was torpedoed and sunk on September 9, 1918.)

Only nine days later, on May 11, the entire Regiment* was posted for training from Edinburgh to a tented Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick.

*Until the eventual arrival from Newfoundland of ‘F’ Company, the unit did not possess the regulation strength to officially be a battalion.
The Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp on June 10, the day on which it received its Colours – From a post-card by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo

From Stobs Camp, some thirteen weeks later again, in early August, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, the senior Companies, having by then become the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, were transferred to Aldershot in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before their departure on active service to the Middle East and to the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Private Lynch’s ‘E’ Company and ‘F’ Company – the latter having arrived at Stobs Camp on July 10 – were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot being established at the town of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland. There they were to be the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment.

When he was apprised of his transfer appears not to have been recorded, but Private Lynch was one of the small number of personnel from ‘E’ Company which was at this time ordered to swell the ranks of those units posted to Aldershot - thus he became a soldier of ‘A’ Company. It was during the period while he was at Aldershot, and as was the case with the great majority of the Newfoundland troops there, that Private Lynch was prevailed upon to re-enlist for the duration of the war. This he did on August 15*.

*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.

After those final weeks of training plus a royal inspection at Aldershot, on August 20, 1915, Private Lynch took ship on board the requisitioned passenger liner Megantic for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting in Gallipoli where, a month later – of which two weeks had been spent billeted at the British barracks at Abbassia, near the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on the night of September 20, the 1st Battalion landed on the beach at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

(Right top: The image of Megantic in peace-time livery is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries.)

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

(continued)
Private Lynch was not, however, to set foot on Kangaroo Beach. On September 20, while still in transit, he was admitted into the 1st Stationary Hospital at Mudros on the Greek island of Lemnos for treatment to a venereal disease. He remained in hospital receiving attention for seventeen days.

Then forwarded to a convalescent depot on October 7 – likely also on Mudros - he is next recorded as having reported back to duty with the 1st Battalion on March 1 of 1916, some five months later.

When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, the 1st Battalion was despatched to the British Mediterranean naval base at Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month.

From Alexandria the Newfoundlanders were transferred, almost immediately, southward to the area of Suez at the lower end of the canal of the same name. There the Battalion was to wait several weeks for further orders since, to that point, it appears that the theatre of the future posting of the 29th Division, of which it was a component, was still uncertain*.

*In fact, a reinforcement draft was sent from Scotland to Egypt, only for it then, upon arrival, to be returned to France. On its way out, it had passed the ship transporting the parent Battalion from the Middle East to Marseille.

On March 14, the officers and men of 1st Battalion embarked through Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the Suez Canal onto His Majesty’s Transport Alaunia for the voyage to the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles, en route to the Western Front.

(Preceding page: ‘Kangaroo Beach’, where the men of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is 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 from 2011)
Some three days after the unit’s disembarkation on March 22, the Battalion’s train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy. For the Newfoundlanders it had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them travelling undistributed and unused in a separate wagon.

De-training at the railway-station in Pont-Rémy at two in the morning, the troops still had a long march ahead of them along deserted country roads before they were to reach their billets at Buigny l’Abbé.

It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers paid much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge that they passed on their way from the station. Some three months later the Somme was to have become a part of their history.

On April 13, the 1st Battalion marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where the Newfoundlanders were billeted, where they welcomed re-enforcements on the 15th and, on the evening of that same day, were introduced into the British lines of the Western Front, there to be immediately set to work to improve the communication trenches.

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.
On July 1, 1916, Private Lynch was wounded at Beaumont-Hamel during the fighting of the first day of the Somme and was evacuated on the morrow to the 87th Field Ambulance having incurred gun-shot wounds to the head and shoulder.

From there, on July 3, he was transferred to the 6th General Hospital at Rouen. His wounds were seemingly not of a severe nature as he was released to the 29th Convalescent Depot only two days later again, on June 5*.

*Although it must be remembered that in those days before the advent of anti-biotics there was always a serious risk of the slightest lesion becoming infected.

(Right above: a part of the reconstituted battle-field in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?))

(Right: Wounded at the Somme being transported in handcarts from the forward area for further medical attention – from Le Miroir)

August 1 saw Private Lynch once more admitted into hospital. On this occasion he was sent to the 12th General Hospital, also in Rouen where the immediate diagnosis was the all-encompassing NYD – Not Yet Determined. From there he moved to the 2nd Convalescent Depot on August 8; on the 23rd he was reported as having been admitted back into the 6th General Hospital; and from his papers cite him as having been released back into the 2nd Convalescent Depot on August 31.

(Right above: The River Seine flows sedately through the centre of the French city of Rouen and past its venerable gothic cathedral at or about the time of the Great War. – from a vintage post-card)

Discharged to duty at Base Depot, Rouen, on September 3, Private Lynch’s files report him as once more being with Battalion on the twenty-first day of the same month. By this time the Newfoundlanders had been posted just to the north of the remnants of the medieval city of Ypres, at Elverdinghe, where they were occupied with entrenching and were also doing work under the supervision of the Royal Engineers.

On July 27-28 of 1916, the 1st Battalion had moved north and entered Belgium for the first time. It had been ordered into 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. The Salient was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders’ posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatal.

(continued)
On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, the 1st Battalion was ordered south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – the Somme.

Only four days after their return to France and to the Somme, the Newfoundlanders were ordered to take to the offensive at a place called Gueudecourt, some twelve kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. Once again the 1st Battalion was to lose heavily – two-hundred thirty-nine casualties all told - and to gain very little.

Private Lynch was one of the wounded of that October 12 and he was admitted into the 140th Field Ambulance having suffered injuries to the head and a knee as the result of flying shrapnel.

No further documentation a propos this incident seems to exist until a report of December 3, 1916, which records him as having re-joined the 1st Battalion at Mesnil Camp near the town of Albert on that date - and also as having been promoted to the rank of lance-corporal on the same day.

The Newfoundlanders were soon to be withdrawn from active service and, on December 11 or 12, the 1st Battalion entered into Corps Reserve for a six-week respite, there to be encamped well behind the lines and close to the city of Amiens.
The Christmas period of 1916 was marred for Lance Corporal Lynch, however, by his admission into the 53rd Field Ambulance for medical attention to a case of myalgia. He is not recorded as being back to duty with the 1st Battalion until January 30.

During that short interim, the Newfoundlanders had officially returned to active service on January 23, 1917, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality - of 1917.

The only infantry activity to directly involve the 1st Battalion during that entire period – from the time of the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement in the remnants of the village of Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and beginning of March, 1917, an action which was to bring this episode in the Newfoundlanders’ War – in the area of the Somme - to a close.

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 even had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick’s Day.

It was on March 29 that 1st Battalion began to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, its march to finish amid the rubble of a village called Monchy-le-Preux.

On April 9 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was the so-called Battle of Arras intended to support a French effort elsewhere.
In terms of the count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it was to be the most expensive operation of the Great War for the British, its only positive episode being the Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.

Whereas the British campaign proved an overall disappointment, the French offensive was to be yet another disaster.

The 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, was to play its part with the 29th Division in the Battle of Arras, a role that would begin at a 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, Monchy-le-Preux was to prove the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders’ war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties on April 14 alone – other sources cite other figures, but all are similar.

May of 1917 was a period when the Newfoundlanders were to move hither and thither on the Arras Front, in and out of the trenches. While there was the seemingly eternal artillery presence, there was little infantry activity – apart from the marching.

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

(continued)
The Newfoundlanders were now once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of the Ypres Salient. This had been selected as the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. Officially named the Third Battle of Ypres, the campaign came to be better known to history as Passchendaele, borrowing that name from a small village on a ridge that was – at least ostensibly - one of the British Army’s objectives.

(Right above: Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration)

The 1st Battalion remained in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army which floundered its way across the sodden countryside of Flanders. Notably the unit fought in two major engagements, at the Steenbeek on August 16, and at the Broembeek on October 9.

(Right: Somewhere, perhaps anywhere or everywhere, on the Passchendaele battlefield during the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration)

A week after the encounter of October 9 at the Broembeek, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn from the Passchendaele campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: Cambrai.

The Battalion moved back south from Belgium into northern France on October 17 to re-enforce, organize and train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras. But by November 20, it had moved to the forward area and was to play its part in the assault of the first day.

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 engaged in the fighting at all times during that period. The battle began well for the British who were to use tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered – and reserves scarce - and by its close the British had relinquished as much ground as they had gained.

(Right above: The Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009)

(continued)
(Preceding page: In 1917 the British formed the Tank Corps, a force which became ever stronger as the war progressed as evidenced by this photograph of a tank park, once again ‘somewhere in France’ – from Illustration)

The 1st Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day. They were not to be the last.

The son of Thomas Lynch, seaman, and of Mary Ann Lynch (née Reardon) – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay – of 30, Livingstone Street in St. John's, he was also brother to at least both George-Patrick and Bridget-May and likely as well to Catherine-Mary.

Corporal Lynch was reported as missing in action on December 3, 1917, at the time of the fighting retreat near the French villages of Masnières and Marcoing.

On March 14 of the following year, 1918, a report – an official list forwarded by the Germans - received on March 14 through the offices of the International Red Cross in Geneva, recorded the burial of Corporal Lynch by the Germans at Serranvilles, near Cambrai. His personal file was thus amended so as to read killed in action or died of wounds on or soon after 3/12/1917.

Thomas Lynch had enlisted at twenty-seven years of age: date of birth November 10, 1887.

(Right above: The Caribou at Masnières stands on high ground just to the north of the community, the capture of which was the final objective of the 1st Battalion on November 20. It is controversial as to whether this objective was ever achieved. – photo from 2012)

(The photograph of Private Thomas Lynch (spelled Linch by the source) is from the Provincial Archives.)

(Right: A family memorial which stands in Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Cemetery in St. John’s commemorates the sacrifice of Corporal Lynch. – photograph from 2015)

(continued)
Corporal Thomas Lynch was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).