



**Private Augustus Miles (Regimental Number 4856) lies in Magdalen Hill Cemetery, Winchester: Grave reference, Newfoundland Plot 8..**

**His occupation prior to enlistment recorded as that of a clerk, Augustus Miles was earning a weekly fifteen dollars working for the *James Ryan Company* of Bonavista. He presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on May 1 of 1918. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.**

***\*The building was to serve as the Regimental Headquarters in Newfoundland for the duration of the conflict.***

It was to be on the day of that medical assessment, May 1, while at the same venue, that Augustus Miles would enlist. He was thus engaged...***for the duration of the war\****...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

***\*At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits – as of or about May of 1916 - signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.***

Only some few hours were now to follow before there subsequently came to pass, while still at the ***CLB Armoury*** on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On the same first day of that month of May he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Augustus Miles became...***a soldier of the King\****.

The formalities undergone, Private Miles, Number 4856, was thereupon obliged to wait for some six weeks before departing from Newfoundland for ***overseas service***. Whereas it appears that some of his fellow recruits were to be granted several days of leave to travel to their home, in the case of Private Miles any such furlough to return to the community of Bonavista appears not to have been documented.

Following his enlistment it is likely that Private Miles reported...***to duty***...to be quartered in the temporary barracks apparently established since 1915 in the St. John's curling rink and the Prince's Skating Rink in the eastern end of the city.

(Right: ***This photograph of the Prince's Rink in St. John's with military personnel, apparently attired in uniforms of Great War vintage, on parade is from the Ice Hockey Wiki web-site. There appears to be no further information a propos.***)



If he were therefore to have spent these several weeks in St. John's, this time would likely have been passed quartered in the temporary barracks\* in the east end of the capital city.

***\*A number of the recruits, those whose home was not in St. John's or close to the capital city, or those who had no friends or family to offer them board and lodging, were in the beginning to be quartered in the curling rink in the area of Fort William in St. John's, a building which was at the time to serve as barracks. It appears to have become the norm for the later recruits to have been quartered there.***



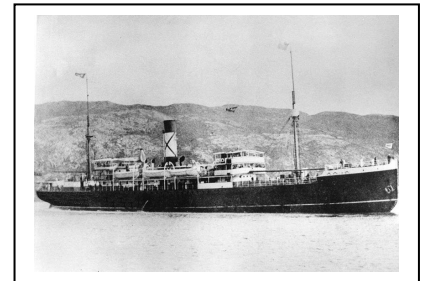
Private Miles was not to leave for overseas service until June 11 of 1918 when he boarded a train\* in St. John's en route for Halifax, Nova Scotia, via Port aux Basques and North Sydney. From there he sailed on an unspecified troop-ship to the United Kingdom\*\*, to disembark in England some ten days later

*\*Up until the early part of 1918, since the spring of the previous year, the re-enforcements had been sent to Halifax on board the Bowring Brothers' vessel Florizel (see further below). She had been wrecked in February of that year, en route to Halifax, with a large loss of life, and there was no replacement for her.*

*\*\*As the vessel carrying the Newfoundland troops has not been identified, it is not possible to record the port from which, or the one to which Private Miles and his fellow recruits sailed. All that may be documented is that upon arrival in the United Kingdom he was transported to southward to Hazely Down Camp (see below).*

\* \* \* \* \*

Some three years and nine months prior to that summer of 1918 when Private Miles was to find himself in England, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's and elsewhere in the city, and were formed into 'A' and 'B' Companies.



During that same period the various authorities on both sides of the ocean had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

(Right above: *The image of 'Florizel' at anchor in the harbour at St. John's in October of 1914 is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

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

The ship had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island. Once having disembarked in the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915: firstly in southern England on the *Salisbury Plain*; then in Scotland at *Fort George* – on the *Moray Firth* close to Inverness; and lastly at *Edinburgh Castle* – where it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.



(continued)

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

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

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

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



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

Seven days after the arrival of 'E' Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent had been ordered elsewhere. On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit had been dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.

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



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

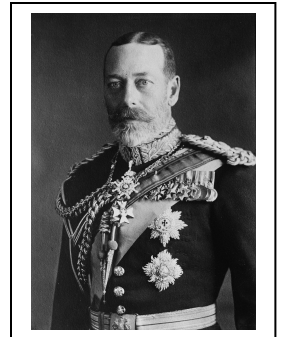
This had been an all-important moment: the Company's arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment's numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength\* of a battalion which could be posted on...*active service*.



*\*A number sufficient for four 'fighting' companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

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

From *Stobs Camp*, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the four senior Companies, having by that time become the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, had been transferred to *Aldershot Camp* in southern England.





There the Newfoundlanders were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before the Battalion's departure to the Middle East and to the fighting on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Preceding page: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India* – the photograph is taken from the *Bain News Services* as presented by the *Wikipedia* web-site.)



The later arrivals to the United Kingdom, 'E' and 'F' Companies, were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were eventually to form the nucleus of the first reinforcements to be dispatched to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

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

*Ayr was a small town on the west coast of Scotland whose history precedes the year 1205 when it was established as a Royal Burgh (Borough) by the crown of Scotland, an appointment which emphasized the importance of the town as a harbour, market and, later, administrative centre.*

*By the time of the Great War centuries later it was expanding and the River Ayr which had once marked the northern boundary of the place was now flowing through its centre; a new town to the north (Newton-on-Ayr), its population fast-increasing, perhaps encouraged by the coming of the railway, was soon to be housing the majority of the personnel of the Newfoundland Regimental Depot.*

(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.

Since that summer of 1915, recruits from Newfoundland had passed through The Regimental Depot at Ayr, there to undergo the mandatory fourteen weeks of training, and had then been sent on their way to *active service*, a practice which was to continue for the subsequent twenty-nine months.



In all, Ayr had seen the coming and going of eleven drafts from home\*.

*\*The last to do so would be the Seventeenth Draft. The first six – 'A' to 'F' Companies – had already been stationed in the United Kingdom – as seen above - before the establishment of the Regimental facilities at Ayr.*

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The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, and was to eventually serve as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers arriving from home were despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

(Preceding page: *Wellington Square seen here almost a century after it hosted the officers of the Newfoundland Regiment* – photograph from 2012)

(Right below: *The new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original* – photograph from 2012)

At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to be able to accommodate the number of new arrivals – plus men from other British regiments which were still being billeted in the area...and a measles epidemic which was to claim the life of several Regiment personnel – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in the town-centre of Ayr itself, and the *other ranks* had been billeted at Newton Park School and if not, in the grandstand or a tented camp at the newly-built racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr.

During the summer months of 1917, as of early July the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment and the Regimental Depot had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was such that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the end of September.

In the New Year of 1918, the Regimental Depot and the Headquarters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the soon-Royal Newfoundland Regiment had moved quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to *Hazely Down Camp* in the southern English county of Hampshire, not far distant from the venerable cathedral city of Winchester.

(Right above: *Troops march through a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918* – from *The War Illustrated*)

This transfer had been finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was to there, *Hazely Down Camp*, that Private Miles reported upon arrival those several months later in England.

\* \* \* \* \*



Apart from the afore-mentioned fourteen weeks of infantry training, the new arrivals were to be equipped and organized in preparation for their dispatch across the English Channel to...*active service*...on the Continent. They were then sent in reinforcement drafts – of which there had already been some fifty – via the Infantry Base Depot established in the vicinity of the French city of Rouen to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Royal (Royal as of January 25, 1918) Newfoundland Regiment which had been involved in fighting since the autumn of 1915.

(Right: *The War Memorial in Bonavista honours the sacrifice of Private Miles.* – photograph from 2012)



But illness was now to play its part, and Private Miles was not to depart from England for service on the Continent.

On September 24, he was admitted into the *Hazely Down Camp Military Hospital* where he was deemed by the medical staff to be...*seriously ill*...from pneumonia.

The son of Edmund Miles (deceased from *La Grippe* – influenza – on January 9 of 1901) and of Susannah (Susan) Miles – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Bonavista, he was also brother to Elizabeth-Jane, Archibald and to Noah.

Private Miles was reported as having...*died of sickness*...– officially: *exhaustion and heart-failure* - at Winchester on October 1, 1918. He was buried three days later, on October 4.



Augustus Miles had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-nine years: date of birth in Bonavista, Newfoundland, September 16, 1883 (from a copy of Church of England Parish Records). Curiously the same ledger also records the birth of an...*Augustus Henry Miles to Edmund Butler and Susan Miles on May 12, 1889*. No further information appears to be available except to say that the name *Henry* does not appear on the 1883 entry.

(Right above: *The family monument to Private Miles which stands in the Anglican Churchyard, also in the town of Bonavista* – photograph from 2012)



Private Augustus Miles was entitled to the British War Medal for his *overseas service*.

The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to [criceadam@yahoo.ca](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 30, 2023.