

Private William Patrick Miller (Regimental Number 107), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

His occupation recorded as being that of a *checker* - possibly with *C. P. Eagen, Grocer & Provision Merchant* of Duckworth Street and Queen's Road, St. John's - earning an annual five- - a second paper appears to have eight- - hundred dollars, William Patrick Miller was a volunteer of the First Recruitment Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury**, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on August 28 of 1914. It was a procedure which would find him...*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 five days following that medical assessment, on September 2, and at the same venue, that William Patrick Miller was to be enlisted. He was engaged...*for a year**...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.*

Private Miller was soon to have an increase to that one dollar per day: on September 21, he received a double promotion of sorts to the posts of Regimental Drum-Major and Signalling Sergeant for which he was to realize a daily one dollar and sixty cents plus a twenty-cent Field Allowance.

Perhaps this advancement had been because, by 1914, at the time of his enlistment, Private Miller was already a veteran of the armed forces, having formerly attended the *Royal Hibernian Military School* in Dublin before then having served for some twelve years, 1891 to 1903, in the 2nd Battalion of the Essex Regiment (a regiment of the *Regular Army*).

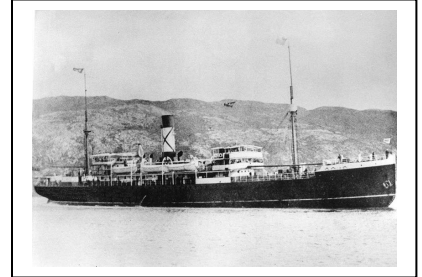


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Some of that time had been spent in South Africa – and for his service during the Second Boer War of 1899 to 1902 he had received the Queen's South Africa Medal - and apparently, according to his enlistment documents, some more of the time had been invested in having tattoos embedded over the greater part of his body.

(Preceding page: *This is a picture of the above-named medal. In fact there were very few medals available up until the time of the Great War – the Victoria Cross is likely the best known. Many more, some of them won by Newfoundland military personnel, were to be instituted during the period of 1914-1918. – from the Wikipedia web-site))*

Twelve further days were then to go by before there came to pass, once more at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of enlistment: attestation. On the third day of that October Sergeant Miller and a goodly number of his fellow recruits pledged their allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon at that moment William Patrick Miller and his comrades-in-arms officially entered the service of the King.



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

Two days later the Newfoundland contingent – it was not as yet a battalion – of 'A' and 'B' Companies was to parade through the city, to the waterfront. There it embarked onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* which was awaiting in the harbour.

These first soldiers of the Newfoundland Regiment to depart for *overseas service*, the *First Five Hundred* – also to be known to history as the *Blue Puttees* – were now to sit on board ship for the best part of a day as it was not to be until the morrow that *Florizel* would sail to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island with the convoy carrying the (1st) Canadian Division to the United Kingdom.

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 the unit was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.



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

Some three months later, on May 11, and some seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundland unit – by now 'A' and 'B' Companies re-enforced by 'C', 'D', and 'E' - was ordered moved from the Scottish capital to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

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



A month after the Newfoundland unit's transfer to Stobs Camp, by this time having been further promoted to the rank of staff sergeant – it is suggested that this *may* have occurred as early as the time of his elevation to signalling sergeant on September 21 of 1914 – Sergeant Miller was to be...*reduced to the ranks...*on June 19 of 1915*.

**It would appear, according to a rather lengthy Conduct Sheet, that Sergeant Miller by this time had amassed a number of charges against his name, mostly absences and a single...‘Allowing a female in barrack room’. On all the preceding occasions he had been reprimanded but, after an ‘Absence from Parade’ on June 12, just the day after which on June 13 he had broken arrest and been absent without authorization once again - the authorities had decided that he was to forfeit his stripes – a decision which came was to take effect after a disciplinary hearing on June 19*.*

**This punishment notwithstanding, his later record was to show little or no improvement.*

It was to be at Stobs Camp that the Newfoundland contingent received the reinforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength*. The now-formed 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered ready to be ordered on ‘active service’.

**The number was about fifteen hundred, sufficient to provide four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

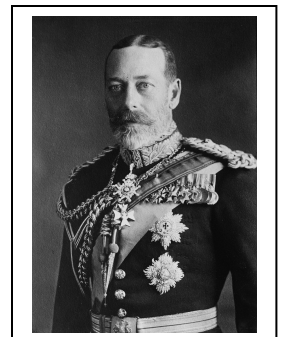


(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches past on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ – Private Howard among their ranks - 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.

This force, now designated as the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

Meanwhile the two junior companies, the later-arrived ‘E’ and the aforementioned last-arrived ‘F’, were ordered transferred to Scotland’s west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the first reinforcement to eventually be despatched to the aforementioned 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.



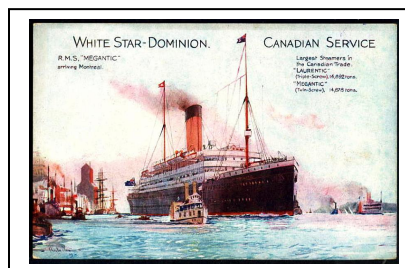
(Preceding page: George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – the photograph is from *Bain News Services* via the *Wikipedia* web-site.)



It was during this period while at *Camp Aldershot* that on August 14 Private Miller was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion for the...*duration of the war* or until my discharge.*

(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 its departure to active service on the Gallipoli Peninsula* – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)

While 'E' and 'F' Companies were beginning their posting to the Regimental Depot at Ayr, on August 20 of 1915 the 1st Battalion embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Plymouth-Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks.



(Right adjacent: *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.*)

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 was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



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



(Right: *Newfoundland troops seen 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 – Dardanelles to the French, Çanakkale to the Turks.* – from Provincial Archives)

When the Newfoundlanders landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* on that September night of 1915 they would disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.



Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, had proved to be little more than a debacle:

(Right above: *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*)

Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course 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 those of their allies, the French, and it would finally 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: *This is Anzac Bay in the fore-ground with the Salt Lake in the centre further away. The bottom of Suvla Bay is just to be seen on the left and adjacent to the Salt Lake, and further away again. The hills in the distance and the ones from which this photograph was taken were held by the Turks and formed a horse-shoe around the plain surrounding the Salt Lake - which was where the British and Newfoundlanders were stationed. – photograph from 2011*)



(Right: *No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay and the Turkish-held locations which were opposite the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives*)

A month after having set foot on the sands of *Kangaroo Beach* for the first time, Private Miller was wounded by a bullet to the neck on October 17, 1915, while serving with 'A' Company in the *Suvla Bay* trenches. His condition having been deemed to be...*dangerous...*, he was evacuated from there on that same day and placed on board the hospital ship *Galeka* (see below).



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(Right above: A vessel of the Union-Castle Line built in 1899, prior to the Great War 'Galeka' served on the commercial route from Great Britain to South Africa. Requisitioned as a troop carrier at the outbreak of hostilities, in 1915 she was converted for use as a hospital ship capable of accommodating three-hundred sick and wounded. On October 28 of 1916 she was entering the harbour at Le Havre without patients when she hit a mine, the explosion to kill nineteen medical personnel. She ship was beached but was considered to be a total loss. – the image is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

The son of Patrick Miller* and of Frances J. Miller** of Apsey Point, Trinity Bay – later of 308, Park Street, Sydney, Nova Scotia, in the Dominion of Canada, where she was to live with a daughter – Private Miller's own places of residence were recorded as being 25, Hutchings Street in St. John's, and also Devonport, England. He was also (*half-?*) brother to Elizabeth, Mrs. Philip Madden of Maddox Cove; and to Mrs. James Craven of Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

**Private Patrick Miller, Number 508 of the 1st Battalion, 24th Regiment of Foot (2nd Warwickshires), was reported as 'Killed in Action' at the Battle of Isandhlwanda (2nd Zulu War) on January 22, 1879*

***She subsequently signed her name as Mrs. Frances Miller Gallagher, then reverted to simply Mrs. Frances Miller. In 1917 she was living with a married daughter in Maddox Cove, Newfoundland; by 1921 she had moved to Sydney, Cape Breton, to reside there with the other daughter of three paragraphs above.*

Private Miller was reported as having...*died of wounds...*on October 17*, 1915, and as having been *buried*** at sea from the hospital ship *Galeka* on the following day. At home it was the Reverend John J. Winsor of Shoal Harbour who was requested to bear the news to his family.

William Patrick Miller had enlisted at the *declared* age of thirty-five years of age. Thus far the exact date and place of his birth have proved to be elusive.

**Incorrectly recorded as October 7 in The Rooms database index*

***As Private Miller had died wearing the coat of Private William White (Number 345) - with the latter's pay-book in the pocket - for a time there was some confusion as to the identity of the deceased. Private White was to later die at Beaumont-Hamel.*



(The photograph of Private Miller is from the Provincial Archives.)

Private William Patrick Miller 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 – January 29, 2023.