

Private Thomas Moore (Regimental Number 1527) is interred in Haringhe (*Bandaghem*) Military Cemetery: Grave reference II. D. 13.

His occupation before military service recorded as that of a *labourer* earning an annual three-hundred dollars, Thomas Moore, a recruit of the Fifth Draft, presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on May 4 of 1915. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as being... *Fit for Foreign Service*.

Three days after that medical assessment, on May 7, he returned to the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, on this second occasion for a medical examination. There Thomas Moore was to be engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar to which would be added a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

There were now to pass but four final days before, on May 11, he would undergo his attestation, to swear his *Oath of Allegiance*, the concluding official formality. At that moment Thomas Moore became... a soldier of the King.

\*A second source records him as attesting on the day of his enlistment.

Thereupon followed a lengthy waiting period of six weeks less two days before Private Moore, Regimental Number 1527, was to embark onto His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* on June 20 in St. John's Harbour and sail (almost\*) directly to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two men of 'F' Company and eighty-five naval reservists to take passage on that day.

(Right above: Naval reservists from Newfoundland, during the early days of the Great War, before their departure for the United Kingdom - from The War Illustrated)

Where Private Moore was to spend the interim between his attestation and his departure on...overseas service...is not clear – and is not documented among his papers.

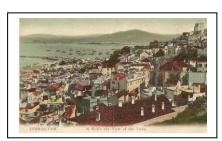




It may be that he returned temporarily to work and possibly that he was to spend some time at his home of Grand River in the Newfoundland west coast District of St. George - but this of course is only speculation.

(Right above: The photograph of Newfoundland military personnel in tenders on their way to board 'Calgarian' is from the Provincial Archives. 'Calgarian' was not a requisitioned troop transport but in September of 1914 had been taken over by the British government to serve as an armed merchant-cruiser. She did, however, as on this occasion, at times carry troops and civilian passengers across the Atlantic. She was later torpedoed and sunk by U-19 off the north of Ireland on March 1, 1918.)

\*Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the journey of about a week. Not only was Calgarian escorting three submarines, but she sailed by way of the Portuguese Azores and then Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders apparently even having the time to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. She reached Liverpool on July 9.



(Preceding page: The British Crown Colony of Gibraltar in pre-Great War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background beyond the harbour and Royal Navy dockyard. – from a vintage postcard)

On the day after its arrival in the United Kingdom, 'F' Company travelled from Liverpool by train to Hawick from where the detachment marched and then reported...to duty...at Stobs Camp on the evening of July 10. It was an important moment: the Newfoundland Regiment, as of that day counting fifteen hundred personnel\*, was now at establishment strength and could be posted on...active service.



\*A number sufficient to furnish 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)

\* \* \* \*

Almost nine months before that June 20 of 1915, 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, they to become 'A' and 'B' Companies.



During that same period the various authorities 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 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.

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



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.

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 was ordered elsewhere. On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit was dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and southeastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.



(Right above: 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 marched into Stobs Camp.

\* \* \* \* \*

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 now become the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, were transferred to Aldershot Camp in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before departing to the Middle East and to the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



(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 – the photograph is from Bain News Services via 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 soon to be formed 2<sup>nd</sup> (*Reserve*) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.

The Depot was to be Private Moore's home for the next twelve months.

At the end of this summer of 1915, the once-Royal Borough of Ayr on Scotland's west coast was to begin to serve as the overseas base for what was to become the 2<sup>nd</sup> (*Reserve*) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment from where – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 - reenforcement drafts from home were to be despatched to bolster the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's numbers, at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.



(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)

(Right: 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.



In was on March 27 of 1916 – some eleven months after he had first enlisted – and on the day before he was to leave the Regimental Depot, that Private Moore was to *re-enlist* into the Newfoundland Regiment; on this occasion it was to be for the... *Duration of the War\**.

\*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 a limited period of a single year. As the War progressed, however, this would likely cause problems and they were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.

By that time Private Moore had witnessed the departure of *two* re-enforcement drafts from Ayr: In mid-November the first had sailed for the Middle East to serve at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*; the second had been a convoluted adventure – the draft had taken ship in mid-March for Egypt but upon arrival there had been obliged to turn around for a return voyage as far as the French Mediterranean port-city of Marseille.

It was on March 28 of the year 1916 that the large 3<sup>rd</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Moore one of its rank and file - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton, the first such contingent to embark directly for the Continent. Two days afterwards, on the 30<sup>th</sup>, His Majesty's Transport *Archangel* docked in the river-port of Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot where the draft was now to spend some days in final training and organization before moving on to its rendezvous with the parent Newfoundland Battalion.

(Right below: The image of a troop-laden 'Archangel' leaving port – likely Southampton – is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

(Right below: British troops disembark at an earlier time of the War at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration)

\*Apparently the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.

On April 15, a detachment from Rouen of two-hundred eleven other ranks – accompanied by two officers – reported...to duty...with the Newfoundland Battalion already billeted in the village of Englebelmer some three kilometres behind the lines of the Western Front. Private Moore is documented as having been among that number sent from Rouen, a contingent which included not only personnel from Ayr, but also others from Gallipoli and Egypt whose departure from there had been delayed.





Some eight months before the above time, while Private Moore and his 'F' Company had been beginning their time of training at Ayr in the summer of 1915, those aforementioned four senior companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', of the Newfoundland Regiment, had become its 1st Battalion.



The unit had thereupon been attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.)

On August 20 of 1915, the Newfoundland Battalion 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



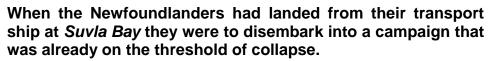
(Preceding page: The image of Megantic, here in her peacetime colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

(Right: Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 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 below: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion would now 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 been proving to be little more than a debacle:





(Right below: No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives)

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 below: An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives)

November 26 would see what perhaps was to be 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.



(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)



By this time the situation there had daily been becoming more and more untenable, thus on the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the entire 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 thereupon 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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, Indian and *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had by now simply been marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* could be undertaken.



(Right above: '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 to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.

(Right: '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 evacuation of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*, the Newfoundland unit had been ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria. On January 14, the Australian Expeditionary Force Transport *Nestor* had arrived there with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on board. The vessel was to sail just after mid-day on the 16<sup>th</sup>, on its way southwards down the Suez Canal to Port Suez where she had docked early on the morrow and where the Newfoundlanders had landed and marched to their encampment.



There they were to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29<sup>th</sup> Division had yet to be decided\*.

(Right above: The image of the Blue Funnel Line vessel Nestor is from the Shipspotting.com web-site. The vessel was launched and fitted in 1912-1913 and was to serve much of her commercial life until 1950 plying the routes between Britain and Australia. During the Great War she served mainly in the transport of Australian troops and was requisitioned once again in 1940 for government service in the Second World War. In 1950 she was broken up.)



(Right above: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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)

\*Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was already becoming a theatre of war.

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



After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and other ranks of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were to board His Majesty's Transport Alaunia at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage back up through the Suez Canal en route to France. The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseille, on March 22.

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

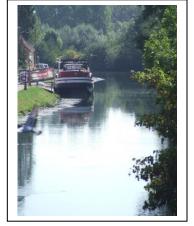
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseille.



It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably travelled unused in a separate wagon.

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 which they had then traversed on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to have become a part of their history.



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

On April 13, the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

Amongst those afore-mentioned...re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen...of course, was to be counted Private Moore who, with his fellow arrivals, new-comers to...active service..., was to report...to duty...with the Newfoundland Battalion.

\* \* \* \* \*

Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's – and Private Moore's - arrival on the Western Front in Mid-April, 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 of the Western Front on April 22.

\*It should be remembered that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

Having then been withdrawn at the beginning of that month of May to the areas of Mailly-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing for the upcoming British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, that flowed – and still does so today – through the region.

\* \* \* \* \*

On June 28\*, three days before the attack on the Somme\*, several raids were launched on enemy positions along the line. Private Moore was among those involved in such an action against the German defences positioned opposite the 88<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade's trenches. He was wounded by a bomb – grenade – blast which left him injured in the right buttock and was then evacuated immediately to the 87<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance where his condition was deemed to be serious.

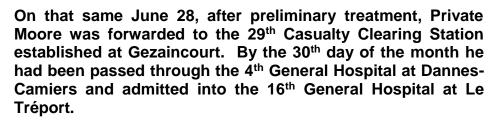


(Right above: A part of the re-constituted battlefield in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?))

\*In fact the opening day of the First Battle of the Somme had originally been set for the last day of June, but poor weather during the week prior had led the High Command to postpone the assault for a day.



(Right: A British Field Ambulance, more permanent than some nearer to the front, in north-eastern France at a later date in the War – from a vintage post-card)





(Right above: The railway station at Dannes-Camiers through which thousands of sick, wounded and convalescent military personnel passed during the Great War – from a vintage post-card)



Six days later, on July 6, he was en route back across the English Channel to the United Kingdom on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Salta*. By the following day, July 7, he had become a patient in the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth. Private Moore was to remain there until August 17.

(Preceding page: The image of 'Salta' in her war-time hospital-ship garb is from the 'In Memoriam' web-site. She was a French ship but was chartered by the British government in February of 1915 and converted to serve as a hospital ship. She played this role until April 10 of 1917 when she struck a mine near to the entrance of Le Havre Harbour and sank within ten minutes. Of the two-hundred five souls on board, one-hundred thirty were drowned.)

(Right: The main building of what was to become the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital during the Great War had originally been opened, on July 1<sup>st</sup> of 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010)

(Right below: A party of Newfoundland patients dressed in hospital uniform but otherwise unfortunately unidentified, is seen here convalescing in the grounds of the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital at Wandsworth – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

On that same August 17 Private Moore was granted the customary ten-day furlough accorded to military personnel upon release from hospital – until the 26<sup>th</sup> when he was posted to duty with 'H' Company back at the Regimental Depot at Ayr.





(Right below: The Newfoundland Plot in Ayr Cemetery wherein lie fourteen Newfoundlanders whom the Commonwealth War Graves Commission refer to as Canadians – here and elsewhere – photograph from 2014)

Private Moore was once again hospitalized during this second posting in Scotland, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Scottish General Hospital in Glasgow, his treatment for a venereal complaint lasting from November 22 until December 30 of 1916. Then, on March 4 of 1917, he was next reported as once more having passed through Southampton – and Rouen on the 5<sup>th</sup> – as a soldier of the 20<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft.



Subsequent to the inevitable period then to be spent at the Base Depot, Rouen, he is documented as having joined the Newfoundland Battalion *in the field* on March 31, one of a draft of five officers and thirty-two *other ranks* from Rouen to do so on that day.

\* \* \* \* \*

Private Moore had been away from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some nine months by the time of his return to service in the field during that spring of 1917. His former unit had been involved in several operations during that intervening period, not least of all the one which had begun on July 1 – although June 30 had been the initial date – at a place called Beaumont-Hamel.

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\*.

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(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 greatest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the carnage of the Somme was to continue for four and a half months.

(Right: 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.





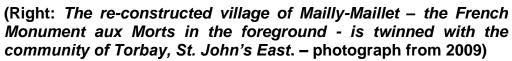
(Right: A grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland - dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from...?)

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it was to be feared that any 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.





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 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion - still under establishment battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong – maybe even fewer - 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: The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 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 nonetheless had incurred casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.

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

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

Four days after that return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 southeast of Beaumont-Hamel.

The encounter was to prove to be another ill-conceived and costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

(Right: This is the ground over which the 1<sup>st</sup> 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)

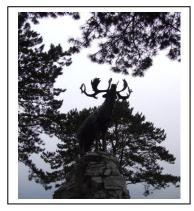
The Newfoundland Battalion was not to be directly involved in any further concerted infantry action in the immediate area of Gueudecourt although, on October 18, it would supply two-hundred fifty men to act as stretcher-bearers in an attack undertaken by troops of two British regiments, the Hampshires and the Worcestershires, of the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

(Right: 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion began to wend its way back up to the front lines.

There it 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)



It had been on January 11 that the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered out of Corps Reserve and its lodgings at *Camps en Amienois*, from there to make its way on foot to the community of Airaines. From the railway station there it was to entrain for the small town of Corbie where it had thereupon taken over billets which it had already occupied for a short period only two months before.

After that recent 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 apparently had already returned to the trenches by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

Those casualties, however, were only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig somewhat cavalierly referred to as *wastage* since the Newfoundland unit had not ventured from its trenches during those several days.

However, that winter period – as had been and was to be the case of all the winter periods of the Great War – would be a time of relative calm, although cold and uncomfortable for most of the combatants of both sides. It had been a time of sickness, and the medical facilities were kept busy, particularly, so it seems - from at least Canadian medical documentation - with thousands of cases of dental work.

And as has been related in an earlier paragraph, this period also provided the opportunity to undergo training and familiarization with the new practices and weaponry of war; in the case of the Newfoundland Battalion this had at least partially been undertaken in the vicinity of the communities of Carnoy and Coisy.

On February 18 the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion began a five-day trek back from Coisy to the forward area where it went back into the firing-line on February 23, relieving a unit of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers. It was at a place called Sailly-Saillisel and the reception offered by the Germans was lively: after only two days the Battalion had incurred four dead, nine wounded and three gassed without there having been any infantry action. The Newfoundlanders were withdrawn on February 25 to return three days later.

They carried with them orders for a...bombing raid...on the enemy positions at Sailly-Saillisel...to be carried out on March 1.



In fact, 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 that 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.

(Preceding page: A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers, his 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 were now to spend their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and in training for upcoming events. They had 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.

(Right above: 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.

(Right above: The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War, in early 1916 - from Illustration)

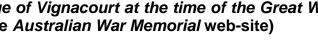
By March 31, the day on which Private Moore had reported back...to duty..., the unit had already reached the village of Vignacourt where it was to spend the day in training. On the morrow, April 1, the Newfoundlanders would be on the march again.

(Right: The village of Vignacourt at the time of the Great War by courtesy of the Australian War Memorial web-site)









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

On April 9 the British Army was to launch 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 over four thousand - this attack was to 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.

And while the British campaign would prove 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

After this further debacle the remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion remained in the area of Monchy-le-Preux for but a few days. Its casualty count had been high enough to warrant that it and the Essex Regiment, which had also incurred 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* would be the engagement of April 23 at *Les Fosses Farm*. This was in fact an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Armies. It was apparently not to be a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, several of the adjacent units reporting having been driven back by German counterattacks, actions accompanied by heavy losses.



Late, on that same evening of April 23, the Newfoundlanders subsequently retired the dozen or so kilometres to the relative calm of Arras.

(Preceding page: 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 of 1917 was to be a period when the Newfoundland Battalion would move hither and thither on the *Arras Front*, marching into and out of – mostly away from - the trenches. While there was to be the ever-present artillery-fire, concerted infantry activity, particularly after May 15 – *officially* the last day of the *Battle of Arras* – would be limited, apart from the marching.

(Right above: Newfoundland troops just after the time of Monchy-le-Preux – from The War Illustrated)





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

(Right above: Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville – not Bonneville - in early May, perhaps the  $7^{th}$ , of 1917 – from The War Illustrated)

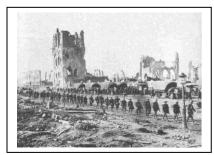
The Newfoundlanders was then soon once again moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the vicinity of Ypres and...the Salient, their first posting to be to the banks of the Yser Canal just to the north of the city.

(Right: The Yser Canal at a point in the northern outskirts of Ypres almost a century after the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 centre of Ypres on their 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to remain in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army. This had been or was also to be the case with the Australians, the New Zealanders and the Canadians, all of whose troops had floundered or would soon flounder their way across the sodden and shell-torn countryside of Belgian Flanders.

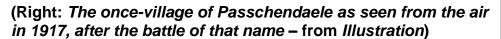




Notably the Newfoundland Battalion at *Passchendaele* was to fight in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16; and at the *Broembeek* (see both immediately below) on October 9.

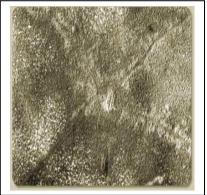
At the former it had incurred nine killed in action, ninety-three wounded, and one missing in action; at the Broembeek the cost had been higher: forty-eight killed or died of wounds, one-hundred thirty-two wounded and fifteen missing in action.

(Right: 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)



It was to be only two days after this last-mentioned confrontation that the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion then marched to the railway station at Elverdinghe from there to be transported to *Swindon Camp* in the area of Proven. Having remained there for five days to be both re-enforced and bombed, on the morning of October 17 the unit was once more to board a train.





By ten-thirty that same evening, the Newfoundland Battalion had arrived just to the west of the city of Arras and would now march the final few kilometres to its billets in the community of Berles-au-Bois.

The Newfoundlanders were still there, at Berles-au-Bois, four weeks and two days later when, on November 17, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion would be ordered once again onto a train, on this occasion to travel in a south-easterly direction to the town of Peronne. From there it then began to move further eastward, now on foot, towards the theatre of the battle now imminent.

On November 19, while still on the move, the unit was to be issued as it went with...war stores, rations and equipment. For much of that night it marched up to the assembly areas from where, at twenty minutes past six on that morning of November 20 – Zero Hour – the Newfoundland unit, not being in the first wave of the attack, was to move forward into its forming-up area. From those forward position, some hours later, at ten minutes past ten, bugles blowing, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion advanced to the fray.



(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)

This new offensive – apparently initially conceived to be no more than a large-scale raid - 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 to be directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle was to begin well for the British who had used tanks on a large scale for the first time, but opportunities were then squandered. There were to be no troops available to exploit what was, admittedly, a hoped-for yet unexpected success, and by the close of the battle, the Germans had counter-attacked and the British had relinquished as much – more in places - territory as they had originally gained.

The Newfoundland Battalion had once again been dealt with severely, in the vicinity of Marcoing, Masnières - where a Caribou stands today - and in the area of the Canal St-Quentin which flows through both places: of the total of five-hundred fifty-three officers and men who had advanced into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of only the second day\*.



(Right above: The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on November 20; however, whether its capture was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012)

\*At five-hundred fifty-three all ranks — not counting the aforementioned ten per cent reserve - the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment even at the outset of the operation was operating at just over fifty per cent of establishment strength: not that it would have been any consolation had it been known, but a goodly number of battalions in all the British and Dominion forces — with perhaps the exception of the Canadians - were encountering the same problem.



(Right above: A number of graves of soldiers from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in Marcoing Military Cemetery. Here, as is almost always the case elsewhere, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, has identified them as being Canadian. – photograph from 2010)

After the exertions of *Cambrai*, the Newfoundlanders were to be withdrawn from the line, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment by then numbering the strength of only a single company - whereas a full battalion comprises four. The unit then remained in the vicinity of Humbercourt, to the west of Arras, until December 18 when it was to march to Fressin, some fifty kilometres to the north-west. There the unit would spend both Christmas and New Year. The weather had obliged and even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow - a bit too much at times apparently.

At the beginning of January of 1918, after that snowy Christmas period spent to the south-west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion returned to Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time. There, like the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences.



(Right above: By 1918 Ypres was looking like this; some of these broken buildings had been a school whish had served as a shelter for troops in the earlier days of the conflict. – from a vintage post-card)

In the meantime, the Germans had been preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking man-power after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them. It was expected that they would launch a spring offensive - which they did - in fact they were to unleash several of them\*.



\*There were also to be several assaults by the Germans on French forces during that spring. They all met with varying degrees of success at the outset, but eventually they would be thwarted by Petain's divisions, aided at times by the newly-arriving Americans.

In the sector where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was stationed, the blow was not to fall until April. Thus, while they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders were to continue to dig.

(Preceding page: Some of the countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were stationed in March and early April of 1918 – photograph from 2011)

As suggested above, the Germans would do as was expected of them: Ludendorff's armies had launched a powerful thrust against the British on March 21, the first day of that spring of 1918, having struck at first in the area of and just south of, *the Somme*, there to overrun the battlefields of 1916 and beyond; for a while their advance had seemed unstoppable.

For a number of reasons, after two weeks the offensive had begun to falter and would eventually halt; but then, just days afterwards, a second offensive, *Georgette*, was to be launched in the northern sector of the front, in Belgian Flanders, where the Newfoundlanders were stationed: the date April 9. Within only two days the situation of the British was to become desperate.



(Right above: British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918 – from Illustration)

On the day after the first heavy bombardments, April 10, and as the Germans approached the towns of Armentières and Nieppe, troops were to be deployed to meet them. The Newfoundlanders, having been due to come out of the line and to move back to the area of *the Somme*, were instead to board buses at three o'clock in the afternoon, thereupon to be directed southward, towards the border town of Nieppe.



They were to be in action, attempting to stem this latest offensive, just three hours later.

(Right above: The area of La Crêche - the buildings in the background - where the Newfoundlanders de-bussed on April 10 to meet the Germans in the area of Steenwerck and its railway station – photograph from 2010.)

The British were now to be pushed back to the frontier area of France and Belgium. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April the Newfoundland Battalion, fighting in companies rather than as a single entity, was to make a series of desperate stands.

On April 12-13 – the dates in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's War Diary are not clear - during the defensive stand near the De Seule crossroads on the Franco-Belgian border, one platoon of 'C' Company was obliterated while trying to check the German advance. The remainder of 'C' Company had taken up defensive positions along a light railway line and, with 'A' Company, had stopped a later enemy attack. 'B' and 'D' Companies – in a failed counterattack on that evening – had been equally heavily involved.

(Right below: Ground just to the east of Bailleul where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to be in action during the period April 12 to 21 – photograph from 2013)

What exact role Private Moore played is not known - it is only recorded that he was a soldier of 'A' Company - but from April 10 to 21 was to be a difficult eleven days for all of the 1st Battalion's personnel. Nevertheless, somehow, the German breakthrough never materialised and the front would finally stabilise.

The Regimental War Diary cites ...the remainder of 'C' Coy. under Capt. Paterson, M.C. and Hqrs. took up a position along a light railway line and prepared to fight to a finish. ...there can be no doubt that it was Hqrs., 'A' & 'C' Coys. that by their resistance saved what would have been at least a very serious position for the whole 34<sup>th</sup> Division\*.

\*The 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade – and therefore the Newfoundland Battalion – was to be seconded to the 34<sup>th</sup> Division from the 29<sup>th</sup> Division during this critical period.





(Right above: These are the De Seule crossroads, lying astride the Franco-Belgian frontier, also the scene of fierce fighting involving the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on April 12 -13, 1918. Today there stand several houses and a convenience store. – photograph from 2009(?))

A native of Rose Blanche (his mother's place of origin) and the son of William Moore, labourer, and of Elizabeth Moore – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay - of Grand River in the District of St. George's, he likely had at least one brother who had lived/ worked in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia.

Private Moore was reported as having been...wounded...on April 14 of 1918 while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting to contain the German advance – successfully but with heavy losses - just to the south of the Belgian border town of Neuve-Église, during *Georgette*, the German spring offensive.

He was evacuated from the field to the 103 Field Ambulance for treatment to multiple chest injuries and was transferred from there to the 62<sup>nd</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Haringhe (*Bandaghem*\*). There the Officer Commanding reported him as having...died of wounds...on the next day, April 15.

(Right above: Transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card)





(Preceding page: A British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and whenever the necessity were to arise – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War: Other such medical establishments were often of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card)

Thomas Moore had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-one years: possible date of birth in Grand River, Newfoundland – despite having been cited, as seen above, as a... *native of Rose Blanche* – on May 20, 1993 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

\*Place-names such as Bandaghem, Mendinghem and Dozinghem, although they resemble the names of authentic Belgian communities, are in fact inventions of the British troops to identify temporary medical centres of the period and the inevitable cemeteries.

Private Thomas Moore was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

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 5, 2023.



