



Private Francis (known as *Frank*) Morris (Regimental Number 2974) is interred in Cement House Cemetery: Grave reference, XIV. C. 23.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *school-teacher* earning four-hundred dollars per annum, Frank Morris was a volunteer of the Tenth Recruitment Draft. He presented himself for medical examination on July 21 of 1916 at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service.***

(continued)

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

On the day of that medical assessment, July 21, and at the same venue, Frank Morris would enlist, and was 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 a few further hours were now to follow before there then came to pass, while still at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. Thus on the same twenty-first day of that month of July he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Frank Morris became...*a soldier of the King.*

Private Morris, Number 2974, would not now sail to the United Kingdom until a lengthy period of six weeks less four days had then elapsed. How he was to spend this prolonged interval after his attestation appears not to have been documented. It may be that he was to return temporarily to spend time at his residence at the time of enlistment, the community of Trinity in the district of the same name but, of course, this conclusion is a little bit speculative and he may well have chosen – or *been* chosen - to remain in barracks, although there was apparently little in the way of military training undertaken, to be billeted and trained in 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 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 was on the SS *Sicilian* that Private Morris was to make the trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom, the third and final such voyage that the ship was to make in 1916. He was a private soldier of Section 16, Platoon 12, of 'C' (Reserve) Company of the 3rd Battalion (see * below), it being a draft of two-hundred forty-two personnel in all that was leaving for overseas service.



But he had been obliged to await the 28th day of August, well over a month after his attestation before he would embark on the vessel for passage to the United Kingdom.

(Right above: Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when 'Sicilian' was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War. During the Great War she was apparently requisitioned as a troopship on only one occasion: in October of 1914 she was

a vessel of the armada which transported the (1st) Canadian Division overseas to the United Kingdom. She otherwise continued to work commercially between Great Britain and Canada for her owners, the Allan Line and later Canadian Pacific, at times carrying soldiery if and when her schedule allowed.

***The 3rd Battalion was based in St. John's, whereas the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion – 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Companies - was stationed in the United Kingdom. The 1st Battalion was the edge of the sword – 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies – and as of August of 1915, had been posted to the Front, at first in Gallipoli then on the European continent (see further below).**

Upon the arrival of *Sicilian* in British waters, the ship proceeded to the south-coast Royal Naval port of Devonport where the first contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment had landed with the (1st) Canadian Division in October of 1914. Having arrived in port on or about September 9, from there Private Morris and his comrades-in-arms now boarded a train for the journey north to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot.



(Right adjacent: **A no-longer bustling Devonport Harbour, today bereft of its former importance – photograph from 2012)**

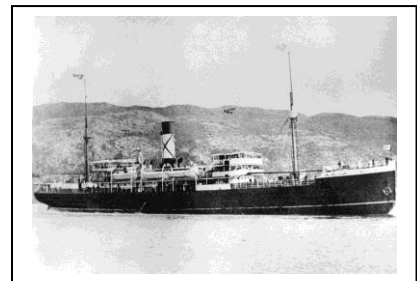
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Some two years prior to that September 9 of 1916, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914, the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's and elsewhere in the city, and were formed into 'A' and 'B' Companies.

During that same period the various authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

(Right: **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 1st 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.

(Right: *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: *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*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.

(Right below: *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 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.*

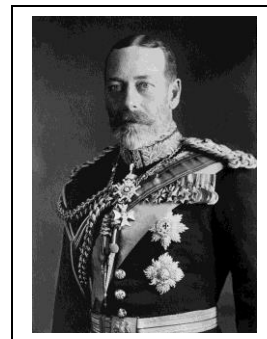
(Right: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – original photograph from the Provincial Archives)*



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 now become the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, had been transferred to *Aldershot Camp* in southern England.

There they 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*.

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 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.



(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.)

(Right below: *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 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.



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.



That November 15 of 1915 was to see not only the departure of the 1st Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr to the Middle East and to the fighting of the *Gallipoli Campaign* but also, only five days prior, the arrival from Newfoundland of 'G' Company which would be obliged to take up quarters at *Gailes Camp*, some sixteen kilometres up the coast from Ayr itself – but just over sixty if one went by road.

A further seven weeks plus a day were now to pass before the first one-hundred personnel of 'H' Company, having sailed in mid-December as recorded in an earlier paragraph, were to present themselves at the Regimental Depot on January 4, some of them to be affected, even fatally, by an ongoing measles epidemic of the time.

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After that there was then to be an interlude of three months plus several days before the second detachment of 'H' Company reported on April 9, 1916, to the Regimental Depot.

Note: *Until as late as the spring of 1916 it had been the intention to form a 2nd Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment to fight on the Continent. In fact it would seem that the last-mentioned contingent of one-hundred sixty-three recruits was to form the nucleus of that unit, while the personnel already at the Depot by this time would form a reserve battalion to serve as a re-enforcement pool for both the fighting units.*

It could not have been long before a change of plan came about as very soon men of that designated contingent (the second half of 'H' Company) were being sent to strengthen the 1st Newfoundland Battalion already on the Continent – maybe Beaumont-Hamel had something to do with it.

A further draft from Newfoundland arrived at Ayr towards mid-summer, this comprising a two-company detachment and some naval reservists, sailors who, having disembarked from *Sicilian* in Devonport, were to remain there in England.

Some weeks later again, as seen in an earlier paragraph, *Sicilian* would sail from Newfoundland once more to arrive in England in the first week in September, 1916, with two-hundred forty-two recruits on board. By the 5th day of the month the new-comers – Private Morris among that number - had reported to the Regimental Depot.

* * * * *

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 2nd (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 1st Battalion.

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 otherwise in the grandstand or a tented camp at the newly-built racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr – on the far side of the river.

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

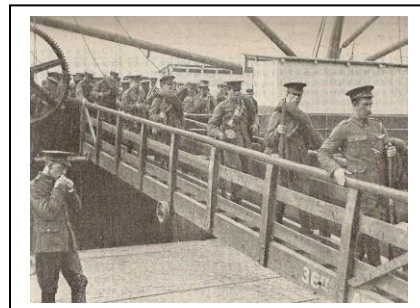
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(Preceding page: *The new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photograph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

Some eleven weeks after he had first reported to the Regimental Depot, the 14th Reinforcement Draft from Ayr – he, Private Morris, one of its rank and file - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on November 30 of 1916 on its way to the Continent and to the *Western Front*.

The contingent disembarked in the Norman capital of Rouen on the morrow, December 1, and spent time at the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot located there, in final training and organization. The majority of its personnel then awaited the order of the despatch to join the parent Newfoundland Battalion...*in the field*.



(Right: *British troops disembark at an earlier time of the War in Rouen on their way 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.*

It was well into that month of December, the 11th or perhaps the 12th - by the time that Private Morris' draft of one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Rouen reported...*to duty*...in the vicinity of Méricourt l'Abbé and that the aforementioned rendezvous was effected. It was at a moment when the Newfoundland unit was on the move from the forward area to a site far to the rear where the Christmas period was now to be spent.

* * * * *

By the time of Christmas of 1916, the first contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, as seen above, had already been serving overseas for well over two years. The 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been formed – in the spring of 1916 - and multiple drafts had been dispatched from Ayr to supplement the strength of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment (see immediately below).



As for Frank Morris, he had by December 11-12 been a soldier of the Newfoundland Regiment for one-hundred forty-three days.

(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.*)

The four senior companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', had become in the summer of 1915 the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment and had thereupon been attached to the 88th Infantry Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. The force had soon been dispatched from *Camp Aldershot* to...*active service*.



(Right above: *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.*)



(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*)

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 1st Battalion was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Right above: *'Kangaroo Beach', where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion of the 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: *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*)



When the Newfoundlanders had landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* they were to disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

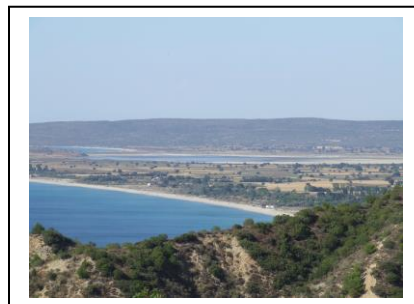
Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion would now serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, had been proving to be little more than a debacle:

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 as seen from the Newfoundland positions – 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.



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

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.



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 1st Battalion would be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



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(Preceding page: *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.

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.



(Right above: *‘W’ Beach at Cape Helles under shell-fire only days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration)*

****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 and beyond.

On January 14, the Australian Expeditionary Force Transport *Nestor* had arrived there with the 1st Battalion on board. The vessel was to sail just after mid-day on the 16th, 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 29th Division had yet to be decided*.

(Right: *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 again in 1940 for government service in the Second World War. In 1950 she was broken up.)*



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

(Right: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1st 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*)



After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st 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.

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



The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseille, on March 22.

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

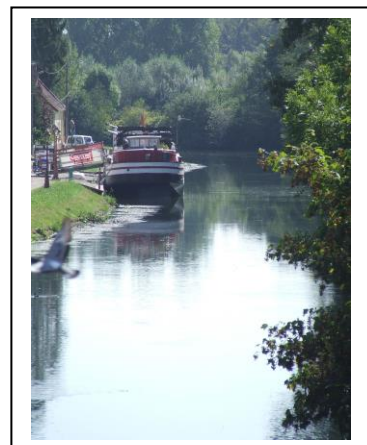
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseille.



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.

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



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.

On April 13, the entire 1st 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*.

(Right: A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?))



Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front*, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit had then been ordered to move further up for the first time into forward positions on April 22.



**It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2nd 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.*

(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 to the right in the photograph – photograph from 2009)



Having then been withdrawn at the end of that April to the areas of Mailly-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders had soon been 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.

(Right above: Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?))

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*.

**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...*First Battle of the Somme*...was to continue for four and a half months.

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

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

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



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

There were then a further two days before the unit had marched further again to the rear area and to billets in the village of Mailly-Maillet.

(Right: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John's East. – photograph from 2009*)

There at Mailly-Maillet 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, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1916, the 1st Battalion was still to number only...*11 officers and 260 rifles*...after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.



Of course, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had not been the only unit in the British Army to have incurred horrific losses on July 1, 1916, even though it had indeed been one of the most devastated. But even with its depleted numbers, the Battalion was needed and, after that first re-enforcement, it had almost immediately again been ordered

to man the trenches of the front line: as of that July 14, undermanned as seen above, the Newfoundlanders began another tour in the trenches where...*we were shelled heavily by enemy's 5.9 howitzers and a good deal of damage was done to the trenches* (excerpt from the 1st Battalion War Diary).

A second re-enforcement draft from Rouen had then arrived days later, on July 21, while the Newfoundland Battalion was at Acheux and then, only three days afterwards – at the very time day that the Prime Minister of Newfoundland had visited the unit – a third draft of sixty other ranks had arrived in Beauval and reported...*to duty*.



(Right above: *The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – obviously renovated since that time – sunk in the ramparts of the city of Ypres, when the Newfoundland Battalion was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

(Right: *The same re-constructed ramparts as shown above, viewed from just outside the city and the far side of the moat which still partially surrounds it – image from 2010*)



On July 27-28 of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion - still under establishment battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong – maybe even fewer - even after still further re-enforcement – would move north and enter the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.



The unit 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 above: *Canadian trenches in Sanctuary Wood, not far removed from the Newfoundland Battalion's positions during August and September of 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 would incur casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.



And it was to be there in *the Salient* in the sector of a place called *Railway Wood*, that the Newfoundland Battalion would soon be serving after its transfer from France.

(Right above: *Railway Wood, the Newfoundland positions at the time, almost a century later – a monument to the twelve Royal Engineers buried alive there may just be perceived on the periphery of the trees – photograph from 2014*)

(continued)

(Right: *The already-battered city of Ypres seen here towards the end of the year 1915 – and some eight months before the Newfoundlanders were to be posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card*)



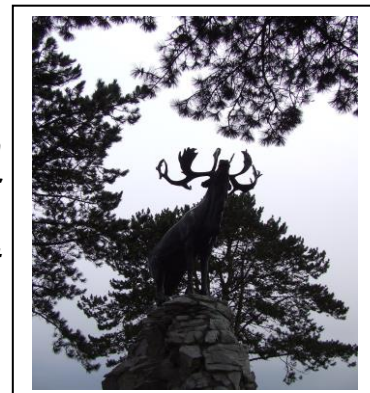
On October 8, 1916, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the Newfoundland Battalion had been ordered to return southwards. The unit was thereupon to be transported by train back into France, back into the area of the...*First Battle of – the Somme.*



Just four days after unit's return to France from Belgium, on October 12 of 1916, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had again been ordered to take to the offensive; it was at a place called Gueudecourt, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east 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 above: *This is the ground over which the 1st 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 then to be directly involved in any further concerted infantry action in the immediate area of Gueudecourt although, on October 18, it had furnished 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 88th Infantry Brigade of which, of course, the Newfoundland unit was a battalion.

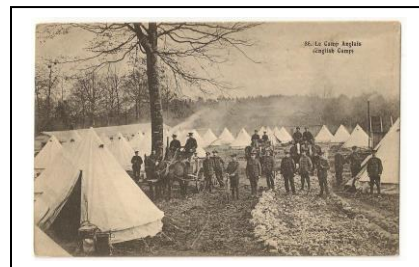


(Right above: *Stretcher-bearers not only shared the dangers of the battle-field with their arms-bearing comrades, but they often spent a longer period of time exposed to those same perils. This photograph was likely taken during First Somme. – from Illustration*)

On October 30, the Newfoundland unit had eventually retired to rear positions from the Gueudecourt area. It had been serving continuously in front-line and support positions for three weeks less a day.

The Newfoundlanders were now to spend two weeks retired to the area of Ville-sous-Corbie, re-enforcing and reorganizing. It was not to be until November 15 that the Battalion had started to wend its way back to the front lines.

Back at *the Front* the Newfoundland unit continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties, almost all likely due to enemy artillery – during the late fall and early winter. It was to be a period interrupted only by another several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas season, encamped well behind the lines and in close proximity to the city of Amiens.



(Right above: *A typical British Army Camp during rather inclement winter conditions somewhere on the Continent – from a vintage post-card*)

The parent unit had therefore begun to retire in anticipation thereof once again from *the Front* on December 8, although a goodly number of its personnel, two-hundred-sixty *other ranks* - more than fifty per cent of its strength at the time - was to be seconded on December 11 for several days' work at Carnoy and at Fricourt.

Those spared this secondment continued their withdrawal onwards to Méricourt l'Abbé which is where the one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from the Base Depot in Rouen – Private Morris among that number – had reported...*to duty*. The newcomers were thus just in time for the above-mentioned six-week interval now to be spent in quarters at *Camps-en-Amienois*.

Life on the *Western Front* was not, however, always going to be as easy as that for Private Morris and Co..

* * * * *

The afore-mentioned Christmas festivities – apparently a turkey dinner washed down with...*real English ale*...- having been completed, it was not to be until a further sixteen days had passed that on January 11 the Newfoundland Battalion would be ordered out of *Corps Reserve* and from its lodgings at *Camps en Amienois* to make its way on foot to the town of Airaines.

From the railway station there it then entrained for the small town of Corbie where it thereupon took over billets which it already occupied for a short period only two months before. Days later again the unit continued its progress, once again on foot, back up to the forward area and to...*active service*.

That recent six-week Christmas respite spent far to the rear by now a thing of the past, 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 fatalities – of 1917.

It was now the beginning of the winter period. As had been and was to be the case of all the winter periods of the *Great War* – that of 1916-1917 would be a time of relative calm,

although cold and uncomfortable – there was to be a shortage of fuel and many other things - for most of the combatants of both sides.

It would also be a time of sickness, and the medical facilities were to be kept busy, particularly, so it seems - from at least Canadian medical documentation - with thousands of cases of dental work.

This period also provided the opportunity to undergo training and familiarization with the new practices and the recent weaponry of war; in the case of the Newfoundland Battalion these exercises were to be at least partially undertaken from February 4 to 18 in the vicinity of the communities of Carnoy and Coisy.

On February 18 the 1st Battalion was to begin a five-day trek back from there to the forward area where it was to go back into the firing-line on February 23 to relieve a unit of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers. It was at a place called Saily-Saillisel and the reception offered by the Germans was to be both lively – and deadly: 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 to be withdrawn on February 25...to return just three days later.

The Battalion by then was carrying with it orders for a...*bombing raid*...on the enemy positions at Saily-Saillisel...to be carried out on March 1.

(Right: *A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers, his unit to be relieved by the Newfoundlanders on March 1, enjoys his cigarette in the cold of the trenches at Saily-Saillisel during the winter of 1916-1917. – from Illustration*)



The aforesaid planned raid of the German positions at Saily-Saillisel would go ahead a little later than scheduled as it appears that the enemy had made similar plans. The reciprocal infantry action(s) thus continued for the better part of two days, March 2 and 3.

(Right: *The fighting during the period of the Battalion's posting to Saily-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(?)*)



In fact, that sharp engagement at Saily-Saillisel was to be the sole infantry activity *directly* involving the Newfoundland unit during the entire period from Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in mid-April of 1917. The action would also serve to bring this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.

But Private Morris was not to play any role in the confrontation of the opposing infantries at Saily-Saillisel.

* * * * *

(continued)

Although by that February 27 Private Morris had become familiar with the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel, he was not to experience anything there other than the attentions of the enemy artillery – which at that occasion was to do him no apparent harm.



On the other hand, on that same date he was admitted into the 14th Corps Rest Station and there diagnosed as suffering from a case of dysentery.

Perhaps the following two-week period spent in convalescence was to be of no avail to him as, on March 14 or 17, Private Morris was transferred from the Rest Station to the 25th Stationary Hospital at Rouen from where, a month later again, on April 18, he was embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Panama* for the cross-Channel journey back to the United Kingdom.

(Right above: The image of a peace-time `Panama` is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Built in 1902, she was a vessel of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company which was to be requisitioned early during the conflict and converted from use as a passenger liner to that of a hospital ship with a capacity for four-hundred eighty-four sick and wounded. Having survived the Great War, she was purchased by the British government to continue to serve as such which she did for almost a further thirty years, including those of the Second World War, 1939 - 1945.)

Having arrived in England, Private Morris was transported to and admitted on April 19 into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth. He was to remain there until May 26 at which time he was transferred to Ward No. 3 of the Dysentery Convalescent Hospital at Barton-on-Sea, Hampshire.



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

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

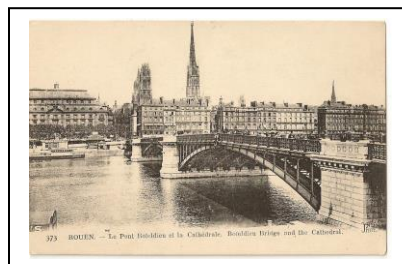


Released from Barton-on-Sea on July 4, he was granted the customary ten-day furlough accorded to military personnel discharged from hospital in the United Kingdom. Upon completion of this period of leave, Private Morris was then posted to the – temporary, as it transpired – Regimental Depot at Barry* where he reported...*to duty* ...on July 13 and where he would remain to serve until the first week of that September.

****During the summer months of 1917, the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry, in the region of the city of Dundee. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were to return back to Ayr by the third week of September.***

The fifty-nine *other ranks* – of which Private Morris was one – of the 29th Re-enforcement Draft from Barry embarked in Southampton on their way to France on September 7. Arriving in Rouen two days later, they there were to spend the inevitable days at the Base Depot before leaving to rendezvous with the 1st Battalion.

(Right: *The River Seine flowing through the centre of the French city of Rouen – and under the watchful gaze of its venerable gothic cathedral – at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



Private Morris reported...*to duty in the field*...on September 18, one of twenty-three *other ranks* to do so on a day when the parent unit was out of the line at *Penton Camp*, Poperinghe, preparing to return to the trenches about a week hence.

* * * * *

Those several months before, after the confrontation at Sailly-Saillisel the Newfoundland Battalion was ordered retired to the rear by train, to an encampment at Meaulté. There, and later at *Camps-en-Amienois* – even further behind the lines and where the unit had spent the preceding Christmas period – the Newfoundland unit would spend almost the entire remainder of that month.

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 those 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 come from Ayr, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.

(Right: *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 commenced making 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.

(continued)

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



On April 9 the British Army had launched 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 Canadian National Memorial which has stood atop Vimy Ridge since 1936 – photograph from 2010*)

(Right below: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen in 1917, from the western, 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 1st 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 had proved to be the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war: four-hundred eighty-seven casualties all told on April 14 alone*.

(Right below: *The Caribou at Monchy-le-Preux stands atop the vestiges of a German strongpoint in the centre of the re-constructed community. – photograph from 2009(?)*)



After the debacle of April 14, the remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion had 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.

When the thirty-nine *other ranks* of a re-enforcement contingent from Rouen had reported to the 1st Battalion on April 18, they were to be just in time to march the dozen kilometres or so from Arras up to the line to take over trenches from the Dublin Fusiliers.

(continued)

There had been by that time only two-hundred twenty *other ranks* in number plus twelve officers serving with some two-hundred personnel of the Essex Regiment in the aforementioned composite force. Those of the 1st Newfoundland Battalion would spend the 19th salvaging equipment and burying the dead.

They had then remained *in situ* until the 23rd.

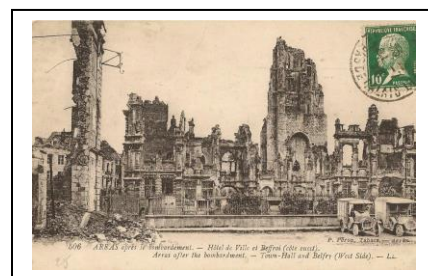


(Right above: *Windmill Cemetery stands about mid-way between Monchy-le-Preux – about three hundred metres behind the photographer – and Les Fosses Farm – three hundred metres to the right along the main road to Arras.– photograph from 2007*)

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 had in fact been an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5th, 3rd and 1st Armies.

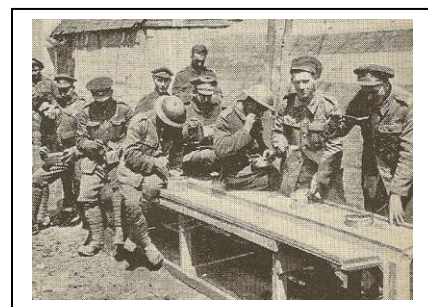
It apparently had not been a particularly successful venture, at least not in the sector of the 1st Battalion, several of the adjacent units reporting having been driven back by German counter-attacks, actions accompanied by heavy losses.

And the Newfoundlanders had also sustained further casualties: ten...*killed in action*, three ...*missing in action*, and forty-eight...*wounded*.



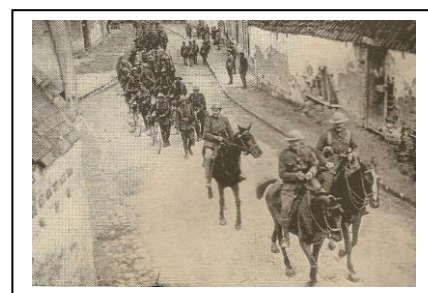
Later on during that evening and night of April 23-24, the Newfoundlanders had retired the dozen or so kilometres to the relative calm of Arras.

(Right above: *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*)



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

The *Battle of Arras* had by that time been proceeding to its costly and inconclusive close in mid-month – May 15 - but the Newfoundland unit was not to be further involved in any co-ordinated offensive action – it had been too exhausted; this now would be a period when the 1st Battalion was to be posted in a nondescript fashion on the *Arras Front*, in and out of the quieter trenches.



On May 7 it had been on the move once again and marching to different billets in Berneville where it was to be the subject of a war journalist and photographer.

(Preceding page: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville – as cited immediately above - in early May, perhaps the 7th, of 1917 – from The War Illustrated*)

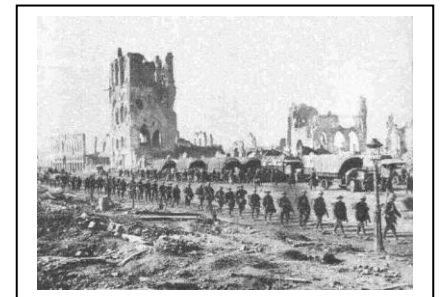
At the outset of June, the 1st Battalion had retired from the line to Bonneville, there to spend its time again re-enforcing, re-organizing and in training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.



The Newfoundlanders had then soon once again been 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 above: *The Yser Canal at a point in the northern outskirts of Ypres almost a century after the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, manned its eastern bank: East is to the right – photograph from 2014*)

(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*)



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.

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*)

The 1st 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.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1916, after two years of war – from Illustration*)

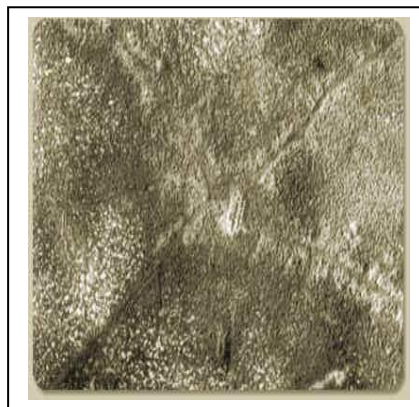
Notably the Newfoundland Battalion at *Passchendaele* was to fight in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16; and at the *Broembeek* (see both immediately below) on October 9.

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



(Right above: *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*)

There were then to be four weeks of relative calm which was for the Newfoundland Battalion to begin on August 24 with a four-day withdrawal from the forward area to *Penton Camp* to the north-west of Poperinghe. This reprieve would continue while the British forces re-enforced and re-organized after a month of fighting that had not gone as well as the British High Command had optimistically anticipated.



(Right above: *The once-village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1917, after the battle of that name – from Illustration*)

And it had been, as reported further above, during this quiet period while at *Penton Camp* that the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had welcomed Private Morris back into its fold.

* * * * *

The Newfoundland unit would go back to war during the last days of what had been a fine month of September, in contrast to what had gone before – but, as the fighting at *Passchendaele* started once more...so did the rains.

The return to the forward area would recommence for the 1st Battalion on September 25, although the unit had incurred four wounded two days prior to that date due to long-range artillery fire. Once back in their trenches they had prepared for their next concerted attack on German positions. It would come some two weeks later and it would come at the *Broembeek*.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *An innocuous, placid stream shown here, in 1917 the Broembek was a torrent which would flood the surrounding terrain, transforming it into a quagmire. – photograph from 2009*)

The son of Charles Morris (deceased in St. Anthony from cancer on September 19, 1918) and of Anna Susannah Morris (also found as *Hannah, née Brown**) – he from Trinity, she from nearby Trouty - Private Morris had also been brother to four siblings – Ethel, Maria, Arthur-William and to George-Brown.

**The couple had married in Trinity on January 15 of 1878.*

(Right above: *Normally a nondescript, placid, stream, the Broembek in October of 1917 had burst its banks and inundated the surrounding fields, transforming them into a quagmire. – photograph from 2010*)

Private Morris was reported as having been...*killed in action...*while serving with 'A' Company in fighting at the *Broembek, Belgium, on October 9, 1917.*

At home it was the Reverend C. M. Stickings of Trinity who was requested to bear the news to his family.

His body was later exhumed – by April 8 of 1920 - and re-interred to where it rests today.



Francis (*Frank*) Morris had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty years and three months: date of birth in Trinity, Newfoundland, April 27, 1896 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

(Above left, above right and right: *A family monument in the local cemetery and the Trinity War Memorial both commemorate and honour the sacrifice of Private Morris - as also does a stained-glass window of the mortuary chapel in the Trinity-Dunfield Anglican Cemetery. – all photographs from 2011*)



(Right above: The photograph of the *stained-glass window to be found in the Trinity-Dunfield Cemetery Mortuary Chapel is courtesy of Cyril Bennett – with many thanks.*)

Private Frank Morris was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also 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 2, 2023.