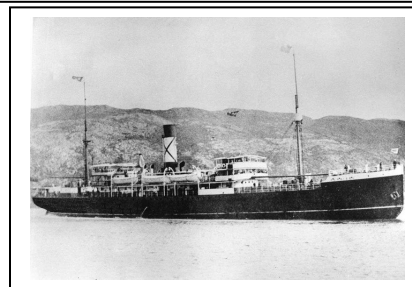


Private Edward Joseph Murphy (Regimental Number 112), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *mail clerk* working for \$9.00 a week, Edward Joseph Murphy enlisted – at the private soldier’s daily rate of \$1.10 (including a daily ten-cent field allowance) - on September 4, 1914, a recruit of the First Draft. Having attested on October 1, he embarked for England on October 3, two days afterwards, onto the Bowring Brothers’ vessel *Florizel*.



The ship sailed on October 4, the following day again, in order to rendezvous off the south coast of the Island with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas.

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

In the United Kingdom Private Murphy trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England, then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness -, at Edinburgh Castle – where the unit provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles -, and later again at *Stobs Camp* near to the town of Hawick.



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

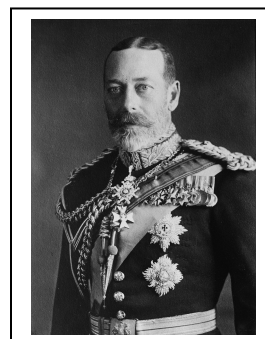
(Right below: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp, Scotland, to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies*, ‘A’ – Private Murphy among its numbers - ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, were then sent south to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot; meanwhile the two junior Companies, ‘E’ and ‘F’, were sent to Scotland’s west coast, to Ayr, where they were to form the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.



(Right below: *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* – photograph from *Bain News Services* via *Wikipedia*)

**On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service. The 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.*



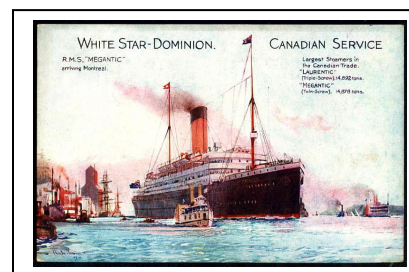
It was apparently to be during that final period of training spent at Aldershot that Private Murphy – and not only he - had been prevailed upon, he on August 13, to re-enlist in the Newfoundland unit...for the duration of the war*.

**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 only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.*



(Right above: *Some of the men of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Aldershot in August of 1915* – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)

Private Murphy was to serve as a soldier in the British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force during the *Gallipoli Campaign*. On August 20, 1915, he embarked onto the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (right) for passage to the Middle East and the fighting against the Turks where, a month later, on September 20 – having spent two weeks in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - he disembarked with the 1st Battalion at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



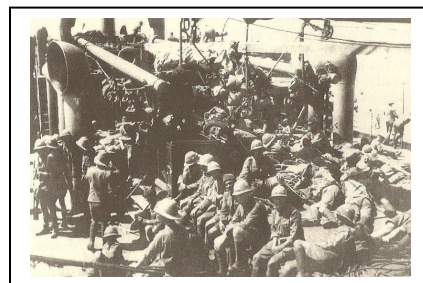
(Right above: *The image of Megantic, in peace-time a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

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



(continued)

(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 Private Murphy served for ten days in the early fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



On October 1, 1915, Private Murphy was evacuated from *Suvla* on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Somali* to the 15th General Hospital established in the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria – a British Naval Base at the time – to be diagnosed as suffering from dysentery. From Alexandria, on November 16, he was embarked onto a second Hospital Ship, *Neuralia*, for the return passage to the United Kingdom, there to receive further treatment.

* * * * *

Upon his arrival in England Private Murphy was admitted on November 27 into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth on the southern outskirts of the capital city. He was to receive treatment and convalescent care there until his release on January 24 of 1916.



(Right: The image of *Neuralia*, dressed in her white war-time hospital-ship garb, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

On that date he was then granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed service personnel upon discharge from hospital – apparently he spent it somewhere in Ireland – after which he commenced a posting to the Regimental Depot in Ayr where he reported to duty on February 2.



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



(Right: Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing at 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

(continued)

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, to serve as a base for the soon-to-be 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

It was from there – as of November of 1915 until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were to be sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the numbers of the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion as they became depleted – as they often unfortunately did.



(Right: *An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

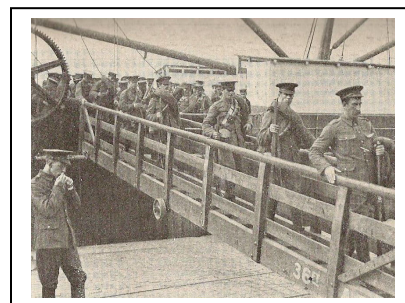
Private Murphy was one of the two-hundred eleven *other ranks* and two officers of the 3rd Re-enforcement Draft which disembarked in the Norman capital city of Rouen on March 30, 1916, having sailed there from the English south-coast port of Southampton two days previously, on the 28th, on board His Majesty’s Transport *Archangel* .



(Right above: *The troop-transport Archangel is seen here charged with re-enforcements on their way to the Continent. – from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site*)

After days of final training and organizing* at the Base Depot in Rouen, the contingent was ordered to the front, to its rendezvous with the 1st Battalion.

(Right: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)



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

On April 15, a re-enforcement detachment from Rouen of two-hundred eleven *other ranks* accompanied by two officers reported to *duty* with the 1st Battalion already billeted - but only days earlier - in the village of Englebelmer some three kilometres behind the lines of the *Western Front*.

Private Murphy is documented as having among that number, a contingent which included not only personnel from Ayr, but others from the Middle East whose departure from there had been delayed or otherwise disrupted.

* * * * *

(continued)

In the meantime, during Private Murphy’s hospitalization in England and posting to Ayr in Scotland, the Newfoundland Battalion had continued to serve at *Suvla Bay*. It had been a miserable existence and had been no better from a military point of view.

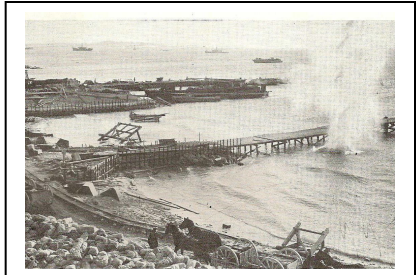
Flies, dust, disease, frost-bite, floods – and the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command* had ever anticipated – had overwhelmed the British-led forces. It had been decided to abandon the venture.

**Many of the commanders were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

On the night of December 19-20, the British were to abandon *Suvla* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, having formed a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel was to be evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, and some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case would the respite be of a long duration; the 1st Battalion had been 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 and the *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps were also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had now been only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Peninsula would be undertaken. The operation had taken place on the night of January 8-9, and the Newfoundland Battalion was to provide some of the rear-guard for this second withdrawal as well*.



(Right above: *‘W’ Beach at Cape Helles as it was 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 above: *The same ‘W’ Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces and by the Newfoundlanders who were the last soldiers off the beach: vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011*)

(continued)

(Preceding page: *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 the British evacuation of the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the 1st Battalion had been sent to Alexandria, having arrived there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were to be immediately transferred southward to Suez, one of the ports at the southern end of the canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders as, at the time, the subsequent destination of the 29th Division had not yet been decided*.



**Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.*

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



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

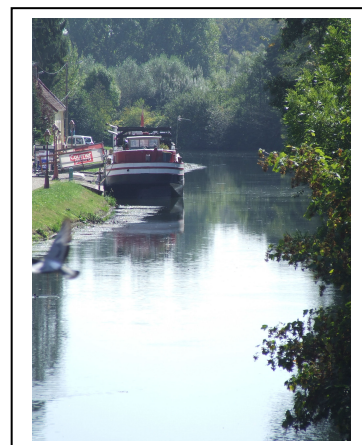
On March 14, the Newfoundlanders had taken ship through Port Tewfiq, also at the southern end of the *Suez Canal*, for the French port of Marseilles, and had disembarked there on March 22, en route to the *Western Front*.

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train would arrive at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having travelled unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the local station at two in the morning, the Newfoundlanders still were to have a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

(Right: *the 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 over which they had marched on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would become a part of their history.

On April 13, 1st Battalion had marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where they would be billeted, would receive reinforcements and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the trenches of the *Western Front* and set to work.



* * * * *

It had been on that April 15th of 1916, of course, that Private Murphy's re-enforcement draft had reported at Englebelmer from the British Base Depot at Rouen, for duty with the 1st Battalion.

(Right: *part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)



The Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the meandering river that flowed – and today still flows - innocuously through the southern part of the region to which it lends its name, *the Somme*.

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 largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the killing of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.



(Right above: *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: *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.



The son of Matthew Murphy and of Alice Mary Murphy* (née O'Neill, deceased of tuberculosis on August 13, 1913) of Pleasant Street before, by the time of enlistment, Mundy Pond Road, he was also brother to Matthew-John and to Catherine-Margaret.

**The couple married on November 25, 1883.*

Private Murphy was reported as *missing in action* on July 1, 1916, at Beaumont-Hamel, while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. Some thirty weeks later, on December 31, Private Murphy was officially *presumed dead**.

**On an un-dated Conduct Sheet he is documented as having been 'Killed in Action 1/7/16'.*

Edward Joseph Murphy had enlisted aged twenty-two years (from enlistment papers); the family memorial (see below) records him as having died aged twenty-five years.

(Right above: *Looking from the British lines at Beaumont-Hamel 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 2009*)

(Right above: *a grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from ...*)

Private Edward Joseph Murphy was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).

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

(continued)



Hon. J.R. Bennett
Col. Sec.
City
Hon Sir.

Mundy Pond Rd.
City
Dec. 19th, 16

Your very kind letter to hand, and I beg to thank you most kindly on behalf of my wife and family for your sincere expression of sympathy on the death of my dear son. As he has shown his loyalty to his King & Country by volunteering and finally making the supreme sacrifice I cannot but try hard to emulate his loyalty by being brave and bearing my loss with resignation.

Again thanking you Most Kindly.

I am

My dear Hon. sir
Matt. Murphy



(Right: This family monument to Matthew Murphy and to Alice Mary (née O'Neill) Murphy, and to their son Private Edward Murphy, stands in Belvedere Roman Catholic Cemetery in St. John's. – photograph from 2015)

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 13, 2023.