



Private Albert John Myer(s) – he records his name as *John Albert Myers* - (Regimental Number 1143) is buried in Forest Road Anglican Cemetery in St. John's, in the Naval and Military Plot.

His occupation prior to the time of his military service recorded as that of a *cooper* working for a Mr. William Snow of the Southside for a weekly five dollars*, Albert John Myers appears to have no record among his papers of the required medical examination before – or indeed, even following – his enlistment.

****A second source records an unlikely forty-eight dollars per month.***

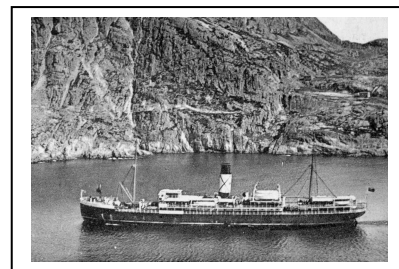
That enlistment took place upon his presentation of himself at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury** in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on February 17, 1915. There Albert John Myer(s) was engaged...*for one year***...at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar to which would be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

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

***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.*

Ten days were now to follow before there was to subsequently come to pass, once more at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On the same twenty-seventh day of that month of February he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Albert John Myer(s) became...*a soldier of the King.*

For Private Myer(s), Number 1143, and his fellow recruits there was now yet to be another, and final, waiting period of three weeks and a day before he and they would be summoned to...*overseas service.* How he occupied himself during that time is not recorded among his papers; he may, of course, have temporarily returned to work, but this is only speculation.



(Right above: *The image of the Bowring Brothers' vessel 'Stephano', sister-ship of 'Florizel', as she passes through 'the Narrows' of St. John's Harbour is from the Provincial Archives.*)

Unlike the two previous contingents to have departed Newfoundland (see further below) for...*overseas service,* Private Myer(s) 'D' Company was not to sail directly to the United Kingdom. On March 20 it, he a soldier of the Number 8 Platoon, embarked onto the Bowring-Brothers' vessel *Stephano* – sister-ship to *Florizel* - for the short voyage to Halifax, capital city of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, where it was thereupon to board a second vessel, the newly-launched *Orduña* for the trans-Atlantic crossing*.



(Right above: *The image of Orduña is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. The vessel was not to be requisitioned during the Great War but would be used by the Cunard Company to operate on its commercial service between Liverpool and New York.*)

(continued)

Having then sailed from Nova Scotia on March 22 for the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool, Private Myer(s) and his draft landed there eight days later, on the 30th. Once having disembarked in Liverpool, the two-hundred fifty men and officers of 'D' Company were thereupon transported on the same date by train to arrive in Edinburgh, the Scottish capital, on the same day, there to join the Newfoundland Regiment's 'A', 'B' and 'C' Companies.

These units were already by this time stationed at the historic Castle, 'A' and 'B' having recently been posted from Fort George and 'C' having arrived directly from home (see further below). After 'D' Company's arrival at the end of that month of March, the Newfoundlanders were now to remain at Edinburgh for the following six weeks.

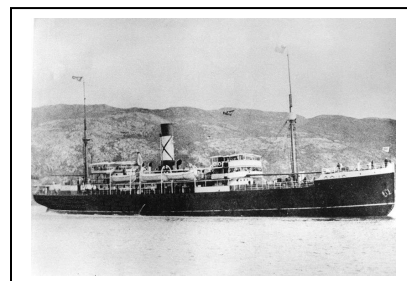


(Right above: *From its vantage point on Castle Hill, the venerable fortress overlooks the city of Edinburgh where in 1915 the Newfoundlanders were to provide the first garrison to be drawn from outside the British Isles. – photograph from 2011*)

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Five to six months before the arrival of Private Myer(s) in Scotland, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of some five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's for the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits – these soon to become 'A' and 'B' Companies - during which time the various authorities on both sides of the Atlantic had also been preparing for the Regiment's first transfer overseas.

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 – to spend some twenty-four hours.



The vessel had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the (1st) Canadian Division overseas as it passed off the south coast of the Island.

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

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



Once 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, as recorded beforehand, it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

On February 16, only days after ‘A’ and ‘B’ Companies had taken up their posting on *Castle Hill*, ‘C’ Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent* - would arrive directly from Newfoundland.

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

* * * * *

As seen in a previous paragraph, for the month of April and the first days of May of 1915, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ Companies, now united, were to furnish the garrison – the first troops from outside the British Isles to do so - of the guardian of Scotland’s capital city. Then, during the first week of May, ‘E’ Company was to report there...*to duty*...from home. Four days later again, on May 11, the Newfoundland contingent was ordered elsewhere.

On that day, some seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundland unit was dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent would eventually receive the re-enforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength*.

The now-formed 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment would thus be rendered available for...*active service*.

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



**This was approximately fifteen hundred, sufficient to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot. This force, now the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.



Meanwhile the two junior Companies, ‘E’ – last arrived at Edinburgh - and the aforementioned ‘F’, were ordered transferred to Scotland’s west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the first re-enforcements to be later dispatched to the 1st Battalion.

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

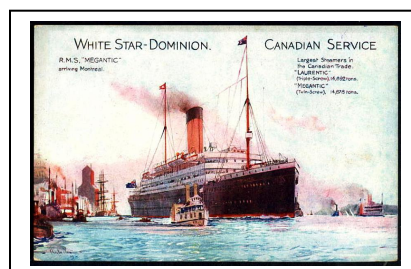
It was while the Newfoundland Battalion was in training during those weeks at Aldershot, on August 15 that Private Myer(s) would be prevailed upon to enlist...*for the duration of the War.*

(Right: *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.)



(Right: *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.)*

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



(Right: *Newfoundland troops 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*)



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

(continued)

(Right: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla Bay, and where the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to serve during the autumn of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, was 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.



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

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

***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.**



November 26 of 1915 would see perhaps 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: 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)

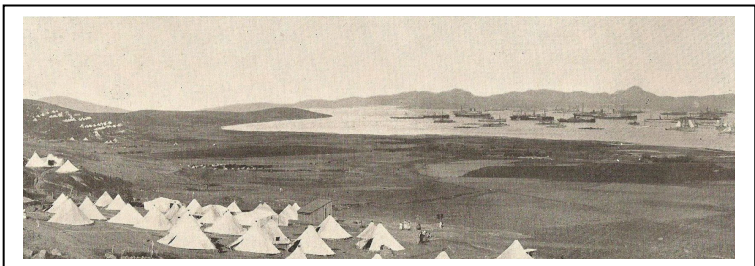


There were to be many casualties on both sides, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no

Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

It was on that same November 26, but certainly at an earlier hour than that at which the storm started – six o'clock in the evening -, that Private Myer(s) was evacuated from the Newfoundland positions to the not far-distant 54th Casualty Clearing Station at *Suvla Bay*, and there diagnosed as being...*seriously ill*...with jaundice. From there he was ferried three days later, on the 29th, to the 3rd Canadian General(?) Hospital at West Mudros on the Greek island of Lemnos some seventy kilometres distant. On December 16, he was transferred from hospital to the nearby Base Convalescent Depot.

(Right: *Towards the end of the year 1915 Mudros Bay and its minuscule harbour on the island of Lemnos were almost entirely surrounded by Allied medical establishments – a great number of them under canvas. – from Illustration)*



On Boxing Day of 1915, Private Myer(s) was embarked onto the hospital ship *Aquitania* – a requisitioned trans-ocean liner - for passage back to the United Kingdom. Upon arrival in England on January 3 of the New Year, 1916, he was transferred from the ship to the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth where he was to be treated for what had by then been discovered to be dysentery.



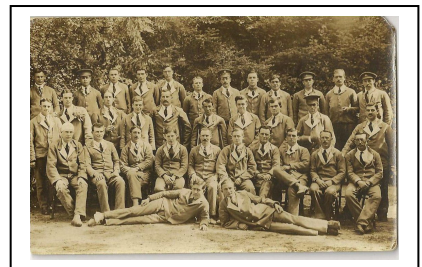
(Right adjacent: *Some of the peace-time facilities on board 'Aquitania' in use as war-time hospital wards – the original photograph from the Cunard Archives)*

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

Six weeks following his admission into hospital at Wandsworth, on February 14, Private Myers was transferred into the Napsbury War Hospital in St. Albans for attention to psychiatric problems as he had apparently become...*excited & troublesome*...although by early July his condition apparently had improved.



There at St. Albans it was decided that he would not likely be fit for...*active service*...for a period of six months – later it was felt that he would never recover. The same document, dated July 3 of 1916, recommended that he be posted back to the Regimental Depot in Newfoundland and also that he remain in hospital until such time as *direct* repatriation might be arranged.

However, despite these instructions, on November 30 of 1916, Private Myers was granted the customary ten-day furlough accorded to military personnel upon release from hospital in the United Kingdom. Upon the completion of this period of leave he was ordered to report...*to duty*...at the Regimental Depot and 2nd (Reserve) Battalion Headquarters which he must have done on or about December 9.

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 the base for the personnel arriving to form the nucleus of the re-enforcements to be sent on...*active service*. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from Newfoundland were despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1st Battalion.

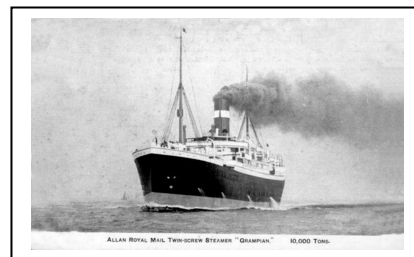


The Depot was also to serve as a station through which those returning to Newfoundland as no longer fit for military service – and also those whose year of service had expired and who wished to return home – were to await repatriation.

Such, of course was the case of Private Myer(s).

(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on-Ayr where the ‘other ranks’ were quartered is to the left of the River Ayr while the Royal Borough, where many of the officers resided, is seen to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr.*

It was apparently not until the following month of March, the year now 1917, that Private Myers was to eventually set sail for home. His Majesty’s Transport *Grampian* left Liverpool on the 23rd with him on board but, as Private Myers is not recorded as arriving home until as late as April 5, it was possibly not to be the *direct* journey to Newfoundland that had been recommended for him then again, there was likely to have been ice about*.



**Grampian would later hit an ice-berg head on but would not sink.*

(Right above: *The photograph of ‘Grampian’ is from the Old Ship Galleries web-site.)*

He was attached to the Regimental Depot in St. John’s on April 14, 1917, to be discharged from the Regiment on May 2 of the same year.

The son of Alwin (John) Meyer (likely deceased by 1902) and of Julia Meyer (née *Moore**) of St. John's, he was also brother to Bertha-R., Arthur-John and to Edith-Blanche (married *Smith*).

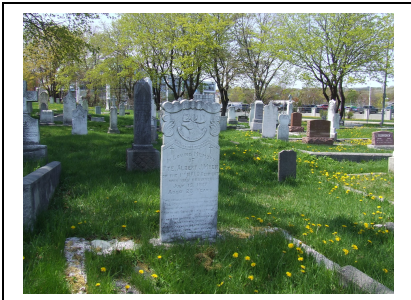
**The couple had married in St. John's on October 25 of 1894.*

Julia Meyer* was to re-marry on May 2, 1902, to William Vokey**, former employee of Bowring Brothers (deceased of *hemiplegia* – paralysis - on November 1 of 1917), the couple then to reside at 81, the Southside in St. John's – she also later of 49, George Street, and of 28, Carter's Hill (also see below).

**Private Myer(s) was to allocate a daily eighty cents from his pay to his mother.*

***Originally from Spaniard's Bay, apparently he was also formerly of Flower Hill in the city according to his doctor.*

Private Myer(s)* drowned in St. John's Harbour (see article below), while home in the city on sick leave, on July 14 - another source cites July 12 – of 1917.



John Albert Myers* had enlisted at a *declared* nineteen years of age – although the report below cites him dying at the age of twenty-eight: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, May 18, 1893 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register which records only one given name: *Albert*.)

(Right above: *A family memorial which stands in the Old Anglican Cemetery on Forest Road in St. John's commemorates the service of Private Albert J. Myer* – photograph from 2015*)

**His headstone records Myer.*

Private John Albert Myer(s) was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



(continued)

A local newspaper printed the following report soon after the death of Private Myers:

Tragic Death of Invalid Soldier

A sad drowning, under tragic and mysterious circumstances, occurred on Saturday last at the South Side, the victim being Private Albert Myers, son of Mrs. Vokey, Carter's Hill, a veteran soldier of 'Ours' who returned home not long since suffering from shell shock.

On Friday last he left home. Not returning up to the following morning his absence naturally caused anxiety. He was last seen proceeding in the direction of the South Side. The police, aided by civilians, conducted a diligent search for the soldier, and after dragging the waters of the harbour near Baine Johnson and Co's premises, Mr. Jas. Ford raised to the surface the body of the unfortunate young man.

After it was removed to the Morgue Dr. Cowperthwaite conducted a post mortem and then the body was confined and prepared for burial* by Undertaker Barrett and removed to the home of the mother of the deceased. Pte. Myers was 28 years old and joined the first contingent of the Nfld. Regiment. To the bereaved mother and other relatives the sympathy of the whole community will be expressed.

**His body was later exhumed, on or about October 10, 1923, for transfer to the Naval & Military Plot in the same cemetery.*

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