



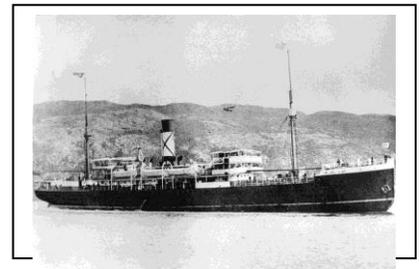
Corporal Clement Leslie Newell (Regimental Number 3812) is interred in Cement House Cemetery – Grave reference XVII. D. 14.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a clerk, Clement Leslie Newell was an agent and *traveller* (travelling salesman – in *his* case, of insurance) and earning a variable monthly income of about sixty dollars working for the *Scarborough Company of Canada*. He was a recruit of the Fifteenth Draft.

Having presented himself for medical examination at Headquarters at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, he then enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attested, all on the same day, May 23, 1917.

(continued)

Private Newell did not leave St. John's until August 4 of that year. On that day he marched down to St. John's harbour and boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel, *Florizel* (right)*. The destination was Halifax, Nova Scotia, from where the Newfoundland draft now took ship – thus far un-identified: maybe *Missanabie* but this is far from certain - to cross the Atlantic to the United Kingdom.



**Albeit a second source claims that the contingent left St. John's by train.*

Arriving in England the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence to serve as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some two years. It was from here – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home had been despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *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*)

During the period spent at the Depot at Ayr, Private Newell received a first promotion, to the rank of lance corporal - with an accompanying five-cent raise in pay – to which he was appointed on October 22.

Private - later Lance Corporal - Newell spent the five months succeeding his arrival in the United Kingdom at the Regimental Depot at Ayr and likely also at Barry*. In the latter half of January of the New Year, 1918, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion was to move quarters from Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester.



It was there that Lance Corporal Newell would have been stationed at the beginning of February when he was ordered to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent.

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

(Right above: *a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918 – from *The War Illustrated**)

(continued)

On February 4, the 36th Re-enforcement Draft of two hundred *other ranks* from Hazely Down – Lance Corporal Newell among its non-commissioned officers - passed through the English port of Southampton on its way to the Continent. On the 6th the Newfoundlanders arrived in the French port of Rouen, there to undergo the inevitable final training and organization* at the Base Depot before finding their way to the front.

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

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

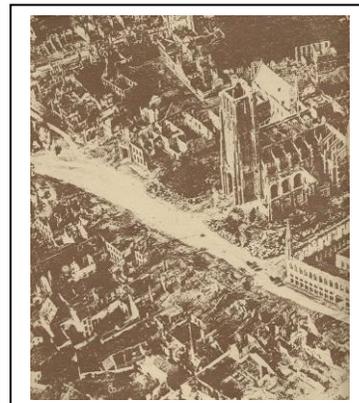


A detachment of one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Rouen – Lance Corporal Newell among that number - reported to duty with 1st Battalion at Steenvoorde, on the Franco-Belgian frontier, on the 15th of that February, the day before an inspection by Major-General Beauvoir de Lisle, Officer Commanding 29th Division, a parade complete with presentation of decorations and the announcement that the Newfoundland Regiment was to be designated as *Royal*.

Meanwhile, at the close of the *Battle of Cambrai* at the beginning of December of 1917, 1st Battalion – once again badly understrength due to the heavy casualties incurred – had been withdrawn from the area of the front lines to re-enforce and to reorganize. The following weeks had been spent at first to the south-west of the city of Arras, at Humbercourt and then at some distance to the north-west, at Fressin.

The weather obliged and even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow, a bit too much at times apparently.

At the beginning of January of 1918, and after that snowy Christmas period spent to the west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had been ordered into Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time.



There, as it was with the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences. It was during a period while 1st Battalion was out of the lines that Lance Corporal Newell reported to *active service*.

(Above right: *an aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916 – from Illustration*)

Meanwhile, while the Allies built their defences, by the beginning of 1918 the Germans were preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking manpower after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them.

It was expected that the Germans would launch a spring offensive. While they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders continued to dig.

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



Then the Germans did as was expected of them. Ludendorff's armies had already launched a powerful thrust on March 21, striking at first in the area of *the Somme*, overrunning the battlefields of 1916 and beyond; for a while the advance seemed unstoppable.

Then a second offensive, *Georgette*, was launched in the northern sector of the front, in Flanders, where the Newfoundlanders were stationed: the date was April 9.

Within two days the situation of the Allies was desperate.

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



On the day after the first heavy bombardments, April 10, as the Germans approached the towns of Armentières and Nieppe, troops were deployed to meet them. The Newfoundlanders, due to come out of the line and move back to the Somme, boarded buses at three o'clock in the afternoon and were suddenly directed southward, towards Nieppe.



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

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

The British were pushed back to the frontier area of France and Belgium. On the 12th of April 1st Battalion, fighting in companies rather than as a single entity, was making a series of stands.

On April 13, during the defensive action near the De Seule crossroads on the Franco-Belgian border, one platoon of 'C' Company was obliterated while trying to check the German advance. The remainder of 'C' Company took up defensive positions along a light railway line and, with 'A' Company, stopped a later enemy attack. 'B' and 'D' Companies – in a failed counter-attack on that evening - were equally heavily involved.



(Right above: ground just to the east of Bailleul where 1st Battalion fought during the period April 12 to 21 – photograph from 2013)



What exact role Lance Corporal Ellis played during this frantic period is not known - it is recorded only that he was a non-commissioned officer of 'B' Company - but from April 10 to 21 was to be a difficult eleven days for all of 1st Battalion's personnel. Nevertheless, somehow, the German breakthrough never materialised and the front finally stabilised.

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

Only days after the crisis of the German spring offensive had passed, on April 24, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion said farewell to their comrades-in-arms of 88th Brigade and 29th Division. On the following day there was a recessional parade attended by the officer commanding 88th Brigade, Brigadier Freyberg. 1st Battalion was to later be deployed to another unit, but for the summer of 1918 it was to move a world away from Flanders where it had just fought, to be stationed on the west coast of France.

On April 29, the Newfoundlanders – 1st Battalion by now reduced to a total strength of just thirty officers and four-hundred sixty-four other ranks - took train in Belgium for the French coastal town of Étaples, where they arrived at eleven o'clock in the late evening. For now, for them, the fighting was a thing of the past.

The summer of 1918 was to pass peaceably enough for most of the personnel of 1st Battalion. For the months of May June and until early July, the unit was posted to Écuire, to the Headquarters of Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in Europe.



(Right: Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force at the time of the Battalion's posting to GHQ – from Illustration)

The cosmetic honour of this new role, however, masked the reality that the 1st Battalion of the recently-proclaimed *Royal Newfoundland Regiment* was no longer capable of serving in the field.

***Although few at home cared to admit it publicly, the problem was that 1st Battalion had run out of reserves and was unable to continue as a fighting entity. It was to be September before even a battalion of reduced strength could return to active service. At home, mandatory military service was initiated – conscription by another name – but with limited results.**

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The posting to Écuire completed, for most of July and all of August the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion were encamped in much the same area, close to the coastal village of Équièhen – itself not far removed from the large Channel port of Boulogne – and far to the rear of the fighting, of which there had been plenty elsewhere.



(Right above: a view of the sparsely-populated coastal community of Équièhen at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

Re-enforced, the Newfoundlanders returned to the fray on Friday, September 13, as one of the three battalions of the 28th Brigade of 9th Scottish Division. 1st Battalion was once more to serve on the Belgian front where, some six weeks later, having advanced out of the *Ypres Salient*, it would finish its war on October 26 at a place called Inghoyghem (*Ingooigem*).

Only two days before 1st Battalion’s attachment to the 9th Scottish Division, a second promotion had been awarded to Lance Corporal Newell: September 11 saw him put up his corporal’s stripe.

On September 28, the Belgian Army and the 2nd British Army broke out of their positions, overrunning the enemy lines. It was the start, for them, of the *Hundred Days Offensive**. On the following day, the Newfoundlanders were fighting at the Keiberg Ridge. After almost four years of stalemate, it was once again to be a conflict of movement.

(Right: *British troops and German prisoners in Flanders during the Hundred Days* – from *Illustration*)



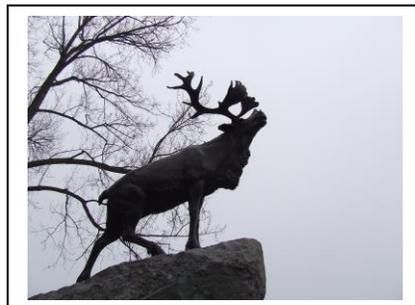
**This offensive would prove to be the final campaign of the Western Front and would terminate with the Armistice of November 11. It had begun further to the south on July 18 on the French front on the River Marne, followed on August 8 by an onslaught by British and Empire troops near Amiens in what would also become known as 3rd Somme.*

On October 14, 1st Battalion, having been rested for a week after heavy fighting near Ledeghem, had returned to the front for a new drive to commence on that same day. The Newfoundlanders were to push along the northern bank of the River/ Canal Lys, itself north of the city of Courtrai (*Kortrijk*) which they were to bypass. The advance of the 14th was successful - but the cost again high - only three hundred reporting for muster at dawn on the following morning.



(Right above: *the Lys – both canal and river – at a point not far from the crossing-place – right to left - of October 19-20, 1918 – 1st Battalion had advanced towards the camera along the far bank. The Harlebeke Caribou (below) stands about one hundred metres behind the camera. – photograph from 2010*)

The youngest son of Nathaniel Newell, former fisherman, deceased August 30, 1912, and Margaret Jane Newell – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of *The Dock*, Port-de-Grave, he was also the brother of Elfreda*, Jabez and Harold.



Corporal Newell was reported as having been *killed in action*, on October 14, 1918, while serving with 'B' Company in fighting beyond the Belgian village of Ledeghem during the *Hundred Days Offensive*.

Clement Leslie Newell had enlisted at the age of twenty-three years and four months: date of birth, January 17, 1894, according to the 1911 Census.

(Right above: *The Caribou at Courtrai – today Kortrijk – commemorates the crossing of the Lys Canal and the sacrifice of the Hundred Days Offensive. – photograph from 2012*)

(Right: *The Port-de-Grave War Memorial honours the sacrifice of Corporal Newell. – photograph from 2010*)



**Elfreda was one of three sisters: Mrs. John B. Smith, Mrs. Nathan Mercer and Mrs. Robert J. Taylor.*

Corporal Clement Leslie Newell was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



(continued on following page)

Nfld. Record Office
58 Victoria St.
London

The Dock
Conception Bay
Newfoundland

Gentlemen:

Can you give me any information re the personal effects of 3812 Corp. Clement L. Newell, B Company Royal Nfld Regiment?

He was killed at Vichy Ridge near Ledeghem, Oct. 14. 1918.

Any of his belongings such as his Bible or Prayerbook etc. would be most gratefully received.

I am

very truly yours

Mrs Margaret J. Newell

Note: 3812

Cpl CL Newell

Effects of the above named soldier were forwarded to Nfld 18/8/19 These are classified as personal effects, so contents cannot be described.

In fact, a Mr. Hugh Thomson of 15, Gordon Street, Ayr, forwarded Corporal Newell's personal belongings to the *Pay & Record Office* in London, from where they were later forwarded to Newfoundland.