

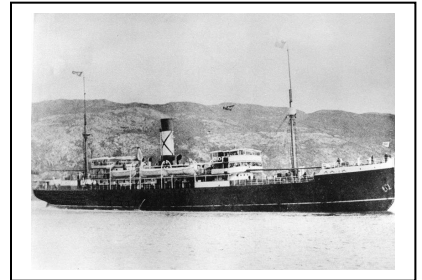


Lance Corporal Douglas McNeil Osmond (Regimental Number 306) lies buried in Gezaincourt Communal Cemetery Extension: Grave reference II. A. 15.

His employment previous to enlistment recorded as that of a *clerk* earning a monthly fifty dollars, Douglas McNeil Osmond presented himself for enlistment at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on September 4, 1914. He was a recruit of the First Draft.

It may well be that he was then granted leave to return home to the Notre Dame Bay community of Moreton's Harbour as Douglas McNeil Osmond is next recorded as having undergone a medical examination in Grand Falls on September 9. It was a procedure that was to pronounce him as...*fit for foreign service*.

When Private Osmond then returned to St. John's is not clear; however, he was present there on October 1, for that was the date on which he, among many others, was attested. It was then to be only a further two days before he then embarked on October 3 with the others of the *First Five Hundred* onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting the contingent in St. John's Harbour.



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

The ship sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island where she was to join the convoy transporting the 1st Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

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



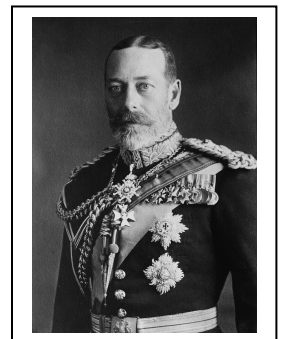
In the United Kingdom Private Osmond trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh Castle – where it provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented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

(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about 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', '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, the later-arrived 'E' and 'F*', were sent to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

(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 – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia*)



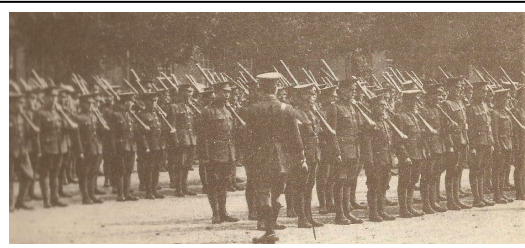
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****On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service.***

The 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

It had then been during the period spent at Aldershot that Private Osmond of 'B' Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on or about August 14, to re-enlist 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 at Camp Aldershot in August of 1915, on parade for a royal inspection – from The Fighting Newfoundlander by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)

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



On August 20, 1915, Private Osmond and his comrades-in-arms 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 where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he disembarked with the 1st Battalion 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 above: 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)

(continued)

(Right below: 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)

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On October 10, only a bare three weeks after having disembarked in *Gallipoli*, Private Osmond was to be evacuated from *Suvla Bay*, at first to be superficially diagnosed as suffering from pyrexia (a high fever) and likely being also at first ferried for medical attention to *Mudros Bay*, on the Greek island of Lemnos, some fifty kilometres distant.

From Lemnos he was subsequently transferred on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Neuralia* to St. David's Hospital on the British-held Mediterranean island of Malta. There his condition was further diagnosed as being due to malaria.

(Right above: The picture of HM Hospital Ship Neuralia in her war-time colours is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

(Right: the vestiges of a British Royal Naval Hospital, now disused, on the island of Malta: since 1964 Malta has been an independent nation but at the time of the Great War was a British possession – photograph from 2011)

Departing from Malta some six weeks later, on November 22, Private Osmond was then to be invalided back to the United Kingdom on board HM Hospital Ship *Egypt*.

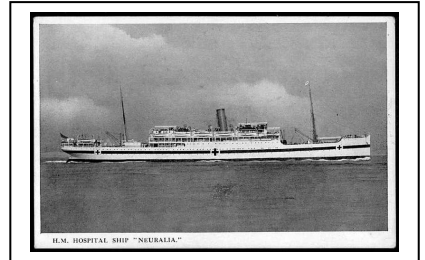
(Right: The image of HMHS Egypt is also from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. She sank in the English Channel in May of 1922 after a collision with the 'Seine', and carried to the bottom a cargo of gold and silver, most of which was later salvaged.)

Upon Private Osmond's arrival in England he was transported to the 3rd London General Hospital in the southern Borough of Wandsworth, still suffering, now from bronchitis, where he was admitted on November 29.

He was to remain there for the next six weeks.

(Right: 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)

(continued)



(Right: *A party of unfortunately unidentified Newfoundland patients convalescing at Wandsworth* – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

Following his convalescence and the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon discharge from hospital – in his case from or from about January 9 until the 18th – Private Osmond was then posted to the Regimental Depot at Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, to report there to duty on the 19th.



The Regimental Depot had been established as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment some six months previously during the summer of 1915 and it was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1916 - that re-enforcements were to be despatched to bolster the fighting Companies of the 1st Battalion, at the beginning to the Middle East, but then shortly afterwards to the *Western Front*.



(Right adjacent: *An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where the ‘other ranks’ were quartered, 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)

It was while at Ayr that Private Osmond was promoted to the rank of lance corporal, on March 3. Ten days later he would embark through the English south-coast naval port of Devonport with the 2nd Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, to re-join the Newfoundland Battalion, at the time still in the Middle East.

Three weeks later Lance Corporal Osmond’s Draft was to finish its travels, not in Egypt but in France.

The Newfoundland Draft was to spend almost that entire period at sea – with enough time in Egypt to have changed ship - before eventually landing from His Majesty’s Transport *Kingstonian* at the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles* on April 3. From there the personnel - Captain Ledingham, Lieutenant Pippy and one-hundred forty *other ranks* – reported five days later to duty with the 1st Battalion, at the time in billets in the community of Louvencourt, on the 8th of that same month.



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

**At the time there had been some confusion as to whether the 1st Battalion would stay in the Middle East or not, and the 2nd Draft had apparently sailed for Egypt before the Newfoundland unit was ordered to France. One might surmise that the ship was not equipped with wireless.*

* * * * *

In the meantime, while Lance-Corporal Osmond had been receiving medical attention before being then posted to Scotland, things had not been proceeding quite as anticipated on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion had been serving but, even since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the final operation at *Suvla Bay*, had proved to be little more than a debacle: Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods due to a freak storm on November 26 – and 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 the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.



(Right above: *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.*

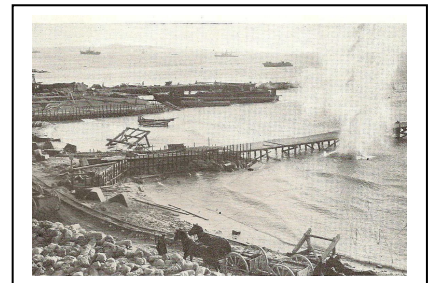
On the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel had been evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration; the 1st Battalion was to be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right above: *Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached. The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011*)

The British and the *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps were also to serve at *Gallipoli* – were now only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* would be undertaken.

This operation had taken place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion providing part of the rear-guard on this second occasion also.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *'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: *'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*)

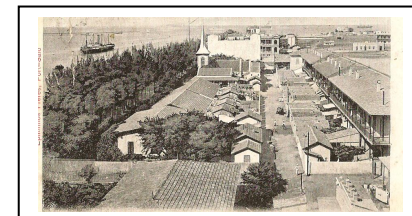


When the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city Alexandria, having arrived there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to Suez, a port at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.



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

The almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the Newfoundland unit boarded His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq on March 14 to sail up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France – likely passing Lance Corporal Osmond's 2nd Draft going in the opposite direction. The 1st Battalion then disembarked in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles on March 22.



(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 Marseilles. – from a vintage post-card*)

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train arrived 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.



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Having de-trained at the local station at two in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were still to face a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé. It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they had marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to become a part of their history.

The unit was now to march in an easterly itinerary: from Buigny l'Abbé to Bruchamps, to Domart, to Bonneville, to Doullens and from there on to the village of Lovencourt where the 1st Battalion was to be billeted for the next six days. It was while there, on April 8, that the Battalion War Diarist recorded in his journal that two officers...*arrived from Egypt with draft of 140 other ranks.*



(Right above: *The small provincial town of Doullens at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

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On April 13, the 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 communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

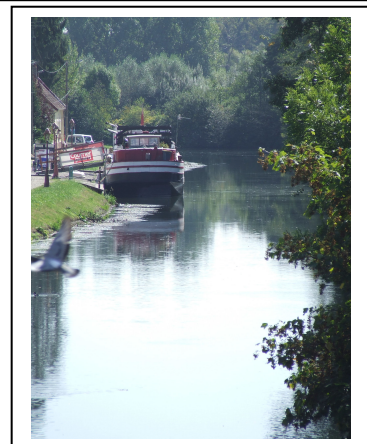
(Right: *A part of the re-constructed trench system in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)



Just days later again, two of the Battalion's four Companies – 'A', that of Lance Corporal Osmond, and 'B', – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit was to then be ordered to move further up 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 the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the 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: *A languid River Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)

(continued)

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.*

(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel: Looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences: The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009*)



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



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: *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 Joseph Baine Osmond, fisherman deceased November 1, 1919, and of Margaret (Maggie) Ann Osmond (née *Tucker*)* - to whom he had allotted a daily eighty cents from his pay - of Moreton's Harbour, Notre Dame Bay – he was brother to Mark, Henrietta, Winnifred-Marion, Ernest-Henry-Tucker, George-Kenneth, Nina, Raymond, Dorothy and to Otto.



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

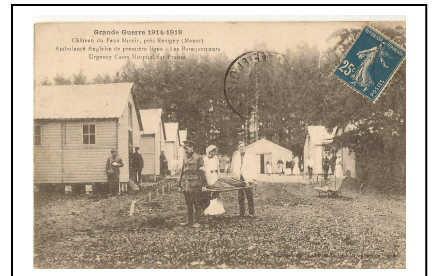
**The couple was married on November 29, 1879.*

Private Osmond was wounded at Beaumont-Hamel where he incurred gun-shot injuries to the face and to both thighs while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting of July 1, 1916, the first day of *the Somme*.

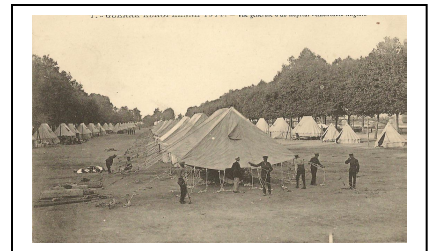
(Right: *Wounded of the Somme being evacuated to the rear in push-barrows* – from *Le Miroir*)



(Right: *A British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some* – from a vintage post-card)



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



Evacuated from the 87th Field Ambulance on July 5 – the date of his admission not to be found among his papers - to the 4th Casualty Clearance Station at the town of Beauval, and from there to the 29th Casualty Clearance Station at nearby Gezaincourt three days later, on the 8th Lance Corporal Osmond was reported as having *died of wounds* at the same 29th CCS.

He was interred at Gezaincourt by the Reverend Thomas Sands, attached to the 4th Casualty Clearing Station.

Douglas Osmond had enlisted at the declared age of twenty-four years: date of birth in Moreton's Harbour, Newfoundland, December 22, 1889 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

(Right: *This family memorial in the Methodist Cemetery in Moreton's Harbour, District of Twillingate, commemorates the sacrifice of Private Osmond.* – photograph from 2015)



Private Douglas McNeil Osmond 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 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 11, 2023.