



Private John Richard Parrell (Regimental Number 2871) is buried in Liverpool (*Kirkdale*) Cemetery: Grave reference, IV. C.E. 89.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman* earning an annual four-hundred dollars, John Richard Parrell was a volunteer of the Twelfth Recruitment Draft. He presented himself to enlist on June 11 of 1916 at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury** in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland and was thereupon

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.

**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.*

On the day following his enlistment, June 12, and at the same venue, John Richard Parrell would now return to undergo the mandatory medical examination. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service.*

Only a few further hours were now to follow before there then came to pass, once again at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. Thus on the same twelfth day of that month of June he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, John Richard Parrell became...*a soldier of the King.*

Private Parrell, Regimental, Number 2871, , would not now leave Newfoundland for *overseas service* until the lengthy period of thirty-three weeks and two 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 work and to spend time with his family and friends at home in the community of Pine's (also *Point's*) Cove on the Straits of Belle Isle and his own place of residence, Flower's Cove, 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.*

Following that long intermission, Private Parrell was one of the approximately three hundred twenty...*all ranks*...to leave St. John's on January 31, 1917, for *overseas service* on the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel*, bound for Halifax, from where the detachment had been ordered to take ship to the United Kingdom on board *Saxonia*.

However, preparations for this crossing had gone awry and thus immediately upon arrival in Nova Scotia, Private Parrell and his contingent were forwarded to accommodation – apparently cramped - in the town of Windsor where the Newfoundlanders were soon to be becoming ill from measles, influenza and then the mumps – two of them to become fatalities during what was soon to be an epidemic. The detachment was thus ordered to remain in Windsor and to be quarantined.

It was not until after a lapse of some two-and-a-half months following its arrival in Nova Scotia that transport could be arranged for the trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom for the by then so-called *Windsor Draft* – minus those twenty-five or so personnel still unable to travel.

On April 17 Private Parrell embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Ausonia*, a requisitioned Cunard passenger-liner and one of three ships which were to sail on the next day carrying the Newfoundlanders in a convoy from Halifax, all three also carrying Canadian re-enforcements to the English west-coast port of Liverpool, where the ships were to dock on April 29.



Having arrived in England the great majority of the Newfoundland contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland and to the town of Ayr where the Regimental Depot had by this time been established for close on two years...but not Private Parrell.

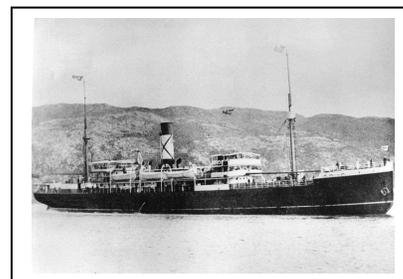
* * * * *

Some two years and seven months prior to that month of May of 1917 when Private Parrell's ship arrived in Liverpool, 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 below: *The image of 'Florizel' at anchor in the harbour at St. John's in October of 1914 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.



(Preceding page: *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**.

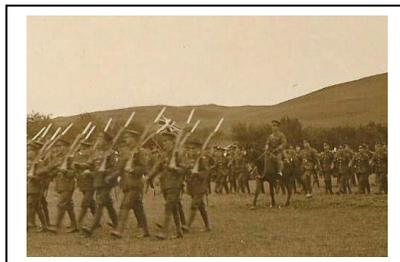
****These five Companies, while a contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.***

(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.***

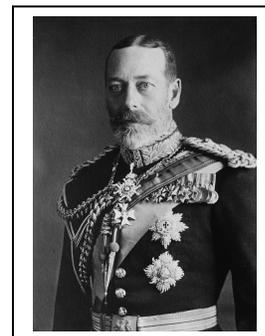
(Right: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – original photograph from the Provincial Archives*)



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*)

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.



(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.

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.

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 *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, formerly 'C' Company of the 3rd Battalion stationed back in St. John's, had reported to the Regimental Depot.

There was now to be a particularly protracted interval before any large numbers re-enforcements were to arrive from Newfoundland – a problem which was later to affect the capabilities of the parent 1st Battalion fighting on the Continent.

The main cause of the difficulty, as seen above, would be those troops which had been dispatched from St. John's and had reached Halifax on board *Florizel* at the end of January, 1917, only to be then held there for some three months before they were to arrive in Scotland where the regulation fourteen weeks of training then awaited them.

Seven months were to pass without any re-enforcements arriving from Newfoundland. When they did, of course, it was to be the so-called *Windsor Draft*.

* * * * *

Upon *Ausonia's* docking in Liverpool, Private Parrell was immediately transported to the Stanley Auxiliary Hospital where he was...*admitted in state of unconsciousness at above Hospital from HM Transport Ausonia never regained consciousness.* On April 30, a day later, he was described as...*seriously ill.*

The son of William James Parrell (also found as *Parrol* and *Parril*) and of Sarah Grace Parrell (née *Crane, possibly deceased by the time of enlistment) – to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Pine's (also *Point's*** and *Pound*) Cove, Straits of Belle Isle, his own place of residence was recorded as nearby Flower's Cove. He was possibly brother to Andrew and Albert.**



****The couple had married in the community of Green Island Cove on May 27, 1895.***

*****The 1921 Census suggests that Point's Cove is the likely one.***

(Preceding page: A view of part of the CWGC Plot at Kirkdale – All those facing the camera are Canadian graves apart from that of Private Parrell which is in the back row, the last on the left. – photograph from 2012)

Private Parrell...*died of sickness*...on May 3, 1917, of a combination of paratyphoid, appendicitis and tuberculosis. He was buried in *Kirkdale Cemetery* on May 7, at eleven o'clock in the morning.

At home it was the Reverend J.T. Richards of Flower's Cove who was requested to bear the news to his family.

John Richard Parrell had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen years and nine months: date of birth in Pound (sic) Cove, Newfoundland, September 6, 1896 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

Private John Richard Parrell was entitled to the British War Medal for his overseas service.



1st Western Hospital

"The Newfoundland Record Office"

"Dear Sir,

Would it be too much trouble for you to let me have the Home address of pte. J.R. Parrell: No 2871. Who died here in Liverpool.

His grave I continually visit and take care of being a "Newfoundlander".

I am sure it would please his parents to know that a Newfoundland Nurse is looking after this grave which is in Kirkdale Cemetery, Liverpool.

Hoping this will not give you any trouble to let me have this address.

Sincerely yours

Nurse Dempster V.A.D.

Nurse Jessie Dempster served in the 1st Western General Hospital in Liverpool.

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.