



Private Stephen J. Paul (Regimental Number 2331) is buried in Ayr Cemetery, Ayrshire, in Scotland: Grave reference, G.2.3.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *lumberman*, Stephen Paul was a volunteer of the Ninth Recruitment Draft. He presented himself for medical examination on March 27, 1916, at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury** in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which would pronounce him as being...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

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

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It was on the day of that medical assessment, March 27, and at the same venue that Stephen J. Paul was now to be enlisted. He was 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.

**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.*

Only twenty-four hours were then to go by before there came to pass, again at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On the 28th day of March he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Stephen J. Paul became...*a soldier of the King.*

Private Paul, Number 2331, would not sail to the United Kingdom until a lengthy period of seventeen weeks less five days had elapsed. How he was to spend this prolonged interval after his attestation appears not to have been documented. It may therefore be that he returned to his work temporarily and was perhaps almost inevitably to spend time at the family home in the Bay of Exploits community of Wigwam Point, Norris' Arm – but of course, these conclusions are a little bit speculative and he may well have chosen to remain 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.*

It was to be the vessel *SS Sicilian* which would carry Private Paul and his draft overseas. Apparently it was a detachment two-companies strong, thus five-hundred Regimental personnel, that sailed from St. John's on July 19, 1916, in the company of a contingent of Newfoundland Royal Naval Reservists and some three-hundred civilian passengers since the vessel was on a scheduled commercial route from Canada to the United Kingdom.



(Right above: *Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when 'Sicilian' was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War. During the Great War she was apparently requisitioned as a troopship on only one occasion: in October of 1914 she was a vessel of the armada which transported the (1st) Canadian Division overseas to the United Kingdom. She otherwise continued to work commercially between Great Britain and Canada for her owners, the Allan Line and later Canadian Pacific, at times carrying soldiery if and when her schedule allowed.*

She was to carry Newfoundland military personnel eastwards across the Atlantic three times, all in the year 1916.

Upon the arrival of *Sicilian* in British waters, the ship proceeded to the south-coast Royal Naval port of Devonport where the first contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment had landed with the (1st) Canadian Division in October of 1914. Having arrived in port during the last days of July, from there the reservists left for naval barracks, and Private Paul and his comrades-in-arms now boarded a train for the journey north to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot.



(Right above: *A no-longer bustling Devonport Harbour, today bereft of its former importance – photograph from 2012*)

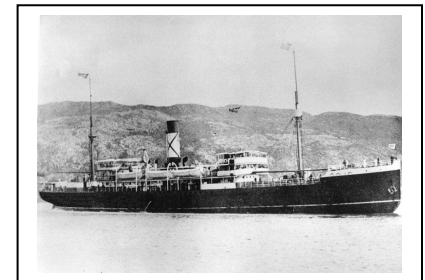
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Some two years prior to *Sicilian's* arrival in England, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's *first* recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the 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 in both Newfoundland and the United Kingdom had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

(Right: *The image of 'Florizel' at anchor in the harbour at St. John's 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.

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



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.

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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 above: *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*.

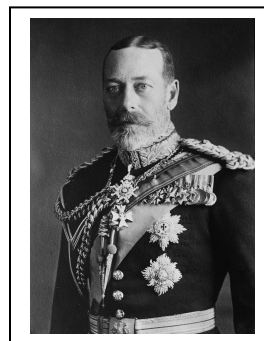
This had been an important moment: the Company's arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment's numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength* of a battalion which could be posted on...*active service*.



**A number sufficient for four 'fighting' companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(Right above: *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*.



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(Preceding page: 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.)

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 first-to-be-departing re-enforcements of the Newfoundland Regiment.

(Right: 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)



(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.

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.

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 to the Middle East and to the *Gallipoli Campaign* but also, only five days prior, the arrival from home of 'G' Company which would take up its quarters at *Gailes Camp*, some sixteen kilometres up the coast from Ayr itself – but 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 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.

Then towards mid-summer, of course, and as seen above, it was the turn of Private Paul and his detachment to report to the Regimental Depot in Scotland.

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The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to eventually serve as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the newcomers arriving from home were despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *Wellington Square (see following paragraph) seen here almost a century after it hosted the officers of the Newfoundland Regiment – photograph from 2012)*

At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to be able to accommodate the number of new arrivals – plus men from other British regiments which were still being billeted in the area...and a measles epidemic which was to claim the life of several Regiment personnel – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in the town-centre of Ayr itself, and the *other ranks* had been billeted at Newton Park School and otherwise in the grandstand or a tented camp at the newly-built racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr – on the far side of the river.

(Right: *The new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photograph from 2012)*



Less than two months after his arrival on the farther side of the Atlantic, on September 27 of 1916 Private Paul was admitted into the Heathfield Hospital in Ayr with a suspected case of pulmonary tuberculosis. Some six weeks later again, on November 10, he was transferred to the sanatorium in Glenafton, New Cumnock.

There Private Paul was to remain, being eventually considered as...*hopelessly ill*...by the medical staff on February 19, 1917.

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(Preceding page: *The Newfoundland Plot in Ayr Cemetery* – photograph from 2012)

The son of Benjamin Paul, former lumberman, and of Mary Paul (née *Stuckles(s)*) of Wigwam Point, Norris' Arm - his own address recorded at the time of his enlistment as being Bishop's Falls – he was also brother to Lawrence Paul, resident of Badger, whom he listed as his next of kin; to Sisia F. Paul of Grand Falls, his sister, to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of fifty cents from his pay; possibly to a third sibling, James; and to a young Ellen who had died at nine days of age.

Private Paul was reported as having...*died of sickness...*, of phthisis (tuberculosis) on March 20, 1917. At home it was the Reverend W. Finn, Parish Priest of Grand Falls, who was requested to bear the news of his death to his family.

Stephen Paul had enlisted at a *declared* twenty-one years and a single month of age: date of birth in Bishop's Falls, Newfoundland, November 14, 1894 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register – which cites no name with the initial letter J).

Private Stephen J. Paul was entitled to the British War Medal for his *overseas service*.



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 3, 2023.