

Private George Phillips (Regimental Number 1164), MM, Russian Order of St. George, 3rd Class, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



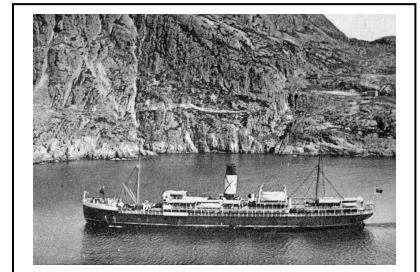
His occupation previous to enlistment recorded as being that of a *lumberman* working for twenty-six dollars a month, George Phillips presented himself for medical examination in the central Newfoundland community of Badger on February 9, 1915. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

He then travelled to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, by train where he enlisted at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road just three days later – engaged at the private soldier's rate of a single dollar per day plus a daily ten-cent field allowance - on the 12th day of the same month.

Then, following another wait of seventeen days, on March 1 he was now to be attested, to swear the *Oath of Allegiance*, the *final* formality. At that moment, George Phillips thereupon became...*a soldier of the King*.

There now passed a lengthy period of seven weeks and three days before, on April 22, 1915, Private Phillips, Number 1164, embarked in the harbour of St. John's for...*overseas service*...with the two-hundred forty-nine officers and...*other ranks*...of 'E' Company onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* en route for Halifax. There appear to be no details of how or where he may have spent this intervening period – he may have returned home to Whitbourne, perhaps even to work – but this is mere speculation.

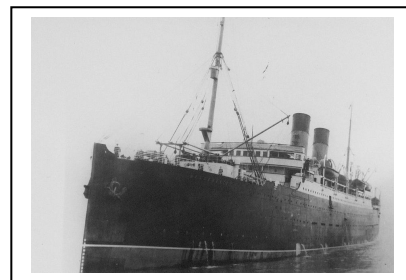
Two days later, on April 24 at eleven-thirty in the evening, the detachment began its trans-Atlantic passage from Nova Scotia on board the trans-Atlantic liner *SS Missanabie* from Nova Scotia to Liverpool. The vessel arrived in that English west-coast port-city on May 2 or 3 – the two dates are recorded although the second may well have been the date of disembarkation.



The Newfoundlanders on this occasion had sailed from Halifax in the company of the Canadian Army Service Corps *Railway Supply Depot*.

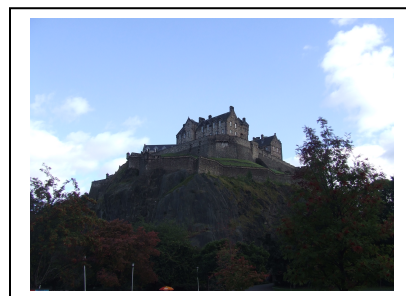
(Preceding page: *The image of 'Stephano' passing through the Narrows of St. John's Harbour is shown by courtesy of the Provincial Archives.*)

(Right: *The image of 'Missanabie' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website. The vessel was of the Canadian Pacific Line and, although transporting troops during the Great War, did so as part of her commercial services which continued during the conflict. On September 9, 1918, she was torpedoed and sunk off the south coast of Ireland with the loss of forty-five lives.*)



From Liverpool the contingent travelled northwards by train to the Scottish capital, Edinburgh where, on May 4, 'E' Company joined 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies which had already taken up station as the garrison at the historic Castle, the first troops from outside the British Isles ever to do so.

(Right: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011*)

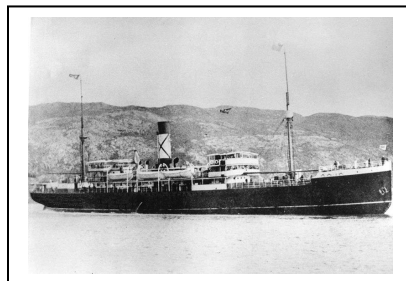


Private Phillips' 'E' Company, however, was to have but a few days to savour the charms of the Scottish capital.

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Some seven months before that May 4, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of 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 to become 'A' and 'B' Companies - during which time the authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's 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.



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

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

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.

**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.*

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Seven days after Private Phillips’ ‘E’ Company’s arrival in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent was ordered elsewhere.

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

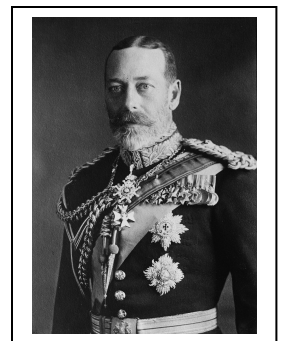
It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent would eventually receive the re-enforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength*. On that date the newly-formed 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus now available to be sent on ...*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 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 *Camp 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.



(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.*)

Meanwhile the two junior Companies, 'E' – as seen, the 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 newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

Private Phillips, however, although having left Newfoundland as a soldier of 'E' Company, was not to be posted to the Regimental Depot but to southern England.

When he had been apprised of this change in plans appears not to be recorded – nor why he was selected - but Private Phillips was one of the few from 'E' Company who were to swell the ranks of the units posted to *Aldershot* - thus he became a soldier of 'A' Company. And it was during the period while he was at *Camp Aldershot*, and as was the case with the great majority of the Newfoundland troops there, that Private Phillips was prevailed upon to re-enlist...*for the duration of the war*. This he did on August 15*.

**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 signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their enlistment.*

(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 Phillips and his 1st Battalion 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)



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(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)



(Right below: 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)



When the Newfoundlanders had 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.

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, had been 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)

***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.**



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

(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)



November 26 of 1915 had seen 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.

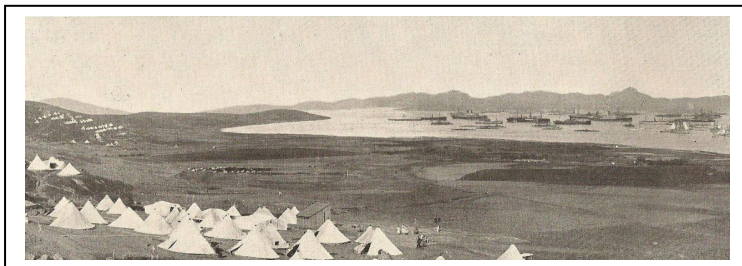
There were to be many casualties on both sides, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, had been those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

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The above-mentioned storm would strike early in the morning at *Suvla Bay* on November 26, thus it was surely later in the day – and amidst the ongoing havoc – that Private Phillips was admitted into the 88th Field Ambulance, there to be diagnosed as suffering not from trench-foot or frost-bite but from jaundice. Four days later he was admitted into the 3rd Australian General Hospital at Mudros on the Greek island of Lemnos some seventy kilometres distant.

After treatment in hospital, on December 9 he was forwarded to the *Lowlands Convalescent Depot*, also on Lemnos.

(Right: *By the end of 1915, a busy Mudros Bay and its minuscule harbour were almost entirely surrounded by Allied medical and other facilities – for the most part under canvas. – from Illustration*)



Then, at some seemingly un-recorded point between that date and the middle of January of the New Year, 1916, he was released...*to duty*...to report to Alexandria, likely to the large British Sidi Bishr Base Depot. His documents record that it was on that January 16 that he was to re-join the Newfoundland Battalion as it passed through Suez (see below) on its way to an encampment in the vicinity of Port Suez.

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After the departure of Private Phillips from *Suvla Bay* for medical attention in late November, the situation there was to daily be becoming more and more untenable for the attacking forces; thus, on the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the entire 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 had the respite been 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*.

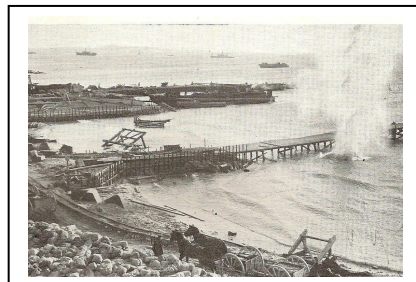
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(Right: Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached: The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011)



The British, Indian and Anzac forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at Gallipoli – had now only been marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Peninsula could be undertaken.

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



(Right: 'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was only 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)

Immediately after the British evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula, the Newfoundland unit had been ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria. On January 14, the Australian Expeditionary Force Transport Nestor had arrived there with the 1st Battalion on board.

The vessel was to sail just after mid-day on the 16th, on its way southwards down the Suez Canal to Port Suez where she arrived on the morrow and where the Newfoundlanders landed and marched to their encampment. On board for this journey was now Private Phillips who had joined Nestor from the afore-mentioned Sidi Bishr Base Depot.



Once at Suez, the Newfoundlanders were now to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.

(Right above: The image of the Blue Funnel Line vessel Nestor is from the Shipspotting.com web-site. The vessel was launched and fitted in 1912-1913 and was to serve much of her commercial life until 1950 plying the routes between Britain and Australia. During the Great War she served mainly in the transport of Australian troops and was requisitioned once again in 1940 for government service in the Second World War. In 1950 she was broken up.)

****Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was already becoming a theatre of war.***

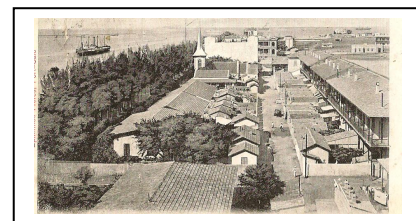
(Right: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles.* – photograph taken from the battleship *Cornwallis* from *Illustration*)



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(Right below: *Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st Battalion were to board His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage back up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France. The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseille, on March 22.



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

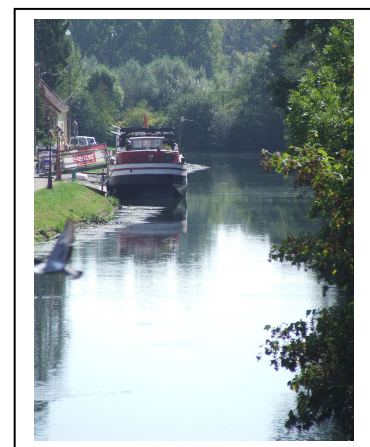
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseille. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably travelled unused in a separate wagon.



Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure the long, dark 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 then had marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to have become a part of their history.

(Right: *A languid River Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)



On April 13, the 1st Battalion had subsequently marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where it would be billeted, would receive re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front*, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit were then to be ordered to move further up for the first time 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 then the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*



(Right: A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?))

Having then been withdrawn at the end of that April to the areas of Maily-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing for the upcoming 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.

Just days prior to the onset of the British attack at *the Somme*, and days *after* the preliminary bombardment had begun, raids were to be launched against the German positions for intelligence purposes. Presumably the fact that the barbed wire had not been destroyed (but also see * below) was overlooked as the offensive would still take place – although a day late.

The raids were failures for the most part, but Private Phillips' role was to be recognized.

He was decorated with the Military Medal having: *'...displayed conspicuous gallantry in the raid on the night of June 27/28, 1916, south of Beaumont-Hamel. He entered the enemy trench and accounted for several of the enemy single handed. After getting out of the trench he went back again to try and obtain some identification. He remained out all night and had to cut his way back through the enemy's wire. This man also took part in the attack on July 1st and showed great gallantry.'* - London Gazette 21/12/1916 & 15/2/17



Private Phillips was also awarded – on or about February 14 of 1917 - the Russian Medal of St. George, Third Class (shown at right), for the action described above.

But he was never to know that he had been thus honoured.

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(Right below: *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*)

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*.



(Right below: *A view of Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?)*)

**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 incursions.*



(Right below: *Wounded at the Somme being transported in hand-carts from the forward area for further medical attention – from Le Miroir*)



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 greatest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the carnage of *the Somme* was to continue for the following four and a half months.

(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village. – photographs from 2010 and 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.

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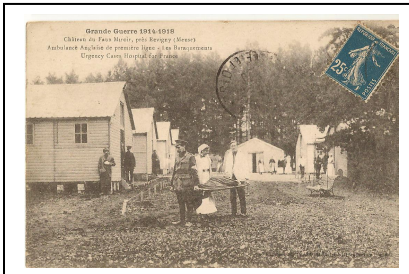
(Right: A grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland - dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from...?)

On July 1 of 1916, during the fighting of the first day of...*First Somme*, Private Phillips – still serving with ‘A’ Company - was wounded on the field at Beaumont-Hamel. Having incurred gun-shot wounds (likely flying shrapnel) to his ear and to his right hand he was eventually admitted into the 87th Field Ambulance on July 2.



(Right below: A British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some and not in the forward area of the Front: this photograph was taken later on in the War. – from a vintage post-card)

From there he was transferred on the same day to an anonymous casualty clearing station and thence immediately forwarded to the 2nd General Hospital established at Le Havre. Private Phillips was embarked on the next day again, July 3, onto His Majesty’s Hospital Ship *Asturias* for the cross-Channel passage back to the United Kingdom.



(Right: The image of HMHS ‘Asturias’ clad in her war-time hospital-ship garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Built in 1908 for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, she was used primarily on the Southampton (Great Britain) to Buenos Aires (Argentina) route. Requisitioned just prior to the Great War she was converted for use as a hospital ship capable of accommodating just short of nine-hundred patients.

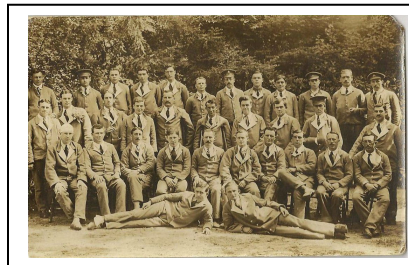


On March 20 of 1917 she was torpedoed - although no sick or wounded were on board at the time – and was beached. ‘Asturias’ remained out of commission until after the conflict when she then was repaired and became a cruise ship until sold for scrap in 1933.)



Upon his arrival in England Private Phillips was transferred to and admitted on July 5 into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.

(Right above: 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)

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

Following both treatment and convalescence, Private Phillips was thereupon granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon discharge from hospital – in his case from July 12 to 21 – and was then immediately posted to the Regimental Depot where he reported *to duty* on the same July 21.

At the end of the summer of 1915, the once-Royal Borough of Ayr on Scotland's west coast was to begin to serve as the overseas base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment from where – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 - re-enforcement drafts from home were to be despatched to bolster the 1st Battalion's numbers, at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.

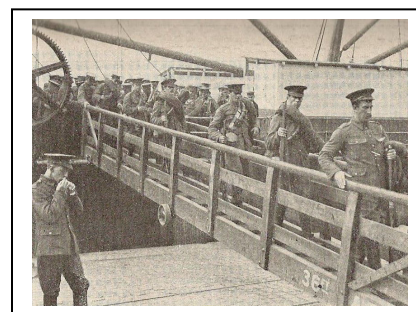


(Right above: An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were quartered the 'other ranks', is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)



(Right: 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.

Some five weeks later, on August 24, Private Phillips - as a soldier of the 10th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on his way to re-join the Newfoundland Battalion on the Continent. Arriving on the following day, the 25th, in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, the Draft proceeded there for several days of final training and organization*.



(Right above: British troops disembark earlier in the War 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.*

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It was to be on September 8 according to his papers – perhaps on September 7 if one places confidence in the Battalion War Diarist – that Private Phillips, as one of a draft of twenty-five...*other ranks*...from Rouen, was to report...*to duty*...in Belgium to the Newfoundland unit.

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After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, the day on which Private Phillips had been wounded, such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it had been feared that a German counter-assault might well annihilate what had managed to survive of the British Expeditionary Force on...*the Somme*.

The few remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion – and of the other depleted British units - had thus remained in the trenches perhaps fearing the worst, and at night searching for the wounded and burying the dead. It was to be July 6 before the Newfoundlanders were to be relieved from the forward area and to be ordered withdrawn to Englebelmer.

It had then been a further two days before the unit had marched further again to the rear area and to billets in the village of Mailly-Maillet.

(Right: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John's East. – photograph from 2009*)



There on July 11, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven re-enforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – had reported *to duty*. They had been the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power having arrived, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1916, the 1st Battalion had still numbered only...*11 officers and 260 rifles*...after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.

On July 27-28 of 1916, the 1st Battalion - still under establishment battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after further re-enforcement – had moved north and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.

It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel.



(Right: *The entrance to ‘A’ Company’s quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

And it had been about six weeks into this period, as seen in a preceding paragraph, on September 7 or 8, that Private Phillips had reported back to the Newfoundland unit.

* * * * *

On September 7 the 1st Battalion had been completing the final days of a tour in the forward trenches just to the east of Ypres in the area of Railway Wood and were busy avoiding the attentions of the enemy artillery. On the morrow, September 8, the unit was to retire into the remnants of the city itself, Private Phillips’ ‘A’ Company to take up quarters in the ramparts (see above photograph).

Whether or not the new-comers from Rouen had immediately been ordered – if they had in fact arrived on the 7th – up to the front-line trenches near *Railway Wood* where the 1st Battalion was serving at that time appears not to be recorded in the unit’s War Diary, but it is not likely. They surely remained until the Battalion’s withdrawal before joining their respective Companies.



(Right above: *Railway Wood – with trees – a century after the time when the Newfoundlanders were entrenched there on September 7-8 of 1916. The white monument, hardly perceivable, is to twelve(?) tunnelers who were buried alive beneath that spot. – photograph from 2014*)

The Ypres Salient – close to the front lines for almost the entire fifty-two month conflict - was in fact to be relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders’ posting there; yet they were nonetheless to incur casualties; a number – fifteen? - of them would be fatal.

Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the Newfoundland Battalion had been ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

(Right: *An aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916: it is described as the ‘Ville morte’.* – from *Illustration*)



Four days after that return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had again been ordered to the offensive; it was to be at a place called Gueudecourt, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel.



The encounter had proved to be another ill-conceived and costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

(Right above: *This is the ground over which the 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007*)

(Right: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of the Newfoundland Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916. – photograph from 2012*)

The son of William Phillips, labourer, and of Sarah Phillips (née Walsh)* – to whom he had allotted an allowance of eighty cents a day from his pay - of Whitbourne, he was also brother to John-James, Clara-Gertrude, Bride, Michael-William, William (sic), Mary-May, Ronald-Richard, to James – and also perhaps to Maude.

Private Phillips was at first reported as...*missing in action*...while fighting with 'A' Company at Gueudecourt on that October 12, 1916. Six months later he was officially *presumed dead*.

However, subsequent to a burial report submitted by a Lieutenant John G. Pitt, Divisional Burial Officer of the 1st Australian Division and dated July 19, 1917, Private Phillips' record was amended so as to read *killed in action*.

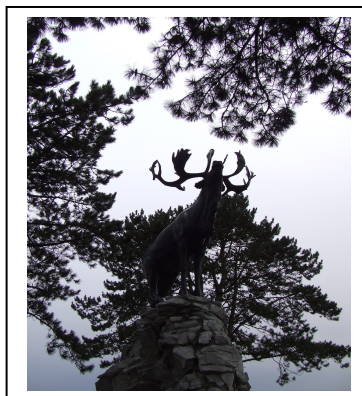
**The couple was married on May 2, 1891, in Whitbourne.*

George Phillips had enlisted at a *declared* twenty-two years of age.

(Right above: *The Whitbourne War Memorial honours the sacrifice of Private Phillips. – photograph from 2013*)

(*The photograph of Private Phillips is from the provincial Archives(?)*)

Private George Phillips, MM, Russian Order of St. George, 3rd Class, 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).



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 6, 2023.