



Private Stanley Gordon Pike (Regimental Number 1235) is interred in Earlsfield (Wandsworth) Cemetery – Grave reference: Nfld. 771.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of an *office clerk* at the *Newfoundland Boot and Shoe Factory* earning a monthly forty-five dollars, Stanley Gordon Pike presented himself at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on December 3 of 1914. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

For whatever the reason – none appears to be cited among his documents - he was not to return to the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road until some sixteen weeks afterwards, on March 24, 1915, there to enlist – engaged at the daily private-soldier's rate of a single dollar plus a ten-cent per diem *Field Allowance*.

On the morrow, March 25, he was to undergo attestation, the swearing of the *Oath of Allegiance* and the final formality of his enlistment. As of that moment Stanley Gordon Pike became...*a soldier of the King*.

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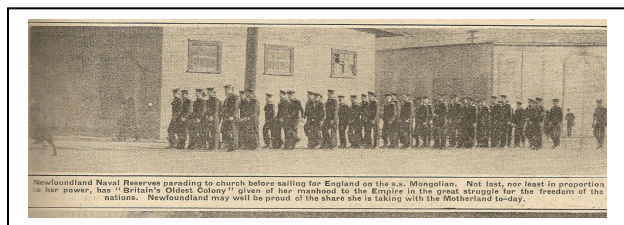
There was now to be a further long interval, of more than twelve weeks, to wait before Private Pike, Regimental Number 1234, would be called to...overseas service. How he was to spend his time does not appear to have been documented: perhaps he returned, at least temporarily, to work, but that is only speculation.

Lance Corporal Pike, having been promoted to that rank on June 19, was to eventually embark onto His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* on June 19-20 in St. John's Harbour, the vessel then sailing directly (see * below) to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two officers and men of 'F' Company who, together with eighty-five naval reservists, were to take passage on that day.



It was to be a long voyage.

(Right above: *The photograph of its passengers being ferried out to the armed merchant cruiser HMS Calgarian, at the time serving as a troop carrier, is from the Provincial Archives. In 1918 she was to be torpedoed and sunk.*)



(Right above: *The caption reads: Newfoundland Naval Reservists marching to church before sailing for England on the SS Mongolian. – from The War Illustrated*)

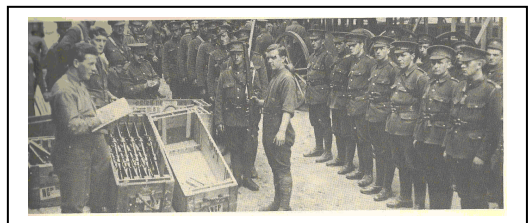
*Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the journey of about a week. Not only was 'Calgarian' escorting three submarines, but she would pass by way of the Portuguese Azores and then Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders even having the time, it would seem, to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. 'Calgarian' reached Liverpool on July 9.



(Right above: *The British Crown Colony of Gibraltar in pre-War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background. – from a vintage postcard*)

On the day after its arrival in the United Kingdom and having been transported by train to Scotland, 'F' Company was to march from the railway station at the nearby town of Hawick and to report...to duty...at the tented *Stobs Camp* on the evening of July 10.

This date coupled to the arrival of 'F' Company was an important event in the history of the Newfoundland Regiment: as of that moment, now counting a personnel of some fifteen-hundred – four fighting companies with two more in reserve - the force was, after a lengthy waiting-period, finally at establishment battalion strength and thus available be posted to...active service.

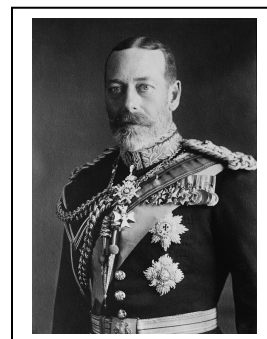


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(Preceding page: *The men of the Newfoundland Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles.* – the original photograph from the *Provincial Archives*)

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By this time the two first recruited companies of the Newfoundland Regiment had been on...*overseas service*...for some nine months. The first contingent of the Regiment had spent the late fall of 1914 and then the subsequent winter at a series of postings: at the large British Army Camp on *Salisbury Plain*; then Fort George on the Firth of Moray and in close proximity to the city of Inverness; thirdly at *Edinburgh Castle* where it had provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles and where it had been subsequently joined at intervals by 'C', 'D' and 'E' Companies from home.



On May 11 of 1915, all five Companies had been transferred to *Stobs Camp* to the south-east of Edinburgh, where 'F' Company had reported...*to duty*...on that July 10.



(Right above: *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*)

(Right above: *The Newfoundland Regiment parades at Stobs Camp to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

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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, were to be ordered transferred to *Camp Aldershot* in southern England. There the Newfoundland unit was to undergo a short period of final preparation – and a royal inspection – before then departing on...*active service*...to the Middle East and to the fighting on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

'E' and 'F' Companies – the last to have arrived in the United Kingdom from Newfoundland - were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were there to form the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (*Reserve*) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.

The Depot was to be Private (see below) Pike's home for the next eight months.

It was just before his 'F' Company was to depart from *Stobs Camp*, on August 12, that Lance Corporal Pike was unfortunately reported as having been...*Drunk on Parade 8. pm*...for which offence the Battalion authorities deprived him of his single stripe, thus reducing him to the rank of private soldier.

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Towards the end of this 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.



It was during this posting to Ayr that Private Pike was prevailed upon to re-enlist. Having originally signed on for a limited period of a year, on February 2, 1916 he was re-engaged *for the duration of the war**.

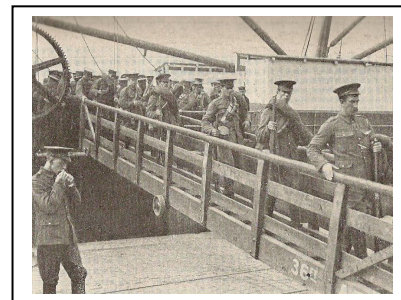
**At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.*

It was during the early period of this posting to Ayr that, on September 18, Private Pike was appointed to the position of Regimental Cook – what his particular culinary talents might have been has not been recorded. Then, seven months later during this same period, he was prevailed upon to re-enlist. Having originally signed on for the...*limited period...of one year, he was re-engaged...for the duration of the war**, on April 5, 1916.

**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 original enlistment.*

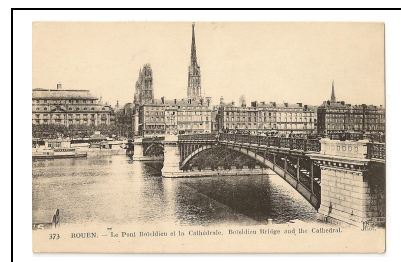
Just three days after his re-enlistment, on April 8, Private Pike was a soldier of the 4th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr which was to pass through the English south-coast port of Southampton, there to embark for the Continent. Later on that same day, his ship docked at Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot where the draft was to spend time in final training and organization before moving on to its rendezvous with the Newfoundland Battalion by that time in France (see below).

(Right: *British troops at an earlier time during the War disembark at Rouen on their way 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, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

During those same several days Private Pike was admitted into the 6th General Hospital – on April 10 - in Rouen, suffering from a bout of laryngitis. After twelve days of medical attention he was discharged...*to duty*...on the 22nd day of that month, thereupon to leave the Base Depot almost immediately to seek out the 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *The watchful towers and spire of Rouen's venerable gothic cathedral keep a watchful guard over the city and the River Seine as it flows through on its way to the sea. – from a vintage post-card*)

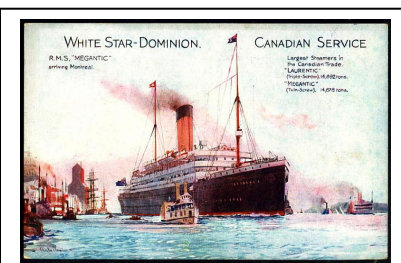
Four days later again, on April 26, a re-enforcement detachment from Rouen of a single officer and forty-one...*other ranks*...reported...*to duty*...with the Newfoundland Battalion just behind the forward area of the *Western Front*, Private Pike among that number.

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In the mean-time, while Private Pike was accustoming himself to life at the new Regimental Depot, the senior Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Camp Aldershot were preparing themselves for the voyage to the other end of the Mediterranean Sea.

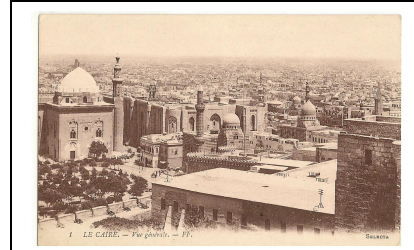


(Right above: *Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, prior to its departure to 'active service' on the Gallipoli Peninsula – from The Fighting Newfoundlander by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.*)



(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, the Newfoundland Battalion had 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*.

(Preceding page: *Cairo, the Egyptian capital city, at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

(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*)



(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: *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:



(Right: *A view of No-Man’s-Land on the plain at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – photograph from Provincial Archives*)

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: *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.***

(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.

In the days following the storm of November 26 the situation of the British - and thus of the Newfoundlanders - was daily becoming yet more and more untenable; 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 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*.

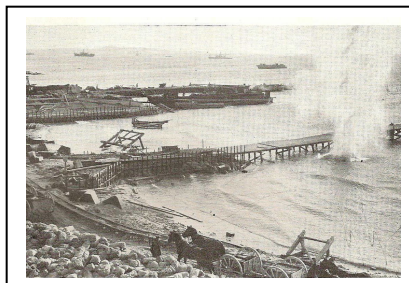
The British, Indian and *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had now only been marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* could be undertaken.

(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)



This final operation would take 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.



There they were to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.

(Right above: The photograph 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.)

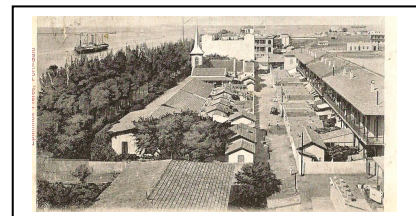
(Right: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)



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

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

After that 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 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 marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to 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*.

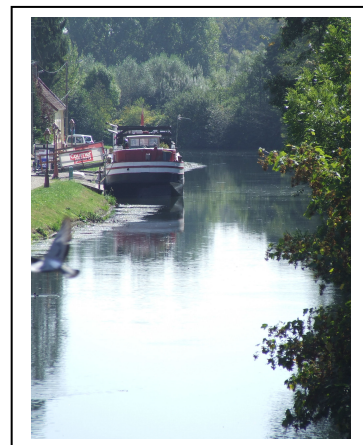
On April 15, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the *entire* Newfoundland unit – this to include the above-mentioned re-enforcements from Scotland - was to then be ordered to move further up for the first time into forward 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.*

It was to be during this eleven-day tour at the Front where and when the Newfoundlanders relieved the 4th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment, that Private Pike found himself on or about that April 26 of 1916.

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(continued)



****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 Mailly-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.



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 above: 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 above: 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 attack.***



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 four and a half months.

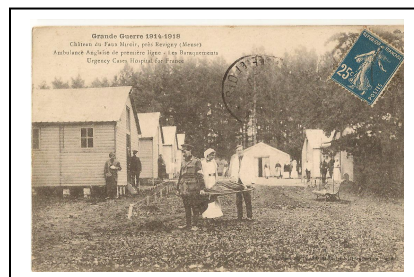
(Preceding page: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village.* – photographs from 2010 and 2015)

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.

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

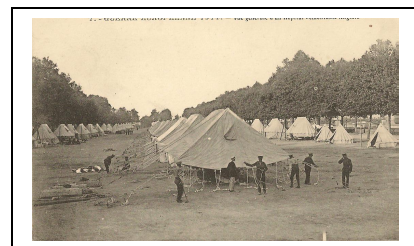


On that July 1, 1916, Private Pike was wounded at Beaumont-Hamel while serving with ‘D’ Company during the fighting of the first day of the...*First Battle of the Somme*. Having incurred injuries to the leg – particularly a fractured left femur - inflicted by enemy artillery fire, he was evacuated on July 2 to the 87th Field Ambulance, thence to an anonymous casualty clearing station. On either the 3rd or 4th of July, Private Pike was further forwarded to the 1st General Hospital in or in the vicinity of the coastal town of Etretat.



There he was reported as being...*dangerously ill*.

(Right above: *A British field ambulance – perhaps even a rest station - of a more permanent nature than some – from a vintage post-card*)



(Right: *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*)

One of Private Pike’s files appears to record an amputation having taken place on July 23 after his admission into hospital in London; a second file reports that two amputations had already taken place on the same day, July 3, in hospital at Etretat. At first the left leg had been removed and then, subsequently, the upper third of the thigh had been taken off for fear of gas-gangrene infection.



(Right above: *the sea-side resort of Etretat which became an important medical centre during the course of the Great War – photograph from 2011*)

It was then not until July 22 that Private Pike was placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Asturias* for the short cross-Channel voyage back to the United Kingdom whereupon he was admitted into Ward 'E' of the King George Hospital on Stanford Road, London. At that moment he was apparently well enough to ask if he had received any letters, and to request some money, but as of that date (August 4, 1916) his condition was to subsequently deteriorate, as may be judged by the following:



King George Hospital Medical report

July 23 - On admission here – large wound occupying end of stump. Burn on back of right upper arm in lower third, somewhat septic

July 2(?) – Temp at 5.0 pm up to 105 degrees

July 30 – Incision for abscess below left clavicle considerable discharge of pus

Aug 6 – About same, perspires very freely

Aug 8 – Not so well. Temp High, dyspnoea, distinct ???? ???? in most of chest, abdomen swollen. Seems on verge of collapse.

Aug 9 – Much worse, condition suggestive of pyæmia (blood poisoning)

Aug 10 – Died 21h05

(Right above: The image of HMHS 'Asturias' clad in her war-time hospital-ship garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. The vessel was constructed in 1907 for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and, before the onset of hostilities, plied the commercial route between Great Britain and Argentina. Upon the Declaration of War, she was requisitioned and converted into a hospital ship with accommodation for just fewer than nine-hundred sick and wounded. In March of 1917 she was torpedoed off the English coast with a loss of thirty-five lives; however, she was beached although was not to be employed for anything other than ammunition storage until the end of the conflict. She was then repaired and became a Cruise Liner, re-named 'Arcadian', and operated as such until 1930. Three years later she was scrapped.)

The son of William Simmons (*Simms* also found) Pike (former tinsmith, deceased at an address on Bond Street, St. John's, on August 27, 1908) and of Fanny Mary Pike (née *Roberts*) - to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of eighty cents from his pay – of 50, Colonial Street in St. John's, he was also brother to Stella-Maud, Robert-Edward, Herbert-Edgar, Clara-Isabel, William-Arthur, Hedley-Vickers(?) and Herbert.



**The couple was married on December 12, 1879.*

Private Pike was reported as having *died of wounds* in hospital on August 10, 1916. He was buried on Monday, August 14, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Stanley Gordon Pike had enlisted at the declared age of twenty-three years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, November 19, 1891 (from the *Pike Family Tree* web-site).

(Preceding page: *The Newfoundland Plot in the Earlsfield (Magdalen Road) Cemetery, Wandsworth*)

Private Stanley Gordon Pike was entitled to the British War Medal (left) 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 – January 30, 2023.

