



Private William (David, see further below) Joseph Power (Regimental Number 965), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

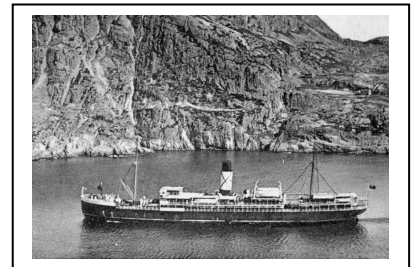


His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of an *office clerk* earning a monthly thirty dollars, William Joseph Power presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on December 8 of the year 1914. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

Thirty-nine days were now to pass following his medical assessment before, on January 16 of the New Year, he would enlist – engaged at the private soldier's rate of a single dollar per diem plus a daily ten-cent *Field Allowance*.

Then, whereas attestation for others had come about on the day of enlistment, he was now to await a further three weeks, until February 5, before *that* final formality would come to pass.

For Private Power, Number 965, there was now to be yet another waiting period, the last, this of six weeks. How he occupied himself during that time is not recorded among his papers; he may, of course, have temporarily returned to work, but this is only speculation.



(Right above: *The image of the Bowring Brothers' vessel 'Stephano', sister-ship of 'Florizel', as she passes through 'the Narrows' of St. John's Harbour is from the Provincial Archives.*)

Unlike the two previous contingents to have departed Newfoundland (see below) for...*overseas service*, Private Power's 'D' Company was not to sail directly to the United Kingdom. On March 20, it embarked onto the Bowring-Brothers' vessel *Stephano* for the short voyage to Halifax, capital city of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, where it was thereupon to board a second vessel, the newly-launched *Orduña* for the trans-Atlantic crossing*.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The image of Orduña is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. The vessel was not to be requisitioned during the Great War but would be used by the Cunard Company to operate on its commercial service between Liverpool and New York.*)

Having then sailed from Nova Scotia on March 22 for Liverpool, Private Power and his draft landed there eight days later, on the 30th. Once disembarked in Liverpool, the two-hundred fifty men and officers of 'D' Company were thereupon transported on the same date by train directly to Edinburgh, the Scottish capital, to join the Newfoundland Regiment's 'A', 'B' and 'C' Companies.

These units were by this time stationed at the historic Castle, 'A' and 'B' having recently been posted from Fort George and 'C' having arrived directly from home (see further below). After 'D' Company's arrival at the end of that month of March, the Newfoundlanders were now to remain at Edinburgh for the following six weeks.

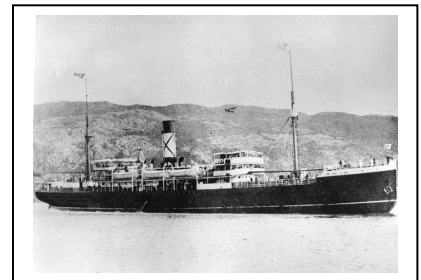


(Right above: *From its vantage point on Castle Hill, the venerable fortress overlooks the city of Edinburgh where in 1915 the Newfoundlanders were to provide the first garrison to be drawn from outside the British Isles. – photograph from 2011*)

* * * * *

Five to six months before that time, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of some 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.



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

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



In the United Kingdom 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 ‘C’ Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent* - would arrive directly from Newfoundland.

**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.*

* * * * *

As seen in a previous paragraph, for the month of April and the first days of May of 1915, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ Companies, now united, were to furnish the garrison – the first troops from outside the British Isles to do so - of the guardian of Scotland’s capital city. Then, during the first week of May, ‘E’ Company was to report there...*to duty*...from home. Four days later again, on May 11, the Newfoundland contingent was ordered elsewhere.

On that day, three weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundland 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*. The now-formed 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered 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 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.



Meanwhile the two junior Companies, ‘E’ – 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.

(continued)

(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.)

No reason seems to be cited among his documents as to why Private Power of Platoon Number 7 of Company ‘D’ was not transferred to Aldershot in August on 1915; but he was apparently *not*, and instead he found himself posted to the new Regimental Depot, to remain there until mid-November.

At 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 is likely – but not however confirmed – that during the months of his posting there that Private Power was prevailed upon to re-enlist* or if not, that he had earlier signed on...*for the duration of hostilities*. If so, he would have been among the very first to do so.

That notwithstanding, his re-engagement would go a long way in explaining the subsequent events during his all-too-short military career.

****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.***

On the 14th of November, 1915, the 1st Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, Private Power among its ranks, took ship in the English south-coast naval port of Devonport on board the *Olympic*, sister ship to *Britannic* and the ill-fated *Titanic*, and sailed for the Middle East. The Newfoundlanders were transferred onto smaller craft at Mudros – on the Greek island of Lemnos - and then landed at *Suvla Bay* on December 1.

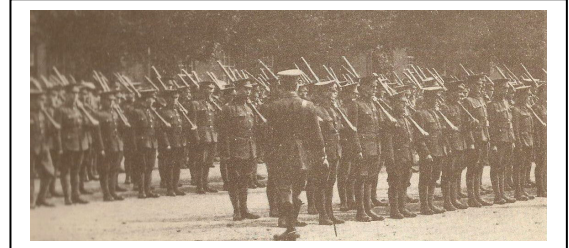


Some three weeks later, the British were to abandon the place.

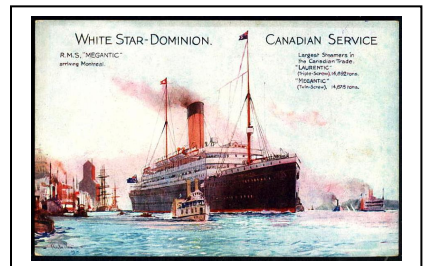
(Preceding page: *HMT Olympic on the right and HMHS Aquitania – both peace-time ocean liners – at anchor in Mudros Bay in the autumn of 1915 – original photograph from the Imperial War Museum, London*)

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(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.)*



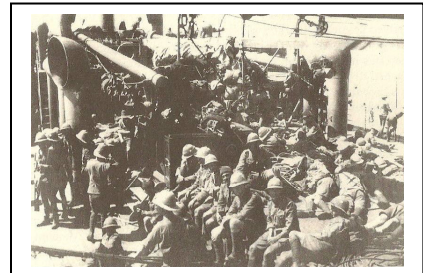
(Right: *The image of Megantic, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)*



On August 20, 1915, Private Voisey and his Newfoundland unit 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*)



(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*)



(continued)

When the Newfoundlanders 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*, was 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 the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.



(Right: *No-Man's-Land* at *Suvla Bay* as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from *Provincial Archives*)

(Right below: *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.*



November 26 of 1915 would see 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, were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

Such, then, was the situation to face those first hundred re-enforcements from Scotland, Private Power among that number, when they alighted onto the sand and stone – mostly the latter – of *Kangaroo Beach* on that December 1 of 1915.

* * * * *

In the mean-time, during the days that had followed Private Power's arrival on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*, the British positions – and therefore those of the Newfoundlanders - at *Suvla Bay* were to become yet more and more untenable and thus on the night of December 19-20, the area had been abandoned – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard.



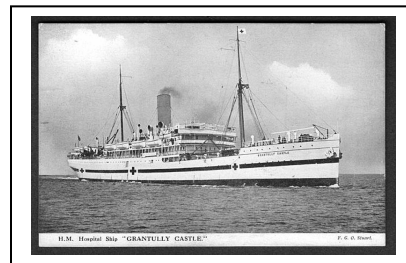
(Preceding page: *Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached: The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011*)

Some of the Battalion personnel were to be 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 Newfoundland Battalion would be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

This place was soon to be abandoned as well.

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On January 3 of the New Year, 1916, Private Power was placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Grantully Castle* for transfer to Alexandria and thence to the 5th Canadian Stationary Hospital at Abbassia Cavalry Barracks, Cairo, there to be treated for debility and frostbite*.



After more than three weeks of medical attention he was discharged *to duty* to the major British Base Depot at Sidi Bishr, Alexandria, on January 30.

**Because 1st Battalion had abandoned Suvla on the night of December 19-20 – among the last troops to do so – Private Power was either at Cape Helles to where the Newfoundlanders had been sent on December 22, or on either the island of Imros or that of Mudros when he reported ill.*

(Right above: *The image of HMHS 'Grantully Castle' clad in her war-time hospital garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Having been built in 1910, she was requisitioned in 1914 to serve as a troop-transport and then in May of 1915 was converted – taking on five-hundred fifty-two beds - for use as a hospital ship. She survived the conflict, was returned to her owners in 1919, and went on to serve for a further twenty years. 'Grantully Castle' was broken up in 1939.*)

Almost eleven weeks later again, Private Power embarked in Port Saïd onto His Majesty's Transport *Lake Manitoba*, a requisitioned Canadian Pacific vessel, on March 18 for the eight-day voyage to the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles.



(Right: *Port Saïd, at the northern end of the Suez Canal, at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

It is probable that Private Power was transferred almost immediately upon his arrival in Marseilles to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot at Rouen, Normandy, whereupon he was likely then attached to the 3rd Re-enforcement Draft arriving from the Regimental Depot at Ayr in Scotland. This contingent was on its way to join the 1st Battalion, the unit having landed in Marseilles on March 22, just prior to Private Power.

****Private Power would not have been alone: several other soldiers of the Newfoundland Battalion took passage on that same ship and several are recorded as having re-joined the parent unit by this same itinerary.***

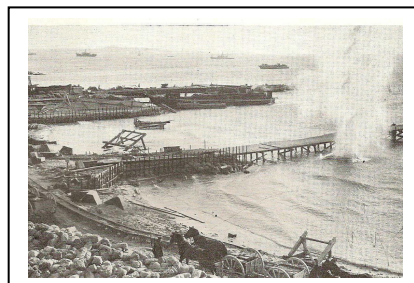
If such were the case, as it likely was, then on April 15, Private Power, a soldier of that re-enforcement contingent of two officers and two-hundred eleven *other ranks*, reported to *duty* with parent Newfoundland Battalion while it was billeted in the village of Englebelmer, just behind the lines of the Western Front.

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Meanwhile, during the first days of Private Power's hospitalization at the beginning of January, 1916, the British, Indian and *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had by then only been marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Gallipoli Peninsula* could be undertaken.

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



(Right above: *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*)

(continued)

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

(Right: *Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal as it was 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 had boarded 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 *Marseilles*, on March 22.

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

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train had found its way to the small provincial town of *Pont-Rémy*, a thousand kilometres to the north of *Marseilles*. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having 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* would have become part of their history.

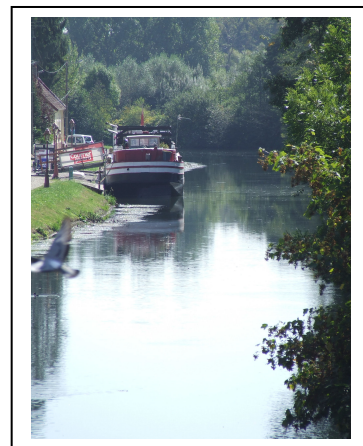
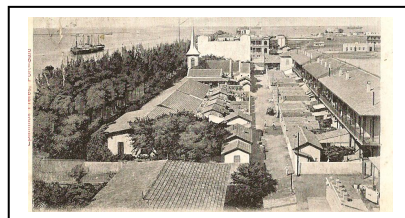
(Right below: *A languid River Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)

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 reinforcements from *Scotland* via *Rouen* and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

Those above-mentioned...*re-enforcements from Scotland*...were of course, the draft which, from *Rouen* onwards, numbered the returning *Private Power* among its ranks.

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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 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.***

(Right below: 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.



One month after his arrival on the Western Front, on May 14, Private Power was admitted into the 87th Field Ambulance, there to be diagnosed as suffering from a disorder of the cornea. He was prescribed for and received glasses after which he reported back...to *duty*...on the 24th day of the same month.

The preparations continued.

If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered, they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later*.



(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: 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 largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the butchery and carnage of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.

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

Recorded as having served during the fighting of July 1, 1916, the first day of *the Somme*, Private Power was one of the very few to leave the field at Beaumont-Hamel unscathed and to answer the roll call* of the next morning – as seen above, only a meagre sixty-eight were to do so.



**This roll call was not officially recorded until July 4 – and neither was that of the fourteen officers and eighty-three other ranks comprising the reserve force of that July 1. This explains why the entry ‘With Battalion 4/7/16’ is to be found on many records – among them Private Power’s.*

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, 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.



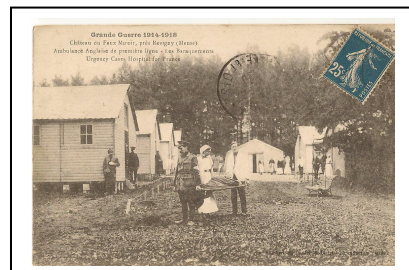
It had then been a further two days before the unit had marched further again to the rear area and to billets in the village of Mailly-Maillet.

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(Preceding page: *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 still numbered only...*11 officers and 260 rifles*...after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.

Shortly thereafter Private Power was again admitted for medical treatment, for an undetermined ailment, and on this occasion into the 88th Field Ambulance from the 20th to the 25th of July. He was ordered to return *to duty* just in time to join the Newfoundland Battalion in its move of July 27-28.



(Right: *One of the more permanent British field ambulances, this one likely not too close to the front – from a vintage post-card*)

After the debacle of Beaumont-Hamel, 1st Battalion was sent north at the end of July into Belgium to re-enforce and reorganize. The Newfoundlanders were stationed in the lethal *Ypres Salient* – although relatively calm during this period - until October 8, before being sent once more to the area – and battle – of *the Somme*.

During those ten weeks that the 1st Battalion was stationed in Belgium in *the Salient*, on September 2, Private Power was admitted back into the 88th Field Ambulance with septic sores on his legs. After treatment he was sent to the Divisional Rest Station for several days. He was then released...*to duty*...on the 20th, and was posted to work in the Battalion's reserve transport on September 29.



He was still with the Transport Section as of November 22*.

(Right above: *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*)

The Salient – close to the front lines for almost the entire fifty-two month conflict - was to be relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there; yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them 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*.



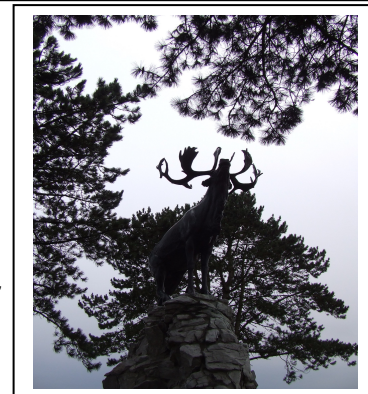
(Preceding page: *An aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916: it is described as the 'Ville morte'. – from Illustration*)

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*)

Private Power, at the time serving with the Transport Section to the rear, would of course have found himself involved in the events of the action at Gueudecourt only peripherally*.

****Commencing in the early summer of 1916, a concerted effort had been made by Private Power's family and also by influential friends and acquaintances – such as both the Prime Minister and the Governor of Newfoundland – to have him declared unfit and sent home. The Army thought otherwise so then a prolonged furlough was requested, but apparently also declined.***

In all fairness to Private Power, he had poor eyesight, astigmatism, ostensibly corrected somewhat by the wearing of glasses, but he was apparently still thought by his commanding officer to be unfit for general service – and he was also anæmic and had a slightly dilated heart.

Again the Royal Army Medical Corps and the Army thought him fit for 'active service', it being suggested that perhaps he... 'did not have the inclination'...for it.

But, maybe it had been forgotten by then - and by them - that he had also served on the field at Beaumont-Hamel.

It has been suggested in an earlier paragraph that Private Power – while unrecorded among the papers in his file – had re-engaged for the duration of the conflict as had, by far, the great majority of his comrades-in-arms. If he had not, he would presumably have been free to leave for home after a year's service as did a few, and his family and others would not have felt it necessary to intercede on his behalf.

(continued)

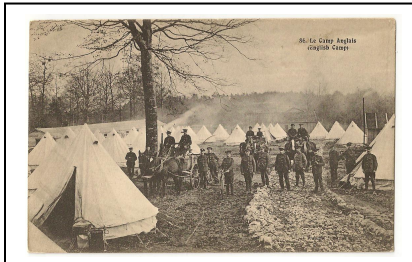
The Newfoundland Battalion was not to be directly involved in any further concerted infantry action in the immediate area of Gueudecourt although, on October 18, supplied two-hundred fifty men to act as stretcher-bearers in an attack undertaken by troops of two British regiments, the Hampshires and the Worcestershires.

(Right: *Stretcher-bearers not only shared the dangers of the battle-field with their arms-bearing comrades, but they often spent a longer period of time exposed to those same perils. The photograph likely from First Somme – from Illustration*)



On October 30, the Newfoundland unit had eventually been retired to rear positions from the Gueudecourt area. It had been serving in front-line and support positions for three weeks less a day.

The Newfoundlanders were now to spend two weeks withdrawn to the area of Ville-sous-Corbie, re-enforcing and reorganizing. It was not to be until November 15 that the 1st Battalion began to wend its way back up to the front lines.



There it continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period broken only by another several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period, encamped well behind the lines and in close proximity to the city of Amiens.

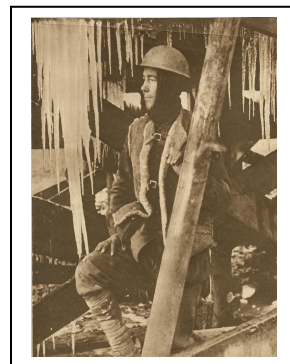
(Right above: *A typical British Army Camp during rather inclement winter conditions somewhere on the Continent – from a vintage post-card*)

It had been in the New Year on January 11 that the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered out of *Corps Reserve* and its lodgings at *Camps en Amienois* from where it would make its way on foot to the community of Airaines. From the railway station there it was to entrain for the small town of Corbie where it thereupon took over billets which it had already occupied for a short period only two months before.

After that recent six-week Christmas respite spent in *Corps Reserve* far to the rear, the Newfoundlanders were to *officially* return to *active service* on January 23, although they apparently had already returned to the trenches by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

Those casualties, however, were only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig casually referred to as *wastage* as the Newfoundland unit had not ventured from its trenches.

In fact, the sole infantry activity *directly* involving the Newfoundland unit during that entire period – from Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in mid-April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Saily-Saillisel at the end of February and the beginning of March, an action which would bring this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.

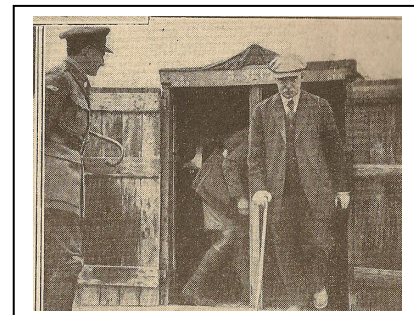


(Preceding page: A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers, their unit to be relieved by the Newfoundlanders on March 1, enjoys his cigarette in the cold and ice of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel during the winter of 1916-1917. – from *Illustration*)



(Right: The fighting during the period of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time. - photograph from 2009(?))

After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March had been a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they were now to spend their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and in training for upcoming events. They had even had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



(Right above: The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, encamped at Meaulté – from *The War Illustrated*)

On March 29, the Newfoundlanders had begun to make their way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, the march to finish amid the rubble of the village of Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right: The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War, early in 1916 – from *Illustration*)

(Right below: The Canadian National Memorial which has stood atop Vimy Ridge since 1936 – photograph from 2010)

On April 9 the British Army was to launch an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was to be the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a major French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties – just over four thousand - this attack was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, its only positive episode to be the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday, 1917.



And while the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* had been yet a further disaster.

(continued)

(Right below: The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the western – in 1917, the British – side of the community: The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013)

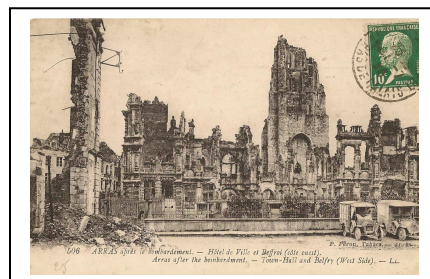
The 1st Battalion was to play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at the place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After *Beaumont-Hamel*, the ineptly-planned action at Monchy-le-Preux would prove to be the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties all told on April 14 alone*.



****It was also an action in which a DSO, an MC and eight MMs were won by a small group of nine personnel of the Battalion – the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) awarded to the unit's Commanding officer. An MM for the same action was also presented to a private from the Essex Regiment .***

After this further debacle the remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion had remained in the area of Monchy-le-Preux. Its casualty count had been high enough to warrant that it and the Essex Regiment, which had also incurred heavy losses, be amalgamated into a composite battalion until such time as incoming re-enforcements would allow the two units' strengths to once more resemble those of bona fide battalions.

The final action in which the Newfoundland Battalion was to be involved during the five-week long *Battle of Arras* would be the engagement of April 23 at *Les Fosses Farm*. This was in fact an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5th, 3rd and 1st Armies. It was apparently not to be a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1st Battalion, several of the adjacent units reporting having been driven back by German counter-attacks, actions accompanied by heavy losses.



Late on that same evening the Newfoundlanders had retired to the relative calm of Arras.

(Right above: The City Hall of Arras and its clock-tower in 1919 after some four years of bombardment by German artillery – from a vintage post-card)



Private Power, however, was not to retire with them.

(Right: Windmill Cemetery stands mid-way between Monchy-le-Preux – some three hundred metres behind the camera – and Les Fosses Farm – three hundred metres to the right along the main road to Arras. – photograph from 2007)

(continued)

Excerpt from telegram to Newfoundland – ...understand shell exploded near 965 power killing him and others instantly...

Excerpt from 1920 Ministry of Militia correspondence to Major T. Nangle (Chaplain of the Forces to 1st Battalion during the War)... that Power was killed when the Battn. was occupying the section of trench running from the right of Monchy towards the Arras-Cambrai road. – although the author of the correspondence somewhat confusingly states that this report relates to...an extract from the War Diary giving details of the action of 14th April, 1917*.



**The reader will note that the date cited below on which Private Power was documented as having died was not April 14.*

(Right above: The Caribou at Monchy-le-Preux stands on top of the vestiges of a German strong-point in the centre of the community. – photograph from 2012)

The son of Michael Joseph Power – head of the *Marine and Employment Department, James Baird Ltd.* - and of Maggie Power (née Corbett)* of St. John's, he was also brother to Helen, at the time studying at Mount St. Vincent, Halifax, Nova Scotia – is she the Ellen Frances born January 3, 1896? – and to John Joseph.

**The couple was married on February 21, 1892.*

Private Power was reported on May 6, 1917, as having been...killed in action...on April 23, 1917, while serving with 'D' Company during the fighting at *Les Fosses Farm* near Monchy-le-Preux.

William David Joseph Power had enlisted at a *declared* twenty-three years of age: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, April 3, 1894 (from Roman Catholic Parish Records where is also to be found the name *David*).

(Right: A family memorial commemorating the sacrifice of Private Power stands in Belvedere Cemetery in the capital city. – photograph from 2010)



Private William Joseph Power 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 8, 2023.