

Private Patrick Richardson (Regimental Number 1234), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



His occupation prior to military service recorded as being that of a *book assistant* earning twenty dollars per month, Patrick Richardson presented himself at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on March 16 of 1915. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

He was then to return to the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road on the following day, March 17, there to enlist – engaged at the daily private-soldier's rate of a single dollar plus a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

On March 25, a week plus a day later again, he was to undergo attestation, the swearing of the *Oath of Allegiance* and the final formality of his enlistment. As of that moment Patrick Richardson became...*a soldier of the King*.

There was now to be a long interval of more than twelve weeks to wait before Private Richardson, 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.

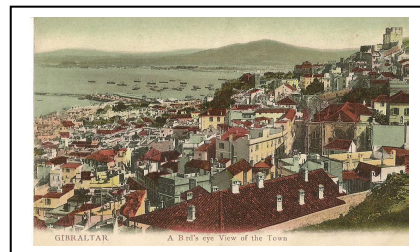
Private Richardson was to embark onto His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* on June 19-20 in St. John's Harbour, the vessel then sailing directly (see \* *below*) to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two officers and men of 'F' Company who, together with eighty-five naval reservists, 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.*)

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**\*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.**

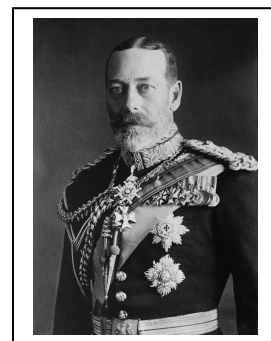
**This date coupled to the arrival of ‘F’ Company was an important event in the history of the Newfoundland Regiment: as of that moment, now counting a personnel of some fifteen-hundred – four fighting companies with two more in reserve - the force was, after a lengthy waiting-period, finally at establishment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



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

\* \* \* \* \*

**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)**



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

\* \* \* \* \*

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.

The Depot was to be Private Richardson's home for the next eight months.

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 2<sup>nd</sup> (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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Richardson 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*\*.

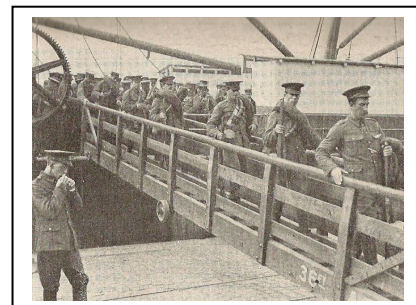
*\*At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits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

It was not until March 28 of the following year, 1916, that the large 3<sup>rd</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton, the first such contingent to embark directly for the Continent. Two days later, on the 30<sup>th</sup>, His Majesty's Transport *Archangel* docked at Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot where the draft was to spend some days in final training and organization before moving on to its rendezvous with the parent 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(Right above: *The image of a troop-laden 'Archangel' leaving port, likely Southampton, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

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

On April 15, a detachment from Rouen of two-hundred eleven...*other ranks* – accompanied by two officers – reported...to duty...with the Newfoundland Battalion already billeted by then in the village of Englebelmer some three kilometres behind the lines of the *Western Front*.

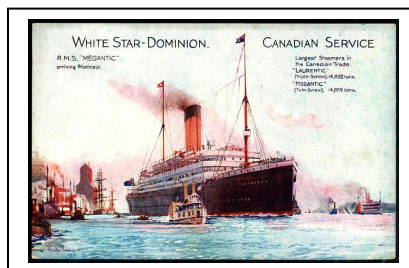
Private Richardson was among that number.

\* \* \* \* \*

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



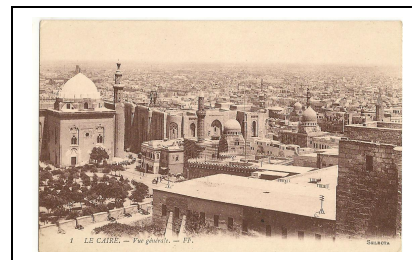
(Right above: *Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, prior to its departure to 'active service' on the Gallipoli Peninsula – from The Fighting Newfoundlander by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.*)



(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.*)

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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.



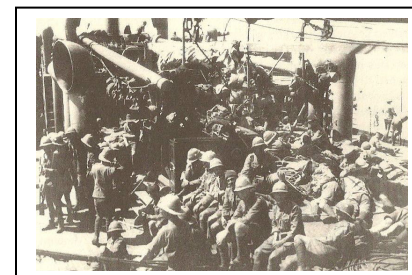
There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Right above: *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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 below: *A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla Bay, and where the 1<sup>st</sup> 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*)

(continued)



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.



*\*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 above: *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.

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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

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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: 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)*



*(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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on board. The vessel was to sail just after mid-day on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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.)*

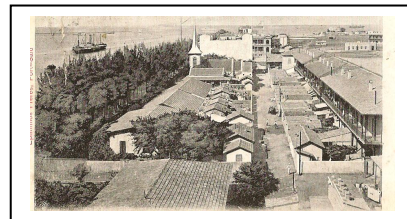
*(Right: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis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

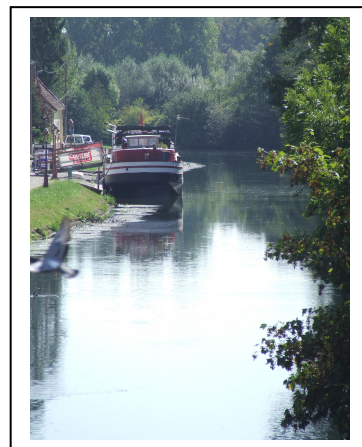
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseille. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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*.

\* \* \* \* \*

And, as related in an earlier paragraph, those...*re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen*...included Private Richardson among their ranks. On that same April 15, just two days following the Newfoundland Battalion's *own* 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 – this to include the new-comers - 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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...?*)

The son of John Richardson and of Jane Richardson (née *Kennedy*?) – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay - of 165 (16½) Duckworth Street in St. John's, he was brother to Mary-Ellen, Annie-Clare, Mary-Joseph, Mollie, Agnes, Aileen (Eileen?), Leo-Joseph and Edward.

Private Richardson was reported as...*missing in action*...at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with ‘C’ Company during the fighting of the first day of...*First Somme*. Some six months later, on December 31, he was officially *presumed dead*.



Patrick Richardson had enlisted at a *declared* twenty years of age. One source has him as William-Patrick Armstrong, born on February 16, 1895, his parents registered as John Armstrong and Jane Kennedy of Battery Road, this to be found in the Birth Register for St. John’s and – copied – in *Grand Bank Genealogy* Basilica Parish Records).

(Right above: *The photograph and the information immediately above, a propos his birth-date, are from the Ancestry.ca web-site.*)

Private Patrick Richardson was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



(continued on following page)

44 Coll's Avenue

Ayr

2<sup>nd</sup> August

Dear Sir  
1916

I wrote to you before regarding Private Patrick Richardson and I am pleased to state I got your reply. I was glad at the time to hear what you told me but I have recently got word from France that he is killed. I should be very glad if you would furnish me with the particulars of his death as you told me I could write to you for any information I may desire regarding him. I should be very thankful for your earliest reply and very glad to receive it. Thanking you very much for your kind attention with my last desire.

§ oblige

Noted on letter: **Missing**

Miss J. Earl

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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 29, 2023.