



Private Simon Ricks (Regimental Number 4070), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Simon Ricks was a recruit of the Eighteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination in Grand Falls on November 3, 1917, he then enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attested that same day.

Private Ricks did not embark for overseas service until January 29 of 1918, some twelve weeks later, when he boarded the Bowring Brothers' Red Cross Line vessel *Florizel* (right) en route for Halifax. From there he sailed on an unspecified troopship to the United Kingdom.

**This draft may even have travelled on to Québec or Montréal where ships were still apparently sailing even at this late time.*

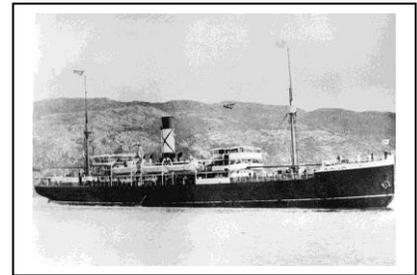
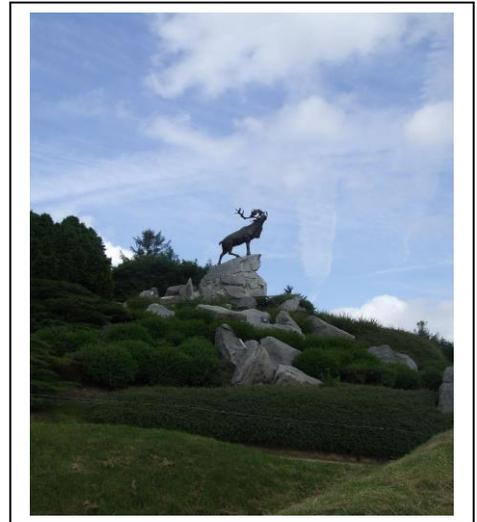
In the latter part of January of the New Year of 1918, the Regimental Depot which served the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester.

This transfer was finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was to Hazely Down that Private Ricks reported *to duty* from Newfoundland; it was also to be *from* there that he was then later despatched to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent.

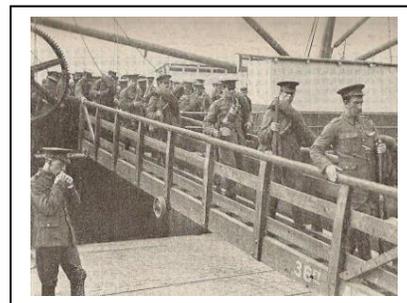
(Right: a *bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp* at some time during the winter of 1918 – from *The War Illustrated*)

Private Ricks was to spend some six months at Hazely Down Camp, some of which time was spent receiving medical attention in the Hazely Down Camp Hospital. On June 4 until 11, he was admitted for attention to a case of ICT (*Inflammation of the Connective Tissue*) of a knee. And it would seem, according to his medical file, that on the day that *that* particular treatment concluded, he was re-admitted for another three days, now suffering from scabies. He was discharged *to duty* to his unit on June 14.

(continued)



On or about August 31, the 51st Re-enforcement Draft – Private Ricks one of this contingent - from Hazely Down, passed through the English-Channel town of Folkestone en route to the French city of Rouen*, for final training and organization** at the British Expeditionary Force Depot there, before finding its way to a rendezvous with 1st Battalion. Only days afterwards – his record says September 5 – Private Ricks reported to duty with the Newfoundland parent unit at Équihen on the French west coast.



(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

**If not, the detachment would have disembarked in Boulogne or Le Havre and taken a train to the Base Depot at Rouen or the one at Étaples.*

***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.*

The summer of 1918 had passed peaceably enough for most of the personnel of 1st Battalion. For the months of May, June and until early July, the unit had been posted to Écuire, to the Headquarters of Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in Europe.



(Right: *Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force at the time of the Battalion's posting to GHQ – from Illustration*)

The cosmetic honour of this new role, however, masked the reality that the 1st Battalion of the recently-proclaimed *Royal Newfoundland Regiment* was no longer capable of serving in the field.

**Although few at home cared to admit it publicly, the problem was that 1st Battalion had run out of reserves and was unable to continue as a fighting entity. It was to be September before even a battalion of reduced strength could return to active service. At home, mandatory military service was initiated – conscription by another name – but with limited results.*

The posting to Écuire completed, for most of July and all of August the Newfoundlanders were encamped in much the same area, close to the coastal village of Équihen – itself not far removed from the large Channel port of Boulogne – and far to the rear of the fighting, of which there had been plenty elsewhere.



It was at the end of this period that Private Ricks reported to duty with 1st Battalion: the summer was drawing to a close.

(Preceding page: a view of the sparsely-populated coastal community of Équièhen at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

Re-enforced, the Newfoundlanders returned to the fray on Friday, September 13, as one of the three battalions of the 28th Brigade of 9th Scottish Division. 1st Battalion was once more to serve on the Belgian front where, some six weeks later, having advanced out of the *Ypres Salient*, it would finish its war on October 26 at a place called Inghoyghem (*Ingooigem*).

On September 28, the Belgian Army and the 2nd British Army broke out of their positions, overrunning the enemy lines. It was the start, for them, of the *Hundred Days Offensive**. On the following day, the Newfoundlanders were fighting at the Keiberg Ridge.



After almost four years of stalemate, it was once again to be a conflict of movement.

(Right above: *British troops and German prisoners in Flanders during the Hundred Days – from Illustration*)

**This offensive would prove to be the final campaign of the Western Front and would terminate with the Armistice of November 11. It had begun further to the south on July 18 on the French front on the River Marne, followed on August 8 by an onslaught by British and Empire troops near Amiens in what would also become known as 3rd Somme.*

The son of George Ricks, likely a fisherman, and of Jane Ricks – to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Sop's Arm (Island), White Bay, he was also brother to Elizabeth, Stewart, Robert, Darius, Dennis, George, Obadiah, Leander and to Lucy.



Private Ricks was reported as *missing in action* on September 29, 1918, while serving with 'C' Company during the fighting at the Keiberg Ridge.

Some thirty weeks later, on April 26, 1919, he was officially *presumed dead*.

Simon Ricks had enlisted at the age of twenty years and one month.

(Right above: *the re-constructed village of Dadizeele (today Dadizele) just to the north of which the Newfoundlanders dug in on the evening of September 29, 1918 – photograph from 2013*)

Private Simon Ricks was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

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In files: Following is a copy of a letter from no. 4281 Pte. S. ROSE. Hamden, White Bay, Nfld, dated 10/6/19, and forwarded by Minister of Militia, Nfld. Letter No. 189/4070 of 15/7/19

I beg to inform you that No. 4070 Pte. S. Ricks, of Sop's Island, W. B., reported missing Sept. 29th (1918), since reported presumed dead, was killed by a shrapnel on Ypres front, Sept. 29th. I assisted to bury him.

Nothing seems to have come of this evidence and the grave of Private Ricks, as in the case of many others, seems never to have been found, its location either forgotten or perhaps destroyed in subsequent fighting.

Sop's Arm
White Bay
9th of Apr 1920

Dear sir i am lettting you know that we received the sheet that was sent to us But that is not much good to one if that's all the King can do for me he can keep that.

Dear sir you must excuse me But i can't help it if i am Asking you if you can make a gathering of a few garments of cloting for me By the time the Boat comes it is very badly needed - i don't care how little it is i will be very thankful

of Gods care Mrs. Jane Ricks

Note on letter: An application form was sent for Separation Allowance and a suggest (sic) that the request for clothing be sent to WPA*.

***WPA – Women's Patriotic Association**