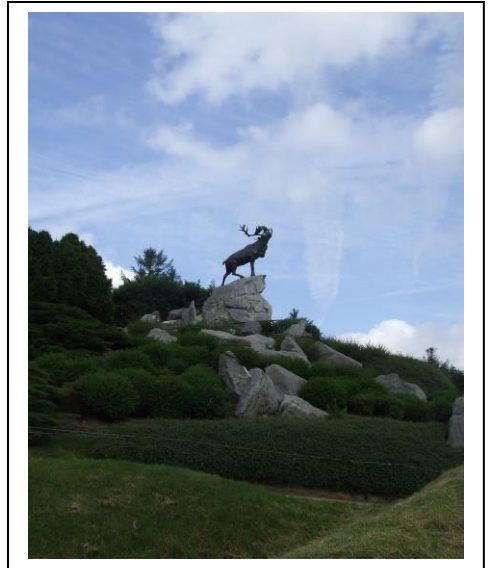


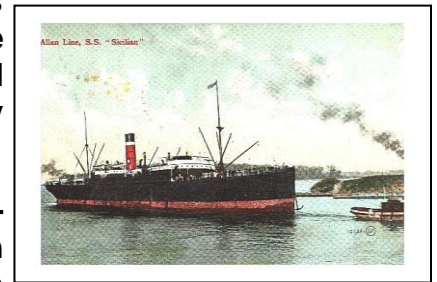
RUSSELL, JOSEPH

Private Joseph Russell (Regimental Number 2299), 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 lumberman earning an annual three hundred dollars, Joseph Russell was a recruit of the Ninth Draft. Having presented himself at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's for medical examination on March 20 of 1916, he then enlisted on March 21 – engaged for the duration of the war and at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10. He attested four days later again, on March 25.



Private Russell sailed from St. John's on July 19 on board His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian** (right). The ship - refitted some ten years previously to carry well over one thousand passengers - had left the Canadian port of Montreal on July 16, carrying Canadian military personnel.



It is likely that the troops disembarked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool; however, it is *certain* that upon disembarkation the contingent journeyed north by train to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot.

**Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had served as a troop-ship and transport during another conflict, carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers arriving from home were despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

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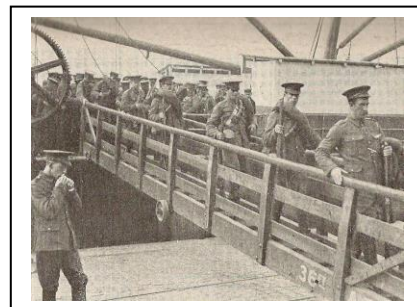
At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been billeted at Newton Park School and either in the grandstand or in a tented camp at the racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr.



(Right above: *the new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photograph from 2012*)

The 11th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Russell one of its number - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on October 3 of 1916 on its way to the Continent and to the Western Front. It disembarked in the Norman capital of Rouen on the next day, October 4, and spent time at the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot located there, in final training and organization*, before making its way to a rendezvous with 1st Battalion.

(Right: *British troops 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.*

It was a large detachment of two-hundred sixty-six *other ranks* – a number which included Private Russell - that reported from Rouen to the 1st Battalion transport lines on October 12. This was also the day on which 1st Battalion made its attack on the enemy positions at Gueudecourt, again sustaining heavy casualties – some two-hundred thirty-nine all told - and gaining little in return.

Thus it was that the new-comers remained behind the lines until the 14th, two days later, when they were moved up to *Switch Trench* and parcelled out to the Battalion's four depleted fighting companies. Consequently, the date of their arrival is often recorded not as October 12 but as October 14.

On October 18, only six days after the engagement at Gueudecourt, the 2nd Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment and the 4th Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment carried out an attack just to the north of 1st Battalion's positions. The Newfoundlanders supplied two-hundred fifty men for the occasion, to act as stretcher-bearers.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *An anonymous stretcher-bearer accompanies the troops onto the battlefield. These men, unarmed, faced the same perils as any other soldier – and often for longer periods. – from Illustration*)

(Right: *This is the ground over which 1st Battalion attacked on October 12 and the area of the positions into which the reinforcements of October 12-14 were posted. It is also adjacent to where Private Russell was killed on the 18th – The Gueudecourt Caribou stands among the trees on the far horizon to the right. - photograph from 2010*)



The son of William Russell, fisherman, and Amelia Russell (née *Hann*) – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Lewisport(e), in the District of Twillingate, he was also brother to William-Stuart, to Selina, to Henry, to Florence-Clara to Adolphus George and to Nathan.

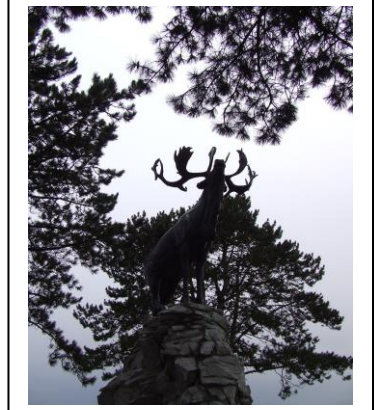
Private Russell was reported as having been *killed in action* on that October 18, 1916, while serving with ‘A’ Company as a stretcher-bearer in fighting near Gueudecourt.



At home it was the Reverend William J. Wilson of Lewisport(e) who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Joseph Russell had enlisted at the age of twenty years and six months.

(Right above: *The sacrifice of Private Russell is honoured on a plaque which is affixed to the Municipal Building in Lewisport. – photograph from 2013*)



(Left above: *the War Memorial which stands in the town of Lewisport honours the sacrifice of its war dead.– photograph from 2013*)

(Far right above: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt marks the furthest point of advance by 1st Battalion during the action of October 12, 1916 – photograph from 2012*)

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

