



Private William Russell (Regimental Number 1137) is interred in Knightsbridge Cemetery – Grave reference G. 34.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a labourer working for the *Reid Newfoundland Company* and earning a daily \$1.50, William Russell presented himself for medical examination on February 6, 1915 at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's. He then enlisted – engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – eleven days later, on February 17, 1915, before attesting on February 27.



Private Russell then embarked with Number 7 Platoon of 'D' Company, just three weeks later again, onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* (right above – from *Provincial Archives*) on March 20, 1915, for passage to Halifax and for overseas service. From Halifax he took ship on His Majesty's Transport *Orduna* (right) for the trans-Atlantic crossing to Liverpool.



Sailing from Nova Scotia on March 22 for Liverpool, the draft landed there eight days later, on the 30th, and entrained to Edinburgh, arriving at the historic Castle on the same day. For the next six weeks, having been united with 'A', 'B' and 'C' Companies already stationed there, the Newfoundlanders formed the garrison – the first troops from outside the British Isles to do so - of the guardian of Scotland's capital city.



(Right: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the skyline of the Scottish capital city from the summit of Castle Hill. – photograph from 2011*)

On May 11 the Newfoundlanders were transferred to Stobs Camp, near Hawick, to the south-east of Edinburgh. There they remained for some three months until the beginning of August when the senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' – now to become 1st Battalion, the Newfoundland Regiment - were sent south to Aldershot in the south of England. There they received final training – and a royal inspection - to prepare for *active service* in Gallipoli.



(Right above: *the Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp on June 10, the day it received its Colours – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



The later arrivals, 'E' and 'F' Companies, were sent to the new Regimental Depot recently being established at Ayr, on the west coast of Scotland. There they were to become the nucleus of the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.



It was during this period at Aldershot, on August 15, that Private Russell was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion 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.*

On August 20, 1915, Private Russell took ship on board the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (right above) for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting in Gallipoli where, a month later – of which two weeks had been spent billeted at the British barracks at Abbassia, near the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, 1st Battalion landed on the beach at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



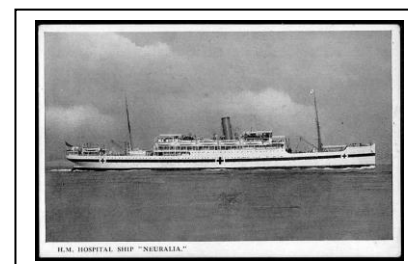
(Previous page black & white: *Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros, either Megantic on August 29, Ausonia on September 18, or Prince Abbas on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – from Provincial Archives)*



(Previous page bottom: *'Kangaroo Beach', where 1st Battalion landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph from 2011)*

(Right above: *almost a century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Russell served during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*

On October 10 Private Russell was taken on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Neuralia* (right) at Suvla, having been diagnosed as suffering from dysentery, and was transported to Alexandria. Nine days later, on the 19th, Private Russell was admitted into Citadel Military Hospital in Cairo. From there, if not forwarded for convalescence, he was certainly at some point discharged *to duty* at a Base Depot before the end of January of the New Year 1916.



(Right: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders, employed as the rear-guard, were among the last to leave on two occasions. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)*



When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, 1st Battalion had been sent to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. From there the Newfoundlanders were transferred, almost immediately, south to Suez. To that point it seems that the theatre of the future posting of 29th Division was still uncertain. It was at during the posting to Suez that Private Russell reported *to duty* with 1st Battalion, on January 26.



On March 14, a decision having been taken, the officers and men of 1st Battalion embarked through Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the Suez Canal onto His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* (right above) for passage to the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles, en route to the *Western Front*.



(Right: *Port Tewfiq at a time just before the Great War – from a vintage post-card)*

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

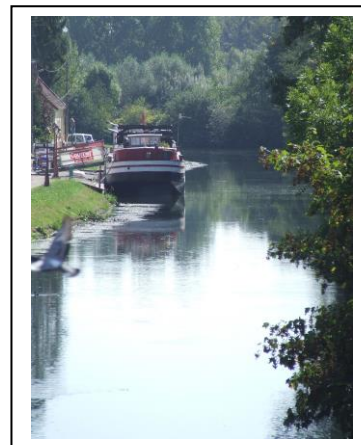
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation in France on March 22, 1st Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy in north-west France. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them travelling unused in a separate wagon.



De-training at the station at two in the morning the Newfoundlanders still had a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

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

It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers paid much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge that they passed on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would be a part of their history.



On April 13, 1st Battalion marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy – where it was billeted, welcomed re-enforcements from Rouen on the 15th and, on the evening of that same day, was sent to the British front lines, there to improve the communication trenches.

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that same meandering river, *the Somme*.

(Right: *part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)

The son of Edith Russell – to whom he willed his everything and to whom he had allocated a daily eighty cents from his pay - and Samuel Russell, a casual labourer, of Brooklyn, Bonavista Bay - he himself recorded as native to Plate Cove, Bonavista Bay – he was also brother to Gilbert, 18; Richard, 14; Marrian, 11; Hettie, 8; and Robert, 4 (all ages as of 1920).

Private Russell was reported to have been *killed in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with 'D' Company during the fighting on the first day of *the Somme*. He was buried on that same day by the Reverend H. S. Reid, attached to 87th Brigade.



William Russell had enlisted at nineteen years of age.

(continued)

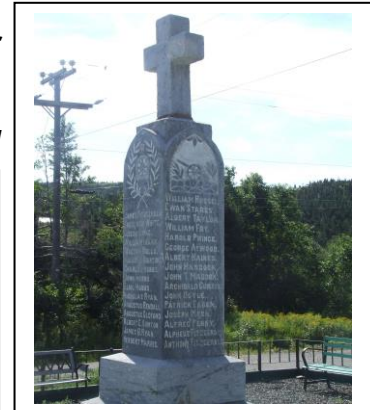
(Preceding page: *Beaumont-Hamel* - looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences - *The Danger Tree* is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009)



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

(Right: *The sacrifice of Private Russell is honoured on the War Memorial near Summerville.* – photograph from 2010)

(*The photograph of Private Russell is from the Provincial Archives.*)



Private William Russell 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).

