



**Cadet\* Walter Scammell (Regimental Number 2958) lies buried in Cambridge City Cemetery – Grave reference C. 3631.**

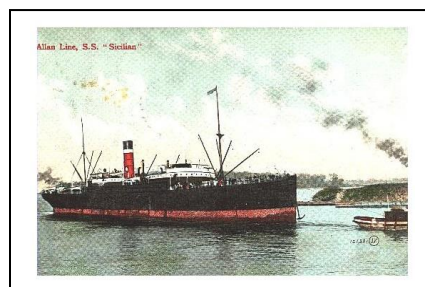
**\*Flying Officer Cadet**

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a school-teacher earning four-hundred fifty dollars per annum, Walter Scammell was a recruit of the Tenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on July 3 of 1916, he then enlisted, also in St. John's – engaged *for the duration of the war* at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and also attested on July 15, some twelve days later.

It was the 28<sup>th</sup> of August before Lance Corporal Scammell – promoted to the rank of lance corporal only the day before his departure from Newfoundland - embarked for passage to the United Kingdom and it was on His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian\** (page below) that he was to make the trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom. This was the third such voyage that the ship was to make in 1916, the Newfoundlanders likely sharing the vessel with Canadian personnel\*\*. He sailed as a soldier of 12<sup>th</sup> Platoon, Section 15, of 'C' Company of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion\*\*\*.

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

***\*\*Sicilian had been re-fitted in 1906 to carry just under twelve-hundred passengers, thus her journey to St. John's in March of 1916 was likely followed by the short passage to Halifax to embark Canadian military personnel. Likewise, in July, she had sailed from Montreal on July 16 with Canadians to embark the Newfoundlanders awaiting passage overseas.***



***\*\*\*3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was based in St. John's, whereas 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion – 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Companies - was stationed in the United Kingdom. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was the edge of the sword – 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies – and was posted to the front.***

**Upon arrival in the United Kingdom, the ship docked in the south-coast naval port of Devonport from where the Newfoundlanders entrained for the journey north to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot where each newcomer was delegated to one of the four resident companies - and the where the somewhat confusing title of 'C' Company was abandoned.**

**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 a base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.**



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

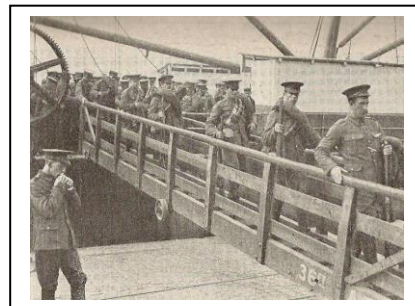
**At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been 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 – photo from 2012)***

**(continued)**

On December 30, 1916, the 16<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Lance Corporal Scammell among the contingent - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to France. On the following day, December 31, it disembarked in Rouen and proceeded to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot for several days of final training and organization\* before moving off to a rendezvous with the parent unit, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(Right above: *British troops 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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

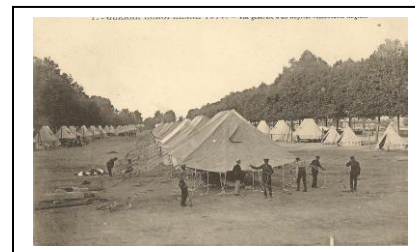
Meanwhile, after a six-week Christmas interlude, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had officially returned to *active service* on January 23 of 1917, although they had already been back in the trenches for some days and had suffered their first casualties – and fatality - of the New Year. The next five weeks were monotonously repetitious: in and out of the trenches, the occasional dead, wounded and ill, and the occasional cold and snowy winter's day which did not seem to particularly bother the Newfoundlanders. Anything was better than rain and mud.

On February 5, Lance Corporal Scammell was one of a small draft of twelve *other ranks* from Rouen to report to *duty* with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at the village of Carnoy, the Newfoundlanders having withdrawn from the trenches only three days prior. With the Regimental War Diary often noting *...nothing of military importance...* priorities of the day often included just staying dry and warm.



(Right above: *the minuscule village of Carnoy almost a century later – photograph from March of 2013*)

On February 26 Lance Corporal Scammell was sent to the 14<sup>th</sup> Corps Rest Station for treatment to a septic toe. Seemingly things worsened as he was next reported on March 15 as having been admitted into the 34<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Grovetown with a severe PUO (*Pain of Unknown Origin*).



(Right above: *a British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War – from a vintage post-card*)

(continued)

Two days later he was in the 6<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in Rouen where he remained for a month before being placed on board His Majesty's Australian Hospital Ship *Warilda* (right) on April 17 for the cross-Channel journey back to the United Kingdom.



Once having arrived in England – on that same day – Lance Corporal Scammell was transported to and admitted into the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital (right) in the Borough of Wandsworth.

The only diagnoses in the records of that time are really just symptoms: pyrexia – high fever – and diarrhoea. He remained there until April 26.

(Right: *The main building of what became 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)



(Above far right: *Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing at 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

On that date, with enteritis now cited – and recorded - as the cause of his medical woes, he was transferred to the Military Hospital, Bermondsey, until May 18. From that date until June 6 Lance Corporal Scammell was in a Convalescent Depot at the coastal town of Eastbourne.

He was thereupon released and granted the customary ten-day furlough accorded service personnel upon discharge from hospital in the United Kingdom. Thus he found himself spending from that June 6 until June 15 at the *Greyhounds Hotel* in the country town of Midsomer Norton.

On that same June 15, his all-too-short period of leave completed, Lance Corporal Scammell reported back to the Regimental Depot at Ayr where he was posted *to duty* with 'H' Company.



(Right: *the High Street in Ayr, dominated then as it still is today by the imposing Wallace Tower, as shown on a postcard of the time sent home by a Newfoundland soldier – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo*)

Just over seven weeks later, on August 5, the 28<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft, from Barry\*, embarked at either Folkestone or Southampton en route to Rouen. There the draft landed, then made its way to the Base Depot for those inevitable days of final preparation.

(continued)

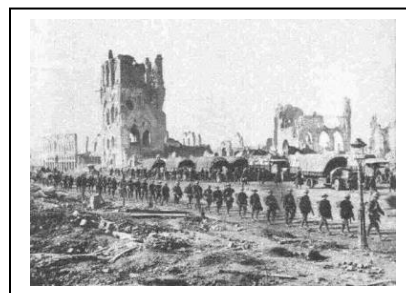
*\*During the summer months of 1917, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.*

Lance Corporal Scammell was in one of the two drafts totalling one-hundred sixty-six personnel which arrived at Penton Camp, on the outskirts of Poperinghe, on August 28. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had quit the line only days prior, on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and was not to return to the front for an entire month. This period, a planned lull in the fighting, was to allow the entire British Army time to reorganize and re-enforce.

*Passchendaele* recommenced for the Newfoundlanders in the front line on September 25, although they had suffered four wounded two days prior to that due to long-range artillery fire. In their trenches they prepared for the next offensive infantry action.

It came about two weeks later at the *Broembek*.

In the meantime, some three months prior to Lance Corporal Scammell's arrival, the Newfoundlanders had once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of Ypres. This area had been selected by the High Command as the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. Officially designated as the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, borrowing that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion remained in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army which floundered its way across the sodden countryside of Flanders. Notably it fought in two major engagements, at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembek* on October 9.



(Right above: *an unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

It was at the *Broembek* that Lance Corporal Scammell was wounded, suffering shrapnel wounds to the right arm and to the chest. Where he was sent for immediate attention seems not to be recorded but, by the following day, October 10, he had been admitted into the 11<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Dannes-Camiers. He remained there for only two days before boarding an un-named hospital ship on the 12<sup>th</sup> to cross the English Channel and return to England.



(Previous page: *Here an innocuous-looking Belgian stream, the Broembeek was otherwise in 1917 when its overflowing waters turned the surrounding fields into a quagmire. – photograph from 2009*)

(Right below: *the railway station serving the nearby communities of Dannes and Camiers through which many thousands of sick and wounded must have passed their way to and from hospital – from a vintage post-card*)

Upon arrival back in the United Kingdom Lance Corporal Scammell was transported to the 2<sup>nd</sup> London General Hospital in Chelsea. Remaining there for treatment until November 6, he was then sent to the Ashford VAD Auxiliary Hospital in the county of Kent for convalescence. When he was released to that ten-day furlough is not totally clear: the date of December 3 is cited and it was certainly close to this date as his record shows that he reported *to duty* at Ayr, with 'H' Company, on December 20.



In the New Year of 1918, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion moved quarters 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 Lance Corporal Scammell was surely a part of the operation.



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

It was at some time during this period spent at Hazely that Lance Corporal Scammell decided to discard the role of infantryman and to apply for training – and for an eventual commission\* – in what would become, as of April 1, 1918, the Royal Air Force\*\*. In the meantime, however, he remained with the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion and received a second promotion, to the rank of corporal, on April 27.

*\*Most of the pilots in the Royal Flying Corps and later in the Royal Air Force were officers.*

*\*\*Until this time the Royal Flying Corps was administered by the Army: the Royal Air Force was to be an autonomous entity.*

On June 7 of 1918, Corporal Scammell's application was accepted and acted upon. He became Cadet Scammell and on June 10 was posted to 'A' Company of the No. 2 Officer Cadet Battalion based in the university city of Cambridge – No. 2 being attached to *Pembroke College*. Whether he ever earned his wings appears not to be documented.



(continued)

On November 1 of 1918, just as the War was drawing to its conclusion, Cadet Scammell was admitted into the 1<sup>st</sup> Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge. He was suffering from influenza and pneumonia.

The son of Stewart Scammell, fisherman – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - and of Sarah Scammell of Change Islands - Coderick's Cove to be precise – he was also oldest brother to Clara, to Violet and to Charley.

Cadet Scammell was reported as having *died of sickness* on November 11, 1918, the day on which the Armistice came into effect. He was buried on November 15 (after a post mortem).

Walter Scammell had enlisted at the age of twenty-one years and four months: birth date, February 16, 1895, according to the 1911 Census.

(Previous page and right: *the sacrifice of Cadet Scammell is honoured on a Memorial Scroll to be found in St. Margaret's Church, Change Islands – photograph from 2013*)



Cadet Walter Scammell was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



**Note:** *There seems to be no explanation as to why there is not a Commonwealth War Graves headstone placed on Cadet Scammell's grave or why he does not lie in the Military Plot in that cemetery, unless that was his family's wish.*

**Note:** *A propos the first page photographs: the cross was momentarily displaced to allow the picture of the inscription to be taken – all three images are of the same grave.*

(continued)

The Pay & Record Office  
58, Victoria Street  
London

57, McCall's Ave.,  
Ayr  
Scotland  
28/2/17

Dear Sir,

I would be very much in debted to you by your letting me know the whereabouts of L/Corpl. Walter Scammell no. 2958, 1<sup>st</sup> Newfoundland Regt. who left for France eight weeks ago. Letters are away to him not less than nine times and I sent a telegram with a reply paid, away a fortnight ago. Kindly let me have some information about him if possible.

Yours Faithfully,  
Mary Davidson