

SHORT. J.



Private James Short (Regimental Number 1086), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

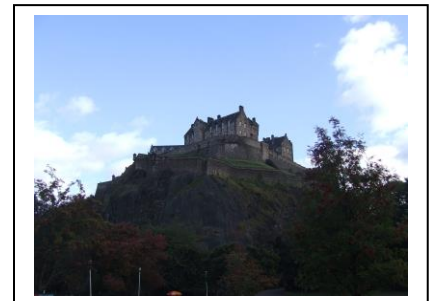
His occupation previous to his military service recorded as that of a fisherman earning an annual \$400.00, James Short presented himself for medical examination at Bonavista on January 30, 1915. Having then travelled to the capital city, he enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's – engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem - on February 8, 1915. He attested on February 19.



Private Short then embarked with 'D' Company, just more than four 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.



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(Preceding page: *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 Short 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 Short took ship on board the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (right top) 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.

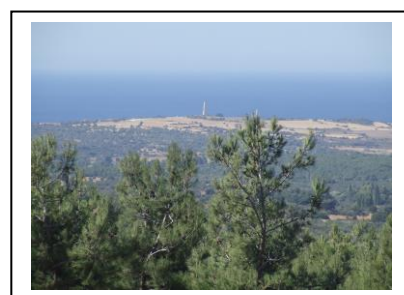
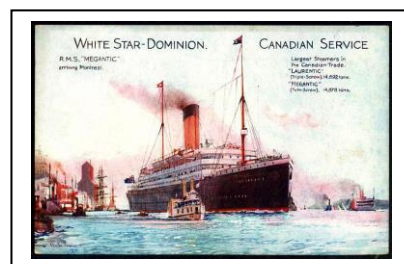
(Above right black & white: *Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros, either Megantic on August 29, Ausonia on September 18, or Prince Abbas on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli.* – from Provincial Archives)

(Above right: *'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)

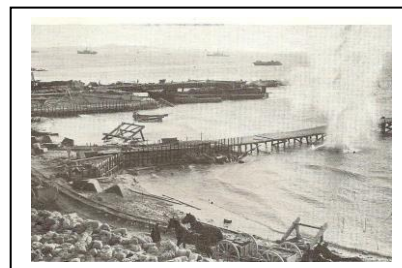
(Above right: *almost a century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Short served during the fall of 1915* – photograph from 2011)

(Right: *Cape Helles (see following paragraph) 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)

(continued)



On the night of December 19-20, the British abandoned their positions and withdrew from Suvla Bay, the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, forming a part of the rear-guard on that occasion. 1st Battalion was transferred two days later to Cape Helles on the western tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders were soon, on the night of January 8-9, to be abandoning Cape Helles as well.



(Right above: *'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration*)

(Right: *'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces and by the Newfoundlanders who were the last soldiers to leave the beach: vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture above are still to be seen – photograph from 2011*)



When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, 1st Battalion was sent to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. From there the Newfoundlanders were transferred, almost immediately, south to Suez where they were to await further orders. To that point it seems that the theatre of the future posting of 29th Division was still uncertain.



(Right above: *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*)



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

On March 14, 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) for the voyage to the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles, en route to the *Western Front*.



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



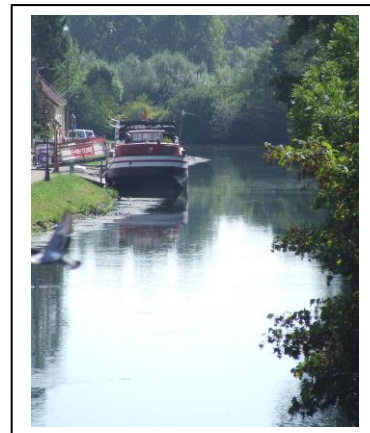
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy.

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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 seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy as it flows through the community* – 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 – three kilometres behind the lines and perhaps some fifty kilometres in all distant from Pont-Rémy – where it was billeted, welcomed re-enforcements from Rouen on the 15th and, on that same day, was introduced into the British lines where the Newfoundlanders were then put to work making improvements to 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 which flowed through the region, *the Somme*.

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

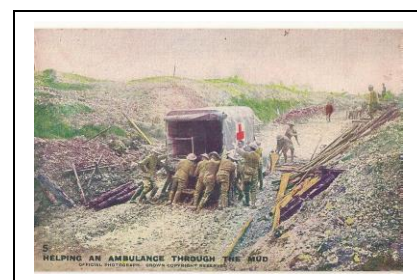
On the late evening of May 22, while 1st Battalion was serving a tour in the trenches, the Newfoundlanders were heavily bombarded and Private Short was wounded by shrapnel in the left side.

(Right: *transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power* – from a vintage post-card)

He was sent at first to the 87th Field Ambulance on that same date, then transferred to the 29th Casualty Clearing Station on the 23rd, the next day. Two days later again, Private Short was admitted into the 1st General Hospital in the French coastal town of Etretat.

(Right: *a sea-side resort before the Great War, Etretat plays the same role a century later* – photograph from 2011)

(continued)



After treatment, on June 6 he was transferred to the 4th Convalescent Depot in Le Havre then, on the 18th, was returned *to duty* to the Base Depot at Rouen. From there Private Short re-joined 1st Battalion on or about July 12, perhaps one of a re-enforcement draft of one-hundred twenty-seven *other ranks* to arrive while the Newfoundlanders were being billeted in huts at Maily-Maillet, just behind the front.

On July 27 and 28 the unit was on the move north into Belgium. There it was to spend the following ten weeks re-enforcing and re-organizing after the disaster of Beaumont-Hamel. The unlikely place for all this was *the Ypres Salient*, one of the most lethal theatres of the entire Great War. Fortunately, although casualties – and fatalities - were incurred, it was *relatively* quiet during the time of 1st Battalion's posting.

(Right above: *the entrance to 'A' Company's quarters in the ramparts of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916* – photograph from 2010)

(Right: *the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time* – from a vintage post-card)

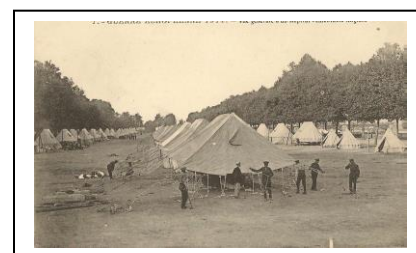
On October 8, 1st Battalion was transferred back south to France and back to the region and the battle of the Somme. Only four days later, on October 12, it was thrown again into the fray, on this occasion at Gueudecourt, perhaps a dozen kilometres or so south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. It was another case of much sacrifice – two-hundred thirty-nine casualties all told - for very little in return. There being no records to the contrary, it may be assumed that Private Short played his part at Gueudecourt.

(Right above: *These are the fields across which the Battalion advanced on October 12, towards the trees on the far-right horizon. The furthest point of advance on that day – before a withdrawal – the area of the trees is where the Gueudecourt Caribou is to be found.* - photograph from 2009.)

According to the Regimental War Diary... *nothing of military interest occurred during the month of November.* Be that as it may, 1st Battalion incurred a number of casualties during the six days that it was posted in the trenches. Private Short was one of them, being wounded by shell-fire on the 30th.

(Right: *a British casualty clearing station being established, this one, like many, under canvas, allowing mobility if and when necessary* – from a vintage post-card)

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Injured in the right shoulder, arm and thigh, Private Short was evacuated to the 34th Casualty Clearing Station at Grovetown on December 1 before being forwarded to the 1st Australian General Hospital, Rouen, on the 4th, and then to England via the Hospital Ship *Carisbrook Castle* (right) on December 7. He arrived on the following day, to be admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.



(Right: *The main building of what became 3rd London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1st, 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 the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

After treatment and convalescence, the customary ten-day furlough allowed to military personnel upon release from hospital was granted to Private Short before he was posted to the Regimental Depot at Ayr on February 19, 1917 – in fact he seems to have spent his furlough there as well. He then remained at Ayr for the next seven and a half months.

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

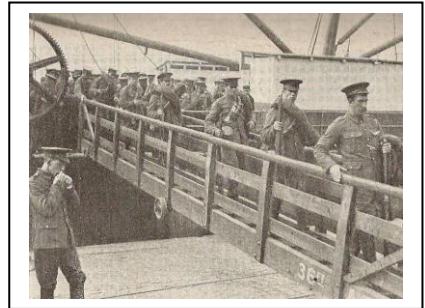


(Right: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

However, in the summer of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion moved to the town of Barry. Intended to be permanent, the transfer lasted only until the third week of September before the pressures mounted to return to Ayr. The victory was nevertheless short-lived as the Newfoundlanders were to find themselves in southern England by the end of January, 1918, in a camp on Hazely Down near Winchester.

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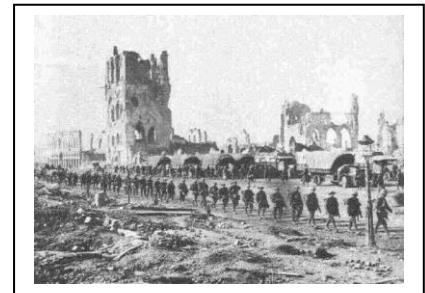
On September 7 the 29th Re-enforcement Draft - Private Short among its ranks - passed through the English south coast port of Southampton en route to Belgium to 1st Battalion, by then embroiled in the British offensive of that summer and autumn, later to become known as *Passchendaele*. On September 8 the draft arrived in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot where it remained for a few days for final training and organization* before moving north.



(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, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

The Newfoundlanders once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of Ypres. This had been selected as the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. Officially named 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 passing through Ypres in 1917 on their way to the front during Passchendaele. – from Illustration*)

A re-enforcement draft from Rouen comprising twenty-five *other ranks* - and among that number Private Short - arrived at Penton Camp on September 18 while 1st Battalion was organizing during a three-week lull in the fighting. The Newfoundlanders were back into action just days later.

1st 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 *Broembeek* on October 9.



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

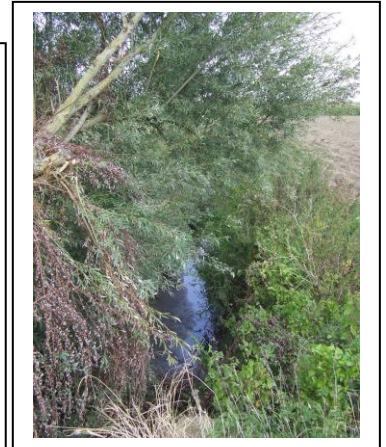
The son of Joseph Short and Bertha Short (née *Fisher*) of Bonavista, and brother to Mrs. Louise Russell - to whom he allotted a daily allowance of 70 cents from his pay – his own place of residence is recorded as Baley's Cove. He was also brother to at least Eliza.

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Private Short was reported as having been *killed in action* on October 9, 1917, while serving with 'A' Company in the fighting at the *Brombeek*, Belgium, during the *Third Battle of Ypres: Passchendaele*.

James Short had enlisted at twenty-two years of age.

(Far right: *The Broembeek flows languidly through the Belgian countryside a century later. In the autumn of 1917 it had overflowed its banks, inundating the surrounding fields.* – photograph from 2010)



(Centre above: *The War Memorial in Bonavista honours the sacrifice of Private Short.* – photograph from 2010)

Private James Short 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) (right).

