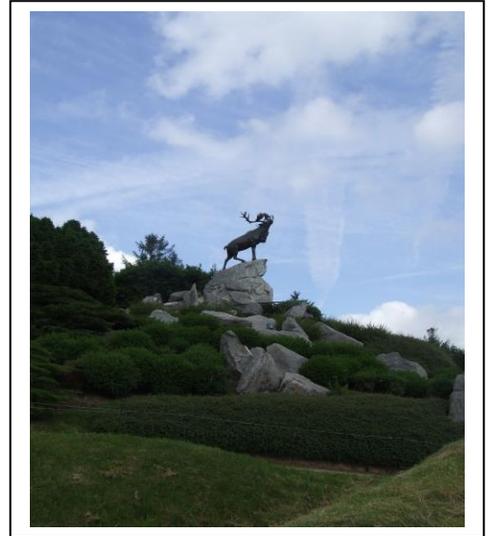


SIMMS . F . F . H .

Private Frank Fred Hayward Simms (Regimental Number 2959), 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 farmer earning an annual three hundred dollars, Frank Fred Hayward Simms was a recruit of the Tenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, he also enlisted – engaged *for the duration of the war* at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 - on July 14, 1916. He then attested three days afterwards, on July 17.

It was the 28th of August before Private Simms embarked for passage to the United Kingdom and it was on His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian** (right) 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 12th Platoon, Section 16, of 'C' Company of 3rd 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.*

****3rd Battalion was based in St. John's, whereas 2nd (Reserve) Battalion – 'E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Companies - was stationed in the United Kingdom. 1st 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 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.



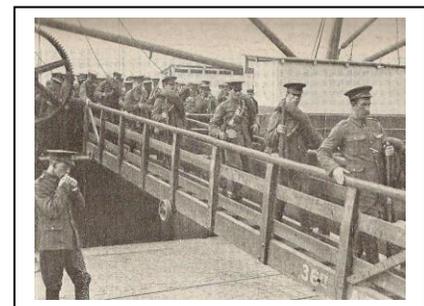
(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-upon-Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

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*)

The 14th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Simms among that contingent - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on November 30 of 1916 on its way to the Continent and to the Western Front. The contingent disembarked in the Norman capital of Rouen on the next day, December 1, 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 above: *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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

When that rendezvous was effected it was late in the day of December 11 – which is most likely why it is recorded elsewhere as happening on the 12th. The parent unit had retired from the front on December 8, but many of the men had been seconded for work at Carnoy and Fricourt.

Those spared had marched on to Méricourt l'Abbé which is where the one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Base Depot – Private Simms among that detachment - reported to *duty*.

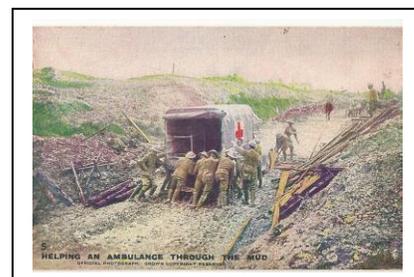


The newcomers were just in time for the six-week Christmas period to be spent encamped well behind the lines in *Corps Reserve* and near to the city of Amiens.

(Right above: a *British encampment somewhere on the Continent, apparently during the winter season* – from a vintage post-card)

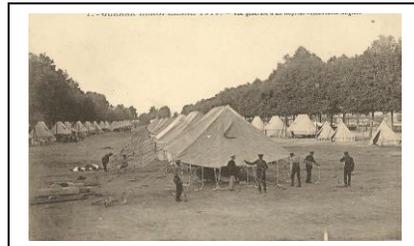
The Newfoundlanders officially returned to active service on January 23 of 1917, although they had already been back in the trenches and had suffered their first casualties – and fatality – of the year. The next five weeks differed little from those of the preceding autumn: in and out of the trenches, the occasional dead, wounded and ill, and the occasional winter's day which did not seem to bother the Newfoundlanders. Anything was better than rain and mud.

On February 24, while the remainder of 1st Battalion was becoming acquainted with the trenches near Sailly-Saillisel, Private Simms was admitted into the 89th Field Ambulance with a PUO (*Pain of Unknown Origin*). Two days later he was forwarded to the 34th Casualty Clearing Station at Grovetown, to the west of Albert; from there he was next sent to the 11th Stationary Hospital at Rouen for further treatment for what by then had been diagnosed as myalgia (muscular pain).



(Right above: *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)

(Right: 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)



Apparently, during the next few days, Private Simms caught the 'flu and developed a high fever. It was there upon decided to send him back to the United Kingdom and so, on March 3, he was embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Gloucester Castle* (right) and traversed the waters of the English Channel en route to the United Kingdom.



Once having arrived back in England, Private Simms was transported to and admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.

(continued)

(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 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

There he apparently was to remain until on or about May 20 when he was released from care and granted the customary ten-day furlough accorded service personnel discharged from hospital. On the 29th of May, Private Simms reported to duty with 'H' Company at the Regimental Depot in Scotland.



(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*)

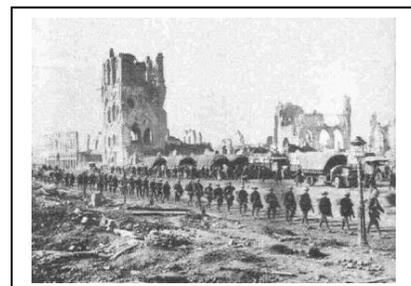
It was almost two months later, on July 22, when the 27th Re-enforcement Draft passed through Southampton en route to the Continent. Two days later, on the 24th, Private Simms disembarked in Rouen where he and the others of his detachment once more endured the rigours of the *Bullpen* before making their way to rendezvous with 1st Battalion.

Private Simms was a soldier 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. 1st Battalion had withdrawn from the line four days earlier, on the 24th, and did not 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 by then 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 action.

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

Some two months prior to Private Simms' arrival at Penton Camp, the Newfoundlanders had once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of Ypres. This had been selected by the High Command to be 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.

(Previous page: *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*)

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. Too late to play a part at the former, Private Simms undoubtedly served at the latter.



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

A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*. They were ordered back south from Belgium into northern France on October 17 to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras – some personnel even having been granted at the time a ten-day furlough back to the United Kingdom.

The so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1st Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



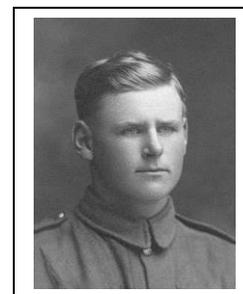
(Above right: *the Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

The son of Frank Hayward Simms, farmer, and Rose C. Simms – to whom he had allotted a daily fifty cents from his pay - of Kimberley Farm, Burin, he was also brother to Helen.

Private Simms was at first reported as *missing in action* on December 3, 1917, at the time of the fighting retreat near the French villages of Marcoing and Masnières.

(continued)

However, an official German report, subsequently transmitted from Berlin to London via the offices of the Geneva Red Cross and received March 14, 1918, recorded No. 2959, Pte. Frank H. Simms found dead after the Battle of Cambrai, his identity disc sent to Berlin 25th Jan., 1918, and buried by the Germans in their Military Cemetery at Seranvillers.



His file was thereupon amended on or about April 5, 1918, so as to read *killed in action*.

Frank Fred Hayward Simms had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and one month.

(The photograph of Private Simms is from the Grand Banks Genealogy site and was donated by Frank G. Simms)

(Right: The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of 1st Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012)



Private Frank Fred Hayward Simms was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



Extract from a letter - from the files of Private Simms – from the Chief Staff Officer and dated June 16th, 1920, to Mr. F. H. Simms, Kimberly Farm, Burin

Controversy still exists over the content in this correspondence.

...I might say that I sent in this enquiry to endeavour to find out some certain particulars about the nature of death of soldiers referred to. You will note that my letter of Sept. 16th, 1918, states that certain information was procured through the Red Cross Society operating in Berlin.

(continued on following page)

In the other cases concerning which the enquiry is now made, it has now come to notice that there was no German field dressing station at Seranvillers, and no trace of any burying ground to be found, nor is such known to the regular inhabitants of that district. It is felt that the Germans had supplied false information: and the matter has been referred to the War office for investigation...

Note: Apparently the site of this particular German Military Cemetery is still yet to be discovered.