

Private John Joseph Doran (Regimental Number 2660) lies in Canada Farm British Cemetery – Grave reference III. C. 41.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a labourer working as a farm-hand and also *on the steam-boats* and earning a monthly \$28.00, John Doran was a recruit of the Tenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on April 27 of 1916, he then both enlisted *for the duration of the war* – engaged at the daily rate of \$1.10 – and attested on the same day, May 1, 1916.

It was the 28<sup>th</sup> of August when Private Doran embarked for passage to the United Kingdom and it was on board His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian\** (right) that he was to make the trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom.

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This was the third such voyage that the ship was to make in 1916, the Newfoundlanders likely sharing the vessel with Canadian personnel\*\*. He was a soldier of Section 4, Platoon 9, 'C' (Reserve) Company of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (see \*\*\* below), and one of a draft of two-hundred forty-two personnel from Newfoundland in all.

*\*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)*

During the winter of 1915-1916 the men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion had been lodged in several venues, at a nearby military camp at Gales, but also as far afield as Paisley Barracks, some sixty-five kilometres distant. However, by the spring of 1916 the difficulty had been overcome by housing the men in a requisitioned school, in a tented community and in the Ayr Racecourse Grandstand, all in the district of Newton-upon-Ayr.



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(Preceding page: *the new race-course at 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 14<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Private Doran among its ranks - 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. It 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

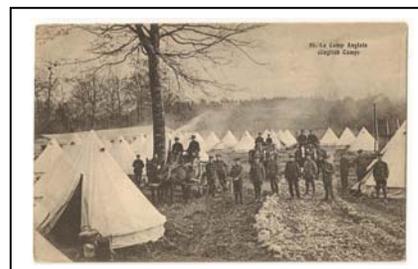


(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

*\*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, Étaples, 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 likely why it is recorded in the Regimental War Diary as occurring on the 12<sup>th</sup>. 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 Doran among that number - reported to duty. The newcomers were just in time for the six-week Christmas period to be spent well behind the lines in *Corps Reserve*, encamped near the city of Amiens.



(Right: *a typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card*)

After that welcome Christmas respite, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23 of the New Year, 1917, although they had already been back in the trenches for several days and had suffered their first casualties – and fatality - of 1917.

On January 24, only a single day later, Private Doran was admitted into the 31<sup>st</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Corbie and was diagnosed as having tonsillitis.



(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*)

From there Private Doran was transferred to the 8<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital in the coastal community of Wimereux and later released to Base Details on February 2. He reported back to duty to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on March 6, one of a detachment from Rouen of one officer and thirty-one *other ranks* to do so on that day. Another contingent arrived on that March 6: the *Regimental Band* had travelled to France from Scotland.



(Right above: *the French coastal resort of Wimereux – during the Great War to become a part of an important medical complex – shown here in the days prior to the conflict – from a vintage post-card*)

(Right: *some six months later, in September of 1917 – and led by Sable Chief, the Regimental Mascot – the Regimental Band on parade at Chelsea Barracks, London – photograph from Provincial Archives*)



After the infantry affair at Sailly-Saillisel, the month of March was a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events. They even had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris (right), the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



On March 29, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had begun to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, on to the village of Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right above: *the remnants of the Grande Place in the city of Illustration*)

On April 9 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties it was the most expensive operation of the War for the British, its only positive episode being the Canadian assault of Vimy Ridge on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.



The French offensive was a disaster.

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(Preceding page: *the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to play its part in the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at a place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After Beaumont-Hamel, Monchy-le-Preux was to prove to be the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties on April 14 alone.



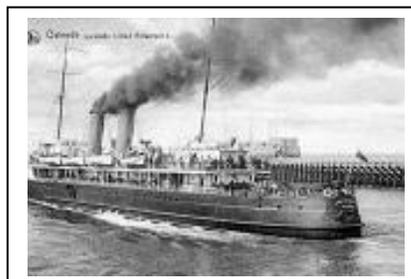
(Right above: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the western – in 1917, the British – side of the community. The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

A lack of any evidence to the contrary suggests that Private Doran played his anonymous part in the attack at Monchy-le-Preux on April 14. Three days afterwards, nevertheless, he was being admitted into the 36<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, again suffering from tonsillitis.



(Right: *a British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some – from a vintage post-card*)

Transferred to the 6<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital at Frévent on April 21, he was next forwarded to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian General Hospital at Étaples on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, to be embarked onto the Belgian hospital ship *Stad Antwerpen* (right) on the following day, for the cross-Channel journey to the United Kingdom.



Having arrived in England on that same April 24, Private Doran was admitted into the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth for further treatment.

(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*)

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Private Doran was discharged from Wandsworth on or about May 24 and was granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital in the United Kingdom. He was then – almost inevitably - posted to the Regimental Depot at Ayr where he reported for duty on June 2.



(Right above: *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*)

On August 5 the 28<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Barry\* probably sailed from Folkestone and two days later disembarked in Rouen - the records conflict - en route to joining 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion back on the Continent. Private Doran was among its ranks. After this also-inevitable period of last-minute preparation at the Base Depot in Rouen, the re-enforcements were ordered to report to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

*\*During the summer months of 1917, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of the city of Dundee. 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.*

Private Doran was a soldier of 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 on the 24<sup>th</sup> 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 the 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 after travelling closer to the front by train on September 20. In their trenches they prepared for the next offensive action. It was to come about two weeks later at the *Broembek*.

However, on September 23 the Newfoundlanders were still behind the lines, awaiting orders to move up. The single Regimental War Diary entry of that day records... *'Casualties 4 OR wounded on ration carrying party at RUGBY DUMP.'*

The son of John Doran (fisherman from Outer Cove, deceased\* in February, 1898 (see below)) and Elizabeth (Eliza) Isabel Doran (likely née *Hearn*) – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay and to whom he had willed his all - of 41, Duckworth Street in St. John's, he was also younger brother to James, his only sibling.



(Right above: *At the time, the front line was to the east (to the right) of the Yser Canal flowing north of Ypres; many of the reserve facilities, staging areas – and Canada Farm Cemetery – were, and Canada Farm itself is, on the west bank. – photograph from 2013*)

Private Doran was reported as having been wounded while serving with 'B' Company with... *Shell wounds both legs fractured & Compound fracture of skull.* He is recorded as having *died of wounds* at the 87<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance later on that same day, September 23, 1917.



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

At home, it was the Reverend Doctor William Kitchen – attached to... *the Mission or Parish of St. Joseph's* in the East End of St. John's and newly created in 1907 - of the St. John's Presbytery who was requested to bear the news to his mother.

John Doran had enlisted at eighteen years of age.

*\*He had apparently died of injuries – officially paralysis – incurred while repairing the Star of the Sea premises in Torbay. His widow records the year of his death as 1893 but, given the documented age of his two sons – John, eighteen years at the time of enlistment in 1916, and James, twenty-two years old as of May, 1919 – this is surely incorrect. The only compatible entry in the Vital Statistics Death Register for the St. John's area appears to be the report of a John Doran – aged sixty-five, born in Outer Cove and interred in Torbay – dying from paralysis on February 28 of 1898.*

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

