



Captain Rupert Wilfred Bartlett, MC & Bar, Chevalier of the Order of the Crown of Italy, (Regimental Number 166), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

**Officers who were eventually promoted from the ranks may be identified from their Regimental Number. Other officers who were not from the ranks received the King's Commission, or in the case of those in the Newfoundland Regiment, an Imperial Commission, and were not considered as enlisted. These officers thus had no Regimental Number allotted to them.*

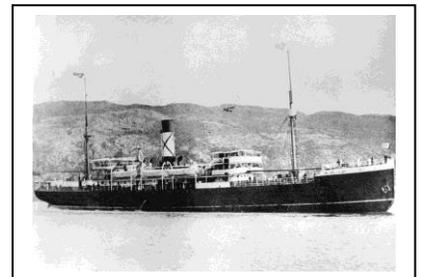
And since officers did not enlist, they were not then required to re-enlist 'for the duration', even though, at the beginning, as a private, each had volunteered his services for only a limited time – twelve months.

Prior to military service, Rupert Wilfred Bartlett had for a year been an engineering student at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick. He had also worked for three years with the *Reid Nfld. Co.* on railroad location work, had spent a year on Bell Island on wharf and construction work, and had spent six months sailing to Greenland on a relief ship attached to the expedition of the American explorer Perry.

Having presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on August 31 of 1914 – a second document records an unlikely August 3 - less than four weeks after the *Declaration of War*, he then enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar plus a ten-cent per diem *Field Allowance* - on September 2, a recruit of the First Draft.

Having then been promoted to the rank of lance corporal on September 21 – at the time he was to apply for an officer's commission on two occasions – he then attested, as did many of his fellow recruits, on or about October 1. The four weeks prior to this had been a time of training for the novice soldiers on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the East End of St. John's.

This first Newfoundland contingent – it was not yet a battalion - was to embark on October 3, in some cases only days after enlistment and/ or attestation. To become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees*, they had on that day boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John's Harbour.



(continued)

The ship would sail for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, via its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island.

(Preceding page: *The image of Florizel at anchor in the harbour at St. John's is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)



In the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915: firstly in southern England on the Salisbury Plain; then in Scotland at *Fort George* – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; and lastly at Edinburgh Castle – where, as recorded beforehand, it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles – and where ‘C’, ‘D’ and ‘E’ Companies arrived from Newfoundland during the Regiment’s period of service there.

(Right above: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

It was also to be at Edinburgh Castle that on April 21 Lance Corporal Bartlett would receive his second – corporal’s - stripe and – apparently contrary to information from other sources – was granted, at the second time of asking - his Imperial Commission and the accompanying appointment to the rank of second lieutenant*, just two days following.

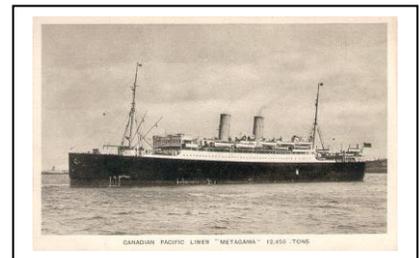


**They were three in number to receive promotion on that day: Lieutenants Bartlett, Patterson and Shortall.*

(Right above: *A copy of a post-card sent home by a Newfoundland private while on garrison duty in the Scottish capital: Edinburgh Castle is on the rise in the left background. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

Second Lieutenants Bartlett, Patterson and Shortall would take ship in Liverpool on the following day, April 23 – on this occasion to embark onto the trans-Atlantic passenger-liner *Metagama* - for the return journey to Newfoundland, although the journey was not direct; they were to disembark at Quebec City – or perhaps Montreal.

The journey appears to have taken them some thirteen days altogether – Quebec(?), Truro and Sydney documented as stops on his way home - before their arrival by train, ferry and train back in St. John’s where the three junior officers were then to be taken *on strength* by the 3rd Battalion of the Regiment on May 6.



The reason for this return voyage was to escort further drafts from Newfoundland to the United Kingdom.

(continued)

(Preceding page: *The image of 'Metagama' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. She was a new ship of the Canadian Pacific Line, her maiden voyage having taken place only a month before that of Second Lieutenant Bartlett. She would not be requisitioned during the Great War although she was often to carry Canadian military personnel on her scheduled services. Unlike her sister-ship 'Missanabie' – sunk in 1918 - 'Metagama' survived the conflict, only to become a victim of the Great Depression some ten years later. She was broken up in 1934.*)

Two months then passed before the two-hundred forty-two other ranks of 'F' Company with Second Lieutenant Bartlett as an officer of Number 6 Platoon - plus eighty-five naval recruits – boarded His Majesty's Ship *Calgarian* in St. John's Harbour, to sail for overseas service on June 19-20, 1915, directly (almost!) to Liverpool.



(Right above: *The image of 'Calgarian' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. A modern vessel recently built for service with the Allan Line, she had been requisitioned in September of 1914 to serve with the Royal Navy as an armed merchant cruiser. Having survived most of the conflict, including the Halifax explosion of December, 1917, she was torpedoed and sunk off the Irish coast on March 1, 1918.*)

Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the Atlantic crossing of about a week. Not only was *Calgarian* escorting three submarines, but she sailed by way of the Portuguese Azores and then the British possession of Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders even having had the time to cross the straits of the same name to spend a few hours in North Africa.



The vessel was eventually to reach the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool on July 9, the troops to disembark on that same day.

(Right above: *Gibraltar in pre-Great War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background. – from a vintage postcard*)

'F' Company and Second Lieutenant Bartlett thereupon joined forces with the Newfoundland contingent on July 10. At the time the parent unit was encamped in the vicinity of the Scottish town of Hawick, to the south-east of Edinburgh which it had left on May 11, at *Stobs Camp*.



(Right above: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915, and one month before 'F' Company's arrival – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

(continued)

'F' Company's arrival gave the Regiment the numbers needed to assume the role of a fighting battalion, and also provided the necessary fifty per cent reserve. According to Army regulations, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was now capable to leave on *active service*.

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' – these to form the 1st Battalion - were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot.

Meanwhile, the two junior Companies, the later-arrived 'E' and 'F', to be accompanied by Second Lieutenant Bartlett, were ordered posted to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion*.



(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India* – photograph from *Bain News Services* via *Wikipedia*)

(Right: *An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were quartered the 'other ranks', is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right.* – courtesy of the *Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

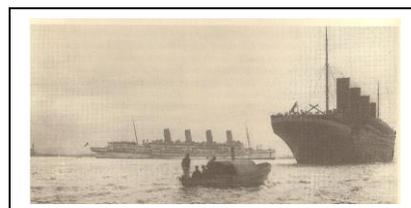


Following this summer of 1916, the once-Royal Borough of Ayr on Scotland's west coast was now to serve as the overseas base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment from where – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 - re-enforcement drafts from home were to be despatched to bolster the 1st Battalion's numbers, at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.



(Right: *The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower – it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo)

Two months were now yet to pass two months before Lieutenant Bartlett – promoted to the rank of lieutenant on October 16 - would depart from Scotland in command of the 1st Re-enforcement Draft of one-hundred officers and *other ranks*. It was to join the 1st Battalion which had been fighting at *Suvla Bay* on the Gallipoli Peninsula since September 20.



He and his charges boarded His Majesty's Transport *Olympic* – sister ship of *Britannic* and of the ill-starred *Titanic* – on November 14, to sail from the Royal Naval harbour of Devonport where he had disembarked from *Florizel* some thirteen months previously.

(Right: *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*)



When the Newfoundland Battalion landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* on that September night of 1915, they disembarked into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse. Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion would serve but, ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, would prove little more than a debacle:

Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course the casualties inflicted by an enemy which was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and those of the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.



(Right: *An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives*)

**Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

November 26 would see the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at Gallipoli; there was to be a freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm strike the *Suvla Bay* area and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival rather than the enemy was to be the priority.

There were to be many casualties on both sides, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, had been those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

This was the chaos into which Lieutenant Bartlett and his draft stepped on December 1.

* * * * *

On the night of December 19-20, the British abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel had been evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration; the 1st Battalion would be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Preceding page: Cape Helles 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)

The British and the Anzac forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at Gallipoli – were now to be only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Peninsula could be undertaken.

(Right: ‘W’ Beach at Cape Helles as it was only days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration)



This final operation would take place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion to furnish part of the British rear-guard on this second occasion also.

***Lieutenant Owen Steele of St. John’s, Newfoundland, is cited as having been the last soldier of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to step into the final small boat – with General Maude - to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.**



(Right above: ‘W’ Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in that January of 1916 and by the Newfoundlanders who were to be the last soldiers off the beach: Vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011)

Immediately after the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to the vicinity of Suez, a port at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.



***Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.**

(Right above: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)

After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and other ranks of the 1st Battalion were to board His Majesty’s Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage through the Suez Canal en route to France.



The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles, on March 22.

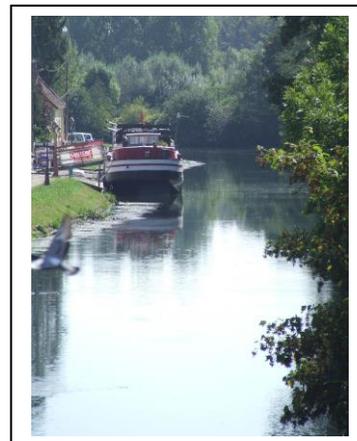
(Preceding page: *Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal as it was just prior to the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably travelled unused in a separate wagon.

Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure the long, dark march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they then marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* would become a part of their history.

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



On April 13, the 1st Battalion subsequently marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where it would be billeted, would receive re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front*, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit was to then be ordered to move further up for the first time into forward positions on April 22.

**It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment Battalion, were then the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*

Having then withdrawn, at the end of April after their first tour in the trenches, to the areas of Mailly-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing – this to include the construction of a light railway in the Louvencourt area - for the now-impending British campaign of that summer. It was to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, flowing sedately – as it still does today – through the region on its journey to the sea.



(Preceding page: A part of of the re-constructed trench system in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel, the wire these days to keep the tourists out of the trenches – photograph from 2007(?))



(Right: A second view of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?))

On the day of June 30, the eve of battle, Lieutenant Bartlett sent a letter of a financial nature to Captain Timewell at the *Pay & Record Office* in London. He finished it by saying: *The boys are on form and hope to give a good... (here he forgets to write a word)... of themselves.* Those boys, by that time, were on the march from Louvencourt towards the commune of Beaumont-Hamel.

If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered, they are those of the eight-hundred who went over the top in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later*.



(Right above: *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 view of Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?))

**Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion's casualties was to be incurred during the advance from the third line of British trenches to the first line from where the attack proper was to be made, and while struggling through British wire laid to protect the British positions from any German attack.*

There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds.*

It was to be the largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the butchery of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.



(Preceding page: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village.* – photographs from 2010 and 2015)

In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man’s-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.



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

While on the nominal roll of the Newfoundland Battalion on July 1, 1916, the first day of *the Somme*, Lieutenant Bartlett did not figure in the fighting at Beaumont-Hamel. He was most likely one of the reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three other ranks of the ten percent reserve – but *perhaps* performed other duties – which was held back at Louvencourt on the day, and which proceeded to the field of battle only later in the afternoon after the fighting had all but subsided.



(Right above: *Yet another image of the field between the communities of Beaumont and Hamel on which was fought the Newfoundlanders’ battle on the first day of First Somme.* – photograph from 2010(?))

**The well-known roll-call of July 2 of those who survived the battle unscathed was not officially recorded until two days later. The roll call of those who had been in the ten percent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three men held back for most of the day at Louvencourt was apparently also recorded only later. Thus the inscription ‘With Battalion 4/7/16’ on certain records.*

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it had been feared that a German counter-assault might well annihilate what had managed to survive of the British Expeditionary Force on *the Somme*.

The few remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion – and of the other depleted British units - thus remained in the trenches perhaps fearing the worst, and at night searching for the wounded and burying the dead. It was to be July 6 before the Newfoundlanders were to be relieved from the forward area and to be ordered withdrawn to Englebelmer.



It was then to be a further two days before the unit marched further again to the rear area and to billets in the village of Mailly-Maillet.

(continued)

(Preceding page: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John's East. – photograph from 2009*)

There on July 11, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven re-enforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – reported *to duty*. They were to be the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power having arrived, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1916, the 1st Battalion still numbered only... *11 officers and 260 rifles*...after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.

On July 27-28 of 1916, the 1st Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after further re-enforcement – moved northwards and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.

It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel.

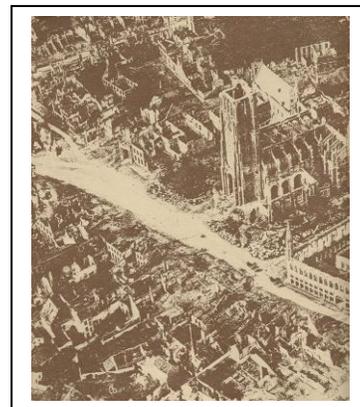
(Right: *The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)



The Salient – close to the front lines for almost the entire fifty-two month conflict - was to be relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there; yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.

Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the 1st Battalion would be ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

(Right: *An aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916: it is described as the 'Ville morte'. – from Illustration*)



Four days after that return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was once more ordered to the offensive; it was at a place called Gueudecourt, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel.

The encounter would prove to be another ill-conceived and costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *This is the ground over which the 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007*)

(Right: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of the Newfoundland Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916. – photograph from 2012*)

Lieutenant Bartlett was wounded* at Gueudecourt, on October 12, 1916, while serving with 'D' Company advancing on the left in the second wave of the attack. The wound, not too serious seemingly, was – depending on the source - to either an arm or a leg, and he was evacuated from the field.

(Right: *Transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and manpower, from a time likely later during the conflict – from a vintage post-card*)

**On October 23, the Colonial Secretary's office in St. John's replied to a letter of the 13th which was enquiring as to the credibility of a report of the apparent death of Lieutenant Bartlett. There seem to be no further details to the incident, except to add the obvious: that the report was untrue.*

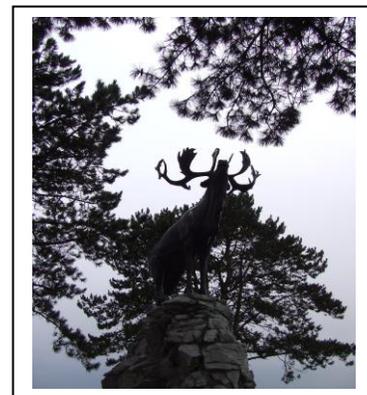
Two days later, on October 14, Lieutenant Bartlett was admitted for treatment into the 8th General Hospital in Rouen – where he had received preliminary care appears not to be recorded; on October 15th, the following day, he was reported as having been placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Asturias* in the port of Le Havre for the cross-Channel journey back to the United Kingdom.

(Right above: *The image of 'Asturias' in war-time hospital ship colours, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries. Torpedoed in 1917, she was beached to be used as an ammunition hulk. After the conflict she was transformed into a cruise ship: 'Arcadian'. She was eventually scrapped in 1933.*)

Once having arrived in England, on the next day, October 16, he was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth where he apparently remained until November 18. He was then transferred to the *Perkins Bull* Hospital for Convalescent Canadian Officers at Putney Heath on the outskirts of London.

Lieutenant Bartlett remained there until his release on January 12 of the New Year, 1917.

(continued)



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



(Right below: *In hospital uniform, a group of Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, here convalescing in the grounds at the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)*



Posted once more to Ayr – presumably after being granted the ten-day furlough customarily accorded military personnel upon release from hospital – Lieutenant Bartlett was assigned *light duty* for the following month after which he was once more to be deemed as being fit for *general service* and *service overseas*.

(Right: *The Newfoundland Plot in Ayr Cemetery wherein lie fourteen Newfoundlanders whom the Commonwealth War Graves Commission persist in referring to as Canadians – here and elsewhere – photograph from 2014(?)*)



He is reported as having returned to the Continent in March – the exact date of his travel is uncertain - of 1917, and to the Newfoundland Battalion, while the unit was stationed for two days at Vignacourt.

Lieutenant Bartlett reported *to duty* on the 30th of the same month, as one of a draft of five officers and thirty-two *other ranks* which was to join from the Base Depot at Rouen on that particular day.



(Right: *The small community of Vignacourt at the time of the Great War – by courtesy of the Australian War Memorial Archives)*

* * * * *

After the departure of Lieutenant Bartlett to hospital in mid-October of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was not to be directly involved in any further concerted infantry action in the immediate area of Gueudecourt although, on October 18, it had supplied two-hundred fifty men to act as stretcher-bearers in an attack undertaken by troops of two British regiments, the *Hampshires* and the *Worcestershires*, of the 88th Brigade.



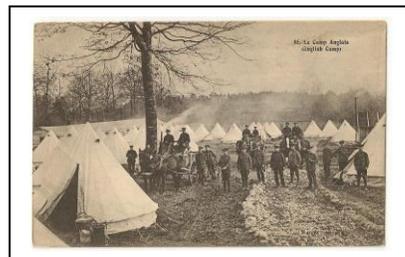
(continued)

(Preceding page: *Stretcher-bearers not only shared the dangers of the battle-field with their arms-bearing comrades, but they often spent a longer period of time exposed to those same perils. This photograph was likely taken during First Somme. – from Illustration*)

On October 30, the Newfoundland unit had eventually been retired to rear positions from the Gueudecourt area. By that time, it had been serving in front-line and support positions for three weeks less a day.

The Newfoundlanders were now to spend two weeks withdrawn to the area of Ville-sous-Corbie, re-enforcing and reorganizing. It was not to be until November 15 that the 1st Battalion had begun to wend its way back up to the front lines.

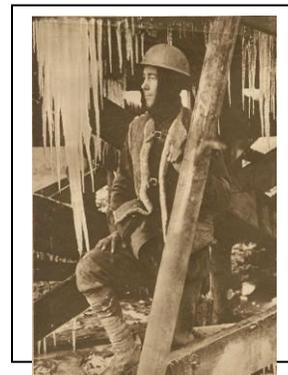
There it would continue its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period to be broken only by another several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period, encamped well behind the lines and in close proximity to the city of Amiens.



(Right: *A typical British Army Camp during rather inclement winter conditions somewhere on the Continent – from a vintage post-card*)

After that welcome six-week Christmas respite spent in *Corps Reserve* far to the rear, the Newfoundlanders were to *officially* return to *active service* on January 23, although they had apparently already returned to the trenches by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

Those casualties, however, had been only a few of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig casually referred to as *wastage*. The sole infantry activity *directly* involving the Newfoundland unit during that entire period – from Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in mid-April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and the beginning of March, an action which would bring this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.



(Right above: *A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers, their unit to be relieved by the Newfoundlanders on March 1, enjoys his cigarette in the cold and ice of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel during the winter of 1916-1917. – from Illustration*)

(Right: *The fighting during the period of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time. - photograph from 2009(?)*)



(continued)

After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March had been 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 were even to have the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



(Right: *The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, encamped at Meaulté – from *The War Illustrated**)

On March 29, the day prior to Lieutenant Bartlett's return to his unit, the 1st Battalion had begun to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, and for planned training exercises en route.

* * * * *

The first two days of training at Vignacourt completed – and Lieutenant Bartlett having reported *to duty* - on April 1 the move continued, still to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, the march to finish amid the rubble of the village of Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right: *The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War – from *Illustration**)

(Right below: *The Canadian National Memorial which has stood atop Vimy Ridge since 1936 – photograph from 2010*)

On April 9 the British Army was to launch an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was to be the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a major French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties this attack was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, its only positive episode to be the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday, 1917.



While the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

(Right: *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 of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)



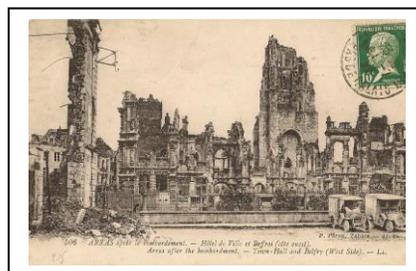
The 1st Battalion was to play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at the place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on

April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After *Beaumont-Hamel*, the ineptly-planned action at *Monchy-le-Preux* would prove to be the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties all told on April 14 alone*.

**It was also an action in which a DSO, an MC and eight MMs were won by a small group of nine personnel of the Battalion – the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) awarded to the unit's Commanding officer. An MM for the same action was also presented to a private from the Essex Regiment .*

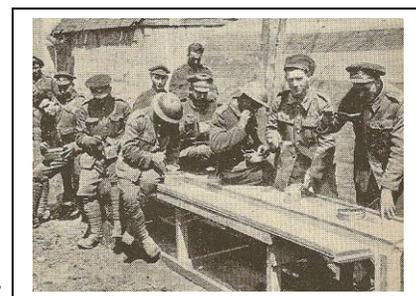
The few that now remained of the Newfoundland Battalion had continued to serve in the area of *Monchy-le-Preux*. The unit's casualty count had been high enough to warrant that it and the *Essex Regiment*, which had also incurred extremely heavy losses, be amalgamated into a composite battalion until such time as incoming re-enforcements would allow the two units' strengths to once more resemble those of bona fide battalions.

The final action in which the Newfoundland Battalion was to be involved during the five-week long *Battle of Arras* would be the engagement of April 23 at *Les Fosses Farm*. This was in fact an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5th, 3rd and 1st Armies. It was apparently not to be a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1st Battalion, several of the adjacent units reporting having been driven back by German counter-attacks, actions accompanied by heavy losses.



Late on that same evening the Newfoundlanders had retired to the relative calm of *Arras*.

(Right above: *The City Hall of Arras and its clock-tower in 1919 after some four years of bombardment by German artillery – from a vintage post-card*)



(Right above: *Newfoundland troops just after the time of Monchy-le-Preux – from The War Illustrated*)

Lieutenant Bartlett was not, however, to fight on April 14 at *Monchy-le-Preux*. He, along with two fellow officers and seven other ranks, had been seconded a week before to join a *Special Company* at VI Corps Depot. He re-joined the 1st Battalion two days after the confrontation, on April 16, and from then on was actively involved in the fighting of the days that followed, particularly during the affair at *Les Fosses Farm* on April 23.



(Right above: *Windmill Cemetery stands about mid-way between Monchy-le-Preux – about three hundred metres behind the photographer – and Les Fosses Farm – some three hundred metres to the right along the main road from Cambrai to Arras. Four known and other unidentified Newfoundland soldiers lie within its bounds. – photograph from 2007*)

His actions on April 23, 1917, at *Les Fosses Farm, Monchy-le-Preux*, earned for Lieutenant Bartlett the Military Cross...*‘for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He took command of the Company and occupied the forming-up trench under heavy fire. When the Division on his right had been repulsed he organized a party and repulsed a counter-attack. He set a fine example throughout.’* – London Gazette, June 18th, 1917



(Right: *The Military Cross with its silver Bar - in effect a second MC - attached to the ribbon.*)

That month of May was to be a period when the Newfoundlanders would be moved hither and thither on the *Arras Front*, marching into and out of the trenches. While there was to be the ever-present artillery-fire, concerted infantry activity, particularly after May 15 – the end of the *Battle of Arras* – and apart from the marching, was limited.

On May 5, there had been a further promotion for Lieutenant Bartlett at a time when he may well have been on leave to the United Kingdom – according to telegrams he sent from there. He would now add a third *pip* to his epaulettes, having been now appointed to the rank of captain.



(Right: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville – not Bonneville - in early May, perhaps the 7th, of 1917 – from The War Illustrated*)

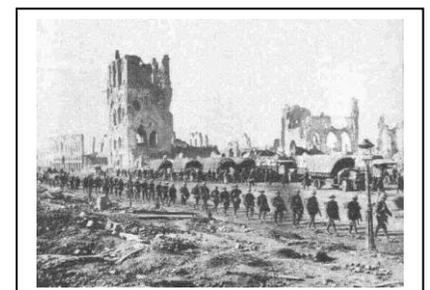
At the outset of June, the Newfoundland Battalion retired from the line to Bonneville, there to spend its time re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.

The Newfoundlanders had then soon once again been moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the vicinity of Ypres and...*the Salient*, their first posting to be to the banks of the *Yser Canal* just to the north of the city.



(Right: *The Yser Canal at a point in the northern outskirts of Ypres almost a century after the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, manned its eastern bank: East is to the right – photograph from 2014*)

This low-lying area, Belgian *Flanders*, the only part of the country unoccupied by German forces, had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917.



(Right: *Troops arriving from the railway station in single file, march past the vestiges of the historic Cloth Hall and through the rubble of the medieval city centre of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer or early autumn of 1917. – from Illustration*)

Officially designated as the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign was to come to be better known to history simply as *Passchendaele*, having adopted that name from a small village on a not-very high ridge to the north-east that later was to be cited as having been – *ostensibly* - one of the British Army's objectives.



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

(Right: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1916, after two years of war – from Illustration*)



The 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to remain in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army – as were to be by then the Australians, the New Zealanders and the Canadians – all of whose troops had floundered their way across the sodden and shell-torn countryside of Flanders.

Notably, the Newfoundland Battalion at *Passchendaele* was to fight in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16; and at the *Broembeek* (see both immediately below) on October 9. At the former it had incurred nine *killed in action*, ninety-three *wounded*, and one *missing in action*; at the *Broembeek* the cost would be higher: forty-eight *killed or died of wounds*, one-hundred thirty-two *wounded* and fifteen *missing in action*.



(Right above: *This is the area of the Steenbeek – the stream runs close to the line of trees - and is therefore near to where the Newfoundland Battalion fought the engagement of August 16, 1917. It is some eight kilometres distant from a village called Passchendaele. – photograph from 2010*)

By the time of the action at the *Steenbeek*, Captain Bartlett had been appointed back on April 15 - after the losses at Monchy-le-Preux – to be Commanding Officer of 'D' Company. On that August 16, his unit a part of the second wave of the attack and on the left flank, 'D' Company was to pass through 'C' Company which had by then taken the Battalion's first objective, and was to continue on to the second and final one. In doing so it had abetted in the capture of two enemy machine-guns and in the consolidation of the position.

Captain Bartlett survived the action unscathed.

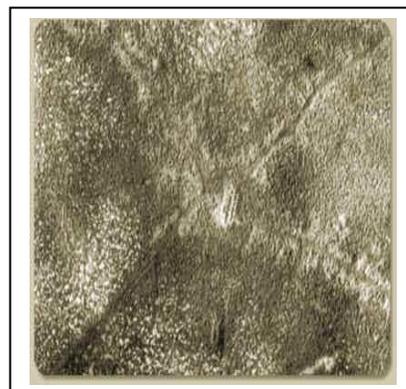
It was after his contribution at the *Steenbeek* that Captain Bartlett added the Bar to his Military Cross ...'for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty on August 16th, 1917 at the Steenbeek.

(continued)

Though suffering from the effects of gas he led his company to their objective in the attack. Though the ground appeared quite impassable he got his company forward and attacked a strong point, personally leading the bombing attack, put the garrison out of action and captured a machine gun. He then selected a good position beyond the strong point and carried out a rapid piece of consolidation. He showed great courage, leadership and determination. – London Gazette, September 26th, 1917, & October 26th, 1917

There appears to be no record among his papers as to whether or not Captain Bartlett was present at the *Broembeek* on October 9 or, if so, in what capacity.

(Right: *The once-village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1917, after the battle of that name – from Illustration*)



It was to be only two days after this last-mentioned altercation that the 1st Battalion would march to the railway station at Elverdinghe from there to be transported to *Swindon Camp* in the area of Proven. Having remained there for five days to be both re-enforced and bombed, on the morning of October 17 the unit was once more to board a train.

By ten-thirty that same evening, the Battalion had arrived back in France and just to the west of the city of Arras. The unit would now march the final few kilometres to its billets in the community of Berles-au-Bois.

A telegram sent to Newfoundland some three weeks later from the United Kingdom by Captain Bartlett and dated November 10, announces that he is currently...*over on fortnight's leave*. This and the fact that the wire was sent from the *Pay & Record Office* at 58, Victoria Street is evidence that this two-week furlough was to be at least partially spent in or near to London.



(Right above: *London – in fact the City of Westminster – in the area of Marble Arch, in or about the year 1913, just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

The Newfoundlanders were still there, at Berles-au-Bois, four weeks and two days after having left Belgium and *Passchendaele* behind them when, on November 17 the Battalion was once again to travel by train, on this occasion in a south-easterly direction to the town of Peronne. From there it would begin to move further eastward on foot towards the theatre of the battle now imminent.

On November 19, while on the move once more, the unit was issued as it went with... *war stores, rations and equipment*. For much of that night it was to march to the assembly areas from where, at twenty minutes past six on that morning of November 20 – *Zero Hour* – the Newfoundland unit, not being in the first wave of the attack, moved up into its forming-up area.

(continued)

From those forward position, some hours later, at ten minutes past ten, bugles blowing, the 1st Battalion advanced to the fray.

This new offensive – apparently initially conceived to be no more than a large-scale raid - 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 to be directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle was to begin well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered, there were no troops available to exploit what was, admittedly, a hoped-for yet unexpected success, and by the close of the battle, the Germans had counter-attacked and the British had relinquished as much – more in places - territory as they had originally gained.



The 1st Battalion was again dealt with severely, in the vicinity of Marcoing, Masnières - where a Caribou stands today - and the Canal St-Quentin which flows through both places: of the total of five-hundred fifty-three officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of only the second day*.



(Right above: *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*)

(Right above: *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 the 1st Battalion on November 20; however, whether its capture was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012*)

**At five-hundred fifty-three all ranks – not counting the aforementioned ten per cent reserve - the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment even at the outset of the operation was operating at just over fifty per cent of establishment strength: not that it would have been any consolation had it been known, but a goodly number of battalions in all the British and Dominion forces – with perhaps the exception of the Canadians - were encountering the same problem.*



(Right above: *A number of graves of soldiers from the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in Marcoing Military Cemetery. Here, as is almost always the case elsewhere, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, has identified them as being Canadian. – photograph from 2010*)

(continued)

By November 30 the Germans had recovered from their surprise and they were now beginning to reclaim the initiative. The 1st Battalion War Diary entry for that day reads partially as follows:

At 7 a.m. heavy shelling with H.E. (High Explosive) & gas of MARCOING village commenced.

At 10 a.m. received orders to move out near MARCOING COPSE as support of the 86th Bde. flank. Moved off by 11 a.m. Coys ordered to rendezvous at west end of Marcoing Copse. On getting there enemy found to be in neighbourhood so everyone joined in the attack & drove the enemy back. By evening the remnants of the Bn. were lining the sunken road running from Marcoing to RUE-VERTES towards its eastern end. Orders were then received to take up position near there &...the Essex regt. and dig in. At night our strength was about 8 officers & 200 O.Rs...

The son of William James Bartlett, sea captain, and of Mary Bartlett (née *Leamon*)* of Brigus, he was also brother to ten siblings: Robert-Abram, William-Stewart, Winifred-Grenfell, Lewis-Goodison, Emma-Gertrude, Blanche-Eleanor, Mary-Elizabeth-Wilmott, Hilda-Northway, William-Leamon-Norman and Beatrice-Stentafor.

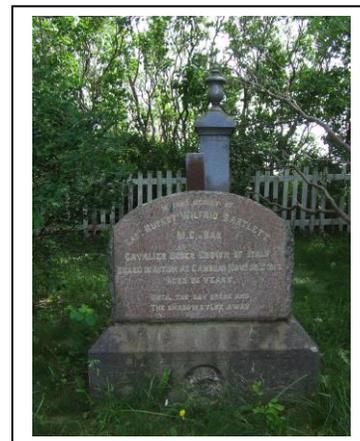
**The couple married at Brigus on December 9, 1874.*

Captain Bartlett was reported as having been *killed in action*, while serving with his 'D' Company, while resisting a German counter-attack on November 30, 1917, during the latter stages of the *Battle of Cambrai*.

Captain Bartlett - apparently 'Pat' or 'Paddy' to those who knew him - died on the road between Masnières and Marcoing. The burial report, submitted by the Reverend Thomas Nangle, Chaplain of the Forces to the 1st Battalion, recorded his interment in Marcoing Copse Cemetery. His remains were later removed to where they repose today.

Rupert Wilfred Bartlett had enlisted at the age of twenty-three years: date of birth at Brigus, Newfoundland, November 15, 1891 (from *Ancestry.ca*).

(Right: *The memorial to Captain Rupert Wilfred Bartlett which stands in the small family cemetery in the community of Brigus – photograph from 2011*)



The following is from a memo found among Captain Bartlett's archival papers:

Regarding the death of Capt. Bartlett MC... 2442 O'Neill said that he was killed by a sniper's bullet through the forehead outside the village of Marcoing. His last words were "Come on Caribous" and he died instantaneously. 2625 pte R. Sparkes also may have information.

(The above photograph of Private Bartlett is from the Provincial Archives.)



The announcement of the Italian decoration was not made until November 15, 1918, almost a year after Captain Bartlett's death. The citation for the...'*Italian Knight of the Order of the Crown of Italy*' is apparently identical to the one pertaining to the Bar to his Military Cross.



(Right: Decoration of a *Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Corona d'Italia, Third Class*)

Captain Rupert Wilfred Bartlett MC & Bar, & *Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Corona d'Italia, Third Class*, was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – February 11, 2023.