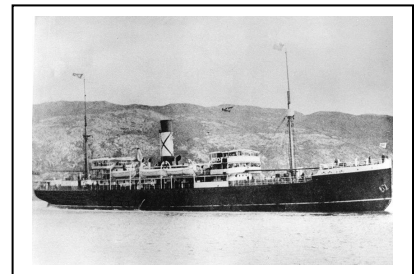


Sergeant James Alexander Bendell (Regimental Number 207), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a *sailor* earning twenty-five dollars a month, James Alexander Bendell presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital City of Newfoundland, on August 29 of 1914, not quite four weeks after the *Declaration of War*. The examination having pronounced him as...*fit for foreign service*...he then enlisted six days later – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (this included a ten-cent Field Allowance) - on September 4. He was a recruit of the First Draft.

It was to be a four-week wait – although training was to be ongoing - before Private Bendell would attest on October 1 and then a further two days until he embarked on October 3 with the others of the *First Five Hundred* onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John's Harbour.



The ship sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island where she was to join the convoy transporting the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

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

In the United Kingdom Private Bendell trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh Castle – where it provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.



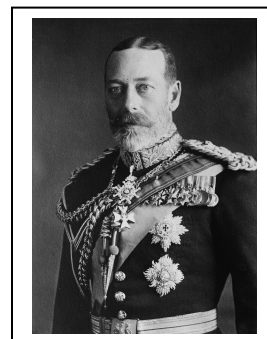
(Right above: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011)*



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', were then sent south 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', were sent to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2<sup>nd</sup> (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*)

*\*On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.*

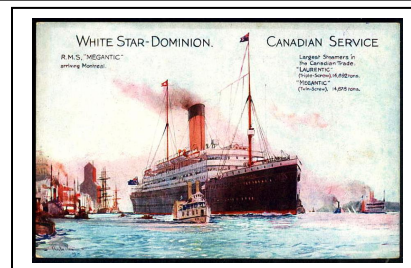
It had then been during that period spent at Aldershot that Private Bendell of 'A' Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 14, to re-enlist *for the duration of the war\**. Four days afterwards, on August 18, he received a first promotion, to the rank of lance corporal.

*\*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.*



(Right above: *Some of the men of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915* – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)

(Right: *The image of Megantic, in peace-time a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

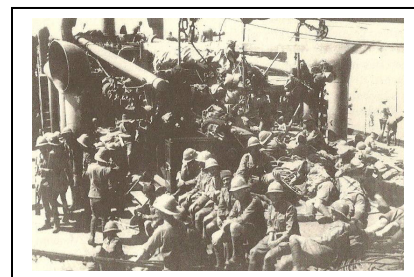


On August 20, 1915, Lance Corporal Bendell and his comrades-in-arms embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he disembarked with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Right: *Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph taken in 2011)*



(Right below: *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)*



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

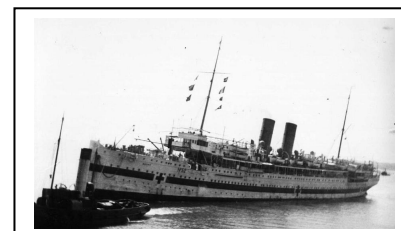
*\*Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

(Right: *A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Lance Corporal Bendell was to serve in the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*



\* \* \* \* \*

One of the all-too many to fall victim to disease was Lance Corporal Bendell. On October 31, 1915, he was evacuated onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Lanfranc* for transport to Egypt, having been diagnosed as *dangerously ill* with enteric. Upon his arrival there on November 6 he was admitted into the 17<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in Alexandria, to be deemed *out of danger* on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of that month. Five weeks later, on December 27, he was embarked on board HM Hospital Ship *Egypt* en route from Egypt back to the United Kingdom.



(Right above: *The image of HMHS Egypt in war-time garb and under tow is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)*

(Right: *One of the principal thoroughfares of the city of Alexandria at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card)*



Upon arrival in England Lance Corporal Bendell was transported to the 5<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, Portsmouth, where he was admitted on January 11 of 1916. He was to spend fifty-eight days there, until March 6.

Those having suffered from the ravages of enteric normally required a longer time for recovery and convalescence than patients treated for other conditions; thus, in lieu of the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital, Lance Corporal Bendell was granted some six weeks during which to fully recuperate. Having been discharged *to duty* on March 6, 1916, he was not to report *to duty* to 'E' Company at the Regimental Depot at Ayr on the west coast of Scotland until April 25 (see \* below).

*\*Having been at first granted the conventional sick furlough from March 6 until and including March 15, he was then granted an extension from the second date until April 24. However, there appear to be no records among his papers of where he was to spend these several weeks.*

While at stationed at Ayr, in July of that summer Lance Corporal Bendell was tested in the 4<sup>th</sup> Scottish General Hospital in the city of Glasgow - the results negative - for any further traces of enteric.

And also while at Ayr, but in a different vein, there was other good news: he received promotion on two occasions: to the rank of corporal on July 31, 1916, and to that of *acting* sergeant on January 11 of the New Year, 1917.

The Regimental Depot had been established during the late summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland 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 from home were to be despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(Right above: *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*)

Two days after the confirmation of his rank as sergeant on March 23, 1917, Sergeant Bendell, as a senior non-commissioned officer of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Re-enforcement Draft, embarked in the south-coast English port-city of Southampton, on March 25, en route to the principal British Expeditionary Force Base Depot at Rouen, Normandy, to which the contingent reported on the 26<sup>th</sup>. There the Newfoundlanders were now to spend time in final training and organizing\* before proceeding to their rendezvous with the parent 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

*\*Apparently the standard length of time for this final training was 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 as the Bull Rings.*

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 to be the most expensive operation of the War for the British, its only positive episode having been the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday.



While the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French offensive of *Le Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further catastrophe.

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

Sergeant Bendell is recorded as having re-joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on April 13, 1917, the eve of the action at Monchy-le-Preux (see further below). The Regimental Diary, however, records no draft arriving on that date or the preceding ones, not surprisingly perhaps since the parent Newfoundland unit had been on the march for twelve days. Any arrivals may, of course, have been late in the evening as it is true that two officers and fourteen *other ranks* are recorded as having joined on the 14<sup>th</sup>, the day of the attack – maybe Sergeant Bendell was one of this number. This draft was to play no role in the fighting of the day, but its services would have undoubtedly been called on soon afterwards.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the meantime the Newfoundland Battalion had remained at *Suvla Bay* for some further five weeks before the operation to evacuate the area was put into place.

On the night of December 19-20, the British had 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 was to be evacuated to the nearby island of Imbros, and some to Lemnos, further away, but in neither case would the respite be of a long duration; the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been transferred only two days later to re-enforce the failure at *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right above: *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 in the picture. – photograph from 2011*)

The British and the Anzac forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps were also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had now been only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Peninsula would be undertaken. This operation had taken place on the night of January 8-9, and the Newfoundland Battalion was to provide some of the rear-guard for this second withdrawal as well\*.



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

*\*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 to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.*



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

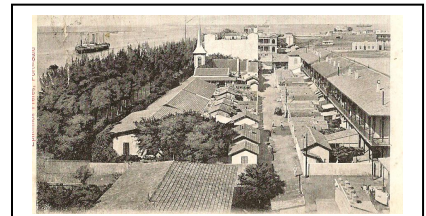
(Right: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship *Cornwallis*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



After the British evacuation of the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been sent to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, having arrived there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month. The Newfoundlanders were thence to be immediately transferred southward to Suez, one of the ports at the southern end of the canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders as, at the time, the subsequent destination of the Battalion’s 29<sup>th</sup> Division had not yet been decided\*.

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

(Right: Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card)



On March 14, the Newfoundlanders had taken ship through Port Tewfiq, also at the southern end of the *Suez Canal*, for the French port of Marseilles, and had disembarked there on March 22, en route to the *Western Front*.

(Right: British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage



Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train would arrive at 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 travelled unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the local station at two in the morning, the Newfoundlanders still were to have a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

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

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 had marched on their way from the station. But some three months later, *the Somme* would have become a part of their history.

On April 13, the Newfoundland Battalion paraded into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy. There its personnel would be billeted, would receive reinforcements and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the trenches of the *Western Front*.

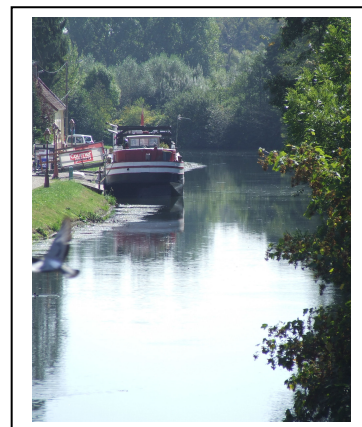
For the remainder of the spring of 1916, the Newfoundlanders were to be preparing for the British campaign of that upcoming summer, the battles to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river flowing through the region, and over which the parent unit of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had marched only some few weeks previously at Pont-Rémy, *the Somme*.

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

If there is one name and one 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\*.

*\*Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion's casualties was sustained while advancing 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.*

(Right: *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: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village (see below). – photographs from 2010 & 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.*



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

It would prove to be the biggest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps worse, it was to continue for the next four and a half months.

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

(Right above: *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 – had reported *to duty*. They had been 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 14<sup>th</sup> of July, 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion still numbered only...*11 officers and 260 rifles*...after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.

(continued)



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

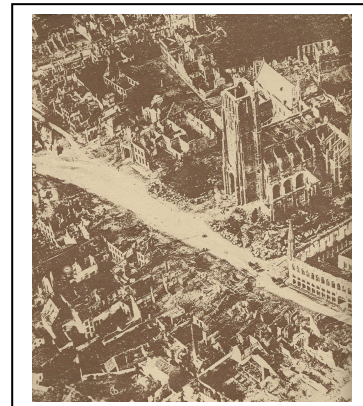
It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of *Beaumont-Hamel*.

(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*)



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

*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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

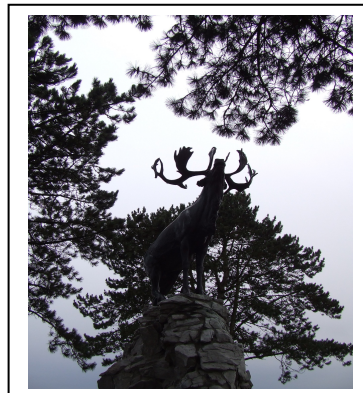
Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had again been ordered to the offensive; it was at a place called *Gueudecourt*, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of *Beaumont-Hamel*.



The encounter had proved to be another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

(Right above: *This is the ground over which the 1<sup>st</sup> 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*)

After *Gueudecourt*, the Newfoundland Battalion was to 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 the several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period. It was a time during which the Regimental personnel was to be encamped well behind the lines and in close proximity to the city of *Amiens*.



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

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

After that welcome six-week Christmas respite spent in *Corps Reserve* well 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.

The only infantry activity directly involving the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion during that entire period – from the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sully-Saillisel at the end of February and 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: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sully-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(?)*)

After Sully-Saillisel the month of March was to be a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they had 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 had 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.

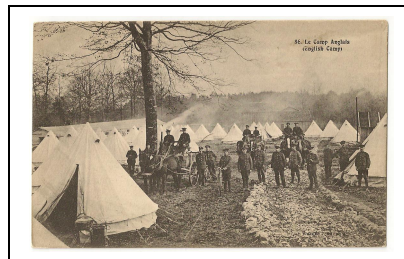
(Right above: *The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion encamped at Meaulté – from The War Illustrated*)

On March 29, the 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. The march was to finish amid the rubble of a village called Monchy-le-Preux.

(Right above: *The remnants of the Grande Place of the city of Arras in early 1916 after some eighteen months of bombardment – from Illustration*)

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

(continued)



On April 9 the British Army had launched 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 having been the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday, 1917.

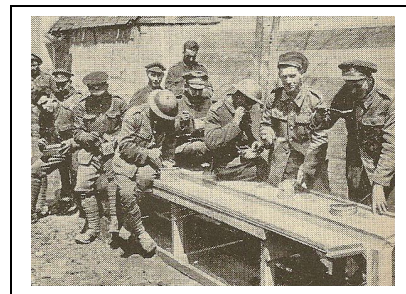
While the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

The 1<sup>st</sup> 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 .*

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



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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

On May 23, one month to the day after the Newfoundlanders' final contribution to the *Battle of Arras*, and a day on which the Battalion was serving in support positions not far distant from Arras, Sergeant Bendell was once more hospitalized.

From the 88<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance where he was admitted suffering from PUO (*Pain of Unknown Origin*), he was forwarded on the same day to the 8<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Agnez-les-Duisans; two days later again, on May 25, he was sent far afield to the 1<sup>st</sup> Stationary Hospital at Rouen.

The diagnosis was to be the unfortunate one of his venereal problems having returned.

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

(Right below: A British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and whenever the necessity were to arise – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War. Other such medical establishments were often of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card)

Some two months were then to pass before Sergeant Bendell was eventually discharged from hospital to return to duty at the Base Depot at Rouen on July 19 where he was now to spend a further month awaiting orders.

Two detachments of newcomers are recorded by the Regimental War Diarist as arriving from Rouen at *Penton Camp* – in the proximity of Poperinghe, Belgium – on August 28 of that 1917, Sergeant Bendell being one of the total of one-hundred sixty-four *other ranks* accompanied by two officers that was to report to duty with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on that day.

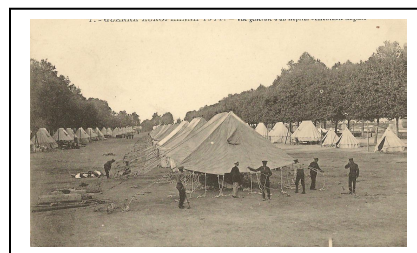
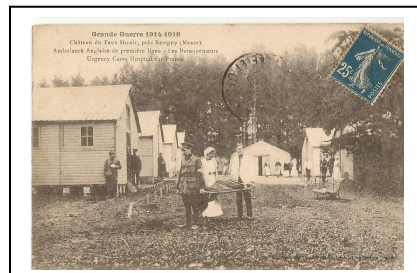
In fact, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had just withdrawn from the area of the front lines as the British Army was about to take a month’s respite in order to re-enforce and to re-organize before continuing a battle which had once again not lived up to the expectations of the British High Command. After a four-week period of fine weather, on September 23 the Newfoundlanders began their return to the fighting. On the day that the *3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres*, soon to become known simply as *Passchendaele*, officially recommenced, the rains, as if on cue, returned.

\* \* \* \* \*

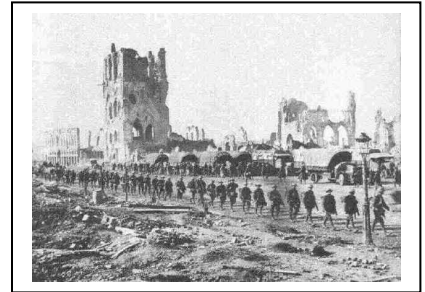
At the beginning of June, after Sergeant Bendell’s departure for further medical attention, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had retired from the forward area to the vicinity of the community of Bonneville where it was to spend its time re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, of the autumn as well.

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

(continued)



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 the banks of the *Yser Canal* just north of the city.



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 above: *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.

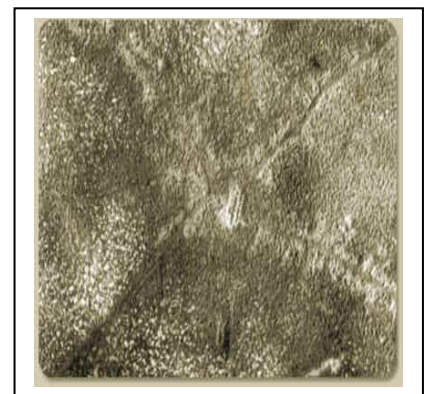


(Right above: *An unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

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



The 1<sup>st</sup> 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 which 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* 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 had been higher: forty-eight *killed or died of wounds*, one-hundred thirty-two *wounded* and fifteen *missing in action*.

Sergeant Bendell was certainly not present at the former: but he had returned *to duty* by the time of the latter.

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

The son of William Norman Bendell (former engineer from Scotland, deceased January 5, 1911) and of Sophia Bendell\* (also née *Bendell*) of 235, Water Street West in St. John's – he was also brother to Margaret-Louisa (with whom his mother later resided) – and to whom as of October 10, 1914, he had allotted a daily seventy cents from his pay - to Emma-Emmeline, to Lilah(sic)-Sophia, to Paul-Carl, to George-Leonard-Hall, Edwin-Norman, John-Herman, Fred, Edward, William, Wilfred-B. and to Rupert-James.



*\*The family name on both sides at times found as Bendle, the couple married on March 5 of 1878. Sophia Bendell gave her later address as 'the Bungalow, Bowring Park'.*

Sergeant Bendell was reported as having been *killed in action* on October 9, 1917, while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting at the *Broembeek*.

James Alexander Bendell had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, March 16, 1896 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



*At the news of his death, his family sent a letter to request that his belongings be distributed among the men of the Battalion.*

(Right above: *An innocuous-looking stream, the Broembeek was to burst its banks in the autumn of 1917, thus transforming the surrounding area into a quagmire. – photograph from 2010*)

*(The photograph of Private Bendell is from Provincial Archives.)*

Sergeant James Alexander Bendell was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 13, 2023.