



Lance Corporal Thomas Carter (Regimental Number 1031) is interred in Earlsfield (Wandsworth) Cemetery – Grave reference: Nfld. 773.

His occupation previous to military service recorded as being that of a *labourer* earning a monthly thirty dollars, Thomas Carter enlisted at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland where he was engaged at the private soldier's rate of a single dollar per diem plus a daily ten-cent *Field Allowance* - on January 20 of 1915.

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Contrary to the practice of the day he apparently had not been examined medically prior to enlistment, but was only to do so more than a week afterwards, on the 28th day of that month and likely at the same *CLB Armoury*. It was an exercise which would pronounce him to be...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

And now, whereas attestation for others had come about on the day of enlistment, Thomas Carter was now to await a further two weeks plus two days, until February 13, before *that* final formality would come to pass.

For Private Carter, Number 1031, there was now to be yet another, and final, waiting period of five weeks before he would be summoned to...*overseas service*. How he occupied himself during that time is not recorded among his papers; he may, of course, have temporarily returned to work, and possibly to home – to Stephenville Crossing, on the other side of the island but which the trans-Island train served - but this is only speculation.



(Right above: *The image of the Bowring Brothers' vessel 'Stephano', sister-ship of 'Florizel', as she passes through 'the Narrows' of St. John's Harbour is from the Provincial Archives.*)

Unlike the two previous contingents to have departed Newfoundland (see below) for...*overseas service*, Private Carter's 'D' Company was not to sail directly to the United Kingdom. On March 20, it embarked onto the Bowring-Brothers' vessel *Stephano* for the short voyage to Halifax, capital city of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, where it was thereupon to board a second vessel, the newly-launched *Orduña* for the trans-Atlantic crossing*.



(Right above: *The image of Orduña is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. The vessel was not to be requisitioned during the Great War but would be used by the Cunard Company to operate on its commercial service between Liverpool and New York.*)

Having then sailed from Nova Scotia on March 22 for Liverpool, Private Carter and his draft landed there eight days later, on the 30th. Once disembarked in Liverpool, the two-hundred fifty men and officers of 'D' Company were thereupon transported on the same date by train directly to Edinburgh, the Scottish capital, to join the Newfoundland Regiment's 'A', 'B' and 'C' Companies.

These units were by this time stationed at the historic Castle, 'A' and 'B' having recently been posted from Fort George and 'C' having arrived directly from home (see further below). After 'D' Company's arrival at the end of that month of March, the Newfoundlanders were now to remain at Edinburgh for the following six weeks.



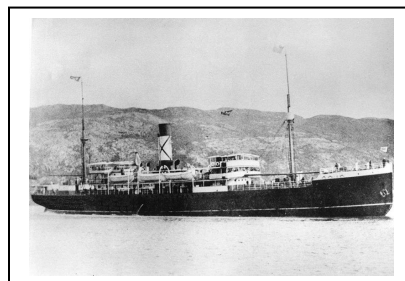
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(Preceding page: *From its vantage point on Castle Hill, the venerable fortress overlooks the city of Edinburgh where in 1915 the Newfoundlanders were to provide the first garrison to be drawn from outside the British Isles. – photograph from 2011)*

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Five to six months before that time, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of some five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's for the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits – these to become 'A' and 'B' Companies - during which time the authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

This first Newfoundland contingent was to embark on October 3, in some cases only days after a recruit's enlistment and/ or attestation. To become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees*, on that day they had boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John's Harbour.



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

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

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



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.

Only days after 'A' and 'B' Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 'C' Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent* - would arrive directly from Newfoundland.

****This contingent, while a part of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.***

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As seen in a previous paragraph, for the month of April and the first days of May of 1915, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies, now united, were to furnish the garrison – the first troops from outside the British Isles to do so - of the guardian of Scotland's capital city. Then,

during the first week of May, 'E' Company was to report there...*to duty*...from home. Four days later again, on May 11, the Newfoundland contingent was ordered elsewhere.

On that day, three weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundland unit was dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

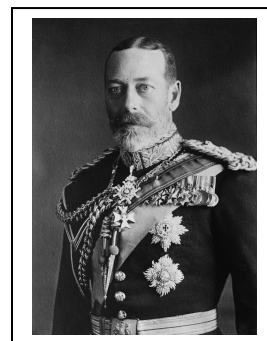
It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent would eventually receive the re-enforcements from home – 'F' Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength*. The now-formed 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered available to be sent on '*active service*'.

(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches past on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



**This was approximately fifteen hundred, sufficient to furnish two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', 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. This force, now the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.



Meanwhile the two junior Companies, 'E' – last arrived at Edinburgh - and the aforementioned 'F', were ordered transferred to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

(Right above: *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 – the photograph is from Bain News Services via the Wikipedia web-site.*)

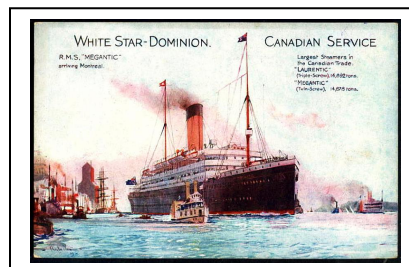
It was while the Newfoundland Battalion was in training during those weeks at Aldershot, on August 15 that Private Carter would be prevailed upon to enlist for the duration of the conflict.

**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.*



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(Preceding page : *Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, prior to its departure to active service on the Gallipoli Peninsula – from The Fighting Newfoundlander by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)*



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

On August 20, 1915, Private Carter and his Newfoundland unit 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. There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1st Battalion was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right above: *Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1st 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: *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)*



(Right: *A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla Bay, and where the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to serve during the autumn of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*



When the Newfoundlanders landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* on that September night of 1915 they were to disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, was proving to be little more than a debacle:



Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course 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 those of the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

(Preceding page: *No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives*)

(Right below: *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 of 1915 would see perhaps 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, were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.



During the days that followed, the British positions at *Suvla Bay* were to become yet more and more untenable and thus on the night of December 19-20, the area was abandoned – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard.

(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 of the picture. – photograph from 2011*)

Some of the Battalion personnel were to be 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 Newfoundland Battalion would be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



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

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

This final operation took 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 to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.*



(Right: 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in 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)

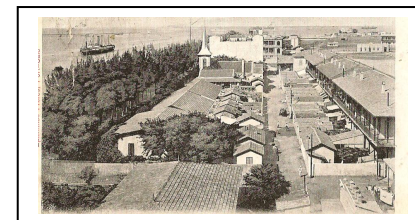
Immediately after the British evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, to arrive there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders would then on the morrow be transferred southward to the vicinity 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 was 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 boarded His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage through the *Suez Canal* en route to France.



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

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

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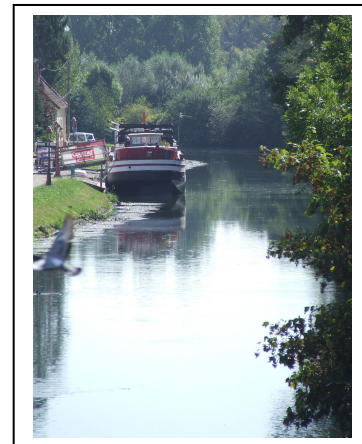
(Right: *British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage post-card*)



Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the 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* was to have 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 then 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.*

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

Having then been withdrawn at the end of that April to the areas of Maily-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing for the upcoming British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, that flowed – and still does so today – through the region.



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.*



(Right: *Wounded at the Somme being transported in hand-carts from the forward area for further medical attention – from Le Miroir*)

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

(Right above: *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.*



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

Private Carter was one of the all-too many wounded at Beaumont-Hamel during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*, July 1, 1916. On the following day, July 2, he was admitted into the St. John Ambulance Brigade Hospital in the coastal town of Étapes, suffering from gun-shot injuries to his arm.

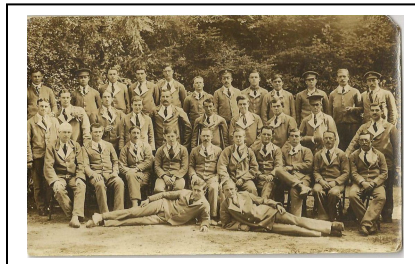


Three days later, on the 5th day of that month, he was evacuated on an un-named hospital ship across the English Channel from France and back to the United Kingdom whereupon he was to be transported to the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth, being admitted there on the 6th.

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



(Right below: *A party of Newfoundland patients dressed in hospital uniform but otherwise unfortunately unidentified, is seen here convalescing in the grounds of the 3rd London General Hospital at Wandsworth – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo.*)



Admitted on August 10 into the Lammus Auxiliary Hospital Convalescent Home, Esher - a subsidiary of the 3rd LGH - Private Carter would remain there until he was discharged on the 21st day of the same month. His treatment and convalescence had lasted for a total of forty-seven days.

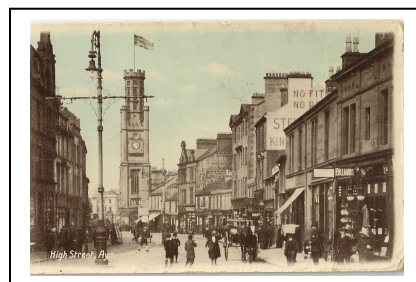
Private Carter then was granted the customary ten-day furlough – allowed to military personnel released from hospital - from that last-mentioned date, August 21, until the penultimate day of August when he travelled to the Regimental Depot at Ayr.

His posting started there on the following day...*fit for Light Duty Class “B” likely to be fit for overseas service within 3 months.*

At the end of the summer of 1915, the once-Royal Borough of Ayr on Scotland’s west coast was to begin 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*.



(Preceding page: *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.* – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)



(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.

Those months spent in Scotland also provided the opportunity for Private Carter to have some necessary dental work undertaken. No further details appear among his papers: all that is documented is the date November 11, the day on which the dentistry was completed.

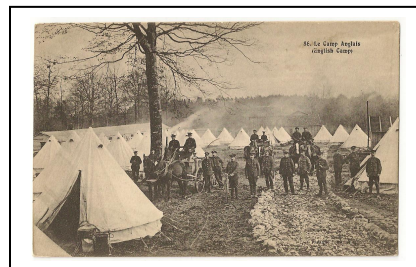
On December 12, the 15th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Carter among that number - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the next day, the 13th, it disembarked at Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot to which the contingent proceeded for several days of final training and organization* before leaving to seek out the parent unit.



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

**Apparently the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

On December 25, Christmas Day, of 1915, a detachment of fifty...*mostly returned wounded...*from Rouen reported...to duty...with the Newfoundland Battalion while the Newfoundlanders were in *Corps Reserve* for a period of about six weeks. Apparently Private Carter was one of that number. The Regimental War Diary does not record whether they arrived in time on that day to partake of that year's Christmas dinner and washed down...*with real ale.*



(Right above: *A British military camp, in not particularly clement conditions, somewhere on the Continent during a winter-time period of the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

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During the time of Private Hearn's absence for medical attention, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had remained in the area of...*the Somme*. The first battle of that name had officially ended in mid-November...but not the fighting. And of course, in the days and weeks which were to follow that cataclysmic July 1, things had been hectic.

After the events of the morning of the first day of *First Somme*, 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 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 establishment 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 above: *The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – 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.

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Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the Newfoundland Battalion had been 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 had again been ordered to the offensive; it was to be 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 ill-conceived and costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

(Right: *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)

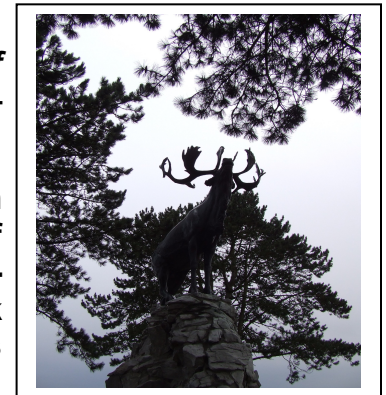
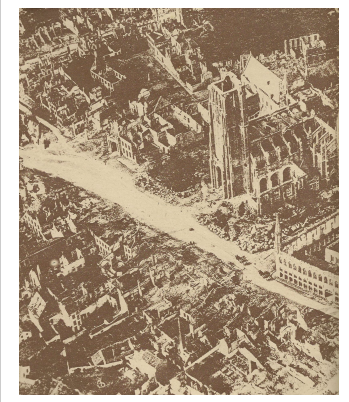
(Right: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of the Newfoundland Battalion’s advance of October 12, 1916.* – photograph from 2012)

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 would supply 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.

(Right below: *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 ordered retired from the area of Gueudecourt to the rear. By this time the depleted Battalion – most battalions were depleted by this stage of...*First Somme* - had been serving in front-line and support positions for three consecutive weeks less a day.

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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 had continued 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.

And, as related in an earlier paragraph, it was on that Christmas Day of 1916 that Private Carter and his re-enforcement draft from Rouen were to report back...*to duty*...with the Newfoundland Battalion.

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It was then on January 11 that the Newfoundland Battalion would be ordered out of *Corps Reserve* and its lodgings at *Camps en Amienois* from where it would make its way on foot to the community of Airaines. From the railway station there it was to entrain for the small town of Corbie where it thereupon took over billets which it had already occupied for a short period only two months before.

After that recent 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 apparently had already returned to the trenches by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

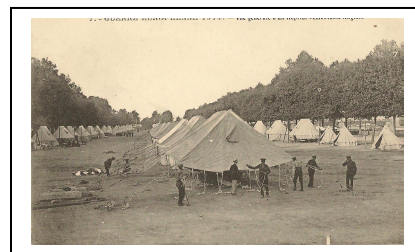
Those casualties, however, were only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig casually referred to as *wastage* as the Newfoundland unit was not to venture from its trenches during that time except to be relieved.

The record shows that he had embarked in England in December to return to the Continent as Private Carter; his will, however, written on February 4, 1917, is signed by Lance Corporal Thomas Carter. But there seems to be no indication of when exactly that promotion was received.

* * * * *

On February 9, Lance Corporal Carter is recorded as having been admitted to the 38th Casualty Clearing Station at Heilly where he was diagnosed as suffering from dysentery.

(Right: A *British casualty clearing station* being established, this one, like many, under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity might arise – from a vintage post-card)



Two days later, on the 11th, he was forwarded to the 14th Stationary Hospital in Boulogne for further treatment. From there, on February 16, he was transferred to the 7th Convalescent Depot, also at Boulogne.

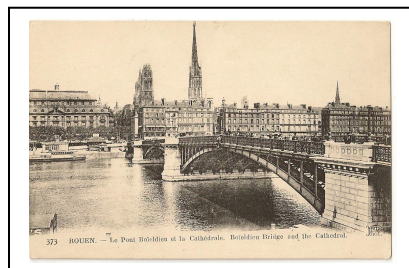
(continued)

Then, on March 3, Lance Corporal Carter was discharged from medical care and dispatched...to duty...at the British Base Depot, Rouen, remaining there for over a month before being ordered to re-join the Newfoundland Battalion.

He would re-join his unit on April 13 at a place called Monchy-le-Preux.

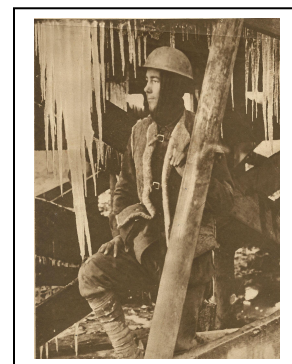
(Right above: *The port of Boulogne on France's west coast, at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

(Right: *The River Seine flowing through the centre of the French city of Rouen passes under the vigilant gaze of the towers of the venerable gothic cathedral. – from a vintage post-card*)



* * * * *

Some three weeks after the departure of Lance Corporal Carter for medical attention on February 9 there had occurred the sole infantry activity which was to *directly* involve the Newfoundland Battalion during the entire period dating from Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in mid-April of 1917. This was to be the sharp engagement in the trenches of Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and the beginning of March, 1917, an action which would bring this whole chapter 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(?)*)



After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March had been a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they were now to spend their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and in training for upcoming events. They had even 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 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, encamped at Meaulté – from The War Illustrated*)

On March 29, the Newfoundlanders had begun to make their way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois 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, early in 1916 – 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 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 – just over four thousand - 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.



And while the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* had been 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*)



Apparently April 13 had been the date on which the Newfoundlanders were originally to go over to the attack at Monchy-le-Preux. The 1st Battalion, however, had been on the march from Bonneval to the front for sixteen days, since March 29, and did not arrive close to the village from its last halt, at Arras, until one o'clock in the morning of the 13th. Thus any attack on that day was deemed unfeasible and it had been postponed until early in the morning of the 14th.

April 13 (late in the day since it would be recorded as the 14th in the Battalion War Diary) had also been the date on which a small re-enforcement draft of two officers and fourteen *other ranks*, including Lance Corporal Carter, was to arrive from Rouen to report to the 1st Battalion – although *his* presence is not noted in the Regimental War Diary.

The new arrivals, however, were not to play a role in the next day's fighting and Lance Corporal Carter had surely remained in the rear area to await orders.

* * * * *

The Newfoundland Battalion would now play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that was to 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 expensive day of the Newfoundlanders' war: it would incur four-hundred eighty-seven casualties all told on April 14 alone*.

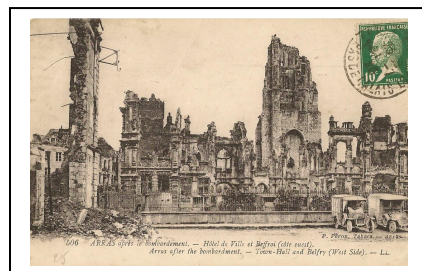
**It was also an action in which a DSO, an MC and eight MMs were won by a small group of nine personnel of the Battalion – the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) awarded to the unit's Commanding officer. An MM for the same action was also presented to a private from the Essex Regiment.*

After this further debacle the remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion remained in the area of Monchy-le-Preux. Its casualty count had been high enough to warrant that it and the Essex Regiment, which had also incurred 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 – but on this day, Lance Corporal Carter was not to march among their ranks.

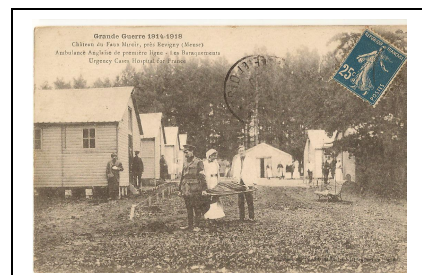
(Right above: *The City Hall of Arras and its clock-tower in 1919 after some four years of bombardment by German artillery – from a vintage post-card*)



(Right above: *Windmill Cemetery stands about mid-way between Monchy-le-Preux – about three hundred metres behind the photographer – and Les Fosses Farm – three hundred metres to the right along the main road to Arras. – photograph from 2007*)

On that April 23 of 1917, the Newfoundlanders had been in the front line near *Les Fosses Farm* – itself not far from Monchy-le-Preux – and involved in the attack – and retirement – of that day. They had also been subjected to heavy shelling during the course of the whole day.

Lance Corporal Carter had been wounded by artillery fire - gunshot wounds to the arm and left shoulder, including fractures to the humerus and the same shoulder - and was to be evacuated immediately, after preliminary treatment on that same day in the 87th Field Ambulance, to the 19th Casualty Clearing Station at Frévent.



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

He was transferred on the following day to the 18th General Hospital at Dannes-Camiers for further medical attention, and then invalided back to the United Kingdom on May 1, on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *St. Denis*, being admitted into the King George Hospital in London on the 2nd.

(Right: *The image of the vessel St. Denis, seen here in peacetime before putting on her hospital-ship uniform, had been launched as the SS 'Munich' in 1908 for the Great Eastern Railway for use as a cross-Channel steamer. Requisitioned as a hospital ship in 1914, her name was changed to 'St. Denis' which would remain her name even after the end of hostilities which she survived, and her return to her original owners.*)



The son of John Carter, fisherman – to whom he had willed his all and also to whom he allotted a daily allowance of fifty cents from his pay - and of Caroline Carter (deceased October 19, 1909) of Stephenville Crossing – the family originally from the community of Little River in the Region of Codroy - he was also brother to at least John-Henry and to Joseph.



Lance Corporal Carter was reported to have *died of wounds* on May 4, 1917, at a quarter to five in the morning, in the King George Hospital, Stamford Road, London. At home it was the Reverend E. A. Butler of St. George's who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Thomas Carter had enlisted at a *declared* twenty years of age: date of birth in Codroy, Newfoundland, July 17, 1894 (from the 1911 Newfoundland Census).

The funeral of Lance Corporal Carter (see further below) was held on May 8 at three o'clock in the afternoon.

(Right above: *The Newfoundland Plot at Earlsfield (Wandsworth) Cemetery* – photograph from 2010)

Lance Corporal Thomas Carter was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

(continued)



**His Excellency the Governor
St. John's
Newfoundland**

12 May

Sir:- 1031 the late L. Cpl. T. Carter

I have the honour to state that L. Cpl. Carter was buried with full Military honours, on the 8/5/17, at Wandsworth Cemetery.

He was interred in the Newfoundland Plot. (Grave No. 766)

The firing and bugle party consisted of men from the 3rd Training Reserve Bt'n Wimbledon.

The coffin was covered by the Newfoundland flag.

A wreath of red roses and laurel leaves was sent by the Newfoundland War Contingent Association, which bore the following inscription:

"In sincere admiration and regret for a good soldier who fought the good fight for his country's sake and died in her services."

Another wreath of mixed flowers, bearing the inscription 'In loving memory of L. Cpl. T. Taylor, from his comrades of K. 2 Ward', was laid upon the coffin.

Among others who attended was Corporal J C Cummins, who represented the Pay & Record Office.

The Last Post was sounded, and a volley of Three Rounds Blank was fired at 3.30 pm.

I have the honour to be,

Sir

Your obedient Servant...

Paymaster & Officer i/c records

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 7, 2023.