



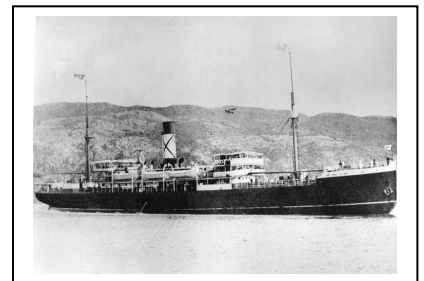
Corporal Lawrence Edward Clare (Regimental Number 343), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



Employed before his military service by a Mr. Phillip Hurley of King's Road as a *painter* for a daily wage of two dollars and fifty cents – although this gentleman does not appear in the relevant St. John's Business Directories - Lawrence Edward Clare was to be recruited during the First Draft.

He 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 September 2 of 1914, four weeks plus one day after the *Declaration of War*. This procedure having pronounced him as being...*fit for foreign service*...Lawrence Edward Clare then enlisted at the same venue – at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (ten cents of which was a *field allowance*) - a further six days afterwards, on September 8 of 1914.

There was now to be another wait of some three weeks – during which period, however, he would have undergone training – before attesting on October 1. Private Clare then proceeded on October 3 to embark with the other personnel of the *First Five Hundred* onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting the contingent in St. John's Harbour.



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

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 1st Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

(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 Private Clare 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 drawn from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.

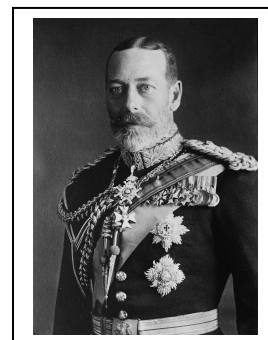
(Right below: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

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 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.



(Right below: *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 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

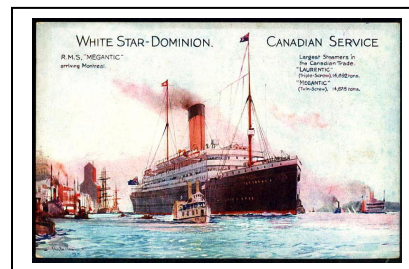
It had then been during the period spent at Aldershot that Private Clare of 'B' Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 13, to re-enlist for the duration of the war*.

*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 1st 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, here in the peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)*



On August 20, 1915, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment 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, the unit disembarked at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Right: *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)



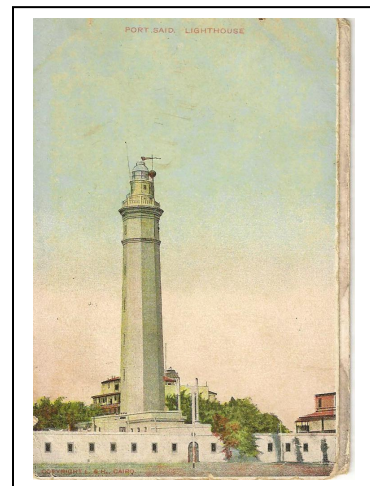
Private Clare was not, however, to land at *Suvla Bay* on the Gallipoli Peninsula with the 1st Battalion on the night of September 19-20.

* * * * *

He was instead one of a number of 1st Battalion personnel who were at this time seconded from the Transport Section to remain in Egypt. There they would work to provide transport for several new composite battalions which were being recruited at the time from various British units.

These units were being hastily formed to counter an uprising in the area of the western frontier of Egypt in the border region with Libya, a movement led by a religious leader, the Senussi. Thus Private Clare served from December, 1915, to February of the New Year, 1916, by which time the insurrection had been mainly suppressed.

On March 2 of 1916, Private Clare embarked at Port Saïd at the northern end of the Suez Canal to sail to the French Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles. There he disembarked on March 10. From then until July of that year there seem to be no records of his service; if, however, he were treated in the same manner as other Newfoundland personnel who had served in the *Western Desert Frontier Force* – and who had travelled on the same ship from Port Saïd to France - then upon his arrival in France he was ordered to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot at Rouen on the Atlantic coast.



(Right above: *The light-house at Port Saïd as it was just prior to the Great War: It was likely the last thing that Private Clare was to see of Egypt as he sailed from there.* – from a vintage post-card)

(Right: *Port Saïd at or about the time of the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)



It was most likely on April 15 that Private Clare re-joined the 1st Battalion *in the field*. A detachment of two officers and two-hundred eleven *other ranks* reported to duty from Rouen on that day in the small *Somme* village of Englebelmer just behind the lines.

While most of that contingent comprised personnel who had travelled from the Regimental Depot at Ayr, Private Clare would not have been the only arrival from Egypt. There had been a number who, for divers reasons, had been unable to depart from Suez on March 14 with the 1st Battalion (see further below).



By the night of that March 15, according to the Regimental War Diary, the draft from Rouen was already hard at work in the nearby communication trenches.

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

* * * * *

In the meantime, during that six-month period of Private Clare's absence from service with the 1st Battalion, the Newfoundland unit had seen the end of the *Gallipoli Campaign* after which it was to remain in the Middle East for a further eight weeks. Then, in March of 1916 it was to be ordered to the *Western Front*.

Nevertheless, its posting to *Suvla Bay* had been a more-than-sobering experience.

(Preceding page: 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)



Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, would prove 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.



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

Thus it had finally been 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)



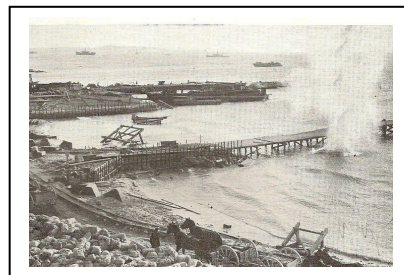
**Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

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, having formed a part of the rear-guard – and the 1st Battalion had been transferred two days later to *Cape Helles* on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right: 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)

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



When the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, 1st Battalion had then been sent to *Alexandria*, having arrived there on the 15th of that month. From there the Newfoundlanders were to be transferred, almost immediately, south to *Suez* at the end of the Canal of the same name.

(Right: ‘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 just above are still to be seen – photograph from 2011)

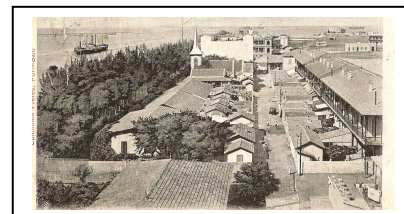


At that time it would seem that the future posting of the Newfoundland unit’s parent (British) 29th Division had still been uncertain. Bulgaria had recently entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and *Salonika* (north-eastern Greece) was soon to become a theatre of war.



However, it had soon been determined that the services of the 29th Division were to be required on the *Western Front*.

(Right adjacent: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders, employed as the rear-guard, were among the last to leave on two occasions. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)



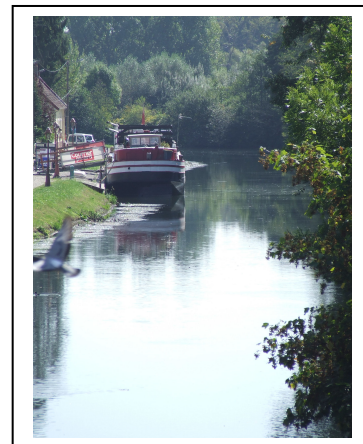
(Right: Port Tewfiq just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

On March 14, the some six-hundred officers and men of the Newfoundland Battalion had embarked through Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the *Suez Canal* onto His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* for the voyage to the French port of Marseilles, en route to the *Western Front*.



(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 Battalion's train would arrive at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them travelling unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the 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: *A slow-moving River Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy* – photograph from 2010)

It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers had paid much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they were to pass on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would be a part of their history.

On April 13, the Newfoundland Battalion had marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy – where it would be billeted, would welcome re-enforcements two days later on the 15th – those introduced in an earlier paragraph and likely including Private Clare - and, on that same day, would be introduced into the British lines of the *Western Front*, there to be put to work to improve the communication trenches.

* * * * *

Just days later, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B', that of Private Clare – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit was then to move further up into forward positions on the *Western Front* for the first time, 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 the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*



The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that same meandering river, *the Somme*.

(Preceding page: *Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel* – photograph from 2009(?))

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: *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)



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

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 butchery of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.



(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village.* – 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.



The name of Private Clare appears on the nominal roll of the 1st Battalion for July 1, 1916, the first day of *the Somme*, but he did not figure in the fighting at Beaumont-Hamel. It is likely that he was a soldier of the ten per cent reserve held back at Louvencourt, and which was not recalled to the field until late in the day of July 1, when the fighting had for the most part subsided. He is – confusingly - documented as *with Battalion* only on July 4*.

****However, these men had answered a roll call of the following day – July 2 - as did those who had fought the battle and survived it unscathed. Where the documentation shows ‘with Battalion’ on July 4, this appears to be the date on which the roll call(s) of July 2 was (were) eventually reported.***



(Right: A further part of the reconstituted battlefield, here showing the British front lines, in the Newfoundland Park at Beaumont-Hamel: today the wire serves only to keep the tourists out of the trenches. – photograph from 2010(?))

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 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, Private Clare’s 1st 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.

Private Clare was to be promoted twice during that posting to Ypres: to the rank of lance corporal on August 11, soon after the Battalion’s arrival there; then to that of corporal on the 28th day of the following month.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *Canadian trenches at Sanctuary Wood: they are about a kilometre from the Newfoundland positions of September, 1916, at Railway Wood in the Ypres Salient, but of course almost a century later.* – photograph from 2010)

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*. A part of that re-organization was to be the first promotion of Private Miller to the rank of lance-corporal which came about some two weeks after his arrival in Belgium, on August 11.



(Right above: *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 1st Battalion had been ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

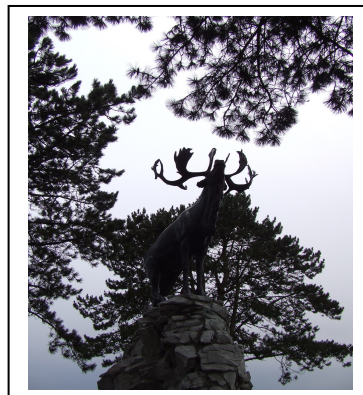


Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had again been ordered to the offensive; it was at a place called *Gueudecourt*, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of *Beaumont-Hamel*.

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

(Right above: *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)



(continued)

The only son of John Clare, his occupation recorded as a keeper and night-watchman at the *Insane Asylum* - and of Margaret Clare (née *Murray*(?), deceased December 10, 1913) of 13, Barron Street in St. John's – Corporal Clare's own address cited as 332 Water Street West, he was also brother to May (*Mary*) and step-brother to Mrs. John (*Lizzie*) Meaney*, also of 332, Water Street West*.

**John Clare remarried on September 15, 1915, to Mary Ryan.*

Corporal Clare was reported as having been *wounded and missing in action* on October 12, 1916, in the fighting at Gueudecourt. Some six months later, on or about April 11, 1917, he was officially *presumed dead*.

Lawrence Edward Clare had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-one years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, February 2, 1894 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



**Private Clare apparently was to allot a monthly fourteen dollars for the schooling and support of his at the time sixteen-year old sickly sister May (Mary). This amount had been entrusted to his half-sister, Mrs. Lizzie Meaney, with whom the sister was presumably staying.*

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

Corporal Lawrence Edward Clare 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. Last updated – February 12, 2023.

