



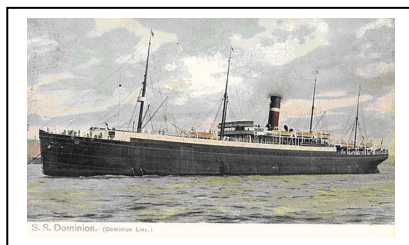
**Private Heber John Miles (Regimental Number 934) is interred in Earlsfield (Wandsworth) Cemetery – Grave reference Nfld Plot. 774.**

**His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a *teacher* with a monthly income of twenty-five dollars, Heber John Miles presented himself for medical examination on December 8, 1914, at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*. He was a recruit of the Second Draft.**

**Just six days after having undergone this medical assessment, he was to return to the *C.L.B. Armoury*, there to enlist – engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar a day plus a ten-cent *Field Allowance*. It would appear that he was also to attest on that same December 14.**

Now for Private Miles, Number 934, there was to be a further just over seven-week waiting period. How he occupied himself during that period is not recorded among his papers; he may, of course, have returned to work but this is only speculation.

On the fourth day of February of 1915, the first reinforcements – this was ‘C’ Company - for the Newfoundland contingent – it was not yet at battalion strength - which by this time was serving in Scotland (see further below), were to embark via the sealing tender *Neptune* onto the SS *Dominion* – the vessel having anchored to the south of St. John’s, off Bay Bulls, because of ice conditions.



The vessel was then to sail - and Private Miles thus departed Newfoundland for overseas service - a day later again, on February 5, for trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom.

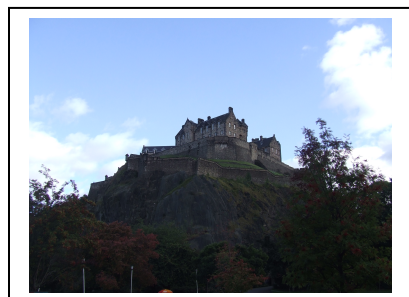


(Right above: *The image of the steamer ‘Dominion’ - launched in 1894 as the ‘Prussia’ - is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. An older vessel, she was to be requisitioned during the latter part of the Great War as a store and supply ship. She survived the conflict to be scrapped in 1922.*)

*\*There appears to be some confusion in some sources as to whether these troops were ‘C’ or ‘D’ Company. However, ‘D’ Company was to go overseas some time later on ‘Stephano’ to Halifax and then on ‘Orduña’ to Liverpool.*

(Right above: *The photograph of personnel of ‘C’ Company on board the ‘Neptune’ on the way to the harbour at Bay Bulls is from the Provincial Archives.*)

Having disembarked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool, the Newfoundlanders entrained for Edinburgh, the first Newfoundland Regiment contingent having by this time been posted to the historic Castle in Scotland’s capital city. There they were to provide the garrison, thus being the first unit from overseas ever to do so.



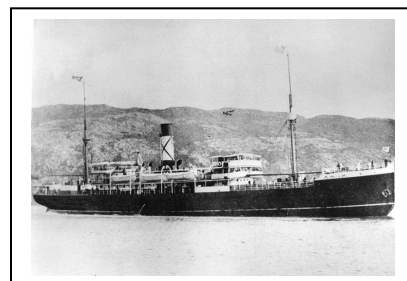
Private Miles and the other new-comers reported to duty at Edinburgh Castle on February 16.

(Right above: *Edinburgh Castle dominates the city from its position on the summit of Castle Hill. – photograph from 2011*)

\* \* \* \* \*

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 - 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 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 would sail for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 adjacent: *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 – and where 'C' Company and Private Miles, as also cited beforehand, would arrive from Newfoundland on February 16 of 1915.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some three months later, on May 11, and three weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundland unit was ordered moved 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 received 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered eligible 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*)



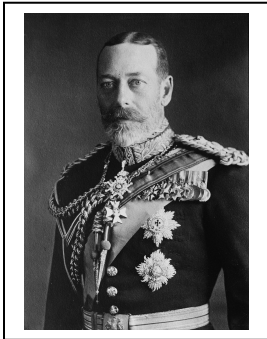
*\*This was approximately fifteen hundred, sufficient to furnish two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, was thereupon attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

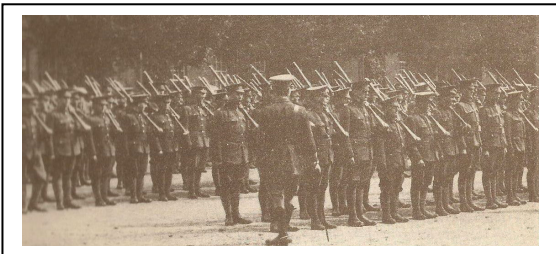
Meanwhile the two junior Companies, 'E' – last arrived at Edinburgh - and the aforementioned 'F', were ordered transferred to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion.

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



It was during this period at Aldershot, on August 15, that Private Miles was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion 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 personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.)

On August 20, 1915, Private Edgar and the 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion landed at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

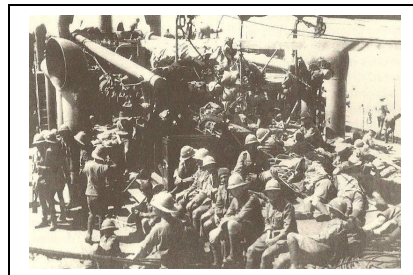


(Right above: *The image of Megantic, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

(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: 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)**



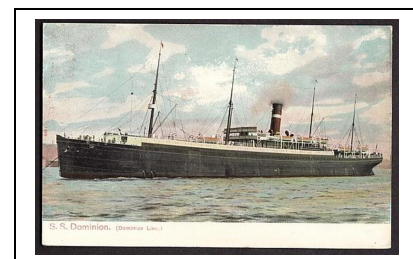
**(Right below: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to serve during the autumn of 1915 – photograph from 2011)**



**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.**

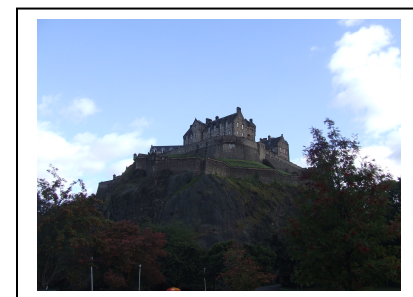
**presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on December 8, 1914. He was to become a recruit of the Second Draft.**

**Six days later he officially enlisted – engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 daily - on December 14, before attesting on that same day. Embarking via the sealing tender *Neptune* onto the SS *Dominion* (right), the vessel having anchored off Bay Bulls because of ice conditions, Private Miles departed Newfoundland for overseas service on February 5, 1915.**



**(continued)**

**'C' Company, the first re-enforcements for the initial contingent of the Regiment that had sailed in October of 1914, arrived in Liverpool on February 16, 1915. The detachment immediately took a train to Edinburgh where the Newfoundland Regiment was to garrison the Castle, the first troops from outside the British Isles to perform this duty. The newcomers arrived in the Scottish capital later on that same day.**



During that posting to Edinburgh, from April 4 until May 1, May Day, Private Miles was admitted into hospital there for treatment for pleurisy.

(Right above: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the skyline of the Scottish capital city from the summit of Castle Hill. – photograph from 2011*)

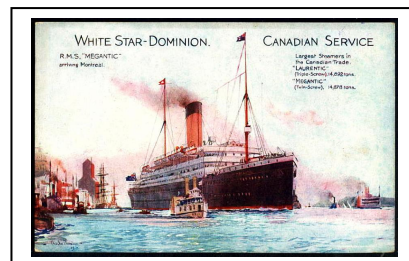
On May 11 the Newfoundlanders were transferred to Stobs Camp, near Hawick, to the south-east of Edinburgh. There they remained until the beginning of August when the senior Companies 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D', were sent south to Aldershot to prepare for a posting to the Middle East and Gallipoli, to be inspected by His Majesty, King George V - and to become 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, the Newfoundland Regiment.



(Right above: *the Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp on June 10, the day it received its Colours – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

The later arrivals, 'E' and 'F' Companies were to be sent to the new Regimental Depot recently established at Ayr, on the west coast of Scotland, as the nucleus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion.

It was during this period at Aldershot, on August 15, that Private Miles was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion 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.*



On August 20, 1915, Private Miles took ship on board the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (right above) for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting in Gallipoli where, a month later – of which two weeks had been spent billeted at the British barracks at Abbassia, near the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion landed on the beach at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



(Right above: *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 – Whatever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – from Provincial Archives*)

(Right above: *'Kangaroo Beach', where the men of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is 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 from 2011*)

(Right: almost a century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Miles served during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



Private Miles was evacuated by hospital ship from Suvla Bay to the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Stationary Hospital at Abbassia where he was admitted on October 3\*. Eleven days later it was on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Gloucester Castle* that, on October 12, he began the passage back to the United Kingdom where he was admitted into the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. By then he had been diagnosed as having contracted rheumatic fever.



*\*Other records have him hospitalized on September 3, days after having disembarked from Megantic in Alexandria. If such were the case, Private Miles did not take ship to Suvla on September 13 with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, but remained in Cairo, in hospital in the Abbassia Barracks, before being shipped back to England.*

(Right above: The image of HMHS 'Gloucester Castle' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. The vessel was built in 1911 for the Union-Castle Line to be requisitioned three years later, in September of 1914, and converted into a hospital ship. On March 31, 1917, 'Gloucester Castle' was torpedoed and, while not sunk, was sufficiently damaged to side-line her for the rest of the conflict. She returned to her owners in 1919.)

For exactly how long Private Miles remained in hospital at Wandsworth seems not to be documented.

(Right: The main building of what became 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010)



At some time, however, he was transferred to *Brooklands Military Hospital* in the town of Weybridge. The following report from the *Pay & Record Office* in London, dated March 13, refers to his hospitalization there:

**The matron of Brooklands Military Hospital, Weybridge, Surrey, states that this soldier is seriously ill suffering from general disability and heart weakness, following Rheumatic Fever; and he might take a dangerous turn at any time she suggests that it might be advisable to have his cousin, No. 933 Pte.W.P. Miles, to come and see him.**

*Timewell*

**Capt.**

**Paymaster & O. i/c Records**

**(Reply of March 14: *Pte. W.P. Miles has been given a Railway Warrant to Weybridge to see his cousin.*)**

On that same March 14 noted above, Private Miles was considered by the medical staff at *Brooklands* as being *dangerously ill*, suffering from tubercular meningitis.

The son of Dougald Miles, fisherman, and of Sarah Jane Miles (née *Ryan*)\* - to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay - of Bonavista, he was also brother to sisters Gwendolyn-May and to Ada-Helen.



*\*The couple had married on March 8, 1894.*

(Right above: *The Newfoundland Plot in Earlsfield Cemetery, not far distant from the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital at Wandsworth – photograph from 2010*)

Private Miles was reported as having *died of sickness* in that same *Brooklands Hospital*, Weybridge, on March 18 (the 17<sup>th</sup> on hospital records), 1916.

Private Miles was buried in Earlsfield Cemetery...*with full military honours*...on March 21. At home it was the Reverend A.G. Bayly of Bonavista who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Heber John Miles had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen years: date of birth in Bonavista, Newfoundland, December 18, 1896 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

(Far right: *the monument in the Anglican Churchyard, Bonavista, placed there by his parents, to the memory of Private Miles – photograph from 2011(?)*)



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

Private Heber John Miles 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) (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 8, 2023.**