

Captain* Reginald (referred to as 'Rex' in *the Fighting Newfoundlander*) Strathie Rowsell, MC, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

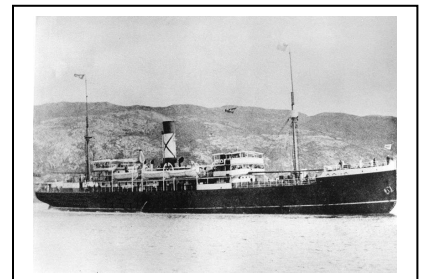


**Officers who were eventually promoted from the ranks may be identified from their Regimental Number. Other officers who were not from the ranks received the King's Commission, or in the case of those in the Newfoundland Regiment, an Imperial Commission, and were not considered as enlisted. These officers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

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

Reginald Rowsell, a teacher at *Bishop Feild College* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, was granted a temporary Imperial Commission and an accompanying appointment to the rank of lieutenant on September 24 of 1914.

He embarked for overseas service nine days later, on October 3, on board the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel*. Taking passage on the ship to the United Kingdom was the first Newfoundland contingent of 'A' and 'B' Companies – it was not yet a battalion – to become known to history as both *the First Five Hundred* and *the Blue Puttees*.



(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 for the United Kingdom on the following day, October 4, to rendezvous off the south coast of the Island with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division.

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



(continued)

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 the unit was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.



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

Some three months later, on May 11, and some seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the entire Newfoundlanders 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 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus rendered suitable to be sent on ‘active service’.

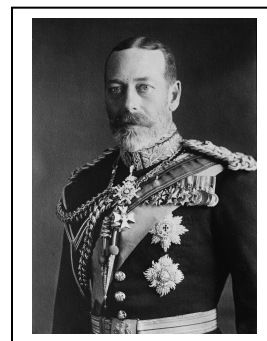
It was also to be during the latter days of this period at *Stobs Camp* that Lieutenant Rowsell would receive promotion on July 28 to the rank of captain.

**This was approximately fifteen hundred, enough to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(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)



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.



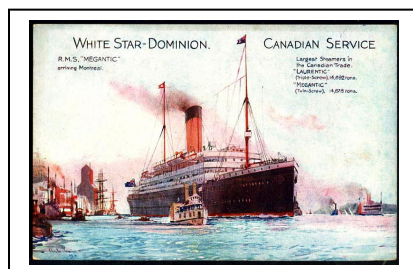
Meanwhile the two junior Companies, the later-arrived ‘E’ and aforementioned ‘F’, were ordered transferred to Scotland’s west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

(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.)

(Right: 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.)



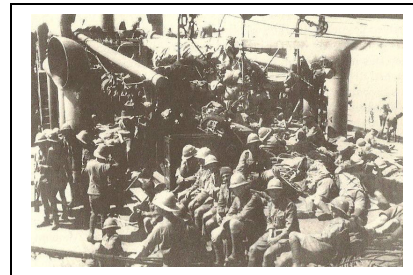
On August 20, 1915, Lieutenant Rowsell and the Newfoundland unit embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks. There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1st 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 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*, and where the 1st Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)

But when the Newfoundlanders landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* they were to be disembarking into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion would 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 to prove to be little more than a debacle:

(continued)

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

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



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

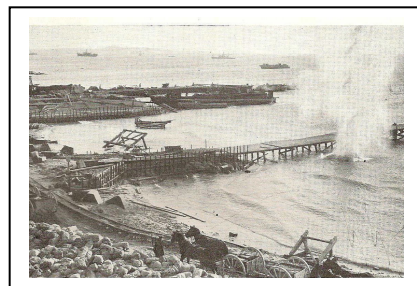
On the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel had been evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, some to *Lemnos*, further away, but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



(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*)

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

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



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

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



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

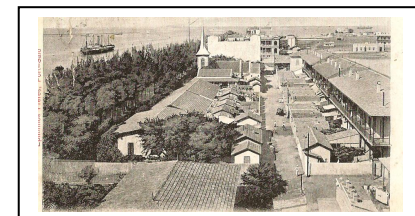
Immediately after the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to the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



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

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

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



(Right above: Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the Suez Canal Great War – from a vintage post-card)

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

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

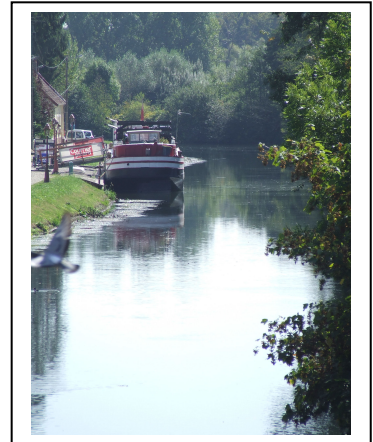


Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably 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 had then marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* would become a part of their history.

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



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

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

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

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



(Right above: *Two views of the re-constructed trench system to be found 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*)



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



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

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

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

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



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

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



It was at Beaumont-Hamel, on July 1, 1916, during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*, that Captain Rowsell was wounded, a machine-gun bullet entering the left groin area and exiting through the buttock.

Captain Rowsell was evacuated for immediate treatment to the 2nd Red Cross Hospital in Rouen on the same July 1, where the decision was taken that he be returned to the United Kingdom for further treatment. On July 3 he was embarked onto His Majesty's Australian Hospital Ship *Western Australia* for the overnight crossing to England.

Captain Rowsell was next reported as having arrived in London on the following day, July 4, and as then having been subsequently transferred to the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth. There he was to be admitted on the same July 4.



(Right: *The photograph of HMAHS Western Australia is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

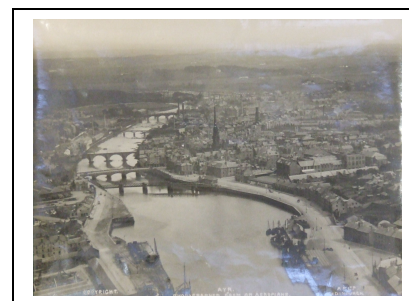
(Right: *The main building of what was to become the 3rd London General Hospital during the Great War was originally opened, on July 1st, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)



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



A document of July 12 reported *good progress*, and a second – dated August 14 – that the wound had healed and that he was able to stroll about since leaving hospital...*but he is not yet fit for marching*. By that time Captain Rowsell had been stationed at the Regimental Depot at Ayr, and it was not to be until November 18 that he was declared again...*fit for active service*.



In the meantime he was to remain in Scotland.

The Regimental Depot, at the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, had by then been established for about a year and a month. It had been organized to serve as the overseas base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion from where – as of November of 1915 up until January of 1918 - reinforcement drafts from home were despatched to bolster the 1st Battalion's numbers, at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.



(Right above: *An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where the other ranks were to be quartered, 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 above: *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*)

On January 3 of 1917 the 1st Battalion received the news that Captain Rowsell had been awarded the Military Cross: *'He served continuously with the Regiment since it landed at Gallipoli until he was wounded whilst gallantly leading his company on July 1st, 1916, in the attack near Beaumont-Hamel. He has shown great devotion to duty.'* - Published in Honours Gazette, January 1st, 1917



It may be that the news had already been relayed by that time to Ayr, but Captain Rowsell may not have been there to receive it. Documents in his dossier suggest that on January 2, 1917, he was to be ordered back to *active service* and was thus on his way back to the Continent.

On the 13th of January, Captain Rowsell, MC, in the company of three fellow officers, reported *to duty* with the 1st Battalion from the Base Depot in Rouen. The Newfoundlanders at the time were coming to the end of a six-week withdrawal into *Corps Reserve* and were making their way back to the forward area. On January 11 the unit had paused in the small town of Corbie where it was to remain for five days.

* * * * *

Six and a-half months previous to his return, after the wounding of Captain Rowsell and the other 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, the 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.

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

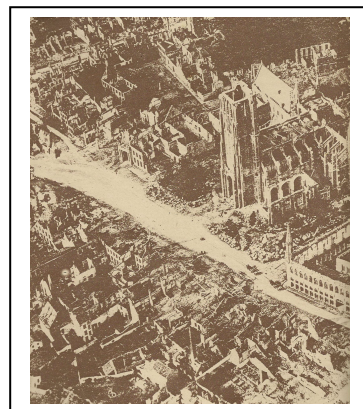
(Right: *The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)



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

Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the 1st Battalion 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*)



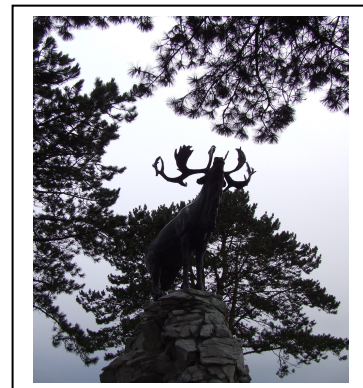
Four days after that return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1st Battalion of the *Newfoundland Regiment* had again been ordered to the offensive; it was to be at a place called *Gueudecourt*, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of *Beaumont-Hamel*.

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

(Right above: *This is the ground over which the 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12, 1916. 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 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.

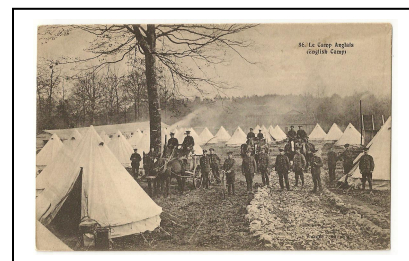


(Right: *Stretcher-bearers not only shared the dangers of the battle-field with their arms-bearing comrades, but they often spent a longer period of time exposed to those same perils. This photograph was likely taken during First Somme. – from Illustration*)

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

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

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



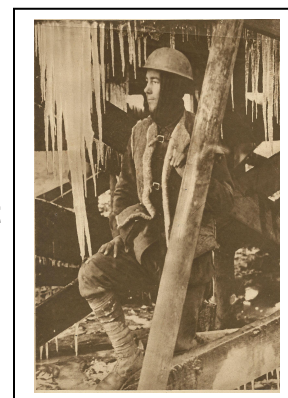
(Right: *A typical British Army Camp during rather inclement winter conditions somewhere on the Continent – from a vintage post-card*)

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

And as has been recounted on previous page, it was at the end of this Christmas period of 1916 and while the Newfoundland Battalion was returning to *active service* at *the Front*, that Captain Rowsell, MC, had re-joined his unit on January 13.

* * * * *

Those aforementioned casualties, however, were only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig casually referred to as *wastage*, as the Newfoundland unit had not ventured from its trenches. The sole infantry activity to *directly* involve the Newfoundland unit during that entire period – from Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in mid-April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Saily-Saillisel at the end of February and the beginning of March, an action which would bring this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.



(Preceding page: *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 Saily-Saillisel during the winter of 1916-1917. – from Illustration*)

(Right: *The fighting during the period of the Battalion's posting to Saily-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 Saily-Saillisel the month of March was a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events.

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



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

On March 29, the Newfoundlanders began 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 Monchyle-Preux.



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

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



On April 9 the British Army was to launch an offensive in the area to the north of the Somme battlefields; this was to be the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a major French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties – 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.



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

(continued)

(Preceding page: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the western – in 1917, the British – side of the community: The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

The 1st Battalion was to play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at the place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After *Beaumont-Hamel*, the ineptly-planned action at Monchy-le-Preux would prove to be the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties all told on April 14 alone*.

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

'I did not see him buried but he lay in the same shell hole with me when (I was) taken prisoner, dead, that's all I know.' – the eye-witness account of Private M. Taylor (#2701), taken prisoner at Monchy-le-Preux, in a later statement.



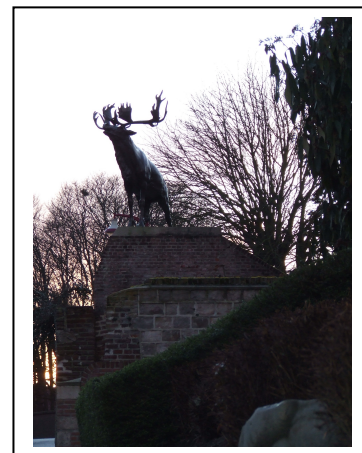
Two or three others had been witnesses to the same effect, Lieutenant Baird adding that Captain Rowsell, commanding 'C' Company, had been *wounded in the left leg*. Most of these reports – if not all – had been subsequently sent to London via the offices of the *Geneva Red Cross* from prisoner-of-war camps.

(The above photograph of Lieutenant Rowsell is from the Provincial Archives.)

The son of John Strathie Rowsell, Magistrate of Bonavista, and Lydia Charlotte Rowsell (née *Skeffington*)*, he was also brother to William-James, to James, Samuel, Blanche, Annette-May, Annie-Mildred, Harold and to Horatio John Read(?) (see below).

**The couple had married in Bonavista on January 9, 1884 (a second source cites February).*

Captain Rowsell was reported as *wounded and missing* on April 14, 1917, while serving with 'C' Company in the fighting at Monchy-le-Preux – a second report of April 18 to his father simply cites *wounded*. Some six months later, on October 14, 1917, Captain Rowsell was officially *presumed dead*.



(Right above: *The Caribou stands atop the vestiges of a German strongpoint in the centre of Monchy-le-Preux.- photograph from 2012*)

His younger brother, Lieutenant Horatio John Read(?) Rowsell, had *died of wounds* in hospital in *Abbéville* on July 8, 1916. Captain Rowsell had received the news on or about July 14, while in hospital at *Wandsworth*, from his friend Captain *Timewell* at the *Newfoundland Pay & Record Office* in London.

Captain Rowsell was twenty-seven years of age at the time of his death: date of birth at Bonavista, Newfoundland, March 10, 1890.

(Right: *The Bonavista War Memorial honours the sacrifice of both Captain Rowsell and Lieutenant Rowsell.*)

Extract from Casualties received from Pay and Record Office London, dated 20th. Feb. 1919:

Capt. R. S. Rowsell M.C. Missing 14/4/17. Information received by the British Red Cross from 1981 Pte. H. King, (Eye Witness).

On Friday 14th 1917 at Monchy on the Arras front, after our advance had been checked I got into a shell (-hole) where I found the dead bodies of three Officers of our Regt.

One was the body of Capt. Rowsell. I knew him quite well. Cpl. Cuffe was alive in the same shell hole and he and I were captured later.

Captain Reginald Strathie Rowsell, MC, 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. Last updated – February 10, 2023.