



Lance Corporal Howard Smith (Regimental Number 1665) is buried in Ayr Cemetery, Ayrshire: Grave reference G.2.5.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *lumberman*, Howard Smith was a recruit of the Sixth (a second source says Seventh) Draft. He presented himself for the medical examination required prior to service overseas with the Newfoundland Regiment at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of

Newfoundland, on June 19 of 1915. It was a procedure which would pronounce him as being...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

On that same day, June 19, and at the same venue, the CLB Armoury on Harvey Road, Howard Smith also underwent enlistment. He was engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

Three weeks and two days were now to follow before there would come the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On July 12 he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, and thereupon, at that moment, Howard Smith was to become...*a soldier of the King*.

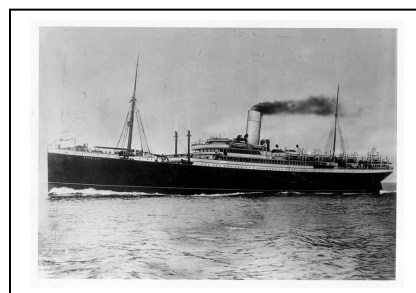
**A second source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

A further, and lengthier, waiting-period was now in store for the recruits of this draft, designated as 'G' Company, before they were to depart from Newfoundland for...*overseas service*.

Private Smith, Regimental Number 1665, was not to be again called upon until October 27, after an interval of fifteen weeks and two days. Where he was to spend this intervening time appears not to have been recorded although he possibly returned temporarily to his work and perhaps was to spend time at home in the Trinity Bay community of Dildo – but, of course, this is only speculation.

On the above-mentioned date of October 27, 'G' Company left St. John's by train to traverse the island to Port aux Basques, the other passengers on board reportedly having included several naval reservists and also some German prisoners-of-war. The contingent then traversed the Gulf of St. Lawrence by ferry – documented as having been the *Kyle* - and afterwards proceeded again by train from North Sydney as far as Québec City.

There the Newfoundlanders joined His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* for the trans-Atlantic voyage to the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport where they arrived on November 9. The vessel had departed Montreal on October 30 with Canadian troops on board before stopping at Québec: the 55th Canadian Infantry Battalion and the Second Draft of the (1st?) Divisional Signals Company.



(Right above: *The image of Corsican is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Launched in 1907 for the Allan Line, one of the largest private shipping companies of the time, she spent much of her early career chartered to the Canadian Pacific Line which in 1917 was to purchase the entire Allan Line business. She was employed as a troop-ship during much of the Great War which she survived – only to be wrecked near Cape Race on May 21, 1923.*)



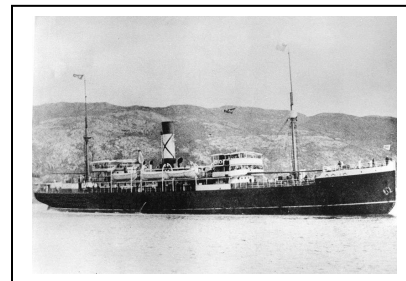
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(Preceding page: *The once-busy Royal Navy facility and harbour of Devonport almost a century after the Great War – photograph from 2012(?)*)

By the morning of November 10, Private Smith's 'G' Company had again travelled by train, to Scotland where it had been billeted in huts in a military camp at Gailes, not far removed from the evolving Newfoundland Regimental Depot at Ayr where accommodation for the new arrivals was as yet not available.

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More than a year prior to that November 10 of 1915, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914, the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's and elsewhere in the city, and were formed into 'A' and 'B' Companies.



During that same period the various authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

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

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

Once having disembarked* 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 it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.



**It was to do so at Devonport through which 'G' Company would pass eleven months later.*

Only days after 'A' and 'B' Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 of 1915, 'C' Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent - would arrive directly – through Liverpool of course - from Newfoundland. On the final day of the month of March it had been the turn of 'D' Company to arrive – they via Halifax as well as

Liverpool – to report...to duty...at Edinburgh, and then ‘E’ Company five weeks less a day later again, on May 4*.

**These five Companies, while a contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, did not as yet comprise a battalion and would not do so for a further five months – as will be seen below.*

(Right below: The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011)

Seven days after the arrival of ‘E’ Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent had been ordered elsewhere. On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit had been dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.



(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 of Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)



Two months less a day later, on July 10, ‘F’ Company would march into *Stobs Camp*.

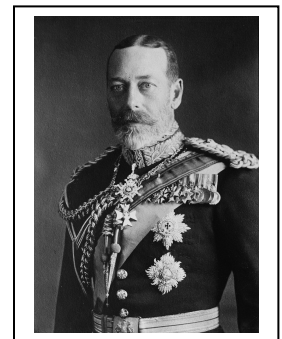
This had been an important moment: the Company’s arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment’s numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength* of a battalion which could be posted on...active service.



**A number sufficient to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(Right above: The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – original photograph from the Provincial Archives)

From *Stobs Camp*, some three weeks after the arrival of ‘F’ Company, in early August ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, the four senior Companies, having now become the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, had been transferred to *Aldershot Camp* in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before the Battalion’s departure to the Middle East and to the fighting on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

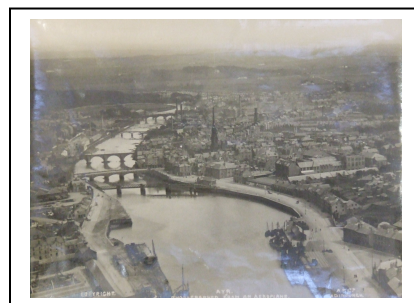


(Right above: George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – the photograph is from Bain News Services via the Wikipedia web-site.)

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The later arrivals to the United Kingdom, 'E' and 'F' Companies, were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were eventually to form the nucleus of the soon to be formed 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.

(Right: 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 below: 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.



The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer and the early autumn of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as a base for the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 – that the new-comers were to be sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1st Battalion*.

**The first such draft was, in fact, to depart from Ayr for service on the Gallipoli Peninsula days after the arrival in Scotland of Private Smith's 'G' Company, on November 15.*

This then had been the situation facing the new-comers: the new Regimental Depot had still been in the throes of its establishment when Private Smith and 'G' Company were to arrive in Scotland on November 10 of 1915; thus, as related in a preceding paragraph, the new-comers were required to be quartered at Gailles, some sixteen kilometres further up the coast – but apparently more than sixty kilometres distant by road.

It was a month and a week after his 'G' Company had arrived in Scotland, on December 17, that Private Smith was to receive promotion to the rank of lance corporal and to be transferred to 'H' Company. But while at the time the first of many re-enforcement drafts were now being dispatched to...*active service*...it would appear that the services of Lance Corporal Smith were not to be called upon.

The son of Thomas (of John) Smith, fisherman, and of Fanny Jane Smith (née Moore*, deceased by the time of the 1921 census) – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of fifty (later seventy) cents from his pay - of Dildo, Trinity Bay – he was also brother to Ella, Cecil and Frederick.



**The couple had married on February 9 of 1892.*

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Lance Corporal Smith was not to serve with 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment on the Continent. He was reported as having died abruptly of heart failure at Ayr on June 3, 1916. At home it was the Reverend T.W. Upward who was requested to relay the news to his family.

Howard Smith had enlisted at a declared eighteen years and nine months of age: date of birth at Dildo, Newfoundland, October 14, 1896 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

(Right above: *A further view of the Newfoundland Plot in Ayr Cemetery – photograph from 2011*)

(Right: *The War Memorial in Dildo honours the sacrifice of Lance Corporal Smith. – photograph from 2014*)



Lance Corporal Howard Smith was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

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 5, 2023.

