

Second Lieutenant Samuel Reginald Smith (Regimental Number 932*), 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.*

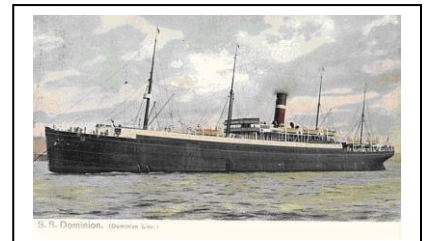
And since officers did not enlist, they were not then required to re-enlist 'for the duration', even though, at the beginning, as a private, they had volunteered their services for only a limited time – twelve months.

His occupation prior to enlistment recorded as that of a *book-keeper*, Samuel Reginald Smith presented himself for medical examination in the community of Harbour Breton on the south coast of the Island on December 7 of 1914. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service.*

Having then travelled by ship and train, he then enlisted a week later at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on December 14 – engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar plus a ten-cent per diem *Field Allowance* – and likely attested on that same day.

Having been subsequently promoted directly to the rank of corporal on January 25, 1915, Corporal Smith had now to wait only a further nine days before he was to be embarking via the sealing tender *Neptune* onto the *SS Dominion* – the vessel having anchored to the south, off Bay Bulls, because of ice conditions.

The larger vessel then sailed a day later again, and Corporal Smith departed Newfoundland for *overseas service* on February 5, as a non-commissioned officer of Number 1 Platoon of 'C' Company*, the first re-enforcements for the first Newfoundland contingent by this time serving in Scotland (see further below).



(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 only 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: 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 on February 16, 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 the Newfoundland contingent had begun to garrison the venerable edifice, thus becoming the first unit from overseas ever to do so.

Corporal Smith and his fellow new-comers reported to duty at Edinburgh Castle later in the day, on that same February 16.

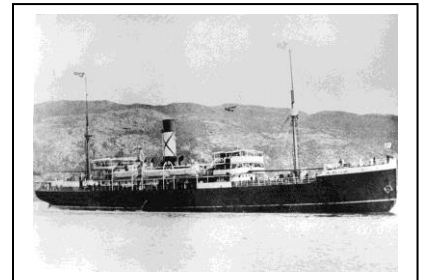
(Right: Edinburgh Castle dominates the city from its position on the summit of Castle Hill. – photograph from 2011)



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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 four-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 – for the most part 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 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)



(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, as recorded beforehand, it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles – and where ‘C’ Company and Corporal Smith, as also cited beforehand, would arrive from Newfoundland on February 16 of 1915.

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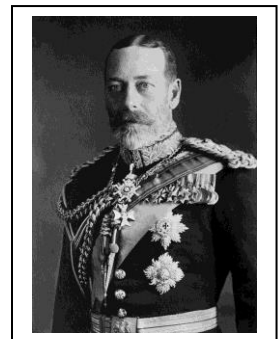
On May 11, now bolstered by the arrival of both ‘D’ and ‘E’ Companies, the Regiment moved south-west from Edinburgh to the tented site of *Stobs Camp* a dozen or so kilometres from the town of Hawick where they were to receive three months more training in the company of many other troops.



(Right: *By the time of ‘F’ Company’s arrival on July 10, the Regiment had received its Colours at Stobs Camp in a ceremonial parade on June 10. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

The Newfoundland Regiment was also anticipating welcoming ‘F’ Company whose numbers would bring the contingent up to establishment battalion strength, thus enabling it to be despatched on *active service*. In fact, that July 10, the day of ‘F’ Company’s arrival, would be the day on which Corporal Smith was to put up his third stripe and attain the rank of sergeant*.

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’, had been 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 likely during the second week of that final training at Aldershot, on or about August 13, that Sergeant Smith was prevailed upon 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.***

(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.)



On August 20 of 1915, the Newfoundland Battalion had 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: *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 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 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 – *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)*



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Less than a week after his disembarkation at *Suvla Bay*, Sergeant Smith was wounded by Turkish artillery fire, this having become much of a daily occurrence. Having incurred shrapnel injuries to the right arm, he was thereupon evacuated from the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

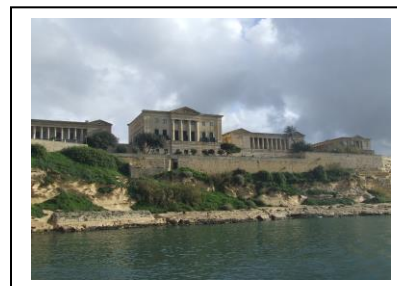
Sergeant Smith was thus placed on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Assaye* and transported to the British-held Mediterranean island possession of Malta where he was hospitalized on September 26.

(Preceding page: *Turkish artillery pieces still dominate the area of Suvla Bay as they did almost one hundred years ago.* – photograph from 2011)

He is recorded as having been discharged back to Mudros on the Greek island of Lemnos *as fit for active service* on November 15. After this date there is little information to be gleaned, excepting the logical supposition of his release from Mudros on some unspecified date back to the Newfoundland Battalion for further service on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

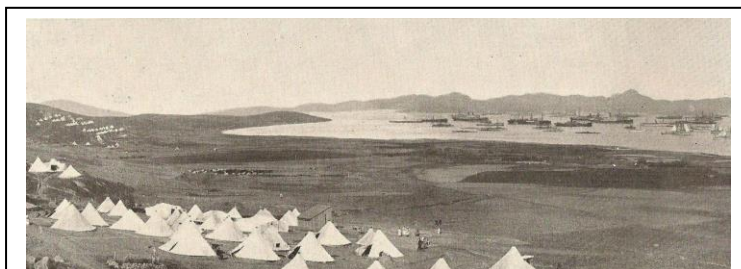


(Right above: *The image of HMHS Assaye is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Launched in 1899 for the P & O Company, she served as a troopship in time of war and also peace for much of her first nine years of service. In 1914 she was requisitioned once more as a troop transport and then as a hospital ship. She sailed for demolition in 1928.*)



(Right above: *One of the several now-abandoned British naval hospital buildings which today stand empty and decaying on the Mediterranean island – independent since 1964 - of Malta.* – photograph from 2011)

(Right: *Allied medical facilities such as those in the foreground and further behind – the majority of them under canvas - almost entirely surround a congested Mudros Bay and its minuscule harbour during the autumn of 1915.* – from *Illustration*)



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When the Newfoundlanders had landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* on the night of September 19-20, 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 were 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*, had proved 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.

(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 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.

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 was to be transferred only two days later to the area of 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)



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

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.



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

****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.***

(continued)

(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, to arrive 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*)



(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)

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



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

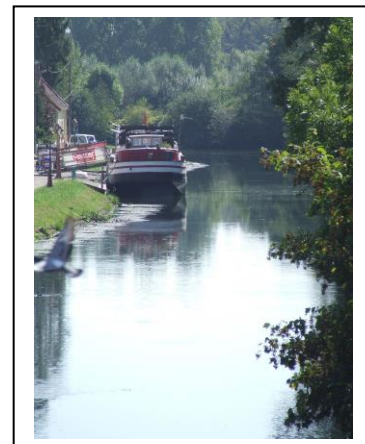
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably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

(Right below: *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 reinforcements 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.*

(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 Mailly-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*)

(continued)

(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.*

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 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.



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

While on the nominal roll of 1st Battalion on July 1, 1916, the first day of *the Somme*, 2nd Lieutenant Smith did not figure in the fighting at Beaumont-Hamel. It is most likely that he was an officer of the ten per cent reserve - fourteen officers and eighty-three other ranks - held back in Louvencourt, and which was not recalled to the field until late in the day when the fighting had for the most part subsided*.



**These men answered a roll call of the following day as did those who had fought the battle and survived it unscathed. Where the documentation shows 'with Battalion' on July 4, this is the date on which the roll calls of July 2 were eventually officially recorded.*

(Right above: *British assault trenches in front of the main lines in the field at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)

On July 11, Second Lieutenant Smith was transferred *for duty* away from the British Expeditionary Force, presumably leaving the Continent on that date and reporting to Ayr – or perhaps enjoying a week’s leave – before reporting to the *Pay & Record Office* in London.



(Right: *London – in fact the City of Westminster – in the area of Marble Arch, in or about the year 1913, just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

On July 20, he took ship from there for the voyage back home to Newfoundland on *Corinthian* travelling via Québec* where the ship docked on August 1.

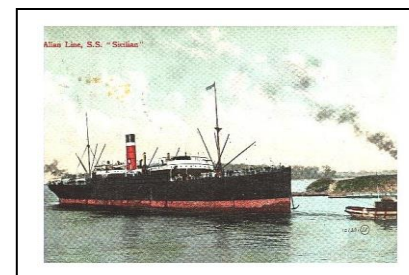
**Second Lieutenant Smith likely then travelled onward to St. John’s on a combination of trains and ferry.*

(Right: *The photograph of ‘Corinthian’ is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Apparently she was not requisitioned during the Great War although she was often used to carry troops across the Atlantic – in both directions. She went aground in the Bay of Fundy at the end of the war and broke up, a victim of the storms of the time.*)



He was to spend the best part of four weeks back home – it being suggested in correspondence that he was employed in a recruiting campaign - before again taking ship on board *Sicilian* on August 28 – with the latest draft – for the return passage to the United Kingdom and to the Regimental Depot at Ayr. He was then reportedly in London by October 25 (see below) during which time he submitted his claim for expenses (a gratuity allowance*) of £2-0-0 during his travels to and from Newfoundland. It was a claim in which he was at pains to ensure Captain Timewell at the *Pay & Record Office* that...*I did not have a batman on either of these journeys.*

(Right: *The image of the Allan Line steamer Sicilian is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel had been requisitioned as a troop-ship and transport carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*



**These were the days when officers were expected to tip the stewards on board ship who looked after their cabins and their personal affairs.*

The Regimental Depot at the once-Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland had been established during the summer of 1915 to serve as a base for the new 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, and it was from there – as of November of 1915 up until January of 1918 - that re-enforcements were being despatched to bolster the numbers of the 1st Battalion, at first to the Middle East but, since late March of 1916, to the *Western Front*.

(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: 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.



Second Lieutenant Smith was transferred from the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion at Ayr on October 27, to pass through London on his way to the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent, and then – after a period of final training* - from the Depot at Étaples to the 1st Battalion on November 1 – a second source cites the day before - in the company of Second Lieutenants James, Manuel, Duley and Thompson.

At the time the Newfoundland Battalion had just retired from three weeks service in the forward area and was billeted in the community of Ville-sous-Corbie, there to re-enforce and reorganize after the efforts of the action of October 12 at Gueudecourt.

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

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It will be remembered that it had not been until July 11 that Second Lieutenant Smith was to be transferred from the British Expeditionary Force for duty back in Newfoundland. However, exactly where he had served during that interim of July 2 to 11 appears not to be documented among his papers – although some time spent at the Base Depot at Rouen is not unlikely. But during his absence, his comrades-in-arms of the 1st Battalion were to continue to fight in that wretched *First Somme*.

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.

(Preceding page: *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 reported, 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.

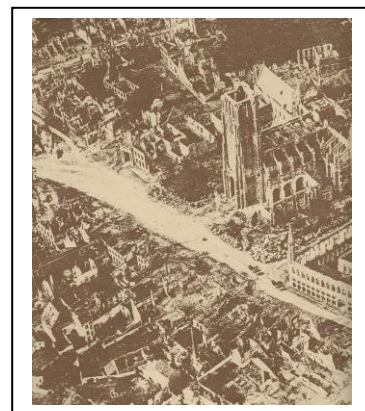
(Right: *The entrance to 'A' Company's quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)



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 Newfoundland Battalion had been ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

(Preceding page: *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.

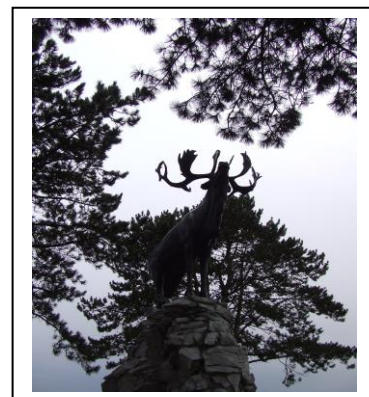
The encounter had proved to be another ill-conceived and costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.



(Preceding page: *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: *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, by which time, as recorded in an earlier paragraph, Second Lieutenant Smith had returned from his duties in Newfoundland and reported back to the Newfoundland unit.

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Once back in the forward area, the 1st Battalion 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 above: *A typical British Army Camp during rather inclement winter conditions somewhere on the Continent – from a vintage post-card*)

It was not to be until January 11 of the New Year, 1917, that the Newfoundland Battalion was to 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.

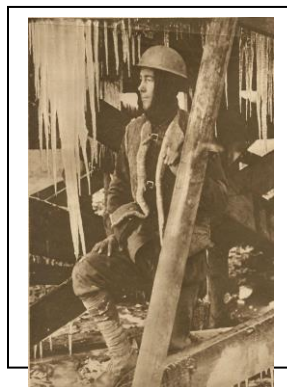
From the local railway station it was to entrain for the small town of Corbie where it had thereupon taken over those billets which it had already occupied for a short period only two months before.

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, as the Newfoundland unit had not ventured from its trenches, were only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig casually referred to as *wastage*.

In fact, the sole infantry activity *directly* involving 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.

(Right: 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 the events at Saily-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: *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.

(Preceding page: *The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras as it already was in 1916, less than two years after the outbreak of the Great War – from Illustration*)

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.



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

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*)

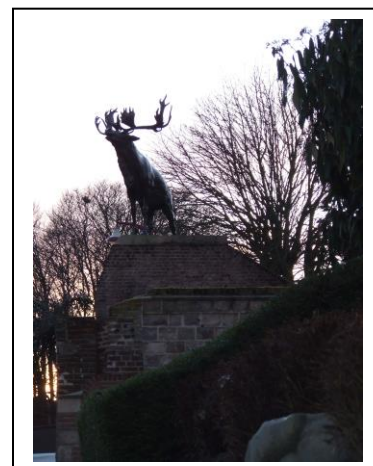


The 1st Battalion was to play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at the place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish some ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After Beaumont-Hamel, the ineptly-planned action at 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 .*

'He was killed shortly after speaking with Captain Rowsell and myself...' – eye-witness account by Captain Alexander Baird (taken prisoner at Monchy): this report was received much subsequent to the event. A number of such reports were received in London, via the offices of the Geneva Red Cross, from the prisoner-of-war camps.

The son of John Smith, general dealer and master mariner, and of Mary Smith (née *Hutchings*)* of Harbour Briton (also *Breton*, as today), Fortune Bay, he was also brother to Alphonsus – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - to Cecil, William, John H., Leo, Harold, Stanley, Austin-Aloysius and to Frances.



**The couple married circa 1888.*

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

Second Lieutenant Smith was reported as *missing in action* on April 14, 1917, during the fighting at Monchy-le-Preux. Six months later, on October 14, 1917, he was officially *presumed dead*.

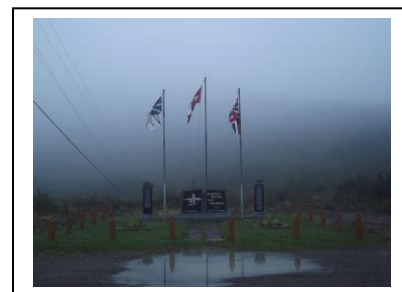
**Lieutenant Stephen Kevin Smith (Regimental Number 931 – the two brothers ‘signed-up’ together): Wounded at Beaumont-Hamel and again in April of 1918 during the German offensive on the Franco-Belgian frontier, he was to survive the conflict and to become a well-known Newfoundland politician.*

For unspecified reasons – perhaps due to the reports later received, although many of them were submitted subsequent to any revision of his record – Second Lieutenant Smith’s personal file was later amended, on May 11 of 1917 so as to read *presumed killed in action*.



Obviously this decision was not made available to everyone as he was still subsequently officially *presumed dead* in certain quarters.

Samuel Reginald Smith had enlisted at twenty-two years of age: date of birth in Harbour Breton, Newfoundland, August 15, 1892 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



(The photograph of Private(?) Smith on the previous page is from the Provincial Archives.)

(Right: *The War Memorial in the community of Harbour Breton honours the sacrifice of Samuel R. Smith. – photograph from 2016*)

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

Newfoundland Regiment

Smith, 2nd/Lt. S. R.

Information received by the British Red Cross from 1981 Pte. H. King, (Eye Witness).

On April 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 2nd/Lt. Smith. I knew him quite well. Cpl. Cuffe was alive in the same shell hole and he and I were captured later.



(Right above: *A family monument to members of the Smith family and which stands in St. Joseph's Roman Catholic(?) Cemetery in Harbour Breton, commemorates the sacrifice of Samuel R. Smith. – photograph from 1916*)

(continued)

Second Lieutenant Samuel Reginald Smith 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.