

Lance Corporal Frederick Ernest Snow, MM, (Regimental Number 685), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



His recorded prior to military service recorded as that of a *machinist* working for a weekly wage of five dollars, Frederick Ernest Snow presented himself for medical examination on November 30, 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.

Two weeks plus a single day later, Frederick (known as *Fred*) Snow 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 appears that he was also to attest on that same December 14.

Now for Private Snow, Number 685, there was to be a seven-week waiting period.

On the fourth day of February of 1915, the first reenforcements – 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 Snow 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 Snow 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)

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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 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 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 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 Snow, as also cited beforehand, would arrive from Newfoundland on February 16 of 1915.

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Some three months later, on May 11, and three 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 reenforcements 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 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 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, '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 2nd (*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 Snow 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.



(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, 1915, Private Snow 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 below: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1st 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.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was 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 above: No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives)

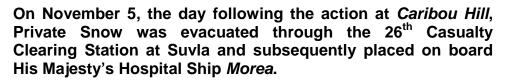
(Right: An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives)

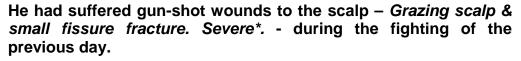
*Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight — let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.



On November 4 of that autumn there was to be a somewhat confused action at a place to be later named as *Caribou Hill* when the Newfoundlanders set out to take possession of an enemy sniper's post on a rise half-way between the opposing lines. An officer, a non-commissioned officer, and six private soldiers were to be involved, later to be joined by a further officer and other re-enforcements. The result of the operation was a skirmish that caused several casualties among the Newfoundlanders, of which two fatalities, and saw several decorations awarded (see below).

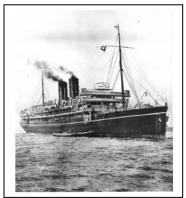
(Right: A photo taken at the time of Caribou Hill, scene of the engagement described above. Since then it has been difficult to re-trace and to identify the exact site, even though the terrain has apparently not changed a great deal. – from Provincial Archives)





(Right: The image of 'Morea' is from a South Australian Maritime Museum web-site. A ship built for the Peninsula & Oriental Steam Navigation Company, she was requisitioned to serve during the Great War as a hospital ship, a troop transport and finally and armed merchant cruiser. She then returned to her pre-War service in 1919 to serve for some ten more years before being sold and broken up in Japan in 1930.)





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*It must be remembered that these were the days before antibiotics when the least complaint was always susceptible to infection. Such wounds often required months to cure.

Admitted on November 10 into the Military Hospital, Tigne, on the British-held Mediterranean island of Malta, Private Snow was thereupon operated on for that...small fissure fracture...to his skull.

(Right above: One of the several British military hospitals on the island of Malta, disused and abandoned since the country became independent in 1964 – photograph from 2011)

Twelve days later, on the 22nd of that same November, Private Snow was once again placed on board ship, on this occasion it was His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Egypt*, for passage back to the United Kingdom.





(Right above: 'Egypt' was launched in 1897 having been built to serve on the route between Great Britain and India. Some seventeen years afterwards, at the outset of the Great War, she was requisitioned to be converted into a hospital ship. The vessel survived the conflict only to sink in the English Channel in 1922, after a collision with a French ship, the 'Seine'. – the image is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

Upon his arrival in England, Private Snow thereupon was transferred to and was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the south-west Borough of Wandsworth on November 29. The report of his condition there follows:

...No. 685. Private Fred. Ernest Snow, who was previously reported at 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth, suffering from gunshot wound in head, is being treated for granulating wound of the skull: that there is no mental change, nor any paralysis, and that his condition is satisfactory... (excerpt from a letter to Mr. George Snow)

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

(Right: A party of Newfoundland patients. dressed in hospital uniform but otherwise unfortunately unidentified, seen here convalescing in the grounds of the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

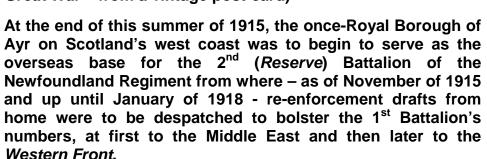




Discharged on January 5, Private Snow was granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed those military personnel released from hospital, a leave following which he was to be briefly posted to the Regimental Depot at Ayr where he reported...to duty...on January 14 – a second source says days later. He apparently was to spend those days of leave in London, having given his address at the time as: Peel House, Regency Street, Vauxhall Bridge Road*.

*This was the venue of the...'Queen George & Queen Mary's Club for the Overseas Forces'...which was described as being...'intended to provide comfortable sleeping and living accommodation for members of the Dominions and other overseas contingents...'

(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)



(Right above: 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.

Some-three-and-a-half months after having been evacuated from the Gallipoli Peninsula, Private Snow was decorated, becoming a recipient of the Military Medal. The citation, to be issued well after the event, reads '...for bravery in the field. Awarded posthumously for good work at Caribou Hill, Gallipoli, November 4th, 1915*.' - London Gazette, 19th February, 1917











Other papers suggest that the medal was awarded for his later conduct at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916...'for conspicuous gallantry on the day of his death' – except that the Military Medal, until 1979, could not be awarded posthumously, a fact that was only belatedly recognized.

*Awarded for an action during which the proposed recipient was killed. The Victoria Cross and 'Mentioned in Despatches' were the only exceptions.

(Preceding page: A further view of the approximate area of Caribou Hill and of the Newfoundland positions almost a century later: Since that era, the Turkish Government has allowed very little development of any of the entire Gallipoli Peninsula, and a goodly number of Turkish memorials are to be found there. – photograph from 2011)

It would appear to be during this period spent at Ayr that Private Snow received promotion and was appointed to the rank of lance corporal, although the specific date is not to be found among his documents. There are also suggestions in his file of the rank of lance corporal before this time, and references to *Private Snow* afterwards as well*.

*Examples: the London Gazette of February 19 of 1917 refers to him as a lance corporal at the time of the action which merited his Military Medal, November 4, 1915, but this is not so in the citation itself where no rank appears to be mentioned whatsoever.

On April 13 of 1916 Lance Corporal Snow was a soldier of the 3rd Re-enforcement Draft which passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot. Disembarking on the 15th, the detachment made its way to the Base for final training and organization before seeking out the parent unit.



(Right: British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration)

*Apparently the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been 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 notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.

It eventually was to do so – and Lance Corporal Snow was to report back...to duty – on April 26, at a time when the Newfoundland Battalion, by now on the Western Front, was in forward positions in front of the village of Englebelmer in the... Département de la Somme.

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During the period which had followed Private Snow's departure for medical attention back on November 5 of 1915, more than five months previously, things were to worsen at *Gallipoli** for the British in general and for the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in particular.

*The French know the place as 'Les Dardanelles' while the Turks call it 'Çanakkale'.

November 26 of 1915 would see perhaps the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at Gallipoli; there was to be a freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm 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, had been those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

As the final days and weeks had passed at *Suvla Bay*, the British position there was to become more and more untenable and thus on the night of December 19-20, they had abandoned the area – 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 would the respite 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)





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

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

This final operation had taken 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 to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.

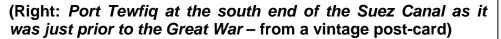


(Right above: 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in January of 1916 and by the Newfoundlanders who were to be the last soldiers off the beach: Vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011)

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 had then immediately been 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: 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 had boarded 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 portcity of Marseilles, on March 22.

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





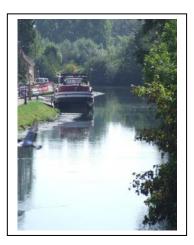


Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train had found its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably 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 have 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 then ordered to move further up for the first time into forward positions on April 22.

*It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and twohundred 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: A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?))



The 1st Battalion was still serving in the same positions when a further re-enforcement draft...from Scotland via Rouen...had arrived to report...to duty. And as seen in an earlier paragraph, Lance Corporal Snow had been a non-commissioned officer of that particular draft.

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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.

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)

(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.

(Right: Wounded at the Somme being transported in handcarts from the forward area for further medical attention – from Le Miroir)



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 carnage 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...?)

The son of George Snow, blacksmith, and of Nina (also found as Dina(h)Snow (née *Tibbs*)* – to whom he had allocated as of January, 1915, a daily sixty cents from his pay - of 116, Pleasant Street, St. John's, he was also brother to William-Edwin, John, Effie-Beatrice, Marian, Victor-George.



*The couple was married on January 21 of 1886.

Lance Corporal Snow was reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with 'C' Company during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. Some six months later, on December 31, he was officially *presumed dead*.

Frederick (*Fred*) Ernest Snow had enlisted at nineteen years of age: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, October 14, 1895 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



(The photograph of Private Snow at right is from the Provincial Archives.)

Lance Corporal Frederick Ernest Snow, MM, 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).





