



Lance Corporal Alfred James Stacey MM (Regimental Number 1747) is interred in St. Julien Dressing Station Cemetery – Grave reference I. B. 4.

His occupation before military service recorded as that of a *fisherman*, Alfred James Stacey was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. He presented himself at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on July 30, 1915, for a medical examination. It was a procedure which would see him pronounced as being...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

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On the same day as that medical assessment, July 30, and at the same venue, the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, Albert Stacey was then to enlist. He was thereupon engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar, this to be supplemented by a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

And it must have been only hours afterwards again that there then came the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On yet the same day he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, at which moment Alfred James Stacey thus became...*a soldier of the King.*

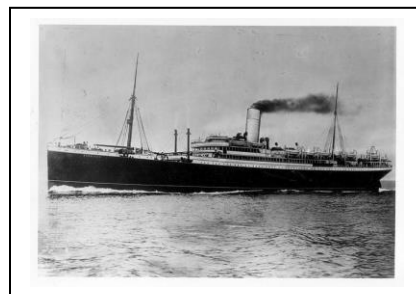
There was now to be a lengthy waiting-period for the recruits of this draft, designated as 'G' Company, before they were to depart from Newfoundland for...*overseas service.*

Private Stacey, Regimental Number 1747, was not to be called upon until October 27, after a period of thirteen weeks less a day. Where he was to spend this intervening time appears not to have been recorded although he may possibly have returned to work, and perhaps even travelled back to his family and friends on Sound Island in Placentia Bay – all of which is, however, only speculation.

On the above-mentioned October 27, 'G' Company left St. John's by train to cross 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: *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.*)



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

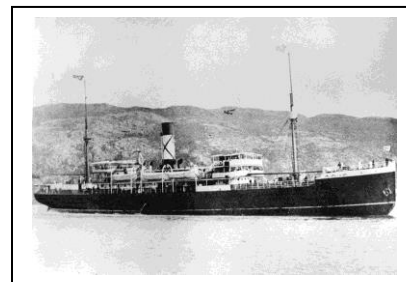


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(Preceding page: *The once-busy Royal Navy facility and harbour of Devonport almost a century after the Great War – photograph from 2012(?)*)

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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: *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 was to 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*.

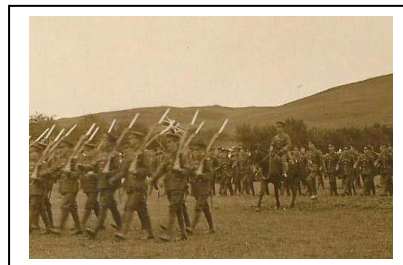
**These five Companies, while a contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.*

(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*.

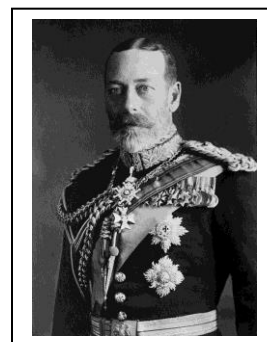
This had been an important moment: the Company's arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment's numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength* of a battalion which could be posted on...active service.



**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: *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.)

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.

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(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 sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion*.

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

This then had been the situation at the time of Private Stacey's arrival there: the new Regimental Depot had still been in the throes of its establishment when he and his comrades-in-arms of 'G' Company were to finish their journey to Scotland on November 10 of 1915; thus, as related in a preceding paragraph, the new-comers were required to be quartered at Gales, some sixteen kilometres further up the coast – but apparently more than sixty kilometres distant by road.

It was during this posting to the Regimental Depot, on June 30, 1916, and only days before his departure to France on...*active service*..., that Private Stacey was prevailed upon to re-enlist...*for the duration of the War**. On the same piece of paper the venue has also been documented: he signed it at the *Racecourse*.

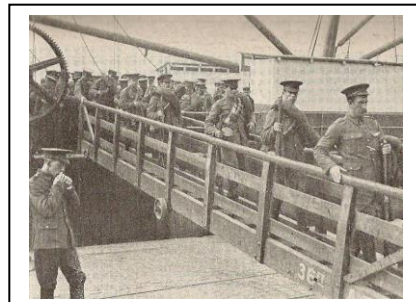


(Right above: The new race-course at Ayr - opened in 1907 – where some of the men of the Regiment were to be billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden: a part of the present grandstand is original. – photo from 2012)

***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. Later recruits signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.**

By that time of his departure he, Private Stacey, had already seen the dispatch of the first seven re-enforcement drafts from Ayr: the First directly to *Gallipoli*; the Second which had sailed to Egypt before being turned back to land in France; and the Third which had sailed straight to France at the end of the month of March. Those which had sailed since – and those which were to do so later on – also had gone or would also go directly to the Continent.

Private Stacey had not been selected to serve in any of the first seven drafts sent from the Regimental Depot; he was to be posted in Scotland for some eight months altogether before his turn would come. When it *did* come, his draft was to be dispatched directly to France.



(Right: *British troops disembark at an earlier date in the War at Rouen on their way to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

On July 9, the 8th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr with Private Stacey among its ranks, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the morrow, the 10th, the detachment disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot which had been established there. There the draft spent time in final training and organization* before proceeding on to its rendezvous with the 1st Battalion.

**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.*

There must have been a sense of urgency at the time: the 1st Newfoundland Battalion had suffered terribly at a place called Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, and on July 6 its depleted strength, as reported by the Regimental War Diary, still numbered no more than one-hundred sixty-eight *other ranks*, one-sixth of establishment battalion (fighting) strength.

Private Stacey was one of the contingent of sixty *other ranks* to report...*to duty*...on July 24 – the War Diary says July 25 – in the small rural town of Beauval, far removed from the front. The parent Newfoundland unit had been there since only the day before and it was to stay there for just two more days before - in company with the new-comers - marching the twenty kilometres to the station at Candas on the 26th to board a train.

* * * * *

A year prior to this juncture, in the early summer of 1915, the Regimental Depot in Scotland had only just been beginning to evolve: both 'E' and 'F' Companies had only then been beginning their time of training at Ayr; as for Albert Stacey, he had just been at the point of enlistment and attestation at home, and he still some three more months to wait before the call was to come to sail overseas to the United Kingdom.

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The aforementioned four senior companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', of the Newfoundland Regiment, having now become the 1st Battalion had at this same time been attached to the 88th Infantry Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and had been dispatched to...active service.



(Right above: *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.)*



(Right: *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.)*

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: *'Kangaroo Beach', where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion of the 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)*



When the Newfoundlanders had landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* they were to disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

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

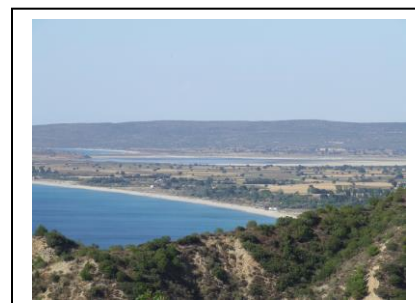
Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and those of their allies, the French, and it would finally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



(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.*

(Right: *This is Anzac Bay in the fore-ground with the Salt Lake in the centre further away. The bottom of Suvla Bay is just to be seen on the left and adjacent to the Salt Lake, and further away again. The hills in the distance and the ones from which this photograph was taken were held by the Turks and formed a horse-shoe around the plain surrounding the Salt Lake - which was where the British and Newfoundlanders were stationed. – photograph from 2011*)



(Right: *No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives*)

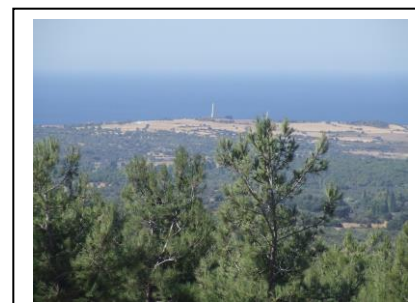
November 26 would see what perhaps was to be the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at *Gallipoli*; there was to be a freak rain, snow and ice-storm strike the *Suvla Bay* area and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival rather 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.

By this time the situation there had daily been becoming more and more untenable, thus on the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the entire 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 thereupon 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*.

(Preceding page: *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 by now simply 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 above: *'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.*

(Right above: *'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 evacuation of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*, the Newfoundland unit had been ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria and beyond.

On January 14, the Australian Expeditionary Force Transport *Nestor* had arrived there with the 1st Battalion on board. The vessel was to sail just after mid-day on the 16th, on its way southwards down the Suez Canal to Port Suez where she had docked early on the morrow and where the Newfoundlanders had landed and marched to their encampment.

There they were to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.

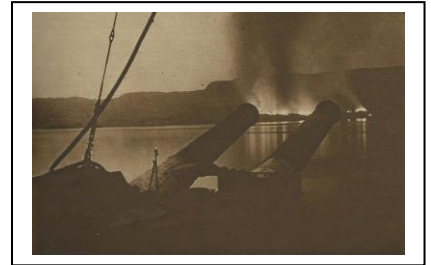
(Right: *The image of the Blue Funnel Line vessel Nestor is from the Shipspotting.com web-site. The vessel was launched and fitted in 1912-1913 and was to serve much of her commercial life until 1950 plying the routes between Britain and Australia.*



During the Great War she served mainly in the transport of Australian troops and was requisitioned once again in 1940 for government service in the Second World War. In 1950 she was broken up.)

****Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was already becoming 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 were to board His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage back up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France.



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

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

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



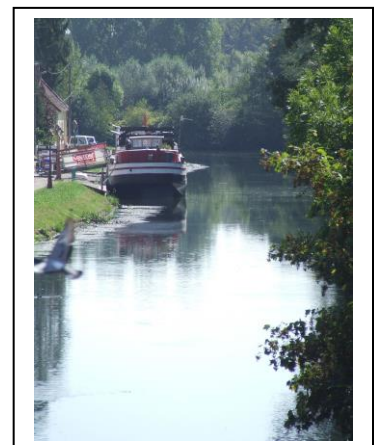
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseille.

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.

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

It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge which they had then traversed on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to have become a part of their history.



On April 13, the entire 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*.

(Right: A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?))

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 had then been 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 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)

Having then been withdrawn at the end of that April to the areas of Maily-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders had soon been 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: 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.*



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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 greatest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the carnage of the...*First Battle of the Somme...was to continue for four and a half months.*



(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village. – photographs from 2010 & 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...?)*

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 any 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.

There were then a further two days before the unit had marched further again to the rear area and to billets in the village of Maily-Maillet.



(Right: *The re-constructed village of Maily-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John’s East. – photograph from 2009)*

There at Maily-Maillet 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, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1916, the 1st Battalion was still to

number only... *11 officers and 260 rifles*...after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.

A second re-enforcement draft had then arrived days later, on July 21, while the Newfoundland Battalion was at Acheux and then, only three days afterwards – on, July 24, the very day on which the Prime Minister of Newfoundland had visited the unit – a third draft, Private Stacey and his fifty-nine comrades-in-arms, had marched into Beauval and reported.

But whether the twain was to meet appears to have gone un-recorded.

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On July 27-28 of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion - still under establishment battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong – maybe even fewer - even after still further re-enforcement – would move northwards and enter into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.

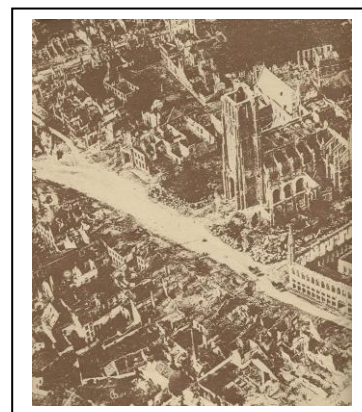
(Right: *The entrance to ‘A’ Company’s quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)



The unit 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.

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 would incur casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.

(Right: *An aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916: it is described as the ‘Ville morte’.* – from *Illustration*)



Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the Newfoundland Battalion would be ordered to return south and was transported back into France, and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

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

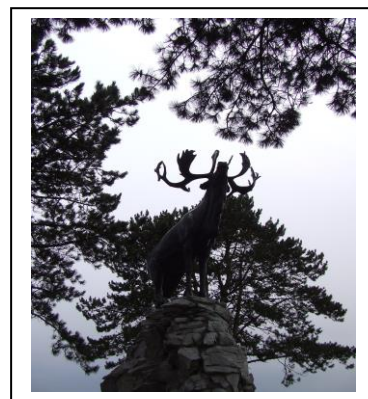
The encounter was to prove to be another ill-conceived and costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.



(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 had been directly involved in any further concerted infantry action in the immediate area of Gueudecourt although, on October 18, it had furnished 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 eventually retired to rear positions from the Gueudecourt area. It had been serving continuously 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*)



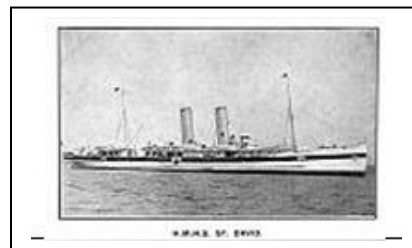
Those Christmas festivities having been completed – turkey dinner washed down with...*real ale*...apparently – there was also to be a Christmas present of sorts for Private Stacey: he received promotion to the rank of lance corporal on December 26, Boxing Day, of that 1916.

After that, it was not to be until a further sixteen days had passed, January 11, that the Newfoundland Battalion would be ordered out of *Corps Reserve* and from its lodgings at *Camps en Amienois* to make its way on foot to the community of Airaines.

From the railway station there it entrained for the small town of Corbie where it thereupon took over billets which it had already occupied for a short period only two months before.

* * * * *

It was while there, on January 13 of the New Year, 1917 – and before the date on which the 1st Newfoundland Battalion was to officially return to...*active service*... - that Lance Corporal Stacey was admitted into the 21st Casualty Clearing Station at Corbie. Having been diagnosed as suffering from myalgia, he was forwarded two days later, on the 15th, to the 12th General Hospital at Rouen. There he apparently remained receiving treatment until February 10 when he was embarked onto His Majesty's Hospital Ship *St. David*.



After the short crossing back to the United Kingdom, Lance Corporal Stacey was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth on February 12, where he was additionally diagnosed as having a case of trench fever.

(Right above: *The image of 'St. David' clad in her war-time hospital-ship garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website. The vessel was a ship built in 1906 to service the crossing from Wales to Ireland for the Great Western Railway but that role was cut short by the Great War which saw 'St. David' and three sister-vessels employed as hospital ships on the cross-Channel routes. She survived the War and returned to her former work until 1933 when she was scrapped.*)



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

Lance Corporal Stacey was now to receive treatment and convalescence in the 3rd London General Hospital until the 14th day of March on which date he was granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital.

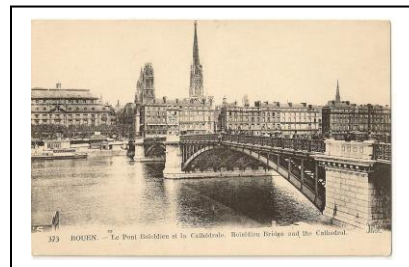


On March 23, following this period of leave, he was sent for a posting to the Regimental Depot at Ayr – and during the summer months to Barry* - a deployment which lasted four-and-a-half months.

(Preceding page: *The Newfoundland Plot in Ayr Cemetery wherein lie fourteen Newfoundlanders whom the Commonwealth War Graves Commission refer to as Canadians – here and elsewhere – photograph from 2014*)

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of Dundee. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.*

It was not until August 5 that the 28th Re-enforcement Draft from Barry – Lance Corporal Stacey among its non-commissioned officers - passed through the English port of Southampton – and then the French port of Rouen – the records say both – before reporting...*to duty*...at the Base Depot at Rouen.



(Right above: *The River Seine flows through the centre of the French city of Rouen – and under the steeples and towers of the venerable gothic cathedral - at or about the time of the Great War. – from a vintage post-card*)

Some three weeks later, a contingent of one-hundred eight *other ranks* from Rouen arrived at its rendezvous with the Newfoundland Battalion at *Penton Camp* just to the north-east of the Belgian town of Poperinghe on August 28, Lance Corporal Stacey among that number. The episode at the *Steenbeek* (see further below) by that date was already a part of the 1st Battalion's history, and the Newfoundland unit – as well as was the rest of the British Army – was now starting a month of re-organization and re-enforcement, preparing for the next efforts in what had already proved to be a less-than-successful summer campaign.

* * * * *

After having parted ways with Lance Corporal Stacey at Corbie all those months before, the Newfoundland Battalion had continued its progress out of Corps Reserve and back up to the forward area and to...*active service*. That recent six-week Christmas respite spent far to the rear now a thing of the past, 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, were to be only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig somewhat cavalierly referred to as *wastage* since the Newfoundland unit had not ventured from its trenches during those several days.

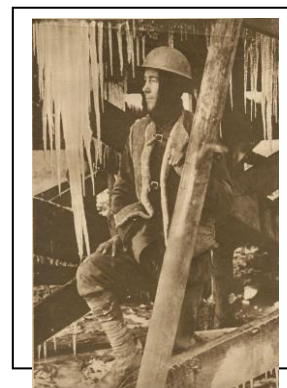
That winter period – as had been and was to be the case of all the winter periods of the *Great War* – would be a time of relative calm, although cold and uncomfortable for most of the combatants of both sides. It was also to be a time of sickness, and the medical facilities were kept busy, particularly, so it seems - from at least Canadian medical documentation - with thousands of cases of dental work.

(continued)

This period had also provided the opportunity to undergo training and familiarization with the new practices and weaponry of war; in the case of the Newfoundland Battalion this had been at least partially undertaken in the vicinity of the communities of Carnoy and Coisy.

(Right below: *A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers, his unit to be relieved by the Newfoundlanders on March 1, enjoys his cigarette in the cold and ice of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel during the winter of 1916-1917. – from Illustration*)

On February 18 the 1st Battalion had begun a five-day trek from Coisy to the forward area where it would return into the firing-line on February 23, relieving a unit of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers. It was at a place called Sailly-Saillisel and the reception offered by the Germans had been lively: after only two days the Battalion had incurred four *dead*, nine *wounded* and three *gassed* without there having been any infantry action. The Newfoundlanders were to be withdrawn on February 25 - to return three days later.



They had carried with them orders for a...*bombing raid*...on the enemy positions at Sailly-Saillisel...to be acted upon on March 1.

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 that sharp engagement at Sailly-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 above: *The fighting during the period of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-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(?)*)

The 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had then been withdrawn to the rear once more, late in the night of March 3-4, where it would now spend almost an entire month. On the morning of March 4, after baths and anti-trench-foot treatment, the personnel – except for the transport which had moved by road – had enjoy the relative luxury of a train to carry them – at least temporarily - away from the war.

After Sailly-Saillisel that month of March had proved to be 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 come from Ayr, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *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.

(Right: *The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War, in early 1916 – from Illustration*)



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



On April 9 the British Army had launched 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.

And while the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* was to be 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 had played its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that began at the place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which finished 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 .*

(Right above: *The Caribou at Monchy-le-Preux stands atop the remains of a German strongpoint in the centre of the re-constructed community. – photograph from 2009(?)*)

(continued)

After this further debacle the remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion had remained in the area of Monchy-le-Preux for but a few days. Its casualty count had been high enough to warrant that it and the Essex Regiment, which had also incurred heavy losses, be amalgamated into a composite battalion until such time as incoming re-enforcements would allow the two units' strengths to once more resemble those of bona fide battalions.

Thirty-eight *other ranks* of a re-enforcement contingent from Rouen had reported to the 1st Battalion on April 18; they had been just in time to march the dozen kilometres or so from Arras up to the line to take over trenches from the Dublin Fusiliers. But they were still only two hundred twenty – plus twelve officers - in number now serving with some two hundred of the Essex Regiment in the aforementioned composite force. The personnel of the 1st Battalion had spent the 19th salvaging equipment and burying the dead and had remained there until the 23rd.

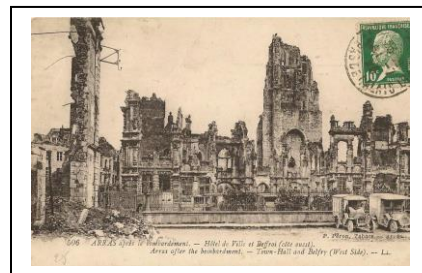


(Right above: *Windmill Cemetery stands about mid-way between Monchy-le-Preux – about three hundred metres behind the photographer – and Les Fosses Farm – three hundred metres to the right along the main road to Arras.– photograph from 2007*)

The final action in which the Newfoundland Battalion was to be involved during the five-week long *Battle of Arras* would be the engagement of April 23 at *Les Fosses Farm*. This had in fact been an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5th, 3rd and 1st Armies.

Apparently it had not been a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1st Battalion, several of the adjacent units having reported being driven back by German counter-attacks, actions accompanied by heavy losses.

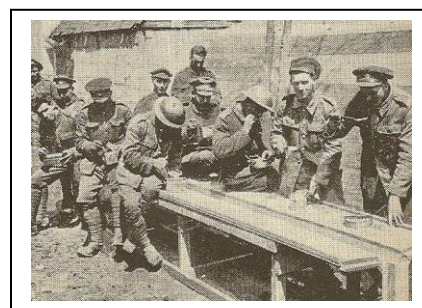
The Newfoundlanders had sustained further losses: ten *killed in action*, three *missing*, and forty-eight *wounded*.



Late on that same evening of April 23, the Newfoundlanders had retired the dozen or so kilometres to the relative calm of Arras.

(Right above: *The City Hall of Arras and its clock-tower in 1919 after some four years of bombardment by German artillery – from a vintage post-card*)

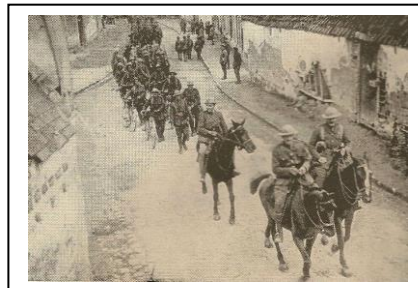
(Right: *Newfoundland troops just after the time of Monchy-le-Preux – from *The War Illustrated**)



The *Battle of Arras* was proceeding to its costly and inconclusive close in mid-month, but the Newfoundland unit was not to be further involved in any further co-ordinated offensive action – it was too exhausted; this now would be a period when the Battalion was to move in a circular fashion on the *Arras Front*, in and out of the trenches.

On May 7 the unit was on the move once again and marching to different billets in Berneville where it would be the subject of a war journalist and photographer.

(Right: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville – not Bonneville - in early May, perhaps the 7th, of 1917 – from *The War Illustrated**)



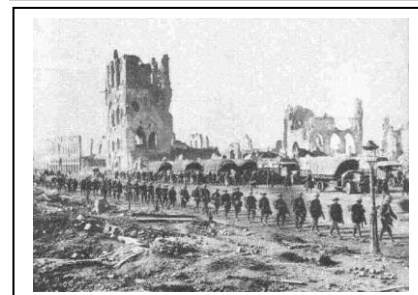
At the outset of June, the 1st Battalion had retired from the line to Bonneville, there to spend its time again re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.

The Newfoundlanders had then soon again been ordered north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the vicinity of Ypres and...*the Salient*, their first posting to be to the banks of the *Yser Canal* just north of the city.



(Right above: *The Yser Canal at a point in the northern outskirts of Ypres almost a century after the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, manned its eastern bank: East is to the right – photograph from 2014*)

This low-lying area, Belgian *Flanders*, the only part of the country unoccupied by German forces, had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917.



(Right above: *Troops arriving from the railway station in single file, march past the vestiges of the historic Cloth Hall and through the rubble of the medieval city centre of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer or early autumn of 1917. – from *Illustration**)



(Right: *An unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from *Illustration**)

Officially designated as the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign was to come to be better known to history simply as *Passchendaele*, having adopted that name from a small village on a not-very high ridge to the north-east that later was to be cited as having been – *ostensibly* - one of the British Army's objectives.

(Right: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1916, after two years of war – from *Illustration**)



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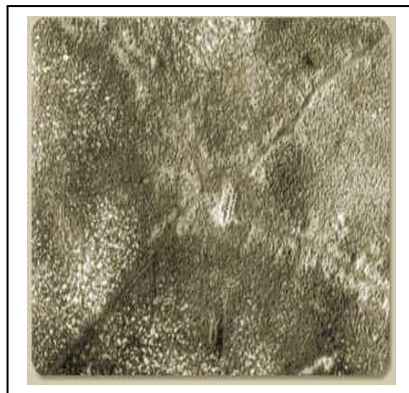
The 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to remain in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army. This had been or was also to be the case with the Australians, the New Zealanders and the Canadians, all of whose troops had floundered or would soon flounder their way across the sodden and shell-torn countryside of Belgian Flanders.

Notably the Newfoundland Battalion at *Passchendaele* was to fight in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16; and at the *Broembeek* (see both immediately below) on October 9.

At the former it would incur nine *killed in action*, ninety-three *wounded*, and one *missing in action*; at the *Broembeek* the cost was to be higher: forty-eight *killed or died of wounds*, one-hundred thirty-two *wounded* and fifteen *missing in action*.

And as seen in an earlier paragraph, it had been at the end of the month of August – after the action at the *Steenbeek* but before that at the *Broembeek* – that Lance Corporal Stacey’s draft had reported to the Newfoundland Battalion at *Penton Camp*

(Right above: *This is the area of the Steenbeek – the stream runs close to the line of trees - and is therefore near to where the Newfoundland Battalion fought the engagement of August 16, 1917. It is some eight kilometres distant from a village called Passchendaele. – photograph from 2010*)



(Right above: *The once-village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1917, after the battle of that name – from Illustration*)

* * * * *

After four weeks of relative calm while re-enforcing and re-organizing, the Newfoundland Battalion went back to war during the last days of September – and as the fighting started once more...so did the rain.

It was then to be only two days after the confrontation of October 9 at the *Broembeek* before the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment marched to the railway station at Elverdinghe, from there to be transported to *Swindon Camp* in the area of Proven, also to the north-east of Poperinghe. Having remained there for five days to be both re-enforced and bombed, on the morning of October 17 the unit was once more to board a train.

By ten-thirty that same evening, the Battalion had arrived just to the west of the city of Arras and would now march the final few kilometres to its billets in the community of Berles-au-Bois.

The Newfoundlanders were still there, at Berles-au-Bois, four weeks and two days later when, on November 17, the 1st Battalion would be ordered yet once again onto a train, on this occasion to travel in a south-easterly direction to the town of Peronne.

From there it began to move further eastward, now on foot, towards the theatre of the battle now imminent.

On November 19, while still on the move, the unit was issued as it went with... *war stores, rations and equipment*. For much of that night it then marched up to the assembly areas from where, at twenty minutes past six on that morning of November 20 – *Zero Hour* – the Newfoundland unit, not being in the first wave of the attack, was to move forward into its forming-up area. From those forward position, some hours later, at ten minutes past ten, bugles blowing, Lance Corporal Stacey and his Battalion advanced to the fray.



(Right above: *The Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai – photograph from 2009*)

This new offensive – apparently initially conceived to be no more than a large-scale raid - the so-called *Battle of Cambrai*, was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders to be directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle was to begin well for the British who had used tanks on a large scale for the first time, but opportunities had been squandered. There were to be no troops available to exploit what was, admittedly, a hoped-for yet unexpected success, and by the close of the battle, the Germans had counter-attacked and the British had relinquished as much – more in places - territory as they had originally gained.

But on the first day all had gone much as planned – and Lance Corporal Stacey had distinguished himself:

It was for his conduct during the action of that first day of the Battle of Cambrai, November 20, 1917, that Lance Corporal Stacey was to be awarded the Military Medal ...'for conspicuous gallantry on and after November 20th. Repeatedly by day and night he carried wounded to the Aid Post and thence into Marcoing under very heavy shell fire. While in the town he sought out on his own initiative the Battalion rations which had been scattered by shell fire, and carried food and water forward to the front line by daylight through heavy shell and machine gun fire. His repeated journeys to the Aid Post with water considerably improved the chances of many wounded men. His work was a fine example to all ranks.' - London Gazette, March 19th, 1918



Nevertheless, the Newfoundland Battalion would once again be dealt with severely, in the vicinity of Marcoing, Masnières - where a Caribou stands today - and in the area of the Canal St-Quentin which flows through both places: of the total of five-hundred fifty-three officers and men who had advanced into battle, two-hundred forty-eight were to become casualties by the end of only the second day*.

(Right: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of the 1st Battalion on November 20; however, whether its capture was ever achieved is at best controversial. – photograph from 2012)*



**At five-hundred fifty-three all ranks – not counting the aforementioned ten per cent reserve - the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment even at the outset of the operation was operating at just over fifty per cent of establishment strength: not that it would have been any consolation had it been known, but a goodly number of battalions in all the British and Dominion forces – with perhaps the exception of the Canadians - were encountering the same problem.*

(Right: *A number of graves of soldiers from the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in Marcoing Military Cemetery. Here, as is almost always the case elsewhere, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, has identified them as being Canadian. – photograph from 2010)*



After the exertions of *Cambrai*, the Newfoundlanders were to be withdrawn from the line, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment by then numbering the strength of only a single company - whereas a full battalion comprises four. The unit had then remained in the vicinity of Humbercourt, to the west of Arras, until December 18 when it was to march to Fressin, some fifty kilometres to the north-west. There the unit would spend both Christmas and New Year. The weather had obliged and had even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow - a bit too much at times apparently.

At the beginning of January of 1918, after that snowy Christmas period spent to the south-west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of the 1st Battalion had returned to Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time. There, like the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences.



(Right above: *By 1918 Ypres was looking like this; some of these broken buildings had been a school which had served as a shelter for troops in the earlier days of the conflict. – from a vintage post-card)*

From January 19 to January 25, several companies of 1st Battalion personnel, both officers and *other ranks* were occupied behind in the lines with the construction of a tramway line near *Kronprinz Farm* – not a farm but a now-disused German pillbox near the village of Passchendaele.



(Preceding page: *Countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) and close to where the Newfoundlanders were building a tram-line in January of 1918 – photograph from 2011*)

The son of Henry Stacey, fisherman, and of Mary Ann Stacey (née *Lockyer**) – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay, and to whom he had willed his all - of Sound Island, Placentia Bay, he was also brother to George, Walter, Phoebe-Alice, Jemima, Cecelia and Caroline.

**The couple had married on March 7, 1889.*

Lance Corporal Stacey was reported as having been...*killed in action*...in Belgium, while serving with 'B' Company in the vicinity of Passchendaele*, on January 20, 1918 - likely the victim of enemy artillery fire behind the lines since the Newfoundland Battalion was not at the front at that time.

His burial on the following day was undertaken and subsequently reported by the Reverend J. Thom, Chaplain to the Forces, of the 14th Battalion, the Hampshire Regiment.

Alfred James Stacey had enlisted at a *declared* twenty-three years and two months of age: date of birth on Sound Island, Newfoundland, April 29, 1892 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

**Passchendaele (today Passendale) was a small village which lent its name to the Battle of 1917. There was also a great deal of fighting in the area on two occasions during 1918, but these campaigns are known by different names.*

Lance Corporal Alfred James Stacey, MM, was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

(continued)



Department
of Militia
W F Rendell Esq Col
Chief Staff Officer

Sound Island
Placentia Bay
Dec 2nd 1918

Dear Mr Rendell

I am in receipt of your esteemed favor of Novem 22 inst and notited remarks in regards to my Dear Sons Medal. I would thank you very much if you will kindly send it to me as we prefer having it forward to us instead of some public gathering. Thanking you verry much for past favors

I am Dear Sir Yours verry

Truly

Henry Stacey

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 4, 2023.