



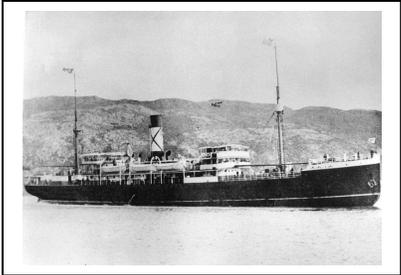
Lance Corporal Rupert King Watts (Regimental Number 276) lies in East Mudros Military Cemetery on the island of Lemnos: Grave reference III. A. 7.

His occupation prior to enlistment being recorded as that of a *clerk* – possibly working for his uncle at *H.C. Watts, General Merchant* of Water Street in Harbour Grace - and earning a monthly thirty dollars, Rupert King Watts presented himself for medical examination in that community on September 1, 1914, precisely four weeks after the *Declaration of War*. It was a procedure which pronounced him...*fit for Foreign Service*.

At some time during the next two days Rupert King Watts made the short journey to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, where he was now to enlist at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (this included a ten-cent Field Allowance) - on September 3. He was a recruit of the First Draft.

Following a four-week wait – although training was to be ongoing – Private Watts attested on October 1 and then, two days following, was to embark on October 3 with the others of the *First Five Hundred* onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting the contingent in St. John's Harbour.

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The ship sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island where she was to join the convoy transporting the 1st Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

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

In the United Kingdom Private Watts trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh Castle – where it provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.

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

It was during the period spent at *Stobs Camp*, that Private Watts received promotion, on June 14, to the rank of lance-corporal – with its five-cents-per-day pay increase.

(Right above: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', were then ordered south to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot; meanwhile the two junior Companies, the later-arrived 'E' and 'F*', were sent to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were 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 – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia*)

**On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service. The 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.*

It had then been during that period spent at Aldershot that Lance Corporal Watts of 'A' Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 14, to re-enlist *for the duration of the war**.

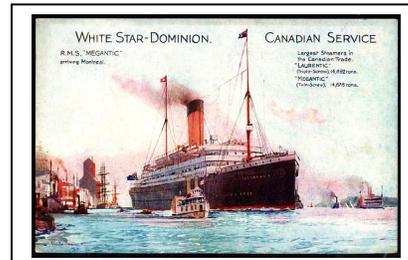
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****At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.***



(Right above: Some of the men of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915 – from The Fighting Newfoundlander by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)



(Right: The image of Megantic, in peace-time a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

On August 20, 1915, Lance Corporal Watts and his charges 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 two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment dis-embarked at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(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)

But despite having reached the close proximity of this latest British military adventure, Lance Corporal Watts was not, however, to serve with the Newfoundland Battalion at *Suvla Bay*.

By then he was likely no longer with his unit*.

****There are no records among his papers to say whether Private Clarke went to Suvla Bay only to be immediately returned to Lemnos, or if he was to land on the island of Lemnos on September 19 when the others of the Newfoundland Battalion were transferred to the 'Prince Abbas' for the fifty-kilometre run-in to the beaches.***

On the date of the Battalion's debarkation at *Suvla Bay* in the early morning of September 20, Lance Corporal Watts was admitted into the 1st Australian Stationary Hospital in the vicinity of the minuscule community of Mudros on the Greek island of Lemnos, there to be diagnosed as *dangerously ill* with dysentery.



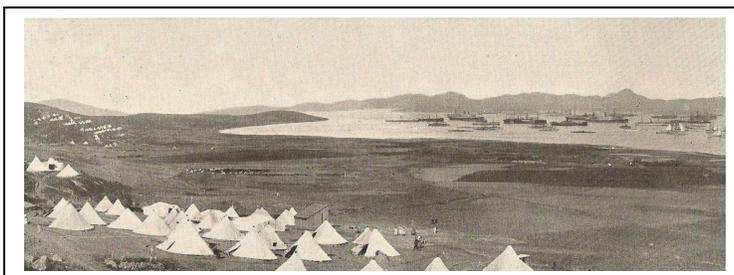
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(Preceding page: *Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros: either Megantic on August 29, Ausonia on September 18, or Prince Abbas on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – from Provincial Archives)*



(Right: *A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla Bay, and where the Newfoundland Battalion served during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*

(Right: *A crowded Mudros Bay and its almost non-existent harbour on the Greek island of Lemnos in late 1915. Visible is also one of the many Allied medical units – the majority under canvas - in the foreground, with another on the hill-side to the rear left. – from Illustration)*



The son of Theodore Thomas Watts, born in Australia (this cited by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission)* (deceased in San Francisco March 11, 1899, perhaps having become naturalized in the United States in 1896), and of Jane (also called *Jeannie* and *Jennie*) Watts (possibly née *McGee*) - also born in Australia, but of Cochrane Street in Harbour Grace by the time of her son's enlistment - Rupert was apparently born at sea, his birth having been registered in Sydney, Australia.



He was also younger brother to Claude, and older brother to sisters Zeta-Mercedes and Belle.

Lance Corporal Watts – a junior non-commissioned officer of 'A' Company - was reported as having *died of sickness* at the 1st Australian Stationary Hospital at Mudros on September 27, 1915. At home, it was the Reverend A. A. Holmes of Harbour Grace who was to be requested to inform his family.

Rupert King Watts had enlisted at the age of twenty-one years.

(Right above: *A further view of East Mudros Military Cemetery on the island of Lemnos – photograph from 2011)*



(*The photograph of Private Watts is from the Provincial Archives.*)

**Henry Corbin Watts Jr. (deceased March, 1917), a general merchant of Harbour Grace, had taken responsibility for his deceased brother's children.*

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Lance Corporal Rupert King Watts was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and 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 12, 2023.