

Sergeant John Bertram Young (Regimental Number 816), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

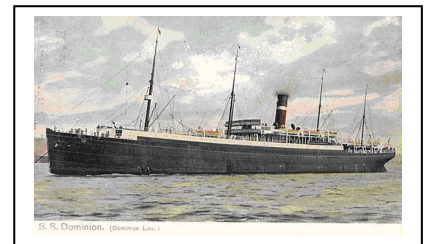


His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a grocer earning a weekly \$8.00, John Bertram Young presented himself for medical examination on December 10, 1914, at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*. He was a recruit of the Second Draft.

Eighteen days after having undergone this medical assessment, John Bertram Young 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 28.

Now for Private Young, Number 815, there was to be a five-week waiting period. How he occupied himself during that period is not recorded among his papers; he may, of course, have returned to work but this is only speculation.

On the fourth day of February of 1915, the first reinforcements – 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 Young 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.*)



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**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.*

(Preceding page: 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.



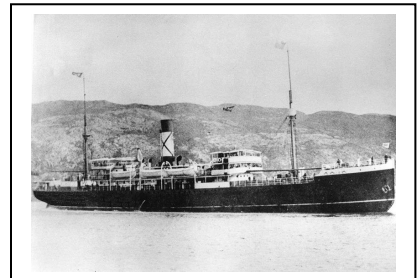
Private Edgar and the other new-comers reported to duty at Edinburgh Castle on February 16.

(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 Young, 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 Newfoundland 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 re-enforcements 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 Young was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion for the *duration of the war**.

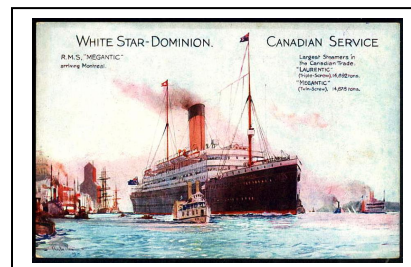
**At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.*

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(Right: 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 Young 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*.

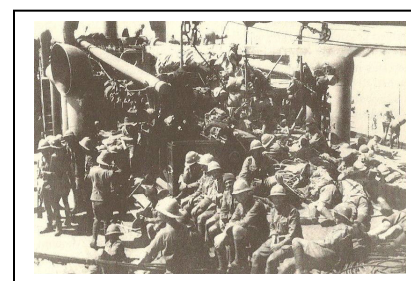


(Right above: The image of *Megantic*, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the *Old Ship Picture Galleries* web-site.)

(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 below: 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.*

During the short period which now followed, things were to worsen at *Gallipoli** for the British in general and the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in particular.

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

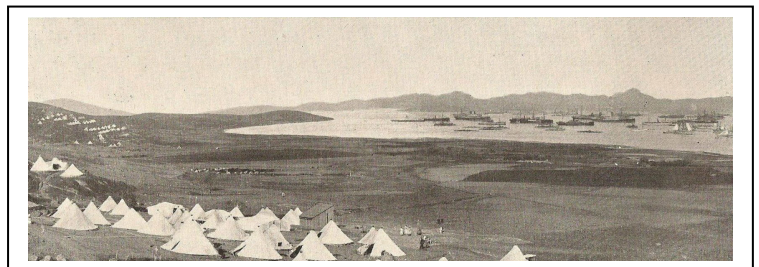
November 26 of 1915 would see perhaps the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at Gallipoli; there was to be a freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm strike the *Suvla Bay* area and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival rather than the 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, were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

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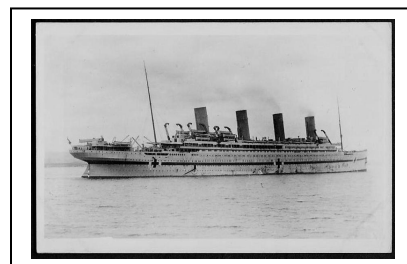
On the day of – likely just prior to - that cataclysmic tempest, November 26, Private Young was admitted complaining of rheumatism into the 54th Casualty Clearing Station at *Suvla Bay*. There he was considered by the medical staff to be...*seriously ill* and, despite, or perhaps because of, the inclement weather, was transferred five days later to the Greek island of Lemnos some seventy kilometres distant, where the Allies had established a goodly number of medical facilities.

The diagnosis had by then been amended to that of myalgia and it was for treatment to this problem that he was taken to the 24th Casualty Clearing Station situated on the eastern side of Mudros Bay.



(Preceding page: *By the end of the year 1915, Mudros Bay and its minuscule harbour were almost completely surrounded by Allied medical facilities – many of them under canvas as seen in the image. – from Illustration.*)

Just over two weeks later, on December 16, he was documented as being at the 87th (or 88th) Field Ambulance, by this time also being treated for frostbite and for trench-foot. January 3 of the New Year, 1916, saw Private Young taking passage to the United Kingdom on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Britannic*, sister ship to *Olympic* and the ill-starred *Titanic*.

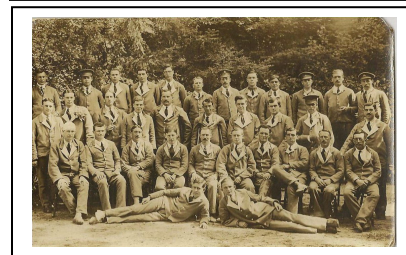


(Right above: *The image of HMHS Britannic clad in her war-time hospital-ship garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. One of the largest vessels afloat at the time, she was to strike a mine in November of 1916 and to sink in less than an hour with a loss of thirty lives.*)

Arriving a week later in England, Private Young was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth on January 10, now also suffering from debility – overall weakness. Released from there on February 28, he was granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed those military personnel discharged from hospital in the United Kingdom. On March 8, he was posted immediately – and perhaps almost inevitably - to the Regimental Depot, reporting *to duty* there on that same date.



(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, 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, Wandsworth – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

At the end of this summer of 1915, the once-Royal Borough of Ayr on Scotland's west coast was to begin to serve as the overseas base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment from where – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 - re-enforcement drafts from home were to be despatched to bolster the 1st Battalion's numbers, at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.



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(Preceding page: *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.*)



It was during this period spent serving in Scotland, that Private Young was promoted on three occasions: to the rank of lance corporal on April 25; to that of corporal some fifteen weeks later, on September 12; then finally to the rank of sergeant on October 27.

On December 30, the 16th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, Sergeant Young one of its non-commissioned officers, embarked in the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the large British Expeditionary Base at Rouen, the capital city of Normandy. The contingent disembarked there on the following day, New Year's Eve, making its way to the nearby British Base Depot for organizing and for final training* before moving on to its rendezvous with the Newfoundland Battalion.



(Right above: *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.*

One of fifty-one *other ranks* to report to duty with 1st Battalion on January 17, while the unit was encamped behind the lines at Carnoy, Sergeant Young was to have his first taste of the *Western Front* trenches only days later when the Newfoundlanders relieved the 1st Battalion of the Border Lancashire Fusiliers at the front in the area of Sailly-Saillisel.



(Right: *Almost a century later, the outskirts of a re-built Carnoy – photograph from March, 2014*)

The Regimental War Diary entry of February 25 reads as follows: *Batt. in same position all day. Heavy bombardment on both sides. Casualties: 3 killed, 6 wounded, 2 gassed. At night Batt. was relieved by 1st KOSBs and marched to HARDECOURT CAMP.*

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The son of Robert Young, clerk with *W.A.B. Sclater (Dry Goods Merchant)* and of Ellen (also found as *Helen*) Young – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay - of Forest Road in St. John's, he was also brother to Bert and James.



Sergeant Young was reported as having been *killed in action* on February 25, 1917, during an enemy artillery bombardment while serving with 'C' Company at Sailly-Saillisel in the French *Département de la Somme*.

John Bertram Young had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, October 27, 1896 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



(Right above: *The fighting during the time 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 2010(?)*)

(Right: *A soldier of the Lancashier Fusiliers and his cigarette in the cold of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel during the winter of 1916-1917 just prior to the arrival of the Newfoundlanders to relieve them in the firing line on February 23 – from Miroir*)

Sergeant John Bertram Young was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – February 8, 2023.