



Private Otto Herbert Adams (Regimental Number 1770), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *farmer*, Otto Herbert Adams 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 August 10 of 1915 for a medical examination. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as being...*fit for Foreign Service*.



On the morrow of that medical assessment, August 11, he was to return to the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, there to enlist. Nicholas Otto Herbert Adams was thereupon to be engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar, to which was to be added a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

And it was then to be only twenty-four hours afterwards again that there then came the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On the following day, August 12, he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, at which moment Otto Herbert Adams thereupon became...*a soldier of the King*.

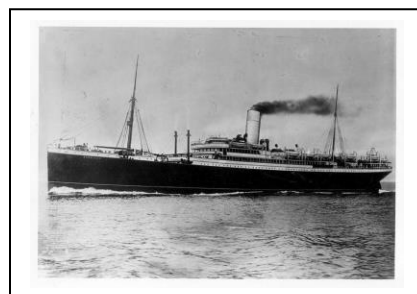
A further, and lengthier, waiting-period was now in store for the recruits of this draft, designated as 'G' Company, before they were to depart from Newfoundland for...*overseas service*.

Private Adams, Regimental Number 1770, was not to be again called upon until October 27, after a period of eleven weeks less a day. Where he was to spend this intervening time appears not to have been recorded although he possibly returned temporarily to his work and surely would have been able to spend time with family and friends on Belvedere Street at the extremity of the city (and just before the old railway track – today Empire Avenue) - but, of course, this is only speculation.

On the above-mentioned date of 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.

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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 above: *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.*)

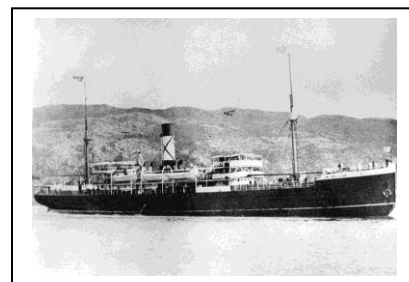


(Right: *The once-busy Royal Navy facility and harbour of Devonport almost a century after the Great War – photograph from 2012(?)*)

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

* * * * *

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 below: *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.



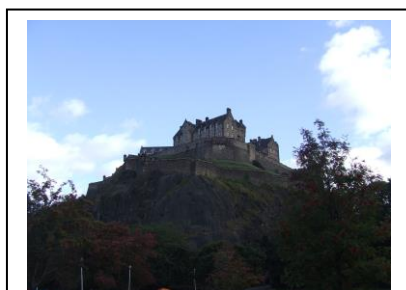
**It was to do so at Devonport through which ‘G’ Company would pass eleven months later.*

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, did not as yet comprise a battalion and would not do 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*.



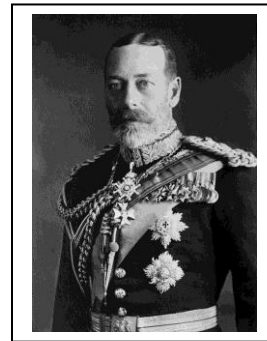
This had been an important moment: the Company’s arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment’s numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength* of a battalion which could be posted on...*active service*.



**A number sufficient to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(Preceding page: *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 above: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – the photograph is from Bain News Services via the Wikipedia web-site.*)

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.

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

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

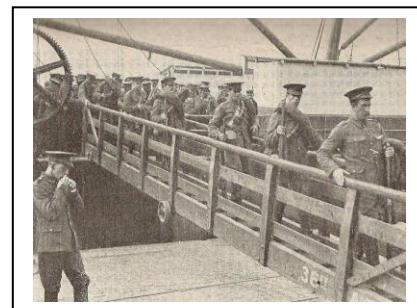
This then had been the situation facing the new-comers: the new Regimental Depot had still been in the throes of its establishment when Private Adams and his comrades-in-arms of 'G' Company were to arrive in Scotland on November 10 of 1915; thus, as related in a preceding paragraph, the new-comers were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

Then, some twenty-eight weeks after having reported to Gales those several months before in November of 1915, on May 24 of the spring of 1916 - and three weeks before his eventual departure on *active service* – Private Adams was prevailed upon to re-enlist...*for the duration of the War**.

**At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for a limited period of a single year. As the War progressed, however, this would likely cause problems and they were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.*

By the time that he, Private Adams, was eventually to sail from the United Kingdom to...*active service*...he had witnessed the departure of *five* re-enforcement drafts from Ayr: In mid-November the first – already cited in an earlier paragraph - had sailed for the Middle East to serve at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*; the second had been a convoluted adventure – the draft had taken ship in mid-March for Egypt but upon arrival there had been obliged to turn around for a return voyage as far as the French Mediterranean port-city of *Marseille*. From that time on, however, the drafts were all to proceed directly across the English Channel to France.

It was on June 14 of 1916, that the 6th Re-enforcement Draft – with Private Adams among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of *Southampton* en route to the Continent. On the following day, the 15th, it disembarked in *Rouen*, the capital city of *Normandy* and the site of the large *British Expeditionary Force Base Depot* where the contingent was now to spend time in final training and organizing* before moving on to a rendezvous with the parent 1st Battalion of the *Newfoundland Regiment*.

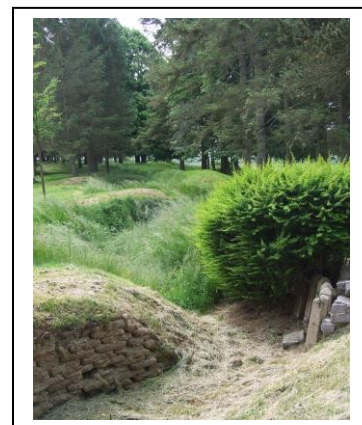


(Right above: *British troops disembark at an earlier time in the War at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

**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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

A draft of sixty-six men from Rouen – Private Adams one of that number - would arrive to join the parent unit at *Louvencourt* on June 30*. At 9:15 that same evening, most of the *Newfoundlanders* – minus the ten per cent *Reserve Company*** but including many of the new-comers - marched from there to their assigned...*forming-up place trenches i.e. rear line of trenches in our usual sector* (from the 1st Battalion War Diary).

(Right: *Just inside the entrance to the Newfoundland Memorial Park is to be found the re-constituted forming-up trench from where the 1st Newfoundland Battalion attacked on the morning of July 1. – photograph from 2010*)



****Had the attack gone ahead on June 30 as initially had been planned, those men might not have been flung into the imminent maelstrom. Bad weather – fog which had restricted aerial surveillance – had decided the High Command to postpone the attack for one day.***

*****Private Adams was to march with these re-enforcements on the next day.***

* * * * *

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 Otto Herbert Adams, he was as yet only at the point of enlistment and attestation at home, and he still had some three months to wait before the call was to come to sail overseas to the United Kingdom.

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: Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, prior to its departure to active service on the Gallipoli Peninsula – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)



On August 20 of 1915, the Newfoundland Battalion had embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks. There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1st Battalion was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



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

(Right: 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)



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(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 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.

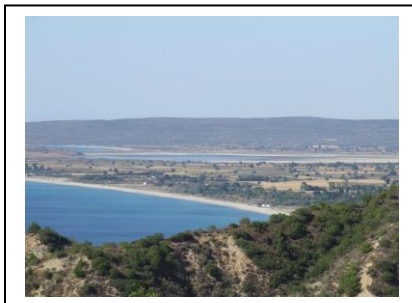
Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion would now serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire Gallipoli Campaign, including the operation at Suvla Bay, had been proving to be little more than a debacle:

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



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

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



November 26 would see 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*.



(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*)

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 under shell-fire 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*)

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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.*)



(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*)



**Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was already becoming a theatre of war.*

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

After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st Battalion were to board His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage back up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France. 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.

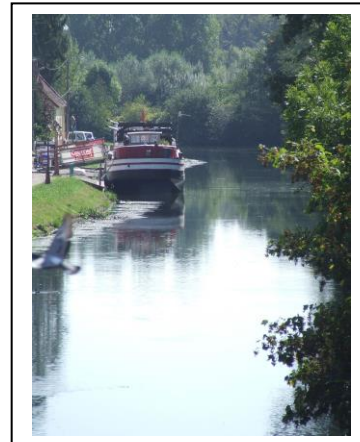


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It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably travelled unused in a separate wagon. Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure 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 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 1st Battalion had subsequently marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where it would be billeted, would receive reinforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.



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

Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front* in mid-April, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit was to then be ordered to move further up for the first time into forward positions on April 22.

**It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment Battalion, were then the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*



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

Having then been withdrawn at the beginning of that month of May to the areas of Mailly-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing for the upcoming British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, that flowed – and still does so today – through the region.

And it was, as related in an earlier paragraph, on the very eve of the onset of that campaign that Private Adams' draft of sixty-six men dispatched from the Base Depot at Rouen, arrived to report to the 1st Battalion at Louvencourt.

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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 front lines down the hill towards the Y Ravine Cemetery visible in the distance and which today stands atop a part of the German front-line defences of the time: 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.*

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 Somme* was to continue for four and a half months.



(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village. – photographs from 2010 and 2015*)

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



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 separating Beaumont from Hamel.

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(Right below: *The Somme as it still flows today between the town of Albert and the city of Amiens – photograph from 2009*)

Private Adams was not one of those who marched away from Louvencourt on the evening of June 30, and thus he was not to figure in the fighting of the morning of July 1 with the Newfoundland Battalion at Beaumont-Hamel; he was one of that ten per cent reserve held at Louvencourt and not called forward until about two o'clock in the afternoon of that day when the fighting had greatly subsided.



**The well-known roll-call of July 2 of those who survived the battle unscathed was not officially recorded until two days later. The roll call of those who had been in the ten per cent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three men held back for most of the day at Louvencourt was apparently also recorded officially only later. Thus the inscription 'With Battalion 4/7/16' on certain records.*

After the events of the first day of the...*First Battle of the Somme*, 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.

It had then been a further two days before the unit had marched further again to the rear area and to billets in the village of Mailly-Maillet.

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

There on July 11, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven reinforcements – 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 manpower having arrived, 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.



Ten days later a further re-enforcement draft from the Regimental Depot at Ayr had arrived via the Divisional Base Depot at Rouen and had presented itself in the community of Acheux to which the 1st Battalion had withdrawn four days before.

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Days later, having marched from Acheux to the provincial town of Beauval, on July 27-28 of 1916, the 1st Battalion - still under establishment battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, maybe fewer even after a third re-enforcement draft of sixty *other ranks* on July 24 – moved northwards and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.



It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel.

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

The Salient – close to the front lines for almost the entire fifty-two month conflict - was to be relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there; yet they nonetheless would incur casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.

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

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

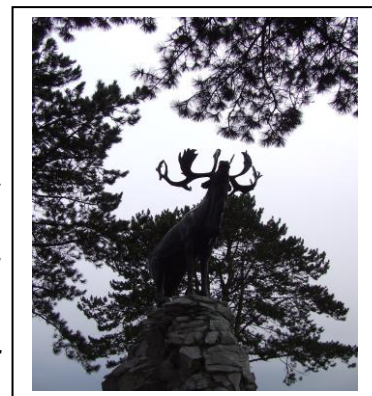
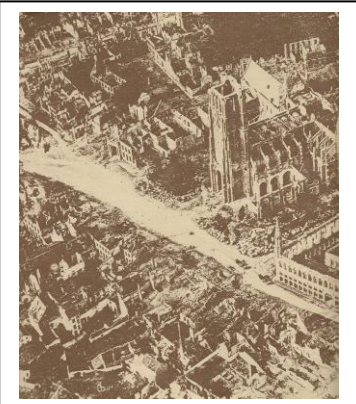
Four days after that return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had again been ordered to the offensive; it was to be at a place called Gueudecourt, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel.

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

(Right above: *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*)

(continued)



After October 12, the Newfoundland Battalion was not to be immediately directly involved in any further concerted infantry action in the immediate area of Gueudecourt although, on October 18, it had supplied two-hundred fifty men to act as stretcher-bearers in an attack undertaken by troops of two British regiments, the Hampshires and the Worcestershires, of the 88th Brigade.

(Right: *Stretcher-bearers not only shared the dangers of the battle-field with their arms-bearing comrades, but they often spent a longer period of time exposed to those same perils. This photograph was likely taken during First Somme. – from Illustration*)



On October 30, the Newfoundland unit had eventually been retired to rear positions from the Gueudecourt area. It had been serving in front-line and support positions for three weeks less a day.

The Newfoundlanders were now to spend two weeks withdrawn to the area of Ville-sous-Corbie, re-enforcing and reorganizing and it was not to be until November 15 that the 1st Battalion began to wend its way back up to the front lines.



(Right above: *A typical British Army Camp during rather inclement winter conditions somewhere on the Continent – from a vintage post-card*)

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.

After those Christmas festivities – turkey dinner washed down with...*real ale*...apparently – it was not to be until 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.

After that recent six-week Christmas respite spent in *Corps Reserve* far to the rear, the Newfoundlanders were to *officially* return to *active service* on January 23, although they apparently had already returned to the trenches by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

Those casualties, however, were to be only some of those everyday thousands whom Douglas Haig somewhat cavalierly referred to as *wastage* since the Newfoundland unit did not venture from its trenches during those several days.

However, 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 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.

And as has been related in an earlier paragraph, this period 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 was at least partially undertaken in the vicinity of the communities of Carnoy and Coisy.

On February 18 the 1st Battalion began a five-day trek back from Coisy to the forward area where it went back 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 was 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 withdrawn on February 25 to return three days later.



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

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

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(?)*)

After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March would 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 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.



(Right above: *The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, encamped at Meaulté – from The War Illustrated*)

(continued)

On March 29, the Newfoundlanders began 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 was to launch an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was to be the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a major French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties – just over four thousand - this attack was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, its only positive episode to be the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday, 1917.



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 below: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the western – in 1917, the British – side of the community: The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

The 1st Battalion was to play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at the place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish 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 .*

* * * * *

Four days before the attack at Monchy-le-Preux, on April 10, while on the march towards Arras, Private Adams had apparently already incurred the displeasure of his superiors and, although the exact charge seems not to be documented among his files, he was awarded seven days of *Field Punishment No. 2* – being kept in shackles, but in all likelihood only when not marching - by his Commanding Officer.

But the worst was yet to come:

...Charged with desertion for leaving the trenches while under shell-fire, he was found guilty and was sentenced* to suffer death by being shot. This sentence was commuted to one of ten years PS to be suspended, suspension to date 31/5/17 but the case will be brought forward for further consideration on 31/8/1917 - KIA 9/10/17**

Auth: 3rd Army C. M. 69324 88 Bge. No. C. A. 157

**He was sentenced on May 23, 1917.*

***Penal Servitude (prison); hard labour?*

There seem to be no record as to when Private Adams re-joined his unit. However, most likely it was after or even on May 31, 1917, the date on which his sentence was suspended, since he surely up until that time would have been held in confinement

It is not clear from his files whether the ten days of Field Punishment and the Court-Martial are related, except that he was awarded the FP for ten days on April 10 and then only four days later, on April 14, was in prison awaiting trial – all of which suggests that they were.

Neither does there appear to exist among the available documents any detail of the charge brought against him apart from... 'leaving the trenches while under shell-fire': the last time that the unit had been exposed to enemy artillery-fire had been at Sailly-Saillisel on the first days of March.

His case went as high as the Commander-in-Chief of the Third Army, Lieutenant-General Allenby, who approved the above commutation until the last day of August. (He, Allenby, was replaced as C-in-C on June 9.) At some time before that August 31 the sentence was again commuted for further consideration, on this occasion by the Officer Commanding the 88th Infantry Brigade – to which the 1st Newfoundland Battalion was attached – Lieutenant-Colonel Nelson: the new date was to be November 30, 1917.

* * * * *

After the further debacle of April 14, the remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion 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.

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

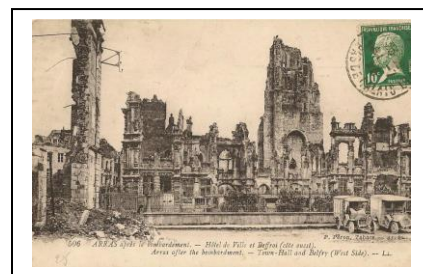
(Right: *Windmill Cemetery stands about mid-way between Monchy-le-Preux – about three hundred metres behind the photographer – and Les Fosses Farm – three hundred metres to the right along the main road to Arras.– photograph from 2007)*



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 was in fact an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5th, 3rd and 1st Armies.

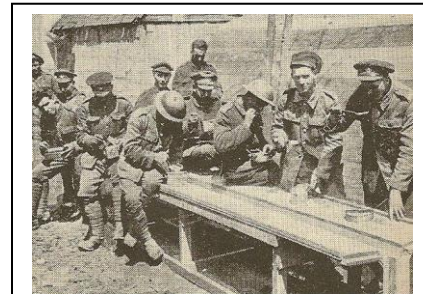
It was apparently not to be a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1st Battalion, several of the adjacent units reporting having been driven back by German counter-attacks, actions accompanied by heavy losses.

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



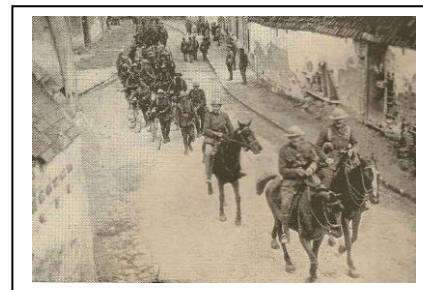
Late, on that same evening of April 23, the Newfoundlanders had retired the dozen or so kilometres to the relative calm of Arras.

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

The *Battle of Arras* was now 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 be moving in a circular fashion on the Arras front, in and out of the trenches.



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

(Right above: *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 in training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.

And, as suggested above – but without any evidence to offer – this may have been the moment when Private Adams was to re-join the Newfoundland Battalion.

* * * * *

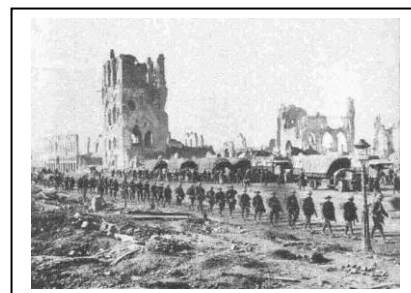
The Newfoundlanders were then soon once again to be moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the vicinity of Ypres and...*the Salient*, their first posting to be to the banks of the *Yser Canal* just to the north of the city.



(Right: *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: *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*)



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

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.



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

(continued)

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

(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*)

Private Reid was most likely to have served at the *Steenbeek*. But he was not to do so at the *Broembeek*; nor was he then seem to have served with the Newfoundland Battalion during the *Battle of Cambrai* (see below) in November of 1917 – but he may have done so with another unit of the 88th Brigade

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

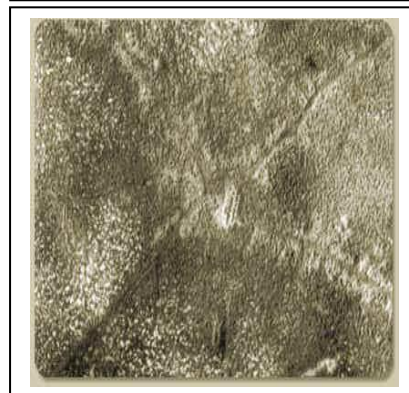
(Right: *In September of 2009 the Broembeek was a small, innocuous stream. In October of 1917 it was full to overflowing, transforming the adjacent countryside into a quagmire. – photograph from 2009*)

The son of Thomas Daniel Adams (former stonemason, labourer, farmer, deceased February 22, 1920) and of Theresa Frances (*Fanny*) Adams (*née Holloway**) – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay and to whom he had willed his all - of 26, Belvedere Street, St. John's (later of 81, LeMarchant Road) - he also was brother to Beatrice-Blanche, Victoria, Minnie-Emma, Alexander, Frederick-William, James-Pulner, Thomas, and Ernest.

**The couple married on October 17, 1885.*

Private Adams was at first reported as...*missing in action*...on October 9, 1917, while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting at the *Broembeek*, Belgium, during *Third Ypres: Passchendaele*.

However, a subsequent report dated 18/12/17 and submitted by a Lieutenant Massey, 50th Division *Salvage & Burial Officer*, recorded the identification of his remains and their interment on or about that same date. Private Adams' documentation was thus amended so as to read...*killed in action or died of wounds on or shortly after 9/10/1917*.



Otto Herbert Adams had enlisted at the *declared* age of eighteen years and three months – although his mother also claims him to have enlisted at age sixteen years and six months*. (Thus far his date of birth has been elusive.)

**She also claimed that the effects later sent to her were not those of her son, despite the affirmation of such by the authorities. Apparently the belt sent back was that of the Ambulance Service, and amongst his other ‘possessions’ were post-cards, a book of poetry and a French dictionary – curious items indeed for a young man who could neither read nor write.*

Private Otto Herbert Adams was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



From D. A. G.

Effects Branch (Men)

G. H. Q. 3rd Echelon

1770, O. H. Adams 1st Newfoundland Regiment

**50th Divisional Burial Officer
23/7/1918**

Reference attached. Having been able to get in touch with the NCO attached to Lieut. Massey whilst he was acting as Burial Officer, I am enabled to give you the following particulars. The effects as sent to the Base on 6/11/17 were obtained from a partially buried body found by Lieut. Massey's party in the neighbourhood of Langemark, Belgium, and it was therefore presumably the body of the above-mentioned soldier as a Paybook was obtained bearing the above particulars. This AB 64 was also forwarded to you but I note does not appear on list of effects on attached sheet.

An attempt at re-interment was made by Lt. Massey's party, but had to be abandoned in its initial stages owing to severe enemy shelling. Upon the burial party's return to the spot on the following day in order to complete the burial it was discovered that the ground had been greatly cut up by shell-fire and the body had completely disappeared.

(continued)

There were no identification discs upon the body when found by Mr. Massey's party and it is opined that those were removed by the individuals who had originally interred the body.

No burial return was rendered by Mr. Massey, he apparently not considering it advisable under the circumstances as above stated.

Personally I do not think there is any doubt that the body was that of Pte Adams.

**D. W. Smith
Lieutenant
50th Div. Salvage & Burial Officer**

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 5, 2023.