

(Acting) Company Quarter Master Sergeant Gordon Clarence Bastow (Regimental Number 930), 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 reported as that of a *clerk* with a weekly income of nine dollars, Gordon Clarence Bastow presented himself for medical examination on December 2, 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.

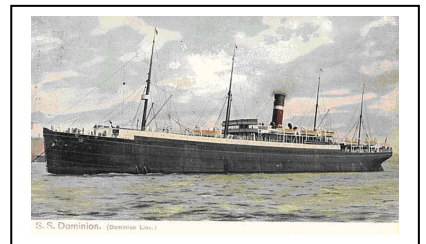
Just twelve days after having undergone this medical assessment, he was to return to the *C.L.B. Armoury*, there to enlist – engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar a day plus a ten-cent *Field Allowance*. It appears that he was also to attest, pledging his allegiance to the King-Emperor on that same December 14.

Now for Private Bastow, Number 930, there was to be a seven-week waiting period. How he occupied himself during that period is not recorded among his papers; he may, of course, have returned temporarily to work but this is only speculation*.

****The St. John's Curling Club was to be used as barracks but this may not have been until later in 1915. In any case, most of the early recruits were from the city and were likely to have remained at home until proceeding overseas.***

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.

(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.*)



(continued)

The vessel was then to sail - and Private Bastow thus departed Newfoundland through the ice for overseas service - a day later again, on February 5, for trans-Atlantic passage to the United Kingdom.

**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 weeks 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 as the *first* Newfoundland Regiment contingent had 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.



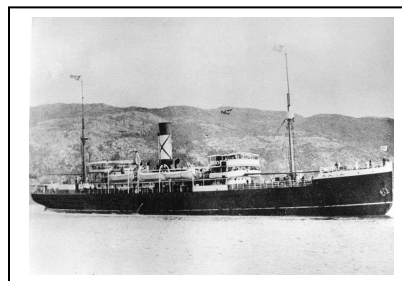
Private Bastow and the other new-comers reported...to duty...at Edinburgh Castle on February 16 of 1915.

(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 February, 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 – they 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: 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 in 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 Loch Ness; 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 Bastow, 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 according to a letter written by Captain Eric Ayre - the entire Newfoundland unit, by this time also comprising ‘D’ and ‘E’ Companies arrived from Newfoundland, 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 more re-enforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915. It was an all-important arrival which 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*)

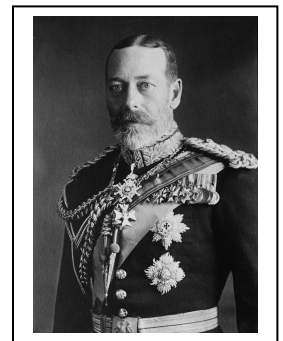


**This was approximately fifteen hundred, sufficient to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

On the second day 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 *Camp 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 a town on Scotland’s west coast, the Royal Burgh of Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the first re-enforcements dispatched to the 1st Battalion.

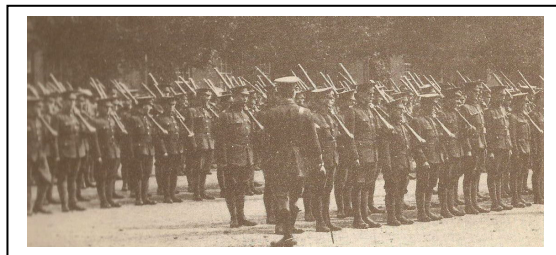
(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – the photograph is from Bain News Services via the Wikipedia web-site.*)



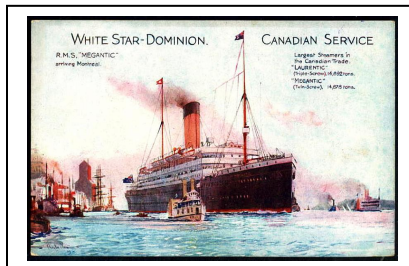
It was during this period at *Aldershot*, on August 15, that Private Bastow was prevailed upon to re-enlist, on this occasion for the *duration of the war**.

***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...for the duration.**

(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 Bastow 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: 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: *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: *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 were to wreak 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 to be afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

Private Bastow, however, was days later to fall victim to enemy action.

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On the second day of December, the day after re-enforcements from Scotland had reported...*to duty...*with the Newfoundland Battalion, Private Bastow was to incur gun-shot wounds to his left side; he was thus evacuated from *Suvla Bay* – possibly via the Greek island of Lemnos – on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Nevasa* for passage to St. Paul's Hospital on the British-held Mediterranean island of Malta.



He arrived there perhaps on December 4 - although a further two sources have December 8-9 and several also refer him as lance corporal – although a specific order has this promotion made only on July 12, after Beaumont-Hamel.

(Preceding page: *The image of HMHS 'Nevasa' clad in her war-time hospital-ship garb, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. A new ship – her maiden voyage for the British India Steam Navigation Company made in 1913 – she was requisitioned in January, 1915, as a hospital ship fitted for six-hundred sixty sick and wounded. In 1918 she became a troop transport, a role she was again to play twenty years later throughout the next world conflict of 1939 to 1945.*)

It was a little over two months later that, on February 5, Private – or Lance Corporal - Bastow was sent from St. Paul's to a new convalescent camp, opened only days before at *Mellieha Bay*, also on Malta*.

On March 14, Lance Corporal/ Private Bastow was reported as having been admitted into...*St. Michael's Hosp. Cp...*but there is no further documentation as to whether he had encountered further medical problems or if this was just a subsequent stage in his convalescence.

(Right: *One of the many now-disused – ever since the island's independence in 1964 - British medical facilities which still stand abandoned on the once-British island of Malta – photograph from 2011*)



The documentation next reports that Lance Corporal/ Private Bastow had taken ship in Alexandria – thus he had most likely been discharged from Malta...*to duty...*at that port-city and to the British Sidi Bishr Base Depot - but no date is affixed. Neither is there any date recorded of the day on which he landed in Marseille where he passed – for no apparently recorded reason - through the hands of the 88th Field Ambulance.



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

It is recorded, though, that he reported back...*to duty...*with the parent 1st Newfoundland Battalion in the village of Louvencourt, arriving there on April 8, the same day as did the 2nd Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, a detachment of two officers and one-hundred forty *other ranks* which had been sent from the United Kingdom to Egypt only to be immediately returned to the French Mediterranean port of Marseille* where it would disembark on April 3. It was then to travel northwards by train, finally to join the 1st Battalion, as seen above, in the village of Louvencourt in the French...*Département de la Somme*.

**Marseilles in English, Marseille in French*

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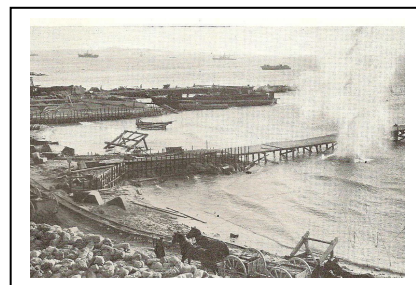
As this draft was to be the only re-enforcement to report to the 1st Battalion during that period, it may well be that Lance Corporal/ Private Bastow had joined its ranks in Egypt or later in Marseille as it would have been highly improbable that he travel alone.

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In the meantime, after Lance Corporal/ Private Bastow's departure for medical attention, the British – and thus Newfoundland - positions at *Suvla Bay* were to become more and more untenable and thus on the night of December 19-20, the area had been abandoned – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form part of the rear-guard.



Some of the Battalion personnel were to be evacuated to the nearby island of Imbros, some to Lemnos, further away; but in neither case had the respite been of a long duration; the 1st Battalion would be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right above: *Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached: The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011*)

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

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

This final operation had taken place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion to furnish part of the British rear-guard on this second occasion also.

**Lieutenant Owen Steele of St. John's, Newfoundland, is cited as having been the last soldier of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to step into the final small boat to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.*



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

On January 14, the Australian Expeditionary Force Transport *Nestor* had arrived in Alexandria 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*.

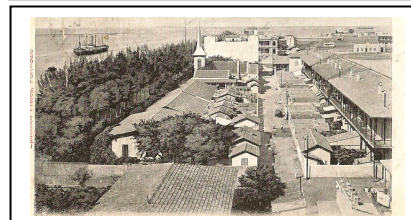
(Right: *The image of the Blue Funnel Line vessel Nestor is from the Shipspotting.com web-site. The vessel was launched and fitted in 1912-1913 and was to serve much of her commercial life until 1950 plying the routes between Britain and Australia. During the Great War she served mainly in the transport of Australian troops and was requisitioned 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 and published in Illustration*)



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



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

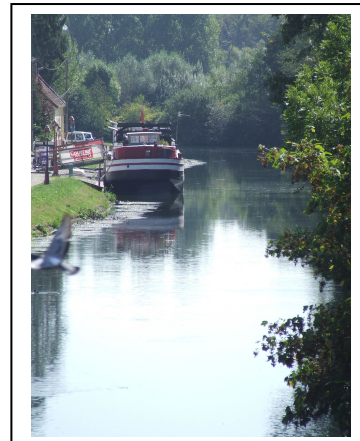
After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st Battalion were to board His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage back up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France.



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

(Right above: *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.

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

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.

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

And it had been, of course, and as recorded in an earlier paragraph, that during this march towards the forward area, on April 8, Lance Corporal Bastow and the 2nd Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, were to report to the Newfoundland Battalion while it had been resting in the community of Louvencourt.



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On April 13, the 1st Battalion now 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*. Days later again, 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.

Having then been withdrawn at the end of that April to the areas of Mailly-Maillet and the afore-mentioned 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.



**It may be of interest to know 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 to the right in the photograph – photograph from 2009*)

(Right: *Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park – photograph from 2009(?)*)



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



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*.

**Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion's casualties was to be incurred during the advance from the third line of British trenches to the first line from where the attack proper was to be made, and while struggling through British wire laid to protect the British positions from any German attack.*



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

There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand were recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds*.

It was to be the largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the carnage of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.



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

In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man's-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.

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

Lance Corporal Bastow was not one of those who was to figure in the fighting of the morning of July 1 with the 1st Battalion at Beaumont-Hamel, but his name was included on the unit's nominal roll; it is therefore possible that he had been seconded to another unit or, more likely, that he was one of the ten per cent reserve of fourteen officers and eighty-three *other ranks* held at Louvencourt and not called forward until late in the afternoon of that day when the fighting had all but 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 officially recorded only later. Thus the inscription 'With Battalion 4/7/16' on certain records.*

(Right: *another part of the reconstituted battlefield, here showing the British front lines, in the Newfoundland Park at Beaumont-Hamel: today the wire serves only to keep the tourists out of the trenches. – photograph from 2010(?)*)

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such was the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it was to be feared that a 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 - 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 then marched further again to the rear area and to billets in the village of Mailly-Maillet.



(Right above: *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 re-enforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – reported *to duty*. They would be the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power having arrived, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1916, the 1st Battalion still numbered

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

Almost certainly because of the losses incurred at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 apart from his other qualities, Lance Corporal Bastow was appointed to the rank of company quartermaster-sergeant (*acting*) on July 12. The 1st Battalion was out of the line, billeted at Mailly-Maillet as seen above, awaiting imminent re-enforcements – and orders.

There at Mailly-Maillet on July 11, the day prior to this latest promotion a welcome 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.

Of course, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had not been the only unit in the British Army to have incurred horrific losses on July 1, 1916, even though it had indeed been one of the most devastated. But even with its depleted numbers, the Battalion was needed and, after that first re-enforcement, it had almost immediately again been ordered to man the trenches of the front line: as of that July 14, undermanned as seen above, the Newfoundlanders began another tour in the trenches where...*we were shelled heavily by enemy's 5.9 howitzers and a good deal of damage was done to the trenches* (excerpt from the 1st Battalion War Diary).

A second re-enforcement draft from Rouen had then arrived days later, on July 21, while the Newfoundland Battalion was at Acheux and then, only three days afterwards – at the very time day that the Prime Minister of Newfoundland had visited the unit – a third draft of sixty other ranks had arrived in Beauval and reported...*to duty*.



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

(Right: *The same re-constructed ramparts as shown above, viewed from just outside the city walls and the far side of the moat which still partially surrounds the place – image from 2010*)



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 north and enter the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.



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(Preceding page: *Canadian trenches in Sanctuary Wood, not far removed from the Newfoundland Battalion's positions during August and September of 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 above: *Railway Wood, the Newfoundland positions at the time, almost a century later – a monument to the twelve Royal Engineers buried alive there may just be perceived on the periphery of the trees – photograph from 2014*)



And it was to be there in *the Salient* in the sector of a place called *Railway Wood*, that the Newfoundland Battalion would soon be serving after its transfer from France.

(Right above: *The already-battered city of Ypres seen here towards the end of the year 1915 – and some eight months before the Newfoundlanders were to be posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card*)

On October 8, 1916, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the Newfoundland Battalion had been ordered to return southwards.

The unit was thereupon to be transported by train back into France, back into the area of the...*First Battle of – the Somme*.



Just four days after unit's return to France from Belgium, on October 12 of 1916, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had again been ordered to take 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*.

(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*)

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

(continued)

But on October 11, the day prior to the attack, with the Newfoundland Battalion already in position in trenches to the north-east of the remnants of Gueudecourt and poised for the attack of the following day, it was to be the Germans who would strike first.

(Right: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of the Newfoundland Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916. – photograph from 2012*)



The Regimental War Diarist's entry for that October 11 is brief: *Front line very heavily shelled. 2 officers and 43 O.R. Casualties. Received orders to advance our line on 12th.*

The son of Marldon (also found as *Malcolm*) Allan Bastow, auctioneer, commission agent, and proprietor of *Central Auction Market*, and of Fanny Jane Bastow (née *Atwill – also found as Atwell*)* – to whom he had allotted fifty cents per day from his pay – of 203, Pleasant Street (later of Cornwall Avenue) in St. John's, he was also brother to Leslie-Okes, Hugh-Allan, Herbert, William, Marjorie and to Bernice.



**The couple had married on July 11, 1881.*

CQMS Bastow was reported as having been...*killed in action*...on October 11, 1916, while serving in the trenches at Gueudecourt with 'C' Company.

Gordon Clarence Bastow had enlisted at a *declared* twenty years of age: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, July 17, 1894 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



The above photograph of Private Bastow is from the Provincial Archives.

(Right above: *A family memorial – seen on the left - which today stands in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's commemorates the sacrifice of CQMS Bastow. – photograph from 2015.*

(Acting) Company Quartermaster-Sergeant Gordon Clarence Bastow 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 1, 2023.