



**Private Walter Bowe (Regimental Number 4575) is interred in the United Church Cemetery in Cupids.**

**His occupation prior to enlistment military service recorded as that of a *miner*, Walter Bowe presented himself for medical examination at the Regimental Headquarters in the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury*\* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on April 22, 1918. It was a procedure which would pronounce him as ...*Fit for Foreign Service*.**

**(continued)**

***\*The building was to serve as the Regimental Headquarters in Newfoundland for the duration of the conflict.***

It was to be on the day of that medical assessment, April 22, and at the same venue, that Walter Bowe would enlist. He was thus engaged...*for the duration of the war\**...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

***\*At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits – as of or about May of 1916 - signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.***

Only some few hours were now to follow before there then came to pass, while still at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On that same twenty-second day of that month of April he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Walter Bowe became...*a soldier of the King.*

Private Bowe, Number 4575, was not to leave for *overseas service* until seven weeks and some days later, but how he was now to spend that prolonged interval after his attestation does not appear to have been documented. It may be that he was to spend at least some of that time at his family home in the Conception Bay community of Cupids but that is only speculation and it is likely that he was to be posted for most or all of it in barracks in the capital city.

He is documented as having...*Embarked for Overseas with draft 11-6-18*...but whether it was by ship or by train (then ferry then train) that Private Bowe and his contingent travelled is not clear – both appear to be recorded or suggested. In either case the destination was to be Halifax, Nova Scotia, Dominion of Canada, from where the draft was to take passage across the Atlantic to the United Kingdom.

Unfortunately, the identity of the vessel on board which the trans-ocean journey was to be made is not to be found among Private Bowe's papers. We are therefore able to know neither the dates of his departure from Canada or his arrival in Great Britain, nor the port where he and his draft from Newfoundland was to disembark.

All that may be said is that upon arrival, Private Bowe and his comrades-in-arms were to make their way to the Regimental Depot and the Headquarters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the by-then Royal Newfoundland Regiment which by that time had been established at *Hazely Down Camp* in the south of England.

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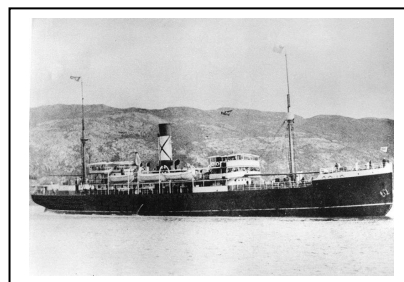
Almost four years prior to that summer of 1918 when Private Bowe was to find himself in England, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of



**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: The image of 'Florizel' at anchor in the harbour at St. John's in October of 1914 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 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island. 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.

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

Only days after 'A' and 'B' Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 of 1915, 'C' Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent - would arrive directly – through Liverpool of course - from Newfoundland. On the final day of the month of March it had been the turn of 'D' Company to arrive – they via Halifax as well as Liverpool – to report...*to duty*...at Edinburgh, and then 'E' Company five weeks less a day later again, on May 4\*.



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

*(Right: 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*, 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*.

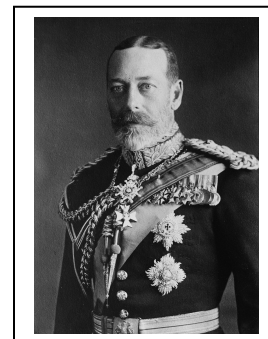
This had been an all-important moment: the Company's arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment's numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength\* of a battalion which could be posted on...*active service*.



*\*A number sufficient for four 'fighting' companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(Right above: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – original photograph from the Provincial Archives*)

From *Stobs Camp*, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the four senior Companies, having by that time become the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 taken from the Bain News Services as presented by 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 first re-enforcements to be dispatched to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(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*)

(continued)



***Ayr was a small town on the west coast of Scotland whose history precedes the year 1205 when it was established as a Royal Burgh (Borough) by the crown of Scotland, an appointment which emphasized the importance of the town as a harbour, market and, later, administrative centre.***

***By the time of the Great War centuries later it was expanding and the River Ayr which had once marked the northern boundary of the place was now flowing through its centre; a new town to the north (Newton-on-Ayr), its population fast-increasing, perhaps encouraged by the coming of the railway, was soon to be housing the majority of the personnel of the Newfoundland Regimental Depot.***



***(Right above: 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.***

**That November 15 of 1915 was to see not only the departure of the 1<sup>st</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr to the Middle East and to the fighting of the *Gallipoli Campaign* but also, only five days prior, the arrival from Newfoundland of ‘G’ Company which would be obliged to take up quarters at *Gailes Camp*, some sixteen kilometres up the coast from Ayr itself – but just over sixty if one went by road.**

**A further seven weeks plus a day were now to pass before the first one-hundred personnel of ‘H’ Company, having sailed in mid-December as recorded in an earlier paragraph, were to present themselves at the Regimental Depot on January 4, some of them to be affected, even fatally, by an ongoing measles epidemic of the time.**

**After that there was then to be an interlude of three months plus several days before the second detachment of ‘H’ Company reported on April 9, 1916, to the Regimental Depot.**

***Note: Until as late as the spring of 1916 it had been the intention to form a 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment to fight on the Continent. In fact it would seem that the last-mentioned contingent of one-hundred sixty-three recruits was to form the nucleus of that unit, while the personnel already at the Depot by this time would form a reserve battalion to serve as a re-enforcement pool for both the fighting units.***

***It could not have been long before a change of plan came about as very soon men of that designated contingent (the second half of ‘H’ Company) were being sent to strengthen the 1<sup>st</sup> Newfoundland Battalion already on the Continent – maybe Beaumont-Hamel had something to do with it.***

**A further draft from Newfoundland arrived at Ayr towards mid-summer, this comprising a two-company detachment and some naval reservists, sailors who, having disembarked from *Sicilian* in Devonport, were to remain there in England.**

**Some weeks later again *Sicilian* would sail from Newfoundland once more to arrive in England in the first week in September, 1916, with two-hundred forty-two recruits on**

board. By the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the month the new-comers, formerly 'C' Company of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion stationed back in St. John's, had reported to the Regimental Depot.

There was now to be a particularly protracted interval before any large numbers re-enforcements were to arrive from Newfoundland – a problem which was later to affect the capabilities of the parent 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion fighting on the Continent.

The main cause of the difficulty, as seen further above, would be those troops which had been dispatched from St. John's and had reached Halifax on board *Florizel* at the end of January, 1917, only to be then held there for some three months before they were to arrive in Scotland where the regulation fourteen weeks of training then awaited them – although in the case of most of this draft, this period was to be much shorter than prescribed.

Another fifty or so recruits would arrive a week later, perhaps on *Olympic*, from Halifax via Liverpool and yet a further one-hundred eighty-five at the beginning of June, but already by this time the lack of young men forthcoming to the recruiting stations in Newfoundland was beginning to prove problematic.

Two months subsequent to this June detachment, a draft of one-hundred four *other ranks*, departed St. John's on August 4, 1917, and reported to Ayr late in that same month. It was not to be followed until October 14 when the next contingent from home arrived.

Then it was on or towards the end of the month of December before any further re-enforcements for the Newfoundland unit set foot in the United Kingdom at a time when both the Regimental Depot and the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion were preparing to abandon their facilities in Scotland.

\* \* \* \* \*

*There was to be only a single exception to the above sequence of departures of re-enforcement contingents from Newfoundland and their arrival at the Regimental Depot in Scotland and that was the draft of March 17. Because of the quarantine in Windsor, Nova Scotia, imposed upon those who had sailed from home on January 31 of 1917, this subsequent contingent, comprising for the most part the Eleventh Recruitment Draft, had thus leap-frogged the Windsor Draft to dock in Liverpool and report to Ayr three weeks and two days ahead of it.*

*By this time the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment serving on the Continent, particularly after the fighting of April 14 at Monchy-le-Preux (see further below), was becoming critically short of personnel and the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion at Ayr was becoming hard-pressed to find replacements for these losses.*

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The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, and was to eventually serve as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers arriving from home were despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(Right: *Wellington Square seen here almost a century after it hosted the officers of the Newfoundland Regiment – photograph from 2012*)



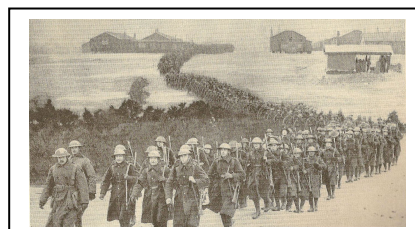
(Right below: *The new race-course at Newton-upon-Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photograph from 2012*)



At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to be able to accommodate the number of new arrivals – plus men from other British regiments which were still being billeted in the area...and a measles epidemic which was to claim the life of several Regiment personnel – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in the town-centre of Ayr itself, and the *other ranks* had been billeted at Newton Park School and if not, in the grandstand or a tented camp at the newly-built racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr.

During the summer months of 1917, as of early July the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment and the Regimental Depot had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.

However, both the Regimental Depot and the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion were very soon to move quarters from the Royal Burgh of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to *Hazely Down Camp*, in the county of Hampshire and not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester. And, as recorded in an earlier paragraph, Hazely Down Camp was where Private Bowe had reported from Newfoundland on an unrecorded date during that summer of 1918.



(Right above: *Troops march through a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918 – image from *The War Illustrated**)

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It was to be from *Hazley Down Camp* that the final re-enforcement drafts were to be despatched to supplement the numbers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. However, according to his War Service Gratuity Form, Private Bowe was never to traverse the English Channel to...*active service*...with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on the Continent.

He was to serve in...*England only*\*.

(continued)

*\*There is a suggestion on a single paper of August, 1918, that he might have been considered for service with the Newfoundland Forestry Corps which was in central Scotland at the time, but there is no other mention of it in his files. He was also at Hazely at the end of September as he is recorded as `confined to barracks` for two days, having decided to absent himself for a number of hours without leave to do so.*



(Right: *The Newfoundland Plot at Magdalen Hill Cemetery, Winchester – photograph from 2011*)

He was apparently still at *Hazely Down Camp* in October when he was admitted on the 17<sup>th</sup> into the *Alexandra Hospital* at not far-distant *Cosham* to spend two days having treatment for a corneal ulcer and for cellulitis – a skin infection – of his left arm.

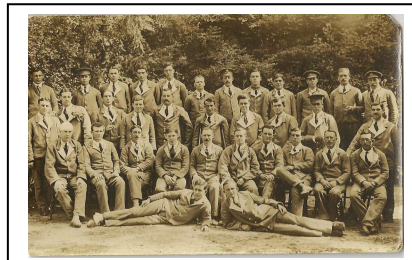
The next report of Private *Bowe* is also of a medical nature, his initial complaint being *keratitis* – an inflammation of the cornea – for which he was once again hospitalized, on this occasion at *Hazely Down Camp Hospital* for the period of February 2 until March 3 of the following year, 1919.

From there he was forwarded to the 3<sup>rd</sup> *London General Hospital* in the Borough of *Wandsworth*, but now not only because of his *keratitis*: Private *Bowe* had by that time been diagnosed as suffering from *tuberculosis*.

(Right: *The main building of what was to become the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1<sup>st</sup> of 1859 to serve as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)

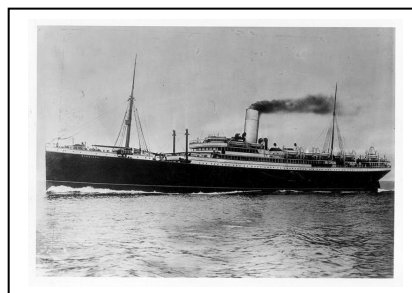


(Right below: *A group of Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, seen here convalescing in the grounds of the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital, Wandsworth – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



Despite the fact – or maybe because of it – that on May 7<sup>th</sup> he was considered to be *progressing favourably*, it was decided to repatriate Private *Bowe*. On May 18 he was transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> *Northern General Hospital* in the port-city of *Liverpool* where he remained until discharged on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

By now categorized as a *Hospital Case* – he was to be placed on board His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* – seen here at right - for the trans-Atlantic crossing – likely directly to *Newfoundland*.



(continued)



Having arrived back in St. John's on June 1, Private Bowe was admitted into the *Escasoni Hospital*\* at which time it was recommended that he be discharged from service and remain in hospital. His discharge was confirmed and came into effect on July 29, 1919.

*\*A house and farm in St. John's were confiscated from its German owner in 1917 by the government for use as a sanatorium, the Escasoni Hospital, for returning service personnel. This institution complemented the privately-funded Jensen Camp on Blackmarsh Road already in service since the previous year. The Escasoni Hospital closed at the end of 1920 and Jensen Camp a month later due to the expansion of a third facility on Topsail Road which became the St. John's Sanitorium.*

While from September 26 to October 6 of 1918 he was well enough to be granted furlough – perhaps to visit Cupids - Walter Bowe's overall condition was not improving.

The son of George Bowe (also found as *Bow*, deceased from asthma on May 19, 1920), former fisherman – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - and Mary Jane Bowe (née *Bussey*\*, deceased from pulmonary tuberculosis on July 2, 1917) of Cupids, District of Port de Grave, he was also brother to Fanny, to William, to James-John, to Beatrice and to Elsie who died at nine months of age.

*\*The couple had been married in the Conception Bay community of Cupids on December 25 (Christmas Day) of 1887.*

Walter Bowe was reported as having...*died of sickness...*, pulmonary tuberculosis, on August 3, 1920.

He had enlisted at a *declared* age of twenty years: however, his birth date in Cupids, Newfoundland, is recorded as 20/10/1899 (on a Discharge Form with his signature just beneath). Brigus Methodist Parish Records nevertheless document his birth on September 14, 1897.

Private Walter Bowe was entitled to the British War Medal for his overseas service.



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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 31, 2023.