

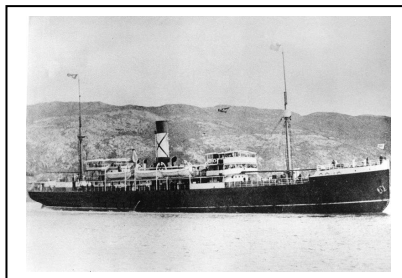
Sergeant James Henry Alfred Carter (Regimental Number 222) lies in Marcoing British Cemetery – Grave reference II. G. 8.

His previous occupation recorded as that of *insurance clerk* earning a one-thousand dollar per annum salary, James Henry Alfred Carter was a recruit of the First Draft. According to his documents he had previously served in the Canadian Militia as a soldier of the 21st Field Battery (*Westmount*)* stationed in or near Montreal.

****While as a Canadian Militia unit, the 21st Battery was prohibited by law from serving outside the borders of the country, this did not preclude it from recruiting on behalf of the newly-forming 'Overseas Batteries' or its personnel from volunteering for service in these new units. The 5th Battery, Canadian Field Artillery, which sailed from Canada in October of 1914, had thus taken many of the 21st Battery 'on strength'.***

James Henry Alfred Carter presented himself for medical examination on August 29, 1914, - a second paper records August 31 - at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which would pronounce him as...*fit for overseas service*. Four days later he enlisted, on September 2 of 1914, engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of \$1.10 (including a daily ten-cent field allowance) - although again a second official paper contradicts this and cites August 29.

Twenty-nine days subsequent to his enlistment, Private Carter attested on October 1 before then embarking two days later again with the others of *The First Five Hundred*, on October 3, onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John's Harbour.



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

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

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



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

(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment parades at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. - courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', were then sent south to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot; meanwhile the two junior Companies, the later-arrived 'E' and 'F*', were sent to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.



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

(continued)

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

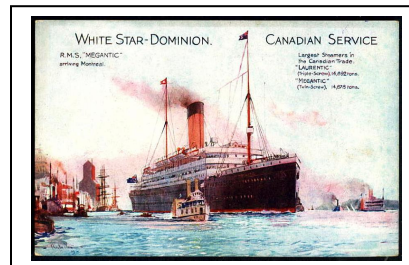
It had then been during that period spent at Aldershot that Private Carter of 'A' Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 14, to re-enlist for the duration of the war*.

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



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

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



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



(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)*



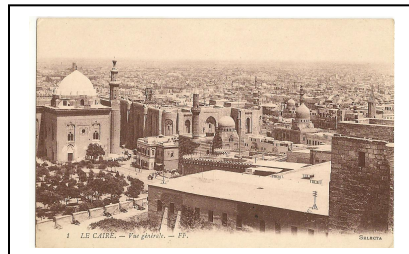
(Right: *Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros: either Megantic on August 29, Ausonia on September 18, or Prince Abbas on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli. – from Provincial Archives)*

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Private Carter was not, however, to serve in *Gallipoli* as his services were apparently necessary for the transport requirements of the then-forming 1st, 2nd and 3rd Composite Battalions. These units were now to be required to serve in Egypt itself.

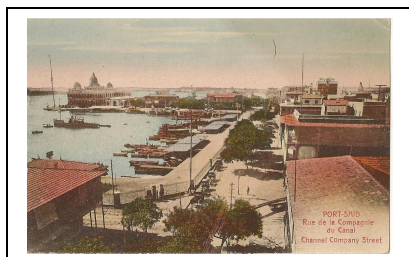
He thus remained behind in Alexandria when the majority of the 1st Battalion sailed for the *Gallipoli Peninsula* on September 13, and was instead to serve during the months that followed on the western Egyptian frontier. There he was stationed in December of 1915, then during the month of January and half of February of 1916 - fighting the Senussi*.



(Right: *Cairo, the capital city of Egypt, at or about the time of the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

**The Senussi was a religious leader who was at the time fomenting unrest among the population of the western Egyptian border area with Libya.*

It was during this period, on November 14, that Private Carter received a first promotion and was elevated to the rank of lance corporal.



The Senussi uprising suppressed, Lance Corporal Carter was posted back to the British Depot of Sidi Bishr, Alexandria, before taking ship at Port Saïd on March 2, 1916. He arrived in the French Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles eight days following, on March 10.



(Right above: *Port Saïd, at the northern end of the Suez Canal, at or about the time of the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

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

From Marseilles Lance Corporal Carter now was likely transported to the major British Base Depot in the area of the Norman city of Rouen. There he would have awaited the arrival of the 3rd Re-enforcement Draft from the Regimental Base Depot in Scotland. He and the draft were thereupon to seek out the parent unit 1st Battalion, it having by that time arrived on the *Western Front* from the Middle East (see further below).

Thus it was on April 15, that the aforementioned re-enforcement draft, most of its number of two-hundred eleven *other ranks* accompanied by two officers having arrived in Rouen from Ayr, was despatched from there to report *to duty* with the Newfoundland Battalion, the unit by then already billeted in the village of Englebelmer some three kilometres behind the lines of the *Western Front*.

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Lance Corporal Carter is not documented as having been among that number, but the 3rd Draft was a contingent recorded as having included not only those from Ayr, but also others from the Middle East such as he, whose departure from there had either been delayed or otherwise amended.

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In the meantime, while Lance Corporal Carter had remained in Egypt, his parent unit had been serving at *Suvla Bay*, the third major British sea-borne landing operation of the *Gallipoli Campaign*.

In fact the whole of the *Campaign* was to be a debacle: Flies, dust, disease, frost-bite, floods – and 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 it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

**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.*

(Right: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve in the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



On the night of December 19-20, 1915, the British were to abandon *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, were to form a part of the rear-guard.

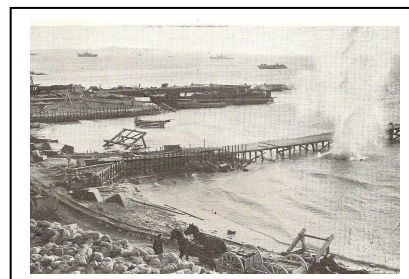
Some of the Battalion personnel were to be evacuated to the nearby island of Imbros, and some to Lemnos, further away, but in neither case would the respite be of a long duration; the 1st Battalion had been transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli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

(Right: *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 in the picture. – photograph from 2011)



The British and the *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps were also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had now been only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Peninsula would be undertaken. This operation had taken place on the night of January 8-9, and the Newfoundland Battalion was to provide some of the rear-guard for this second withdrawal as well*.

(Right: 'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was 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 below: The same 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces and by the Newfoundlanders who were the last soldiers off the beach: vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011)



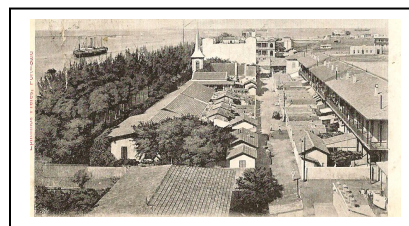
(Right below: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)



After the British evacuation of the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, the 1st Battalion had been sent to Alexandria, having arrived there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were thence to be immediately transferred southward to Suez, one of the ports at the southern end of the canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders as, at the time, the subsequent destination of the Battalion's 29th Division had not yet been decided*.

***Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.**

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



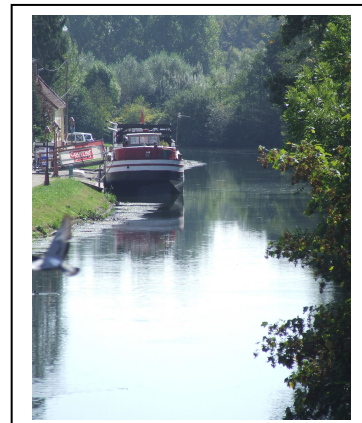
On March 14, the Newfoundlanders had taken ship through Port Tewfiq, also at the southern end of the Suez Canal, for the French port of Marseilles, and had disembarked there on March 22, en route to the Western Front.

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train would arrive at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having travelled unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the local station at two in the morning, the Newfoundlanders still were to have a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

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

It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they had marched on their way from the station. But some three months later, *the Somme* would have become a part of their history.



It was to be there, in the French *Département de la Somme*, on April 15, 1916 – only two days after the arrival there on April 13 of the parent unit - that the 3rd Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr via Rouen – and likely with Lance Corporal Carter one of its NCOs - was to report *to duty* with the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in the village of Englebelmer.

* * * * *

The days following Lance Corporal Carter’s presumed return to his Battalion had been taken up with work in the nearby communication trenches. Only days later again, two Companies – ‘A’ and ‘B’ – had taken over some support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit moved 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 the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles. This was also true on the day of the attack on July 1.*

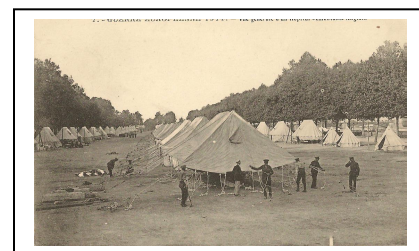
But Lance Corporal Carter would have served little time with his unit on the *Western Front*.

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It must have been, if not upon his arrival at Englebelmer, then within the space of only days – the date apparently unrecorded but certainly before the April 22 noted just above – or even while en route from Rouen, that Lance Corporal Carter was to be admitted into the 89th (or perhaps the 88th) Field Ambulance. His complaint was the ulceration and inflammation of the membrane of his left tibia, this coming as the result of an otherwise unrecorded accident.



Forwarded on the same day from the 88th FA to the 4th Casualty Clearing Station at Lillers, he was to receive further treatment there for five days before, on April 17, being transferred onward to the 2nd General Hospital at Le Havre.



(Right above: *A British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some – from a vintage post-card*)

(continued)

(Preceding page: A British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and whenever the necessity were to arise – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War. Other such medical establishments were often of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card)

At Le Havre it was decided to evacuate Lance Corporal Carter back to the United Kingdom and thus, on April 23, he was placed on board His Majesty’s Hospital Ship *Delta* for the cross-Channel journey. Upon his arrival in England on the following day, April 24, he was admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.



(Right: The image of a peace-time Delta is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. She served as a hospital ship and supply ship from January of 1914 (sic) until March of 1919.)

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



(Right below: A group of Newfoundland patients, the majority unfortunately unidentified, with staff at Wandsworth Hospital: apparently a Joseph is fourth from the right in the second row – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)



Upon his release from hospital, Lance Corporal Carter was granted the customary ten-day furlough – in his case commencing on or about July 23, and likely spent in London since he was to travel from Euston Station on August 1 – a period of leave which was accorded to hospitalized military personnel upon discharge from medical care. Subsequently, Lance Corporal Carter reported to duty, on the same August 1, to the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion at the Regimental Depot.



(Right: A view of Marble Arch, London – in fact, it is technically in the City of Westminster – from 1913, the year prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

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



(Preceding page: An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where the ‘other ranks’ were quartered, is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where lived the officers, is to the right. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)

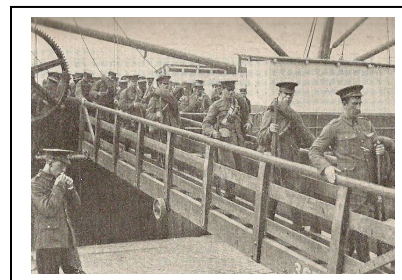
Lance Corporal Carter was to remain at Ayr for the next thirteen months. During this time he was promoted on two further occasions: to the rank of corporal on October 27, 1916, and later, on January 17 of the New Year, 1917, to that of quartermaster sergeant.

Sergeant Carter was to remain posted to Ayr and Barry (see * below) until September of that year.



(Right above: The Newfoundland Plot in Ayr Cemetery, Ayrshire, Scotland, in which lie the remains of fourteen soldiers from the Dominion – photograph from 2014(?))

It was on September 7 of 1917 that Sergeant Carter embarked through the English south-coast port of Southampton with the 29th Re-enforcement Draft from Barry* en route to the French port-city of Rouen and to service once more with the British Expeditionary Force on the *Western Front*. The detachment disembarked two days later, on September 9, and made its way to the major British Expeditionary Force Base Depot near Rouen – with which Sergeant Carter was already familiar - for several days of final training and organization** before leaving to seek out the 1st Battalion, by then in Belgium.



(Right above: British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration)

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion 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.*

***Apparently the standard length of time for this final training was 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 to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

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Since Lance Corporal Carter's departure for medical attention in the middle of April of 1916, the 1st Battalion had served in three of the major confrontations of the Newfoundlanders' war.

The first of these was to come about only some eleven weeks after his parting, and was to be a small part of the larger offensive for which it had been decided by the High Command, back in the earlier part of that year, to bring the Newfoundland Battalion's British 29th Division back from the Middle East to the *Western Front*.

For the remainder of the spring of 1916, the Newfoundlanders were to be preparing for the British campaign of that upcoming summer, the battles to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river flowing through the region, and over which the parent unit of the 1st Battalion had marched only some few weeks previously at Pont-Rémy, *the Somme*.



(Right: A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?))

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 sustained while advancing 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: 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* is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009)

(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel* is a commune, not a village (see below). – photographs from 2010 & 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.



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 would prove to be the biggest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps worse, it was to continue for the next four and a half months.

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it had been 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 - 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 to 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 – had reported *to duty*. They had been 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.

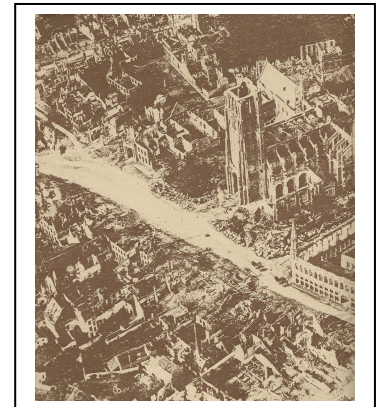
On July 27-28 of 1916, the 1st Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after further re-enforcement – had moved north and entered into Belgium for the first time. It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate 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*)

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

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



Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the 1st Battalion had been ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

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

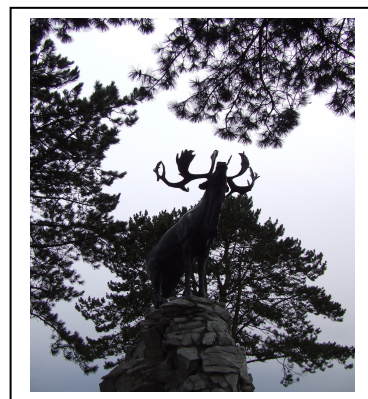
The encounter had proved to be another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

(Right: *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)



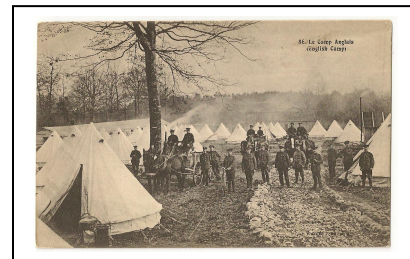
After Gueudecourt, the Newfoundland Battalion was to continue its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period to be broken only by the several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period. It was a time during which the Regimental personnel was to be encamped well behind the lines and in close proximity to the city of Amiens.

(Right: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of the 1st Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916.* – photograph from 2012)



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

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



The only infantry activity directly involving the 1st Battalion during that entire period – from the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and 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 time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time.* - photograph from 2009(?))



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(Preceding page: *The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1st Battalion encamped in huts at Meaulté – from *The War Illustrated**)

After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March was to be a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they had now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events. They even had had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



On March 29, the 1st Battalion had begun to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond. The march was to finish amid the rubble of a village called Monchy-le-Preux.

(Right above: *The remnants of the Grande Place of the city of Arras in early 1916 after some eighteen months of bombardment – from *Illustration**)

On April 9 the British Army had launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties this attack was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, its only positive episode having been the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday, 1917.



(Right above: *The Canadian National Memorial which has stood on Vimy Ridge since 1936 – photograph from 2010*)

While the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.



The 1st Battalion was to play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at a 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 men of the Battalion and one from the Essex Regiment .*

(Right above: *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*)

(continued)

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

The final action in which the Newfoundland Battalion was to be involved during the *Battle of Arras* would be the already-noted confrontation of April 23 at *Les Fosses Farm*. The engagement 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 and accompanied by heavy losses.



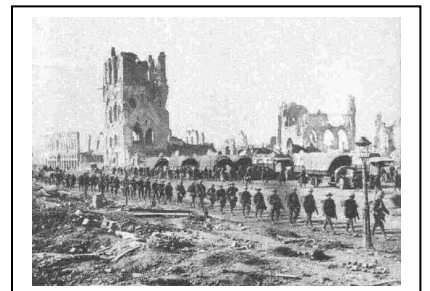
Late on that same evening the Newfoundlanders had retired to the relative calm of Arras.

May of 1917 had then been a period when the Newfoundland unit was to be ordered hither and thither on the *Arras Front*, in and out of the trenches. Apart from the ever-present artillery duelling, there appears to have been little infantry activity undertaken by the unit – apart from the marching. At the beginning of June, the 1st Battalion retired from the forward area to Bonneville and was to spend its time re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, of the autumn as well.



(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*)

The Newfoundlanders had then soon once again been moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the area of Ypres – *the Salient*. This low-lying ground had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917.



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

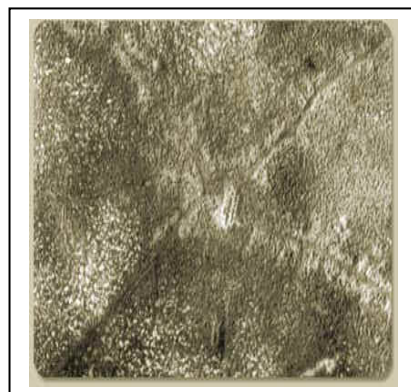
(Right: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1916, after two years of war – from Illustration*)



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 – as were to be by then the Australians, the New Zealanders and the Canadians – all of which had floundered their way across the sodden and shell-torn countryside of Flanders.

Notably the Newfoundland Battalion at *Passchendaele* was to fight in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16; and at the *Broembeek* 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 had been higher: forty-eight *killed or died of wounds*, one-hundred thirty-two *wounded* and fifteen *missing in action*.

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



(Right below: *An otherwise innocuous-looking stream, the Broembeek overflowed its banks in the autumn of 1917, transforming its surrounds into a quagmire. – photograph from 2010*)

* * * * *

Sergeant Carter re-joined the Newfoundland Battalion *in the field* on September 18, one of a contingent of twenty-eight *other ranks* to report *to duty* from the Base Depot at Rouen on that day. The parent unit at the time had withdrawn from the line and was at *Penton Camp*, close to the Belgian town of Poperinghe.



The engagement at the *Steenbeek* was by that time already a part of the Battalion's history, and the Newfoundlanders were now busy preparing for the next phase of the *Passchendaele* offensive, an effort which was to include the infantry action at the *Broembeek*. There being no evidence to the contrary, it must be supposed that there, Sergeant Carter – likewise many others – played his unsung role.

A week and a day after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were to be withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* Campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: the *Battle of Cambrai*. The 1st Battalion was ordered to move back south from Belgium on October 17 into northern France, there to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small community a dozen kilometres or so to the south-west of the city of Arras.

That so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to last for barely three weeks, from November 20 of that 1917 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period. The battle would begin well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but, as had happened on prior occasions, opportunities were squandered and by the close of it, the British had relinquished as much territory to German counter-attacks as they had gained.



The Newfoundland Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who had advanced into battle on November 20, two-hundred forty-eight were to become casualties by the end of the following day.

(Right above: *The Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead on the right-hand side (relative to the image) being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the initial day of the Battle of Cambrai.* – photograph from 2009)

(Right below: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of the 1st Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial.* – photograph from 2012)

The son of William Thomas Skinner Carter, (former officer of *His Majesty's Customs*, deceased September 6, 1908) and of Mary Louisa Carter (née *Hanrahan*, deceased August 27, 1907) of Ferryland, his own address at the time of enlistment was recorded as being that of his sister Harriet-Maria-Skinner-Carter, Mrs. F. C. Alderdice, of 175 LeMarchant Road in St. John's, then of Rennie's Mill Road, she also named by him as being his nearest relative.



Sergeant Carter was also brother to Caroline-Maud, to Sarah-Caroline-Weston, Arthur-Hunt-O'Brien, Mary-Louisa and to Blanche-Isabel.

He was reported as having been *killed in action** while serving with 'A' Company in the attack on an enemy strong-point on November 20, 1917, the opening day of the *Battle of Cambrai* near the French villages of Marcoing and Masnières.

**Sergt. Carter was killed while his Company was in action near the village of MASNIERES. He was hit in the head by a bullet and killed instantly.* – Reply to an enquiry from the *Pay & Record Office*, London



Sergeant Carter was laid to rest in Marcoing Copse Cemetery, to be subsequently re-interred where he lies today.

(continued)

James Henry Alfred Carter had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-eight years: date of birth in Ferryland, Newfoundland, May 25, 1894 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

(The photograph of Private Carter on the preceding page is from the Provincial Archives.)

Sergeant James Henry Alfred Carter was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – February 12, 2023.