

Private Patrick Michael Cleary (Regimental Number 1230), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



His occupations previous to military service recorded as those of a *tin-joiner* and *labourer* working for a monthly thirty-five dollars, Patrick Michael Cleary presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on March 13, 1915. It was a procedure which would pronounce him as being...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

Two days following that medical assessment, he returned to the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road on March 15, on this occasion to enlist – engaged at the private soldier's rate of a single dollar per diem plus a daily ten-cent *Field Allowance*.

There were to follow ten days again after his enlistment before, on March 25, he would undertake his attestation, to swear his *Oath of Allegiance*, the concluding official formality. At that moment Patrick Michael Cleary thereupon became...*a soldier of the King*.

Now passed a lengthy period of four weeks before, on April 22, 1915, Private Cleary, Number 1230, embarked in the harbour at St. John's for...*overseas service*...with the two-hundred forty-nine officers and...*other ranks*...of 'E' Company onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* en route for Halifax.

There appear to be no details of how or where he may have spent that intervening period before taking ship for...*overseas*: he may have perhaps even returned temporarily to work – but this is mere speculation.

Having reached Halifax, on April 24 at eleven-thirty in the evening the detachment began its trans-Atlantic passage on board the trans-Atlantic liner SS *Missanabie* from Nova Scotia to Liverpool. The vessel arrived in that English west-coast port-city on May 2 or 3 – the two dates are recorded although the second may well have been the date of disembarkation.

The Newfoundlanders on this occasion had sailed from Halifax in the company of the Canadian Army Service Corps *Railway Supply Depot*.



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(Preceding page: *The image of 'Stephano' passing through the Narrows of St. John's Harbour is shown by courtesy of the Provincial Archives.*)

(Right: *The image of 'Missanabie' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website. The vessel was of the Canadian Pacific Line and, although transporting troops during the Great War, did so as part of her commercial services which continued during the conflict. On September 9, 1918, she was torpedoed and sunk off the south coast of Ireland with the loss of forty-five lives.*)



From Liverpool the contingent travelled northwards by train to the Scottish capital, Edinburgh where, on May 4, 'E' Company joined 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies which had already taken up station as the garrison at the historic Castle, the first troops from outside the British Isles ever to do so.

(Right: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011*)



Private Cleary's 'E' Company, however, was to have but a few days to savour the charms of the Scottish capital.

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Some seven months before that May 4, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of 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 – these 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 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.



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

The ship had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island.

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



Once having disembarked in the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915: firstly in southern England on the *Salisbury Plain*; then in Scotland at *Fort George* – on the *Moray Firth* close to Inverness; and lastly at *Edinburgh Castle* – where, as recorded beforehand, it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

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.

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

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Seven days after the arrival of Private Cleary’s ‘E’ Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent was ordered elsewhere.

On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit was dispatched 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 would eventually receive the re-enforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength*. On that date the newly-formed 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thus now available to be ordered on...*active service*.

(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches past on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



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

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at *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.



(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.*)

Meanwhile the two junior Companies, 'E' – as seen, the last arrived at Edinburgh - and the aforementioned 'F', were ordered transferred to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

The Depot was to be Private Cleary's home for the next three months – although, apparently it might have been otherwise. He apparently, for reasons undocumented among his personal files, had at first been ordered to travel to Aldershot even though he was a soldier of 'E' Company. While there, on August 15 he was charged with drunkenness, fined five shillings and awarded twenty-four hours of Field Punishment Number 2.

On the morrow, August 16, he was then prevailed upon to re-enlist*. But then, for other reasons which are not clear, he was ordered to report back to 'E' Company at Ayr.

**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 signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their enlistment.*

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

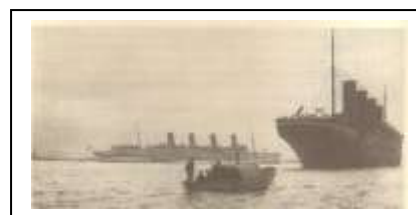


(Right above: *An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were quartered the 'other ranks', is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right.* – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)

(Right: *The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower – it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo.



It was not until the fourteenth – some sources cite the thirteenth - day of November of 1915 that the 1st Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Cleary among its ranks - passed through the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport to embark onto His Majesty's Transport *Olympic*, sister ship of the ill-fated *Titanic* and of the almost equally ill-fated *Britannic* – that ship to be sunk in November of 1916.



The 1st Draft was en route to *Gallipoli*.

(Preceding page: *HM Transport Olympic on the right lies at anchor along with HM Hospital Ship Aquitania, centre, at Mudros Bay in the autumn of 1915. – from a photograph from the Imperial War Museum, London*)

At the end of the month, *Olympic* entered *Mudros Bay* on the Greek island of Lemnos, the site being used - since it was only some fifty kilometres distant from the fighting - by the Allies as an advanced base and medical complex for the *Gallipoli Campaign*.

The one-hundred Newfoundland re-enforcements were subsequently embarked onto a smaller vessel for the journey to *Suvla Bay* on the northern coast of the Peninsula. There they were to land on a rocky surface – in contrast to the sand of the other landing areas - designated as...*Kangaroo Beach*.

From there the newcomers would move forward to the not-distant Newfoundland positions.

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In the mean-time, while Private Cleary was accustoming himself to life at the new Regimental Depot, the personnel of the 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, at Camp Aldershot were preparing themselves for the voyage to the other end of the Mediterranean Sea.



(Right above: *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.)*

(Right: *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.)*

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



(Right: *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)



(Right below: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla Bay, and where the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to serve during the autumn of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



When the Newfoundlanders had 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 been proving to be little more than a debacle:



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

Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and those of their allies, the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only Suvla Bay but the entire Gallipoli venture.



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

(Right: This is Anzac Bay in the fore-ground with the Salt Lake in the centre further away. The bottom of Suvla Bay is just to be seen on the left and adjacent to the Salt Lake, and further away again. The hills in the distance and the ones from which this photograph was taken were held by the Turks and formed a horse-shoe around the plain surrounding the Salt Lake - which was where the British and Newfoundlanders were stationed. – photograph from 2011)



November 26 of 1915 had seen perhaps the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at Gallipoli; there was to be a freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm strike the *Suvla Bay* area and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival rather than the enemy was to be the priority.

There were to be many casualties on both sides, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, had been those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

This then had been the situation into which the one-hundred re-enforcements of the 1st Draft from Scotland were to step when they had set foot on the sand and stone – mostly the latter – of *Kangaroo Beach* on December 1 of 1915.

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In the days following the dis-embarkation of the 1st Re-enforcement Draft, the situation of the British - and thus of the Newfoundlanders - was daily becoming more and more untenable; thus on the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the entire area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel had been evacuated to the nearby island of Imbros, some to Lemnos, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration...

...the 1st Battalion was to be 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 of the picture.* – photograph from 2011)



Private Cleary, however, was to abandon the area of *Cape Helles* before would his comrades-in-arms of the Newfoundland Battalion.

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On January 4 of the New Year, 1916, a relatively quiet day on *Gallipoli* from the few reports available, Private Cleary was evacuated from the Newfoundland positions at *Cape Helles* and taken on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Gloucester Castle*. Some four days later the ship arrived at British-held Mediterranean island of Malta.

Superficially diagnosed at the time as suffering from pyrexia (a persistent, high temperature) he was admitted into St. Elmo Military Hospital on January 8.



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(Preceding page: The image of HMHS Gloucester Castle clad in her war-time hospital-ship garb, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. A vessel built in 1911 for the Union-Castle Line, up until the Great War she plied the commercial routes between Great Britain and south and eastern Africa. She was requisitioned in 1914 as a hospital ship to accommodate four-hundred ten sick and wounded. On March 30, 1917, she was torpedoed with some four-hundred wounded on board of whom, remarkably, all but four were saved. ‘Gloucester Castle’ was later towed into port and repaired. Serving twenty-five years later during the Second World War she was sunk by a German raider of Ascension Island.)

(Right below: Disused and abandoned British Royal Navy medical facilities still stand on the now-independent - since the year 1964 - island of Malta. – photograph from 2011)

On the fifth day of February, Private Cleary was to be evacuated once more by ship, on this occasion – having by this time been diagnosed as being the victim of a case of paratyphoid - per HMHS *Grantully Castle*. He was thereupon invalided from Malta to the United Kingdom where he arrived on February 18.



(Right: The image of HMHS *Grantully Castle* in her war-time hospital-ship garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Built in 1909-1910 for the Union-Castle Line she worked as a passenger-cargo vessel until the Great War broke out when, in January of 1915, she was requisitioned for use as a troop-transport. Four months later she was converted for the role of hospital ship capable of accommodating some five-hundred sick and wounded. *Grantully Castle* survived the conflict and served until March of 1919 when she was returned to her owners.)



Once back in England Private Cleary was transported to and admitted into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth on the same day. After treatment he was forwarded on to Addington Park Convalescent Home, Croydon, on March 1.



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



(Right: A party of Newfoundland patients, dressed in hospital uniform but otherwise unfortunately unidentified, is seen here convalescing in the grounds of the 3rd London General Hospital at Wandsworth – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

Private Cleary was then granted the customary post-convalescent furlough which in *his* case was a six-week period commencing on March 22 and not terminating until May 2. This prolonged period confirms that he had been *seriously* afflicted with enteric (paratyphoid) fever as most other complaints were allowed only a ten-day furlough upon release from hospital.

He was then immediately posted...*to duty*...to Scotland and to the Regimental Depot. (A second record says he reported as of March 30, but this, of course, does not take into account the extended furlough.)

(Right: *The new race-course at 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 – photograph from 2012*)



Some eleven weeks later again, on July 16, Private Cleary, as a soldier of the 6th(?) Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on his way to re-join the 1st Battalion on the Continent. Arriving on the following day, the 17th, in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, the Draft was posted there for almost a week of final training and organization*.



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

**Apparently the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

July 24 was the day on which Private Cleary's draft of sixty *other ranks* reported...*to duty*...from Rouen, a day on which the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris was paying the unit a visit; but it was a battered and depleted 1st Battalion which was billeted at the time in the community of Beauval, well behind the lines.

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Twenty-nine weeks before Private Cleary's arrival on *the Somme*, in the days following his departure from the beach area at Cape Helles, the British and Newfoundland, Indian and *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had only been marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* could be undertaken.



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

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



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

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



Immediately after the British evacuation of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*, the Newfoundland unit had been ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria. On January 14, the Australian Expeditionary Force Transport *Nestor* had arrived there with the 1st Battalion on board. The vessel was to sail just after mid-day on the 16th, on its way southwards down the Suez Canal to Port Suez where she arrived on the morrow and where the Newfoundlanders 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 above: *The image of the Blue Funnel Line vessel Nestor is from the Shipspotting.com web-site. The vessel was launched and fitted in 1912-1913 and was to serve much of her commercial life until 1950 plying the routes between Britain and Australia. During the Great War she served mainly in the transport of Australian troops and was requisitioned once again in 1940 for government service in the Second World War. In 1950 she was broken up.*)

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

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



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

After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st Battalion were to board His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage through the *Suez Canal* en route to France. The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseille, on March 22.



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

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseille. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably travelled unused in a separate wagon.



Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure the long, dark march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

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



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

On April 13, the 1st Battalion had subsequently marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where it would be billeted, would receive re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

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

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

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

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



If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered, they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later*.



(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel: Looking from the British 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: *A view of Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?)*)

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



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

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

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



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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.

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



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 further again to the rear area and to billets in the village of Mailly-Maillet.

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



There on July 11, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven 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 had still numbered only...*11 officers and 260 rifles...*after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.

And it had been, as related in an earlier paragraph, that just days after this time, on July 24 Private Cleary’s re-enforcement draft reported to the parent Newfoundland Battalion at the rural town of Beauval.

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On July 27-28 of 1916, the 1st Battalion - still under establishment battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after further re-enforcement – moved north and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time.

(Right: 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)



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.

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 were nonetheless to incur casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.

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

During the earlier part of the period of the posting to Belgium, Private Cleary was to be ordered to the 29th D.R.S. (*Divisional Rest Station*) on August 18 with a sprained ankle; from there he was discharged back...*to duty*...with the Newfoundland Battalion a week later, on the 25th.

Only days later again, on August 29, Private Cleary was admitted into the 87th Field Ambulance with dental problems before being transferred to 17th Casualty Clearing Station at Corbie on the following day. There appears to be no record in his dossier of when he eventually re-joined his unit on this occasion.

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

(Right: 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)

After having served some ten weeks in...*the Salient*..., on October 8 the Newfoundland Battalion would be ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

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

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



(Preceding page: *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 son of John Joseph Cleary (deceased by 1913) and of Jane Cleary (née *Pollard*) – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of forty cents from his pay, and to whom he had willed his all - of 36, Casey Street in St. John's, he was brother to Bridget, to Rebecca and to John-Joseph.

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

Private Cleary was reported as having been *killed in action* on October 12, 1916, while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting at Gueudecourt.



Patrick Michael Cleary had enlisted at the *declared age* of twenty-one years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, June 21, 1894 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register and St. Patrick's Church Parish Records).

(Right: *The sacrifice of Private Cleary is commemorated and honoured on this stele in the Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Cemetery.* – photograph from 2022)

Private Patrick Michael Cleary 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).



(continued on following page)

Addington Park
War Hospital
Croydon, Surrey

March 4, 1916

Dear Sir

I drop you these few lines to let you know that I am left the 3rd LGH and in Croydon where I have to stay for six weeks Convalescent Home. Will you kindly forward me the sum of £1 \$10 (shillings) on my account as there are quite a lot of little things here a man would require we get a pass to go to Croydon and a man require a few shillings. Hoping you will oblige my favour I remain yours truly

Pte. Patrick Cleary

1230 1st Newfoundland Regt Addington Park War Hospital,
Croydon Surrey

1230, Pte. P. Cleary,
1st Newfoundland Regt,
Addington Park War Hospital,
Croydon, Surrey

Reference to your letter of the 4th; please apply to the Officer in Charge of the Hospital for advance in pay as we are unable to make advances unless authorized by him.

Capt.
Paymaster & Officer i/c Records*

*This being from a copy in the original records, no signature has been appended.

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.
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