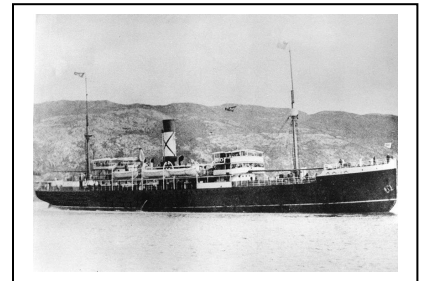


Private Edward Louis Cole (Regimental Number 195), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of an *iron-worker* earning \$7.50 a week in the machine department of the *Reid Nfld. Company*, Edward Louis Cole was recruited during the First Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on August 29, 1914 – a procedure which was to find him as...*fit for overseas service*, he then officially enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (including a daily ten-cent field allowance) - on September 7, before attesting almost four weeks later, on October 3.

That October 3 was the day on which Private Cole and the *First Five Hundred* then embarked 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 Cole 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 of the Regiment, '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.

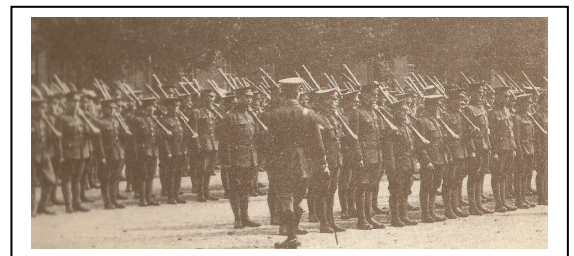
(Right: George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia)



*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.

During that short training period spent at Aldershot, Private Cole of 'B' Company – he was not alone to do so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 13, 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 below: 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 Cole 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 where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he disembarked with the 1st Battalion at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

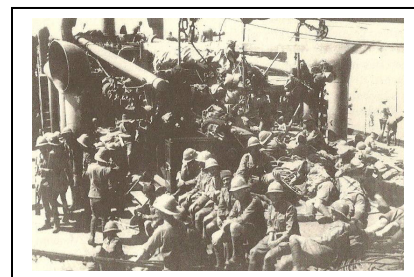


(continued)

(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 below: 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)



The Middle East campaign was to be a debacle: Flies, dust, disease, frost-bite, floods – plus 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 soon afterwards be decided to abandon not only Suvla Bay but the entire Gallipoli venture.

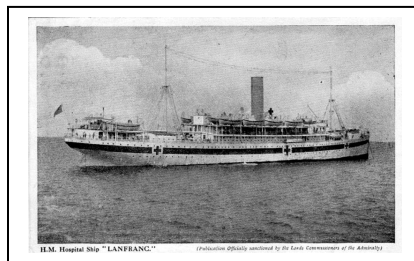
(Right: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Cole was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)



***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.**

*** * * * ***

Some six weeks after having landed at Suvla Bay, Private Cole fell victim to those deplorable conditions. Having been diagnosed as suffering from dysentery and enteric, he was evacuated from Suvla Bay on October 31, 1915, on board His Majesty’s Hospital Ship *Lanfranc* for medical attention in the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria. There he was admitted into the 19th General Hospital on November 6*.

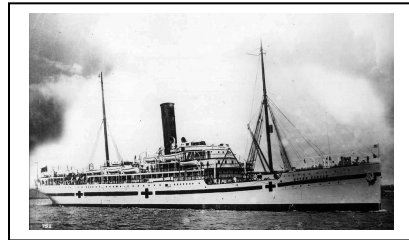


***Second and third sources have the date of admission as a highly-unlikely October 30.**

(Right above: The image of HMHS *Lanfranc* seen here in her war-time white garb with red crosses, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. She was later torpedoed and sunk on April 17 of 1917 with a loss of forty-two lives, almost half of them German wounded.)

(continued)

On November 24, 1915, Private Cole left Egypt for passage back to the United Kingdom on HM Hospital Ship *Dover Castle*. Upon his arrival in England, he was admitted on December 5 for further treatment for enteric and typhoid into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth. After eighteen* days of care, on the 22nd of the same month, he was transferred to the Addington Park Convalescent Home.



**The Army included the opening and the final day in its count.*

(Right above: *The image of HMHS Dover Castle, also seen here in her war-time costume, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*



(Right: *The main building of what became 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: *Newfoundland patients, all of them unfortunately unidentified – except that the fourth from the left in the second row is apparently a Joseph - with some of the nursing staff at Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)*

Perhaps it was at Addington that Private Cole spent the following seven weeks – enteric patients were usually allowed a six-week convalescent period. Then there is also a letter (undated – but received on February 22) from Private Cole addressed to the Regimental Paymaster requesting the sum of four pounds*. It comes from the *Soldiers' and Sailors' Home* in Edinburgh and given the date of reception can have been written only days before. This suggests that Private Cole had been allowed furlough – likely the customary ten days granted to military personnel after hospitalization – before thereupon being ordered to the Regimental Depot.

**He received it on February 24 which also suggests that his convalescence may have been a bit longer than six weeks – although no details appear to be available.*

Just a day later, on the 25th of February, the records show that Private Cole was posted to the west coast of Scotland, to Ayr, where the Newfoundland Regiment had established its Regimental Depot in the previous August to serve as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 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 1st Battalion.



(continued)

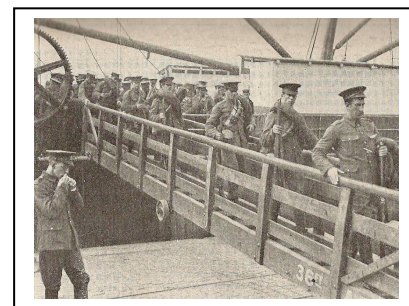
(Preceding page: *An aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where the ‘other ranks’ were quartered, is to the left of the River Ayr; the Royal Borough, where resided the officers, is to the right.* – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)

On March 28 of 1916, the 3rd Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr - Private Cole among its numbers - sailed from the English south-coast port of Southampton on board His Majesty's Transport *Archangel* to disembark on the 30th, two days later, in the capital city of Normandy, Rouen. Upon landing, the contingent then made its way to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot which had been established there, for final training and organization* before moving to a rendezvous with the 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *The image of a troop-laden Archangel is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

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



**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, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known as the Bull Rings.*

The date when Private Cole reported to duty to the 1st Battalion seems not to be recorded, but he was almost certainly one of the contingent of two officers and two-hundred eleven other ranks which did so on April 15. By that time, the parent unit had been billeted in the village of Englebelmer, close enough to the lines for the men of the Battalion to be sent there to work on strengthening the communication trenches.

* * * * *

On the night of December 19-20, 1915, the British abandoned the 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 was 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 transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



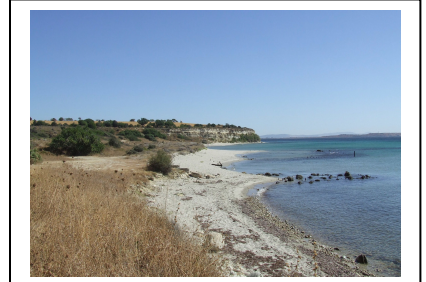
(Right above: *Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached. The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture.* – photograph from 2011)

(continued)

The British and the Anzac forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps also served at Gallipoli – were now only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Peninsula was undertaken. The operation took place on the night of January 8-9, 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion providing some of the rear-guard for this second occasion as well*.



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



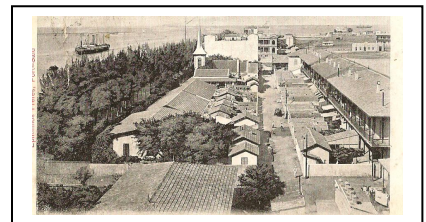
(Right above: 'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration)

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

When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was ordered to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then 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 1st 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 above: Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal just prior to 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 postcard)



After a two-month interim, on March 14 the Newfoundlanders embarked through Port Tewfiq, also at the southern end of the Suez Canal, for the French port of Marseilles, and disembarked there on March 22, en route to the Western Front.

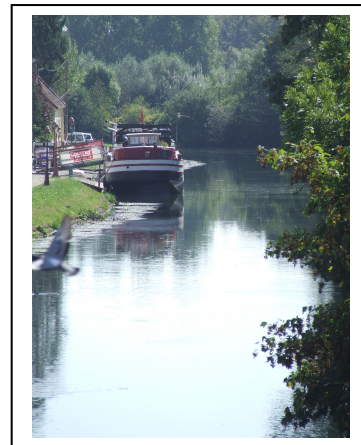
(continued)

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train arrived 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 faced a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

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

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

On April 13, the 1st Battalion paraded into the aforementioned village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where its personnel would be billeted, would receive re-enforcements from Ayr two days afterwards – as seen, likely including Private Cole - and, on that same day, would be introduced into the trenches of the *Western Front*.



* * * * *

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the meandering river which still flows through the region, *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(?)*)

The son of Edward James Cole, like his son employed by *Reid Nfld. Company*, he, the father, in the *Railway Car Dept.*, and of Fanny Jane Cole of 46, Gilbert Street in St. John's, he appears to have left almost no family information to posterity.

Private Cole was reported as having been *killed in action* by a bomb (*hand grenade*) on the night of June 27-28, 1916, while serving with 'B' Company during a failed raid by the Newfoundlanders on enemy trenches in the area of Auchonvillers.

(Right above: *A part of the re-constructed British front line and, beyond it, the battlefield of 1916 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – Today the barbed wire serves to keep the tourists out of the trenches. – photograph from 2010(?)*)



(continued)

Three days later the British offensive* commenced. July 1 would come to be known as *the first day of the Somme*: Newfoundlanders would remember it simply as *Beaumont-Hamel*.

Edward Louis Cole had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty years (from his attestation papers) although a second source says eighteen.



**Originally scheduled for the 30th, the attack was postponed by twenty-four hours.*

(Right above: *Looking down from the British front line at Beaumont-Hamel towards Y Ravine Cemetery which stands on part of the old German front line: On the right is the Danger Tree. - photograph taken in 2011*)

Private Edward Louis Cole was entitled the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village. – 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.



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 13, 2023.