

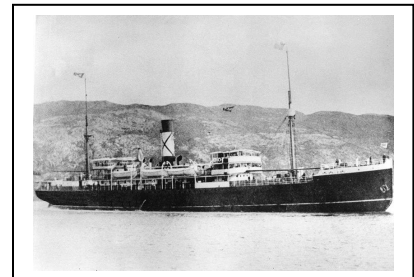


Private James Patrick Connors (Regimental Number 209), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.



His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a *labourer* working for eight dollars a week with the *Reid Newfoundland Company*, James Patrick Connors presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on August 29 of 1914, four weeks less three days after the *Declaration of War*. The examination having pronounced him as...*fit for foreign service*...he then enlisted seven days afterwards – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (this included a ten-cent Field Allowance) - on September 5. He was a recruit of the First Draft.

There was now to be almost a further four-week wait – although training was to be ongoing - before Private Connors would attest on October 1 and then a further two days before he embarked on October 3 with the others of the *First Five Hundred* 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Connors 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.



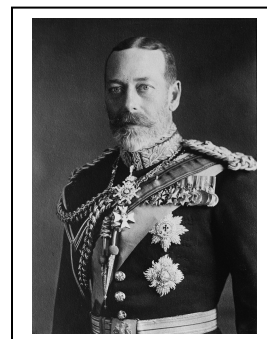
(Right above: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)



(continued)

(Preceding page: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915* – by 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 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion.

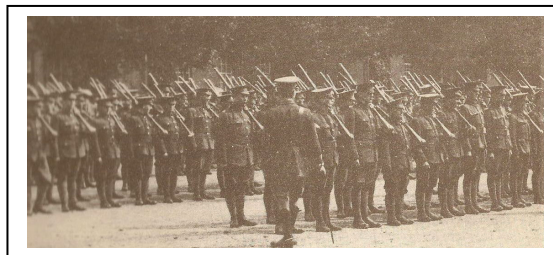


(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India* – photograph from *Bain News Services* via *Wikipedia*)

*\*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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, was thereupon attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.*

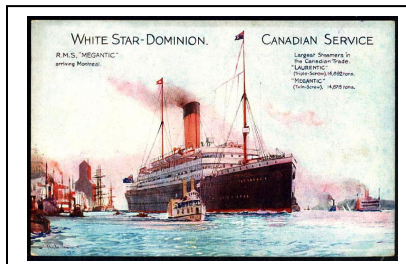
It had then been during that period spent at Aldershot that Private Connors of ‘B’ Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 13, to re-enlist *for the duration of the war\**.

*\*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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Connors 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, he disembarked with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(continued)

**(Right: Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Gallipoli 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 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 Private Connors was to serve in the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)**

**On December 3, 1915, Private Connors was admitted into the 26<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Suvla Bay suffering - as were many others of both sides – the consequences of the aforementioned freak rain, snow and ice-storm of November 26, and the subsequent floods. Within hours, severe frostbite and the aforementioned trench-foot were to be rampant.**



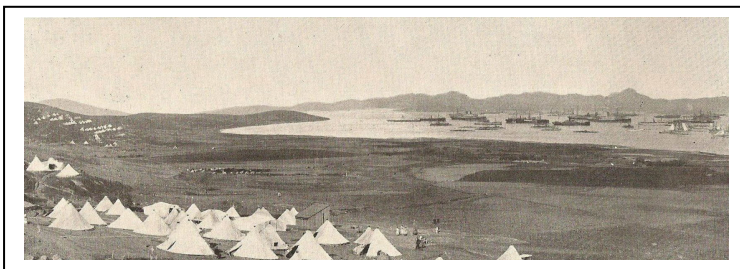
**(Right: An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives)**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**On the following day, December 4, Private Connors was evacuated by ship to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Stationary Hospital at Mudros Bay, on the Greek island of Lemnos.**

**\*No Canadian troops were to serve at Gallipoli, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stationary Hospital being perhaps the only Canadian presence in the eastern Mediterranean during this period. The hospital's matron and a nursing sister lie in Portianos Cemetery, victims of dysentery.**

(Right: *By the end of the year 1915, the bay and the inadequate harbour at Mudros were almost entirely surrounded by French and British – including Canadian and Australian - medical facilities, most of them under canvas. – image from Illustration*)



(Right: *That part of Portianos Military Cemetery in which are to be found the graves of Nursing Sister M.F.E. Munro and Matron J.B. Jaggard of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Stationary Hospital. – photograph from 2011*)



From Mudros, on January 3, Private Connors was taken on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Britannic* – sister ship to both *Olympic* and the ill-fated *Titanic* – for the journey back to the United Kingdom for further medical treatment. *Britannic* was later sunk in the eastern Mediterranean in November of 1916, by a mine.

(Right: *The image of HM Hospital Ship Britannic in her white war-time garb is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)



Once in England, on January 10, Private Connors was transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital in the southern Borough of Wandsworth, an eye infection by now having been added to the list of his complaints. He was to remain there for treatment for almost five weeks.

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



(Right below: *Newfoundland patients, unfortunately for the most part unidentified, with staff at Wandsworth: apparently a Joseph is the fourth from the right in the second row - courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



After convalescence and the customary ten-day furlough – for Private Connors from February 23 until March 3 - for military personnel upon release from hospital, the following three weeks were thereupon almost certainly spent by Private Connors at the Regimental Depot.

The Regimental Depot had been established during the late summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland to serve as a base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (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 home were to be despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

(Right: *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.* – courtesy of the *Carnegie Library at Ayr*)



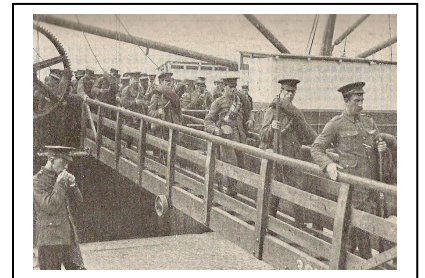
Private Connors embarked on March 28 of 1916 in the English south-coast port of Southampton onto His Majesty’s Transport *Archangel* as a soldier of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Re-enforcement Draft en route for the Norman capital city of Rouen and the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot that had been established there. Private Connors’ Draft landed there on the 30<sup>th</sup>, two days later, and was *taken on strength* for final days of training and organization\* before moving out to join the parent unit.



(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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known to the troops as the Bull Rings.*



Private Connors, however, was not to spend a great deal of time honing his skills at the *Bull Ring* as he was admitted into the 6<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Rouen on April 5, there to undergo treatment for scabies. He returned *to duty* at the Base Depot on April 8 and, in fact, was now to join the parent 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at the time that he would have done had he *not* been hospitalized.

Private Connors was one of the detachment of two officers and two-hundred eleven *other ranks* which reported *to duty* in the village of Englebelmer\*, just behind the lines, on April 15. That night the newcomers were at work in the trenches.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the intervening weeks and months after the evacuation of Private Connors from *Suvla Bay* the Newfoundland Battalion had seen its service at *Gallipoli* brought to a conclusion, this to be eventually followed by its transfer to the *Western Front*.

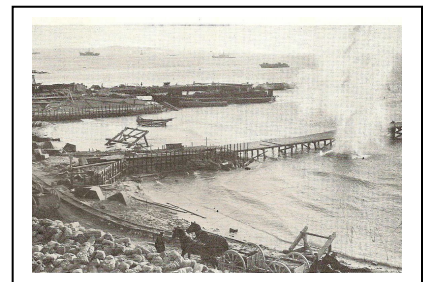
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On the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel was to be evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, and some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case would the respite be of a long duration; the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been transferred only two days later to re-enforce the failure at *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 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 above: *'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: *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: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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*)



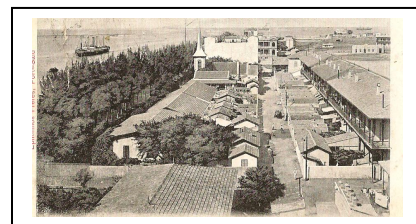
After the British evacuation of the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been sent to the Egyptian port-city of *Alexandria*, having arrived there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month.

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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 since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29<sup>th</sup> Division to which the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was attached 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*.

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

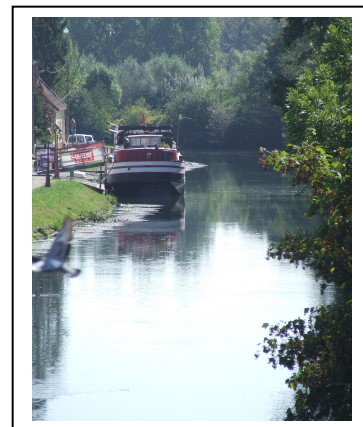
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train would arrive at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having travelled unused 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.



(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.

On April 13, the Newfoundland Battalion paraded into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy. There its personnel would be billeted, would receive reinforcements – with Private Connors returning to his unit as one of that number (see above) - and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the trenches of 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had marched only weeks previously at Pont-Rémy: *the Somme*.

(Right below: 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 one 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.

The son of Patrick Connors, employee at the *Ropewalk* and of the *Reid Newfoundland Company*, and Mary Ann Connors (née *Hurley*)\* - to whom he had allocated a weekly five dollars from his pay -of Mundy Pond Road in St. John's, and later of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, he was also brother to Mary-Margaret and to Thomas-Joseph.

*\*The couple was married on April 27, 1893.*



Private Connors was reported as *missing in action* while serving with 'B' Company during the fighting at Beaumont-Hamel on the first day of *the Somme*, July 1, 1916. Some six months later, on December 31, 1916, he was officially *presumed dead*.



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

James Patrick Connors had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-one years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, (from the Newfoundland Birth Register) February 4, 1894.

(Right above: *Looking from the British lines at Beaumont-Hamel 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 2009*)

Private James Patrick Connors 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).



(continued on following page)

September 8<sup>th</sup> 1920  
Marsh Street  
New Glasgow

Dear Sir

In answer to your letter I cant give you any information concerning my dear Son's Death James. P. Connors No. 209 1<sup>st</sup> N.F.L.D. Regiment he was one of the Blue Puttee Boys. the only information I can give you is that he was missing July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916. I cant give any account of his grave or where he was buried as far as I know his bones may be bleaching to day on some part of No. Man's. Land. I got but very little satisfaction concerning his death. or I even got any thing belong to him. and as far as decorations are concerned we didnt get any only the Medal for 1914 & 1915. his age is 23 the Son of Patrick and Mary Ann Connors his Birthplace West End of St. John's any other information I cannot give you. I am waiting every day for further information from ye concerning him. If I knew any thing about him I would be only too glad to have the papers filled out and sent to you

yours faithfully

Mr Patrick Connors

**The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to [criceadam@yahoo.ca](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 11, 2023.**