

WORLD WAR I **NEWFOUNDLAND AND WORLD WAR I**

Newfoundland Regiment Shoulder Title



Regiment Hat Badge



First Newfoundland Regiment



NEWFOUNDLAND AND WORLD WAR I - ENLISTMENT

- As members of the British Empire, Newfoundland went to war when England went to war.
- 35% of Newfoundland men enlisted. Reasons: adventure, patriotism, propaganda, employment
- By end of the war (1918), 600 000 Canadian and Newfoundland soldiers had served
- Like Canada, Newfoundland brought in conscription towards the end of the war (1917). Men 20-45 could be forced to enlist.



NEWFOUNDLANDERS SERVING IN WWI

ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE (2 050)
Existed before the war started. Once war broke out, reservists were called to duty. Newfoundlanders served on over 30 naval ships.

NEWFOUNDLAND REGIMENT (6 240)
Established in August, 1914, after WWI broke out. Men 19 to 36 years old were recruited.

CANADIAN FORCES (3 100)
Newfoundlanders serving in the Canadian army.

VOLUNTEER AID DETACHMENT (40)
Nurses and health care workers who went overseas to work in military hospitals.

FORESTRY CORPS (500)
Men who travelled to Scotland in 1917 to cut wood for the huge wartime demand.

MERCHANT MARINE (5 000)
Men who crewed cargo ships in hazardous seas patrolled by enemy submarines.

When Great Britain declared war in August of 1914, a message came through to the Governor of Newfoundland saying that the empire was at war. Almost immediately the Governor wired back saying "I think we can raise 500 troops." The regiment was raised from scratch. These troops trained at Pleasantville beside Quidi Vidi Lake at the east side of St. John's.



"The First Five Hundred" conducting a bayonet drill beside Quidi Vidi Lake, St. John's, September 1914.

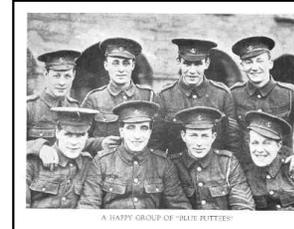
The First 500 of the Newfoundland Regiment sailed for England on Oct. 4, 1914.



Newfoundland Regiment aboard the Florizel, 1914.

The ship was joined at sea by the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian contingent. On arrival in England, the Newfoundland Regiment was separated from the Canadians, sent to training camps in Scotland.

There were no suitable uniforms available for the regiment so their fatigues were made locally from khaki material and knitted wool caps. Not having enough of this khaki material available, puttees (material covering the bottom of the pants and top of the boots) were made from a blue wool material.



This was so distinctive that the regiment members were known as "The Blue Puttees". Another name that marks the first troops to sail from St. John's is "The First 500".

Three main battles involving the Newfoundland Regiment:

1. Gallipoli (Turkey) 1915
2. Beaumont Hamel (France) 1916
3. Cambria (France) 1917

GALLIPOLI

Gallipoli was the first battle in which the Newfoundland Regiment was involved. This is where the troops were first introduced to trench warfare. The first fatal casualty from the regiment was Private Walter M-Whirter, Sept 22, 1915.

The Gallipoli campaign was an attempt to capture the Gallipoli Peninsula. After about ten months, the Allies had lost 81 000 men, while Turkey lost 65 000 men.



43 members of the Newfoundland Regiment were killed and buried at Gallipoli and more died later from wounds and were buried elsewhere. Newfoundland was the only regiment in Canada to fight in the battle for Gallipoli.

BEAUMONT HAMEL

The Battle of Beaumont Hamel was part of the bigger campaign known as the Battle of the Somme. In the battle of Beaumont Hamel, 790 Newfoundlanders went "over the top" to advance towards the Germans.

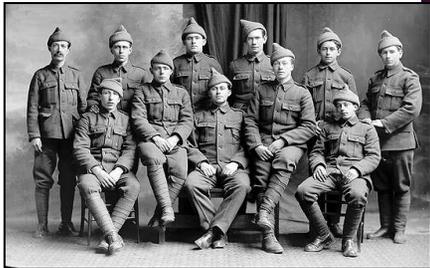


Out of these, 710 were killed, wounded, or missing. Only 68 men answered roll call the next day.

The famous Battle of the Somme was the site of a British offensive from July 1 to Nov 18, 1916. In a 5 day pre-assault bombardment, over 1 732 873 shells were fired at the Germans. The operation was a disaster. Over 57 000 Allied troops were killed, wounded, or missing, the highest casualty rate ever suffered by the British army.



On July 1, 1916, the Newfoundland Regiment, one of the four battalions of the British 88th Brigade, were assigned to take the 3rd enemy line. They were told to expect little opposition.



At 2 am, the 1st Newfoundland Regiment completed a 5 hour march to the trenches. At 8:45 am they were ordered in to support the 87th Brigade. The Essex Regiment was delayed by clogged trenches and at 9 am the Newfoundlanders started their advance to Beaumont Hamel. To reach the enemy trenches they had to march down a slope and cross 900 metres of open ground, in broad daylight. No Allied artillery fire covered them.



Newfoundland Regiment marching forward before the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel.



Each man carried 25 kg of food, supplies and ammunition. Few made it even as far as the Allied barbed wire. The enemy just set their machine guns on the attacking soldiers and mowed them down in waves

Newfoundland soldiers in a support trench, July 1, 1916. The picture was taken before the attack at Beaumont-Hamel began.

Map of Beaumont Hamel Newfoundland Memorial Site



1. Visitors Centre
2. Main Entrance
3. St. John's Road Trench
4. 29th Division Memorial
5. Newfoundland Regiment Memorial
6. British Main Defence Line, July 1, 1916
7. The Danger Tree
8. The Y Ravine Cemetery
9. German Front Line
10. Head of Y Ravine
11. 51st (Highland) Division Monument
12. Hunter's Cemetery
13. Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery No.2

Those who made it to "No Man's Land" could see across another 500 metres of exposed slopes to the German first line of defence. It was a killing field. Few Newfoundland soldiers survived the hail of machine gun bullets.



A present day view of the ground across which the Newfoundland Regiment advanced.

Of the 801 men who went 'over the top' that morning, only 69 returned to answer the roll-call.

255 men were dead.
386 men were wounded.
91 were recorded missing.

Every officer who went forward was either killed or wounded.



July 1 was a hot sunny day and many of the wounded lay baking in the sun all day waiting for rescue.



Many of these reached as far as "The Danger Tree" in no man's land and the others were slaughtered on the German wire.

The Danger Tree

The replica of the "Danger Tree", about half way into no-man's land, where many of the Newfoundland men congregated during the attack, and where most of them were killed.

Shortly after 10:00 a.m., the British attack was called off. Despite some initial successes, the day's objectives had not been achieved.



View of the battlefield at Beaumont-Hamel showing the blasted land.

Total British losses for the day were 57 470 men, of which 19 240 were fatal. No unit suffered heavier losses than the Newfoundland Regiment. No unit suffered heavier losses than the Newfoundland Regiment.

Despite the carnage, hardly any ground was captured that day. Nevertheless, General Douglas Haig, the commander, remained obstinate and inflexible. He insisted that the attack continue. And it did so for the next 141 days.



The Battle of the Somme would rage for five months, with well over a million casualties on both sides, and no side victorious.

Soldiers of the Newfoundland Regiment, shaving in the trenches near the Somme battleground in France (1916).

It was said that the Newfoundlanders displayed the greatest courage ever. Major General D.E. Cayley, Commander of the 88th Brigade stated, "It was a magnificent display of trained and disciplined valour and only failed because dead men can advance no further."



Also it was at this time that the Regiment received it's unofficial motto "Better Than The Best" from Lieutenant General Sir Aylmer Hunter Weston in his now famous letter.

CAMBRAI



The other major battle on the Western Front that the Newfoundland Regiment participated in was at Cambria, France, 1917.



The Battle of Cambrai was a British attempt to take a German-controlled town in northern France on a major supply route.

Soldiers in trenches with tank in background

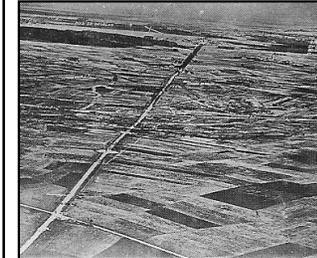


The Battle of Cambrai was the first large-scale tank attack of the war.

British forces succeeded in breaking through German lines. This success was short-lived though, when the Germans launched a successful counter-attack.



It was after this battle that the unit was given "Royal" status. The name changed from the Newfoundland Regiment to the "Royal Newfoundland Regiment" - a great honour to the Regiment. The members were very proud.



- British and NFDL:**
- 45 000 killed
 - 9 000 prisoners
 - 100 tanks destroyed
- German:**
- 45 000 killed
 - 11 000 prisoners
- Result: Stalemate**

Cambrai battlefield

At least two members of the Newfoundland Regiment brought much pride to the regiment during WWI for their accomplishments.



DR. CLUNY MACPHERSON



Dr. Cluny MacPherson was a Major and the chief medical officer with the Regiment. MacPherson is best remembered as the inventor of the gas mask which saved many lives.

The German army used poison gas against Allied troops for the first time in 1915 at Ypres, France. A soldier's only protection was to breath through a handkerchief or other small piece of fabric soaked in urine.



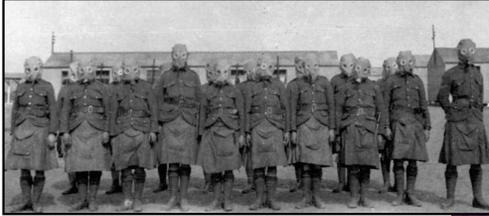
German gas cannisters



The Macpherson gas mask

Out of necessity, Dr. Cluny Macpherson of St. John's, Newfoundland, quickly came up with the idea of a gas mask made of fabric and metal. Using a helmet taken from a captured German prisoner, he added a canvas hood with eyepieces and a breathing tube. The helmet was treated with chemicals that would absorb the chlorine used in the gas attacks. He had invented the world's first gas mask. After a few improvements Macpherson's helmet became the first gas mask to be used by the British.

Macpherson's invention was the most important protective device of the WWI, protecting countless soldiers from blindness, disfigurement or injury to their eyes, noses, throats and lungs. Gas masks are worn by millions of soldiers around the world today.



TOMMY RICKETTS



Tommy Ricketts was the youngest ever, and the only member of the Newfoundland Regiment, to receive the Victoria Cross. This is the most highly esteemed medal which can be awarded.

"During the advance from Ledgehem the attack was temporarily held up by heavy hostile fire, and the platoon to which he belonged suffered severe casualties. Private Ricketts at once volunteered to go forward with his Section Commander and a Lewis gun to attempt to outflank the enemy. They advanced by short rushes while subject to severe fire from enemy machine guns. 300 yards away, their ammunition ran out. The enemy, seeing an opportunity, began to bring up their field gun teams. Private Ricketts at once realized the situation. He doubled back 100 yards, got some ammunition and dashed back to the Lewis gun, and by very accurate fire drove the enemy and their gun teams into a farm. His platoon then advanced without casualties, and captured five field guns, four machine guns and eight prisoners. By his presence of mind in anticipating the enemy intention and his utter disregard for personal safety, Private Ricketts secured the ammunition which resulted in these important captures and undoubtedly saved many lives."



THE HOME FRONT

The WPA: Women's Patriotic Association

- 150 branches, 15 000 members
- Made bandages
- Knitted scarves, socks and hats
- Raised funds
- Visited grieving families
- Cared for injured veterans

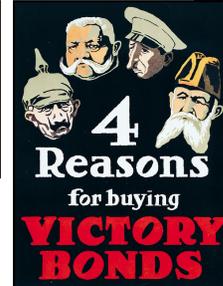


WPA workers, Government House, 1914

Buying Victory Bonds



Buying Victory Bonds was a way to lend money to the government, which helped pay for the war effort.



The Conscription Issue of 1917

In the early years of WWI, recruits voluntarily answered the call to enlist. Many soldiers left home expecting to be back for Christmas. However, the war went on for longer than expected, and people at home and abroad were shocked by the high number of casualties. After Beaumont Hamel, the rate of volunteer enlistments declined drastically. Recruitment drives saw little success.



Newfoundland military personnel recruiting at Harbour Grace, 1917. The inscription on this sign reads: "WHICH? Have you a reason or only an excuse for not enlisting NOW!"



Britain had adopted conscription in 1916, and Canada had done the same in 1917.

In May, 1918, the Newfoundland government passed the Military Service Act, requiring all unmarried men aged 19 to 25 to register for service. The decision was very controversial.

THE EFFECTS OF WWI

The Human Cost

1753 NEWFOUNDLANDERS DIED IN WWI

ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE (2050 enlisted)	392
NEWFOUNDLAND REGIMENT (6240 enlisted)	1291
CANADIAN FORCES (3100 enlisted)	243
VOLUNTEER AID DETACHMENT (40 enlisted)	1
FORESTRY CORPS (500 enlisted)	11
MERCHANT MARINE (5000 enlisted)	115

In WWI, 6240 enlisted in the Newfoundland Regiment.

CASUALTIES (3785):

- 1291 died
- 2314 wounded
- 180 taken prisoner

DEATHS (1291) :

- 1107 killed by enemy action
- 4 accidental deaths
- 35 died from Pneumonia
- 22 died from "sickness"
- 16 died from Meningitis
- 8 died from Influenza
- 99 died from other diseases



The Financial Cost

The war also cost Newfoundland financially. The government had borrowed over \$13 000 000 to finance the war. After the war, Newfoundland's national debt was \$35 000 000.

This caused major economic hardships in the 1920's and 1930's, and contributed to Newfoundland declaring bankruptcy in 1933.

After the war had ended, the Newfoundland troops went home like everyone else. However they left their mark with memorials all across Europe.

THE ROYAL NEWFOUNDLAND REGIMENT

The Newfoundland regiment went out to fight
They went in the field with all their might
And when it was over you couldn't see the soil
The Newfoundland Regiment then became "Royal"

The First 500 men, they trained in St. John's
They trained for a while but not very long
They were called to Old England and on to the plains
And that was the start of the Regiments fame

They were called to Old Scotland to sharpen their drill
And when it was over they were trained to kill
But England and Scotland they became a bore
The Newfoundland Regiment longed for the war

They fought at Beaumont Hamel, they fought at the Somme
The Regiments name forever lives on
They fought at Gallipoli and at Cambria
They fought on the land and they fought in the bay

The war raged on it became quite and strife
Young Pte MacWhirter, he gave up his life
All honours were bestowed upon this young man
The name of his Regiment was Newfoundland

Now many young men would not cross that sea
They gave up their lives for you and for me
And all through our Island their bravery is blessed
On Armistice Day when the world came to rest

Positive Effects of WWI

- **Technological advances:**
 - Transportation
 - Communication
 - Consumer Products
- Positive effect on the worldwide view of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders
- **The Women's Suffrage Movement**

Women's Suffrage

Suffrage: The right to vote.

The participation of large number of women in the war effort created an awareness of gender issues.

The achievements of the WPA and VAD demonstrated the capabilities of women.

Women became more confident and willing to fight for what they believed in.

There was strong opposition to the women's suffrage movement from men holding power in government and church.

1925: Newfoundland women 25 and older were given the right to vote.



Newfoundland Suffragettes

THE SPANISH FLU

A deadly strain of influenza broke out at the end of WWI, killing 25 to 30 million people worldwide. It was brought back to Newfoundland in September, 1918, as soldiers returned from the war, and spread to Labrador in November. It killed 232 people in Newfoundland and Labrador.



Many children in Labrador became orphans because of the Spanish Flu epidemic.
