

The Blue Puttees

**Produced by:
H. Clifford Chadderton**

**For:
The War Amps of Canada**

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The Blue Puttee Lounge

H.C. Chadderton: Hello, I'm Cliff Chadderton, of The War Amputations of Canada. I'm standing in a piano bar in downtown St. John's, Newfoundland. We have come here to do a film about a very famous World War I regiment, and it may seem a little surprising, but in this brand new hotel, when I checked in, I found that it had this lounge which was dedicated to the exploits of a World War I regiment seventy-five years ago.

But that shouldn't be too surprising, because every inhabitant of this province of Newfoundland and Labrador, they all know the story of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and what that regiment did in World War I, and it is a very remarkable story.

We want to tell the story from the stand-point of the rest of Canada. In order to do that, I think you'd have to make a comparison. For example, when the more famous were mobilized for World War I, they had a base, most of them had messes. There was a military district, and when the orders came out to mobilize, regiments like the Canadian Scottish went.

They were issued their uniforms, their rifles and they started training right away. The same thing happened, for example, with the famous "Vingt-Deux" from Quebec City. They were part of an established military tradition. In fact, if we draw a comparison with my own regiment, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the comparison becomes quite significant. My regiment was formed in 1885, to take part in the ill-fated Riel Rebellion. It even had a connection with famous rifle brigade in England.

But not so with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. When this regiment was formed, it was formed from absolute scratch! There was no militia in Newfoundland, which was a colony of Great Britain at that time. There was no military district, there were no military stores.

But what happened was this...

Great Britain declared war in early August of 1914. A message came through to the governor of this colony saying that the empire was at war. Almost immediately the governor wired back saying "I think we can raise 500 troops." Raise them from what?

If you were to sit down in this lounge any evening with the clientele, most of whom would not be Newfoundlanders, you would find a great deal of interest. They would say why, in modern downtown St. John's, in a brand new hotel, would they dedicate a lounge to a regiment that had made its mark in a war 75 years ago? And of course, the burning question is, why the name, The Blue Puttee Lounge?

And that tells the whole story. This regiment was raised from scratch. The uniforms were almost homespun, but they were khaki. But when the time came to make the puttee - now a puttee is a strip of cloth that goes around a soldier's calf, like a legging - they could not find any more khaki broadcloth. So from some place, they scrounged blue broadcloth, and from that they made the puttees.

And today, in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, to be a descendant of a blue puttee is a very, very great honour.

Suvla Bay

H.C. Chadderton: Hugh McWhirter, he was a typical Newfoundlander of the 1914 era. He was born in Bay of Islands, in Humbermouth, near Cornerbrook. The first bit of history we could find out about him was that in 1909, he went with his grandfather to the opening of the Anglo-Newfoundland Pulp Mill at Grand Falls. We know that he left home when he was about 18 years of age. The next time we were able to pick up his history, he was clear across the Island at Wesleyville. And in April of 1914, he took part in the sealing expedition, sailing aboard the *Newfoundland*; that of course was his first taste of tragedy.

As is well known, the *Newfoundland* lost 75 members of her crew in a blizzard that swept over the ice fields. That same year, the vessel, *Southern Cross*, on her way home from the seal hunt, had gone down in a storm with the loss of all hands, 175 men.

Adele: Little did Hugh McWhirter realize, as the ships returned from the Spring Hunt of 1914, that slightly more than a year later, he would be engaged in another great adventure half-way around the world in Gallipoli, fighting the Turkish Army in the ill-fated Dardanelles Campaign.

And, like the other survivors of the great seal hunt tragedy, Hugh McWhirter was not likely to forget the images of his shipmates – found encased in ice and frozen in grotesque shapes, some standing upright as they took their last step looking for the mother ship, others frozen in the clasp of a brother or friend, meeting icy death together from sleet and gale-force winds.

Some family members indicate he may actually have sailed on the *Eagle*. In any event, he narrowly missed death – but it would be waiting for him 19 months later.

H.C. Chadderton: On a cold morning, September 20th, 1915, the Newfoundlanders landed at Suvla Bay, which is just north of the Sea of Marmora, which splits the northern part of Turkey.

Keith: The Newfoundlanders were to take over the front line support trenches from The Royal Dublin Fusiliers and had moved forward to undergo indoctrination from the seasoned troops whom they would be relieving.

Hugh McWhirter was among the advance group. One of his fellow soldiers wrote home, "We had just moved into a forward trench when we were spotted by the enemy artillery. A Turkish shell landed at Hugh's feet. He was no more."

Regimental No. 902 Private Hugh Walter McWhirter was the Regiment's first fatal casualty. His grave can be seen today at Hill Ten Cemetery on Suvla Plain in Turkey.

H.C. Chadderton: The War had deteriorated into a stalemate, until the Newfoundlanders were given an objective at the extreme left of the British line. It was a very large hill and predictably the Newfoundlanders had called it Caribou Hill, after the magnificent animal which populates their island in the St. Lawrence.

Keith: The attack on Caribou Hill is a small, but notable, chapter in the history of the Regiment. It took place early in November in 1915, and earned the Battalion the first of many commendations.

One of the recruits from the Catholic Boys' Brigade, Lieutenant J.J. Donnelly, led the attack. Incidentally, by this time, any of the differences along the lines of religious background, which may have been apparent in the early days, had long disappeared as the Newfoundlanders knit themselves into a loyal, one for all, all for one, fighting force.

Donnelly won the coveted Military Cross, while Sergeant Greene and Private Hynes were awarded Distinguished Conduct Medals.

On December 6th, a new Commanding Officer arrived on the scene, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Hadow, from the Norfolk Regiment. His tenure of command was to be one of the most controversial of any infantry C.O. of the British Forces.

H.C. Chadderton: Toward the end of the Gallipoli Campaign the Newfoundlanders, as part of the British 29th Division, were given the job of holding the Turkish forces. They formed part of this defensive line and the fighting was "hellish" for a number of weeks. Eventually, the British decided to get out of the Dardanelles and the Newfoundlanders had one last task. That was to retire to Cape Helles, where the British evacuation was taking place. They earned an enviable reputation and many a story was told of the bulky mules who suddenly found themselves flung bodily into the cargo carriers of a ship by the brawny-arms of the boys from the colony, who knew all about loading ships.

Keith: On January 8th, of 1916, the day of the final departure, the Turks were on the attack. A company of the Regiment was detached for last minute patrolling, thus, the Newfoundlanders were among the very last troops to leave the Dardanelles. Hugh McWhirter was not among them.

The Newfoundlanders today can look with pride to the fact that it is the Newfoundland Regiment alone that has the distinction of having fought in Gallipoli. No military units, from what was Canada back then, made it to the Dardanelles. What these magnificent Newfoundland troops did,

however, is now part of the history of all of Canada, and we can all share in the pride of their achievements.

Raised From Scratch

H.C. Chadderton: Raised from scratch! That was essentially the distinguishing feature of the Newfoundland Regiment compared with the other regiments and battalions raised in Canada.

At one time, Great Britain had maintained a garrison on the Island Colony, but in 1869, the Imperial Government withdrew the financial support and the troops were disbanded. For the next 44 years, there was no military organization in Newfoundland, and of course, this was to have a singular effect on almost everything which happened to the Newfoundland Regiment, certainly when compared with units of the Canadian Forces of that day.

Adele: All of this changed in 1914, when the Mother Country declared war on Germany and the Secretary of State for Colonies sent a message to St. John's. It said: *"War has broken out with Germany."*

There was an immediate conference between the Governor, Sir Walter Davidson, and the Prime Minister, Sir Edward Morris, but neither could do a thing. A week later, the prominent citizens of Newfoundland had taken matters into their own hands. The Newfoundland Patriotic Association was formed, an event regarded, even today by war historians, as unique in the history of military organization.

For the next three years the Patriotic Association conducted the Colony's military matters. This included everything from recruiting and equipping the troops to raising the funds for their pay, \$1.00 a day for private soldiers, to providing for their dependents at home, and sending the reinforcements, which would be necessary to fight the battles in far-off lands.

At the start, no arrangements were made for their dependents. The Patriotic Association did, however, make a \$10.00 grant to those in need, and later the regular Dependents Allowance was approved, again financed through voluntary donations, or fund-raising events staged by the womenfolk of the Island.

Telegrams flashed back and forth between London and St. John's, and within days, the Governor cabled regarding troops:

Other: *"500 could, I believe, be enlisted in one month."*

Adele: The reply from England: *"His Majesty's government gladly accepts the offer of the Newfoundland Government to raise troops for land service abroad."*

So much for officialdom, the real story is told in terms of what was

taking place on the streets of St. John's, and reaching into the out ports. The young Cadets enlisted almost in a body. Other recruits were trickling in, carried over the Island railway, or by steamer or sailing ketch.

One recruit described the scene at the headquarters of the Catholic Cadet Corps, "We fought each other to try to get to the head of the line." For many years after the war, it was a proud boast to have a low number, particularly to be one of the "First 500."

H.C. Chadderton: It would be very easy to drive by this little monument and never even notice it, and yet it is one of the most historic memorials in all of Newfoundland, as it says: "*First Training Ground of the Newfoundland Regiment, 1914.*" This marks the parade ground on the shores of Lake Quidi Vidi, where the first 500 were placed in tents and did their parade ground drills.

They came from nearby St. John's; they came from the out ports; they were from the Anglican Church Lads Brigade; they were from the Catholic Cadet Corps; they were from the Methodist Guards; they were from the Newfoundland Highlanders. But what this monument marks is the last place, for most of those original 500, where they ever trod the sacred ground of their beloved Newfoundland.

Adele: Pleasantville had been the city cricket grounds, a level expanse of green on the south side of Quidi Vidi Lake. This became the scene of a bustling encampment. Tents sprang up, kitchens were installed, latrines dug.

The War Office in London was unable to furnish uniforms so local clothing manufacturers were commissioned. The result was ill-fitting but serviceable uniforms and the "blue putties," a dress distinction from any other troops who served under the British flag.

When they were first seen in the spit and polish atmosphere of the English camps, the "blue puttees" made the Colonial troops the object of curiosity. This homespun regiment, with no history, was eventually to join the 29th British Division, which included such famous units as the South Wales Borderers, the Essex Regiment and the Royal Scots. The Newfoundlanders were to outshine them all.

October 3rd, 1914, was probably the greatest day in the history of St. John's. Thousands gathered at Pleasantville to see the contingent break camp and march to the waterfront to embark for the great adventure.

The S.S. Florizel, which regularly sailed the St. John's – Halifax – New York run, stood ready to transport 500 men and 25 officers to Great Britain. The charge was \$36.00 for each enlisted man and \$56.00 for officers.

The Captain hoisted anchor at 10:00 p.m. and the crowded vessel steamed slowly through the narrows into the Atlantic. It was just two months from the day that Britain had entered the war. Every man who reached the Dardanelles and later was to fight in France was there because he wanted to be. This was a volunteer force in every sense of the word.

The Governor cabled to the Mother Country:

Governor Davidson: *"The men have been enrolled from all ranks of society; they are of fine physique, rather short in stature but thick-set and enduring. They are also handymen and very hardy and accustomed to hard work and little food. With almost no exceptions, the men are abstemious – they will render a good account of themselves."*

Adele: Little did he know how much the Newfoundlanders would have to rely upon those characteristics in the years ahead.

Beaumont Hamel

H.C. Chadderton: And now, let's go to the tragic battle of Beaumont Hamel.

July 1st has always been known in Canada as the day in which we celebrate the birth of our nation. Originally, it was known as Dominion Day, and later it was changed to Canada Day.

Not so in Newfoundland.

Adele: Every school kid in the nine provinces and the territories which made up Canada, before 1949, knew what July 1st meant, a holiday to mark the founding of our nation.

For the school children, and the population generally, in Newfoundland, however, July 1st had become, not a day to celebrate, but one to mourn and to remember the sacrifices of the Great War of 1914 – 1918.

Keith: Why that one particular day? Any Newfoundlander will tell you, July 1st, 1916 was the Battle of Beaumont Hamel. Eight hundred and one of Newfoundland's finest sons climbed out of their support trenches starting at 8:45 a.m. Only 68 answered the roll call the next day.

In 30 minutes, the Battalion had all but been eliminated. Most of them never saw a German, never fired their rifles, and not one foot of ground was gained. This was the horror and the carnage of World War I at its very worst. They were cannon fodder, as the saying goes.

To understand what really took place at Beaumont Hamel, we have chosen to tell the story from four perspectives.

Firstly, from that of the historian describing the entire battle; secondly, from the point of view of the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Hadow; thirdly, from the descriptions left to us by some of the private soldiers who survived; and finally, from observers in the German trenches, who looked with astonishment at the khaki-clad figures who died in one large mass on that battlefield.

H.C. Chadderton: Let's turn to a small-scale map. Let us suppose that we could look at the battle from the vantage point of today's airliners, 35,000 feet above. This is what we would see: the British Army attacked on a 15-mile front. Beaumont Hamel was approximately in the middle. The front lines of the British and the Germans were separated by No Man's Land; usually about 200 yards of uneven ground, marked by shell holes, barbed wire and little else.

Oh yes, the big picture looked so simple on a map. The French Army to the south was taking a terrible beating. To take some of the pressure

off, Sir Douglas Haig, Commander of the British Forces, was forced into a major offensive against the Germans.

The overall idea was that the British 4th Army would attack the German front line all along the whole front. This would pave the way for a major breakthrough behind the German second line, anchored at Pozieres.

Then, as a battle within a battle, the troops to the north, including the Newfoundlanders, would make a mad dash over the 3,000 yards to push through the German second line and silence the guns in the enemy rear.

The battle failed miserably, but nowhere was the task more hopeless, than that which faced the Newfoundland Regiment.

The plan had been rehearsed everywhere, that was when the Newfoundlanders were back in reserve. Let's turn now to a map which details this battle.

The idea was that the German front would be breached and the Newfoundland Regiment, together with the 1st Essex, would push through and make for the German second position, a distance of some two miles.

This unique panorama gives us an opportunity to tell the story of the desolation of the Newfoundland Regiment on July the 1st, 1916. Along here, we see the British front lines; in behind, the German front lines. And here's the famous "Y" ravine down here. This is the Danger Tree which will be coming into our story. What happened was that the South Wales Borderers firstly took off from these trenches, and within about 50 yards they were simply slaughtered. Then, about an hour later, the Commanding Officer of the Newfoundland Regiment said, "Let's go, boys!" and they jumped out of these trenches (called St. John's Road, by the way, after the Newfoundland Regiment). They jumped out of these trenches and within this "No Man's Land," about no more than 100 yards, the whole battalion was decimated.

Keith:

The official British war history tells what happened. The South Wales Borderers were in the first wave. The history states, "*...within five minutes, nothing remained of the Borderers but a few scattered individuals lying within a 100 yards of the German trench...*" The Newfoundlanders, lined up on the Beaumont Road, renamed St. John's road in their honour, needed only to peek over the parapet to know that a monumental fiasco was in the making. The Generals decided, however, to press on. The official history states, "*...When the military machine gets in motion, it is hard to divert or stop...*"

H.C. Chadderton:

We can see the impossible task which the Newfoundlanders were asked to carry out.

Firstly, much has been written about the mine crater at Hawthorn Redoubt. Tons of explosives had been planted under the German front line position. The question arose, "Should we wait until the British get near the position, thus gaining surprise, or should we blow it ahead of time, making sure there would be a path for our own troops?"

The decision eventually: blow the mine before Zero hour. This had the effect of alerting the Germans all along the whole front.

Keith:

How did the Commanding Officer see the battle? It may have looked easy on a sandbox model. Reality was something else. Lieutenant-Colonel A.L. Hadow, was an English career officer whose experience was limited to serving with units in the distant reaches of the Sudan and Egypt. It was always one of the principles, and possibly a ridiculous one, that in the British Army colonial troops had to be commanded by Colonels from the British Regular Forces.

How did this sit with the loyal, but sceptical soldiers from the Colony? Maybe the song they made up about their colonel tells it all. The words were:

*I'm Hadow, some lad-o
Just off the Staff.
I command the Newfoundlanders
And they know it - not half.
I'll make them or break them.
I'll make the blighters sweat.
For I'm Hadow, some lad-o
I'll be General yet.*

But at 8:40 of the morning of July 1st, 1916, Hadow had his orders. The Brigadier told him to move his men out. He was told that the 1st Essex on their right could not get underway. Their trenches were too clogged from the dead and dying from other units.

Remember that the Newfoundlanders were to charge through the front line of the Germans, which was supposed to have been captured with the first wave. To his credit, Hadow did ask the Brigade Commander whether the German line had been breached. The reply was vague, "*The situation is not cleared up.*"

In fact, Hadow could see for himself. The open ground and trenches in front of them were filled with bodies. They would have to advance, stumbling over the dead of the British troops who had gone before, in the open, in full view of the German machine gunners.

Nonetheless, Hadow passed the word to attack.

He was the first man out of the trench, but his bravado didn't last long. He gestured with his walking stick toward the German lines when the bugles blew, then dropped into a trench to watch his men die. Later, apologists said he was following the standing instructions for Battalion Commanders, "Do not advance with your men, as the risk of being killed is too high."

So Hadow was alive to take the tragic roll call the next day, and to command the Battalion in other later attacks in France. Commenting on the farce at Beaumont Hamel, Hadow simply noted in his diary: *"The Regiment was nearly wiped out."*

To add insult to injury, Hadow sent a message to the Governor in Newfoundland. It was devoid of any sympathy or honest feeling. It said:

Hadow: *"I deeply deplore the losses, but it will be some consolation to the people of Newfoundland to know that nothing could ever have been finer than the conduct of the Regiment and it has established a reputation in this our first battle, which will ever be remembered."*

Keith: Cold words of comfort, indeed.

He had nothing further to say, and for years afterwards when he was living in retirement in England, he maintained his silence. His son told a writer, *"My father never spent much time talking about what had happened during the War."*

At least, the Divisional Commander spoke with more feeling. General Beauvoir de Lyle wrote of the performance of the Newfoundlanders:

Beauvoir de Lyle: *"It was a magnificent display of trained and disciplined valour, and its assault only failed of success because dead men can advance no further."*

Keith: The phrase seems to tell it all. The Newfoundlanders, despite the odds, climbed over and around the bodies of those who had made the first assault and kept going until they were all dead or wounded. The 69 who did survive had been pinned down by vicious enemy fire and were able to crawl back to their own lines, only when they knew that the day had been lost.

And here, we must tell a story which indicates how flaws creep in, fatal flaws.

When the attack was started, each man was loaded down with more than 60 pounds, yes 60 pounds, of equipment, ammunition, grenades, water bottle, field dressing, ground sheet, and, spread among them, wire cutters, picks, shovels, sledgehammers, and even parts of some 32 bridges which were to help them cross captured German trenches.

And here is the worst of it. Each man in the attacking infantry wore on his back a triangular piece of metal designed to reflect the sun and show the Generals in the rear, watching with binoculars, how the advance was going.

When the Newfoundlanders went to ground, the shiny metal on their backs made a perfect target for the German sharpshooters. It will never be known how many of the brave boys from the Colony died uselessly, because the British planners had planted a target on their backs.

H.C. Chadderton: Let's turn now to some word pictures of those who were at the battle.

When we were doing the research for this film, we ran into a young lady who had a letter, which had been written by, I believe, her great Grandfather, Bert Moulton of Burgeo. She reads that letter for us now.

Young Lady: *"Yesterday. Oh God, it was so terrible. Even those of us who were there can't believe it. We are going around in a trance. We heard the bugle or the whistle. I'm not sure which, and somebody said 'we're going to go.' I was standing on a dead guy, I think from the Borderers. He had stumbled back into our support trench. He had lost his hat and his rifle and everything and he was mumbling 'they're all dead; there's nobody left.' Then he died."*

Keith: Bill Newbury was from St. John's. His first recollection was of Captain Eric Ayre, Commander of "D" Company, standing up to lead the attack and dying on the spot.

Bill Newbury: When I saw Captain Ayre killed, I expected I would be the next to go. I was assigned the job of carrying a wooden ladder, me and another man. We then heard the rip of German machine guns. The ladder was splintered. My partner was killed. A second man grabbed the end of the ladder and he was killed. I then abandoned the ladder.

Keith: Robert Tetford, from Harbour Grace, like Bill Newbury, Tetford had been ordered to carry one of the 25-foot-long wooden ladders.

Robert Tetford: Edward Brown was with me. He was hit in the head.

Keith: In the telling, Tetford gently placed his forefinger in the middle of his own forehead and said,

Robert Tetford: Just here. I dived into a shell hole and Billy McNiven fell dead

across my legs. Three or four others from the Regiment were with him. Then a shell fragment ripped open my stomach.

Keith: Walter Day of St. John's:

Walter Day: I enlisted at 15, and was 17 at Beaumont Hamel. I survived the Battle and saw another 40 months of active service in France.

Keith: The copse was blasted bare of leaves by the Germans. One of the trees, standing gauntly isolated from the rest, marked the area where the enemy's bullets and shrapnel was the heaviest. Still, the gallant Newfoundlanders, determined to hang on, gathered around its base. At the end of the day, Frank Lind and at least two dozen other defiant figures could be seen, grotesque in the posture of death. It became known as "THE DANGER TREE" and still stands, 75 years later, withered and misshapen, a monument to the heroic Newfoundlanders who were to make it that far, only to die.

How did the Germans see the Newfoundland attack? A German regimental historian later wrote:

German Historian: *"Ahead of us, wave after wave of British troops were crawling out of their trenches and coming towards us at a walk, their bayonets glistening in the sun."*

Keith: As one of the German survivors said:

German Survivor: *"We simply could not believe what took place. About 6:30 that morning, we knew something was up because the British shelling started in earnest. At 7:15 we had been put on alert when they blew the big mine at Hawthorn. At 7:30 the first wave came towards us. They got only a few yards away from their trenches when we opened fire in full daylight.*

"Then we called down artillery and the whole front of the British trenches was littered with dead and dying soldiers in khaki. We thought the attack was over.

"Then, an hour later, the unbelievable took place. A second wave of British attackers, picking their way through their own dead and wounded, bayonets held high, came down the slope towards us. We had reloaded and simply opened fire once again. In half an hour they were all dead or dying, or pinned down, unable to move.

"All day long we saw some of the poor beggars trying to return to their own lines. Some may have been wounded, but we didn't know that so we had to shoot them anyway.

"It was curious, but they all seemed to have mirrors fixed to their backpacks. Even the worst shots among us could hit them with ease. The distance, 200 yards at the most. It was slaughter, slaughter, slaughter."

Adele:

The aftermath of the battle is remembered throughout Newfoundland, even today. Oh yes, the first official reports were glowing with pride and tribute. The Evening Telegram headlines read:

"British launch great offensive," and "German trenches captured over a 20-mile front."

The news accounts and editorials talked of a glorious victory. Then, on July 13th, 12 days after the assault, the Colony at last was being told.

The casualty lists filled column after column of the daily newspapers.

The Honour Roll of the dead from Beaumont Hamel records four lieutenants from one family, the Ayers of St. John's, and no fewer than 14 sets of brothers. The family names were Evans, Ferguson, Jones, Kelly, Knight, Morris, Penney, Pike, Pinsent, Porter, Ross, Snow, Taylor and White.

A sense of anguish swept throughout the city of St. John's and in the smaller towns and out ports. After all, the population of the Island Colony was only 250,000. The ranks of the Newfoundland Regiment accounted for a very large percentage of its able-bodied men.

The clergymen and civic leaders went through the emotional trauma of carrying the dreadful news to the families. It was a few days in the history of the Colony that no one would ever forget.

The actual casualties numbered 710 in all; 233 killed, 386 wounded and an incredible 91 whose remains were never found.

For months afterwards, people spoke in a softer tone. They remembered the cheering crowds which saw the contingents sail out of St. John's harbour. They knew now that many of them would not return, and the life of the Island Colony would be changed forever.

In November, more than four months later, the famous 51st Highland Division seized the "Y" Ravine. It was found to consist of a great network of caverns and tunnels. The Highlanders took 1,200 prisoners out of the deep underground refuge, with enough supplies to last the Germans for years. The Highland Division's diary stated:

"The ground over which the advance was made was still littered with the skeletons, clad in rags, which represented the men who had fallen in the attack of July 1st."

Memorial University

H.C. Chadderton: Firstly, allow me to read the words of this plaque:

"This university was raised by the people of Newfoundland as a memorial to the fallen in the great wars 1914 - 1918" and later they added, "1939 - 1945"

And allow me also to read this beautiful inscription:

"That in the freedom of learning, their cause and sacrifice might not be forgotten."

When the time came for the people of this proud colony to memorialize those who had lost their lives in World War I, they raised the funds.

But rather than build statues of bronze or marble monuments, they took a very different approach. They decided to create an institute of higher learning.

By coincidence, we have a rather interesting way of explaining how the students of this University feel about knowing that they are going to an institution which was created by the sacrifices of those who gave their lives in World War I.

Adele Fifield, of Trinity East, is both a graduate of The War Amps CHAMP Program because she is a leg amputee, and she is a graduate of this University. And we have asked Adele to explain how these students feel when they walk through the hallowed halls, knowing that this University came about as a memorial to those who are left behind, in France, in Flanders, yes, and in Gallipoli. Adele Fifield...

Adele: Thank you, Cliff. As a student of Memorial University of Newfoundland, or MUN as we affectionately call it, I was very conscious of the sacrifice made by those men who fought in the war for us.

They fought a war so that we, the future generation, would be free to obtain a good education and to live full and prosperous lives.

Those who attend Memorial have a very special feeling towards the University. Like me, many of them would have had relatives who fought in the war.

My Grandfather was in World War I. Fortunately, he survived and came home to us. He was able to share many of his experiences with me.

Many others, who attend Memorial, weren't as lucky. They do, however, have as a constant reminder of the sacrifice made for them, a wonderful institution to attend. They take, as examples in their own lives, the strength, courage and commitment of those men and they are very, very proud to attend Memorial.

H.C. Chadderton: Thank you, Adele. Those men, whose sacrifices this University memorializes, would be justifiably proud of this, their legacy.

This fascinating story of how Memorial University came about, is yet another piece of vastly interesting history which should be known. Not just in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but right across this country.

Gueudecourt

H.C. Chadderton: And now, we come to the battle of Gueudecourt. You know, if the story of the Newfoundland Regiment were to end at Beaumont Hamel, it would still be a magnificent story, a story of courage, a story of everything that these islanders stood for. But after having been wiped out at Beaumont Hamel, they were able to re-group. They were on the parade ground, the survivors, within days.

And from the Colony, the word went out, we need recruits, and within a few weeks, the recruits were on their way across the Atlantic. And as you will see, starting with the battle of Gueudecourt, the Newfoundlanders fought back, and the rest of their story, is again, one of magnificent courage.

Adele: The campaign for reinforcements was aided, in no small measure, by the efforts of the wounded who had been sent home to convalesce. Remember Bert Dicks, who refused to be evacuated from the Beaumont Hamel battlefield? He returned to Grand Falls with his arm in a sling and staged a one-man campaign, enrolling 250 men.

For 18-year-old George Chalker, the excitement of battle was about to begin. The Chalker family was well-known in St. John's. George's father, James, had founded a meat packing plant. The day war broke out, the 16-year-old George, lying about his age, enlisted. His father went down to the Armouries and brought him back home.

When George turned 18, he had his way and did enlist, joining the Battalion in France, a scant 12 days after the tragic Battle at Beaumont Hamel. He told of the great exhilaration when the Battalion was ready to go back into action.

George Chalker: It was after midnight on October 9th, and, as I remember, that fall of 1916 in France was cold. They loaded us into buses, I think they called them charabancs. The vehicles had hard rubber tires and it was a rough ride.

When morning came, we were riding through an area which had seen more than two years of war, with the Germans and our troops seesawing back and forth.

Not a building, or even a tree, was standing. The brick roads provided the only hard ground around. Finally, we dismounted in an area which had been captured. There were wrecked German guns, trenches and equipment lying all around and of course crosses where the dead were buried. We were heading for Gueudecourt, when we passed a young British Officer wearing Captain's rank badges. Great excitement! It was the Prince of Wales, later to become King Edward, who abdicated

his throne to marry Wallace Simpson. That evening, I think it was October 9th or 10th, we relieved the Royal Fusiliers. Nobody got any sleep because the enemy machine guns welcomed us. We wondered if they knew that many of us were tasting battle for the first time. I can't say I was scared, but when they passed out the rum I made sure I got an extra swig or two.

I remember Captain Bert Butler. He had gained great fame in the Regiment. The night before Beaumont Hamel, he had taken out a patrol and came back and told our Colonel Hadow that the attack planned for the next day would see the end of the fighting Newfoundlanders. How right he was.

Anyway, Captain Butler sketched out our orders.

H.C. Chadderton: The orders called for the Newfoundlanders to advance some 800 yards. They were against the Brandenburg, or what was known as the "Iron Division"; tough, tough, tough troops. On the left of the Newfoundlanders, we find the Essex Regiment.

The first objective was what was known as the green line. They managed to vanquish the Iron Division defenders in the front lines and get through to their first objective. And they carried another 200 yards towards the second objective, when they suffered terrible casualties from a counterattack.

However, they did retreat, but only as far as their first objective, and that was a significant, significant victory for them at Gueudecourt.

Keith: Colonel Hadow called his Company Commanders into his candlelit dugout to lay out the plans.

George Chalker takes up the story:

George Chalker: We were still in the support trench in the early morning of the 12th. No one could start a fire so we washed down our bully beef and biscuits by drinking from our water bottles. It was my first battle and I was surprised. The boys were telling jokes and singing. The morning passed quickly, and then after lunch the order came, "Fix bayonets but don't show the tips over the top of the trench." The Germans were only 300 yards away.

I looked with surprise ahead of me. Tommy, I have forgotten his last name, had taken three prisoners. They had their hands over their heads and one of them was holding a grenade. Damned if I know what happened to any of them, because the order came to push on to the final objective. I think they called it the brown line. But, do you know the funny thing? We couldn't find it. There was no trench and the

Germans were murdering us with shell fire. The order came, "Fall back to the hilt trench and stand firm!"

Suddenly, about 200 yards in front, I saw a bunch of grey-green uniforms. Somebody yelled, "They're counterattacking."

Then things got really confusing. I remember one officer saying, "Boys, we have to withdraw." Then I saw Edward Lahey, from Bell Island, he was one of the originals. He was just a private but he said, "We'll stay here. If we run back out of this trench, we'll never make it." He had been in Gallipoli, so I figured he knew what he was talking about.

We had a Captain March with us, I think he was decorated, or he should have been. Anyway, he ran up and down the trench telling us to settle down.

Some of us found shovels to dig a firing step. Then we heard the whistles and the German attack was underway. I thought we were done for when our own machine gunners, who had come up behind us, opened fire. I think I may have shot one or two Germans myself. They were good targets because the sun was in their backs. Anyway, the German counterattack petered out.

That night we were reinforced by the Hampshires.

Keith:

The stubbornness of the Newfoundland Regiment, in holding the Hilt Trench at Gueudecourt, was of great tactical benefit. The trench was a spearhead into the German positions, which anchored the British defensive line for another two years.

The daily orders of October 14th read:

"The commanding officer wishes to convey, to all ranks, his admiration for the way in which the regiment held a front line trench under heavy shell fire for some 40 hours, and then repelled a counterattack."

This was, indeed, atonement for the devastation at Beaumont Hamel.

Colonel Hadow expressed it somewhat differently with these words:

"Reputation gained by the regiment on July 1st, has been magnificently maintained."

Obviously, the Colonel was still refusing to acknowledge, in his own mind, the fiasco of Beaumont Hamel in which, only a few months earlier, he had played no small part.

Even though Gueudecourt was a great victory, it had not been achieved without cost. Five officers and 115 other ranks were killed. Another five

officers and 114 other ranks were severely wounded.

Three NCOs were decorated with the Distinguished Conduct Medal. One of them, Sergeant Major Cyril Gardner, came from British Harbour.

The book *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, by Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, records another outstanding triumph for Cyril Gardner. Although no one was sure why he was wandering around No Man's Land unarmed on January 27th, of 1917. He came upon a trench that held a whole company of the enemy. Gardner took a revolver from one of the Germans and called upon them to surrender. He told them "*Tres bon. You're late. Everyone else has camaraded.*" The Germans understood his gestures, if not his words.

As he was marching 72 prisoners back to his own lines, he was challenged by a British officer who was ready to fire on the Germans. After Gardner stopped him, one of the German officers removed the Iron Cross from his own breast and pinned it on Sergeant Major Gardner. Quite a feat to be decorated in the field of battle by one's enemy!

In the town of Gueudecourt today, there stands a small but impressive memorial to the Regiment from the Island Colony.

The Fighting Newfoundlander

H.C. Chadderton: Military history buffs tell us that you can characterize the World War I infantry men in certain ways. For example, the British tommy was known for his discipline, the French poilu for his fierce pride, the American doughboy for his "don't give a darn" attitude; the Canadian has always been known for his initiative.

And I believe that the fighting Newfoundlander has a brand of all of those characteristics. But he has a uniqueness that is his own. And that uniqueness was the demonstrated ability to fight as a unit.

Now firstly, I want to say something...For a long time it's bothered me when I read casualty lists and it says, "17 officers and 102 other ranks." And the Americans are no better. They say, "7 officers and 67 enlisted men."

You know, in the fighting Newfoundlanders we didn't see that. We saw the ability to fight as "Newfoundlanders." An officer would be killed and his place would be taken immediately by a private, who would jump in and say, "Come on lads." And that was unique. That describes the fighting Newfoundlander. It gives him his particular characteristics, as an infantry soldier in World War I.

If we notice this magnificent statue, there is no rank insignia. For Canadians everywhere, the next time you meet a Newfoundlander, tell him you too will stop, on July the 1st, which is his Memorial Day, and you will think of the sacrifice of his fellow Newfoundlanders in World War I.

But in a war, nobody wins. And that's why we say **"NEVER AGAIN!"**

Sailly Saillisel

H.C. Chadderton: Any military buff will tell you, that the true mark of an infantry regiment is what it can do in a defensive role.

Thus far, the Newfoundlanders had proved the equal of any British unit in attack. It was at a little French town, with the odd name of Sailly Saillisel, that the Newfoundland Regiment found itself in a defensive role. And here again, their achievement was absolutely remarkable.

Keith: Four episodes tell the story of the defence.

Tom Hussey, a 'blue puttee' from St. John's, was confident. He told his Captain, "We can die here if we have to."

When the Germans penetrated one section of the trench, Lieutenant Gerald Byrne seized a pail of grenades, and rallied some of his men shouting, "No Newfoundlander gives way to a Boche!" He drove the Germans back, winning the Military Cross for his gallant action.

John Lewis, also from St. John's, saw that one section of the trench had been cut off. Without hesitation, he grabbed a supply of grenades, running through the crossfire, he retook the position. He won the Military Medal.

One last anecdote completes the story. Lance Corporal Martin Picco, from Port au Port, should not have been there in the first place. He was suffering badly from trench foot, a painful condition, very common in World War I, which came from standing for days on end in ankle deep freezing water. To make matters worse, Picco was wounded early in the morning of March 3rd. He told his men, "We must hold on." And hold on he did, suffering unbelievable agony through a whole day, which included seven German attacks on his position.

Monchy Le Preux

H.C. Chadderton: Monchy le Preux – another battle honour for the Newfoundland Regiment. At about this time in the war what was known as the Fokker Scourge, that is the domination of the aerial battles by the German Airforce, was coming to an end. Although the Germans still had some advantages in their aircraft, like those flown by Baron von Richtofen, the British were catching up.

They were, at that time, still fighting with the French Nieuports, which could not fire through their propellers like the Twin Spandaus of the Germans. However, the British were coming along. They had the new fighters, like the Sopwith Camel, and they could hold their own.

The Sopwith Camels had two machine guns synchronized to fire through the propeller arc. This innovation came too late, however, for the Newfoundlanders at Monchy and, before the battle was even begun, the opposing Bavarian Division knew every British formation and could easily guess at its line of attack.

Keith: While the 1st Canadian Army, complete with four divisions, was making history at Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917, the Newfoundlanders were fighting 15 miles to the south. The objective was Monchy Le Preux. But, before their division could reach it, there was some hard fighting.

On April 11, two days after Vimy, Monchy was taken by the British 37th Division. The village was in British hands, but under constant bombardment from the Germans.

H.C. Chadderton: In mid-April, there was a stalemate all along the lines. However, the British General's staff thought they could bring off a brilliant manoeuvre. Monchy was already sticking out as a salient into the German lines. And so, what the General's staff thought was that they could break out from Monchy. They could go eastward, northward and then westward again, and what they call “rollup” the whole German position.

Keith: On paper, the plan may have looked feasible. On the ground, it was quite different.

Why the discrepancy? In World War I, the Generals who ran the battles were as much as 20 miles in the rear. It was called “commanding by telegraph.” It didn't work.

Firstly, the Generals were simply playing games on maps and sand tables. And secondly, telegraph lines were highly susceptible to being cut by enemy artillery.

- H.C. Chadderton:** Standing in the way of this “rollup” operation, was an immense obstacle called Infantry Hill, and it was held by the Bavarian Division. The orders of the Newfoundland Regiment: attack and take Infantry Hill at all cost.
- Keith:** The kick off time was 5:30 in the morning of April 14th, 1917. Two hours later, nothing had been heard. Captain Herbert Rendell, commanding “D” Company, wrote this about it afterwards. Here are some quotes:
- Herbert Rendell:** *“Our artillery barrage was very thin and failed to silence the enemy machine guns. We got to our objective, then we were scattered. I saw some of my men disappear into a little wood and heard nothing more of them. I saw “C” Company under Capt. Rex Rowsell were over on my right. They were under heavy artillery fire and I never saw them again.”*
- Keith:** Captain Rendell managed to escape capture, only to be killed by a sniper’s bullet at Keiberg Ridge in the Ypres Salient on September 29, 1918, seven weeks before the Armistice.
- Another survivor from the attack on Infantry Hill, was the peppery little George Chalker, who had undergone his baptism of fire at Gueudecourt unharmed. This time he was not so lucky. As the Regiment was withdrawing from Monchy, he was wounded for the first time. He said to a War Amps comrade many years later:
- George Chalker:** *“Clifford me son, we were marching along a road. The shells started to fall. I think two fellas were killed. I got a gunshot wound in the wrist, another in the left shoulder. I went to hospital at Camiers and was invalided back to England on the Newhaven, where I spent three months in the King George Hospital.”*
- Keith:** Bert Holloway was the Intelligence Officer. He was supposed to go ahead with the scouts and snipers. He sent back a message, “From my position, I can see them falling like flies, and machine guns are fierce.” Bert Holloway was trying to get back to tell the Colonel when he was killed.
- The 3rd Bavarian Division was one of the crack formations of the German Army. They fought the battle of Infantry Hill and the British Forces were badly out-manoeuved. The German General, Ludendorf, developed a new doctrine called “elastic defence in depth.” On the other hand, the British defence doctrine still applied, “Here we must stand or fall.”
- H.C. Chadderton:** In the battle for Infantry Hill, the Bavarian Division fell back a little and then they counterattacked in fierce formations; 600 Germans from the Bois du Sart, and another 200 from the Bois du Vert. And at the end of the day, the Newfoundlanders were completely surrounded.

Keith: Up to this point in the War, only two Newfoundlanders had been taken prisoner. That changed drastically, and if Monchy was known for anything, it was that more than 150 of the Regiment fell into enemy hands.

For the freewheeling, freedom-loving Newfoundlander, the German prison camps represented a special kind of hell that he never could have imagined.

The German orders of reprisal were in retaliation for what they perceived to be a policy on the part of the British of keeping German prisoners near the front lines. It stated:

German Voice: *"You will be very short of food, no beds, plenty of hard work and very near the German guns under English shellfire. No soap for washing or shaving, no baths, no boots. And, what we can possibly do to harm and injure all English prisoners of reprisal will be done."*

Keith: The statistics on the attackers who went forward to Infantry Hill were staggering. Among those killed was Cyril Gardner, recently promoted to 2nd Lieutenant, the man from British Harbour.

But the failure of the attack on Infantry Hill was only part of the story. The rampaging Germans decided then to retake Monchy itself, the first salient which had been captured originally on April 12th. This set the stage for another brilliant chapter in the history of the Newfoundlanders.

Lieutenant Colonel Forbes-Robertson, the C.O., organized his headquarters staff of about 20, arming themselves with weapons from the dead and wounded soldiers.

H.C. Chadderton: This gallant band of men, more accustomed to administration than fighting, were determined to hold Monchy.

They occupied a defensive trench just outside the village and began vicious but sporadic firing. The Germans, believing themselves to be opposed by a powerful force, held up their attack. For the Newfoundlanders, this was literally a "don't fire, until you see the whites of their eyes" situation. They held their position for four hours, until British reinforcements could be brought up and Monchy was saved.

This band of cooks and batmen and clerks, under the leadership of their Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Forbes-Robertson, were credited with killing more than 40 Germans.

Keith: As the British official history said, *"They represented all that stood directly between the Germans and Monchy, one of the most vital positions on the whole battlefield."*

In an official communiqué to Sir Walter Davidson, the Governor back in St. John's, the senior British Commander expressed deep regret that the Newfoundland Regiment should, and here we quote, "*...twice since they came to France have been practically wiped out...*" The reference included the previous disaster at Beaumont Hamel.

Later, Forbes-Robertson went back to his original command with the Border Regiment. He won the Victoria Cross in April of 1918, serving with the famous Borderers. The Newfoundland Regiment took great pride in sharing in his distinction.

Cambrai

H.C. Chadderton: We've now reached 1917, and we're about to talk about the Battle of Cambrai. But first, just a comment about the German Maxim machine gun; this was a wicked, wicked weapon of war. It killed British and Allied infantry men by the thousands.

The Germans usually mounted their Maxim machine guns in pillboxes, which made them impervious to our own artillery.

Keith: But the Maxim met its match on the drawing board of the English military wizards. They came up, at long last, with an acceptable answer: the tank. Some say it was the brainchild of Winston Churchill. Although the tank could not be said to have been the complete answer at Cambrai, the Germans were sufficiently impressed to know that their Maxim machine gun crews would no longer dominate.

August 4, 1917, saw the end of three years of war. What was the feeling in the Island Colony knowing that the first rush to join the Colours carried a stipulation of an enlistment of only one year, a stipulation that the men ignored?

The heartbreak of Beaumont Hamel and the daily casualty lists seemed only to encourage the people of the Colony to play their part.

Governor Sir Walter Davidson dispatched an expression of Newfoundland's continued devotion and we quote in part:

Walter Davidson: *"The people in St. John's, and every town of the Colony, on this date, the 3rd Anniversary of this righteous war, records its inflexible determination to continue the struggle and the sacred cause of the Allies."*

Adele: The ties with the Mother Country remained strong, even though centuries had passed since the founding families had immigrated to the "new found land."

The 3rd Anniversary of the War saw, as well, the disbanding of the Patriotic Association. At last the Colony decided to transfer its functions to a new Ministry of Militia.

The proud people of Newfoundland had done the job of directing the Colony's war effort and paying for it through a citizen's committee, something that took place in no other part of the British Empire.

Why did it work? Governor Sir Walter Davidson summed it up this way:

Walter Davidson: *"The people were loyal to the King. The war must be kept out of politics. In an old Colony like Newfoundland, traditions live long. The Newfoundlanders did not need to be told what to do."*

Adele: Meanwhile, in France, as 1917 drew to a close, men from the cities and out ports of the far off Colony longed for home and wondered what would be next. They had seen a new weapon of war, the tank, and the training allowed the Infantry to work exercises at close quarters with these behemoths that seemed impervious to enemy's shot and shell.

H.C. Chadderton: And now, to the Newfoundlanders and Cambrai. We must realize that Cambrai was smack in the middle of the whole Western Front, which ran all the way from Ostend in the north, and Switzerland in the south. The Germans had decided to make a stand, of course, at Cambrai and they built two major defensive lines. The first was known as the Hindenburg line and it was backed up by the Hindenburg Support line. The second German defensive line was known as the Masnieres Beaurevoir line, which was guarding the very outskirts of the city of Cambrai.

Keith: November 20th, was the date set for the big Allied offensive which the British called the "Great Experiment." For the first time, tanks would be used as the major weapon.

Capt. Bert Tait, the Regimental Adjutant, later told the story.

Bert Tait: *"The rumour about an impending push by our side started when the C.O. and I joined four officers of the Division and we drove by bus up the Cambrai Road about two miles behind the front line to look over the ground and find our assembly areas."*

"I was struck immediately by two things: first, was the magnitude of the task facing us. It would be no picnic, but on the other hand, for the first time we were to attack over open ground, unscarred by any previous fighting. Hey, I thought, now we will see what the tanks can do."

H.C. Chadderton: Let's go back to the battle map again. The British would attack on a three divisional front: the 6th Division, the 20th Division and the 12th Division.

When these three divisions had smashed through the Hindenburg line and the Hindenburg Support line, the British 29th Division, which included the Newfoundland Regiment, would then carry on through to the second defensive line, the Masnieres Beaurevoir line.

They would capture the village of Masnieres, and once that had been secured, the way would be clear for this smashing British tank attack to go clear through and take Cambrai.

Keith: A bold plan and its success would depend on the ability of the 29th Division to capture the two strong points in front of the Masnieres Beaufort line, Marcoing and Masnieres. The first strong point, Marcoing, was the objective of the Newfoundland Regiment on November 20th.

Captain Tait's diary tells the story. It was the greatest victory for any single battalion in the November campaign, and in the three years of the war.

Bert Tait: *“Shortly after 10:00 a.m., we heard the bugle call to advance. Fortunately there was a heavy mist so the German aircraft were grounded. Four tanks were churning up the ground ahead of our forward companies. For the first time, that I could remember, we were walking in a leisurely manner and, something which escaped me at first, the air smelled fresh. Other places men lay half-buried. Everywhere we were assailed by the putrid smell of decayed bodies. Once you have smelled that sickly odour you never forget it.*

“I knew we had to get across the Quentin Canal and I remember looking through the mist and seeing the Marcoing Copse. When our tactical headquarters group got there, “D” Company, under Herb Rendell, had already captured it. Next, we were on our way towards what showed on the map as a canal lock with a foot bridge.

“We came under fire and the Colonel sent a message up, telling me to find out what was holding us up. It was machine guns and then a bloody miracle, a tank which had been patrolling our side of the canal showed up.”

H.C. Chadderton: It was in this action, that the Newfoundlanders first found themselves, fighting side by side, with a Canadian Unit, the Fort Garry Horse from Winnipeg. The Garrys had come the night before, mounted cavalry and tanks. And their eventual objective was, of course, Cambrai.

The next morning, the Garrys crossed the canal with their horses. They charged into the German positions, silencing enemy gunners right and left. It was a magnificent effort. Later in the morning, the survivors of the Garrys came back through the Newfoundland lines. They brought some prisoners with them. Their Commander, Lieutenant Marcus Strachan, received the Victoria Cross for his daring leadership in this exploit.

There was a road leading from the British positions right smack through Masnieres and Rue Melee and on into Cambrai.

But right here, there's a bridge which crossed the St. Quentin Canal. The third British tank over that bridge collapsed it. And, of course,

tanks can't cross canals without bridges. That is where the "Great Experiment" in the first battle of Cambrai, in the tanks, failed.

Keith:

In terms of ground gained and lost, the "Great Experiment" with the tanks produced little profit. The tanks had proved their worth in open country, but could only get across canals and rivers if the infantry could protect the necessary bridges.

There was, however, no criticism of the Newfoundland Regiment. They had penetrated almost to the enemy's reserve line and then their defence of Masnieres stopped the German offensive cold in its tracks. Told he was to be replaced, the Brigade Commander said of them:

Commander:

"I don't care what happens to me now; I have commanded the most wonderful troops in the world, who have fought the best fight any man can see and live. I feel my career has been crowned."

Adele:

Seven years later, when the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, came to St. John's to unveil the National War Memorial, he selected, as the single most notable achievement, the Newfoundlanders' resistance against the Germans at Cambrai.

His words were, *"The story of the defence of Masnieres and the part which the Newfoundlanders' battalion played in it, is one which, I trust, will never be forgotten."*

After the battle, the Regiment, and in fact all of Newfoundland, received the glorious news. The Newfoundland Regiment was awarded the prefix "Royal." The War Office stated in a letter dated January 31, 1963, and we quote:

"This is the only instance in which this honour was conferred during the Great War, though other regiments and corps received the title after cessation of hostilities."

Battle Honours

H.C. Chadderton: In the telling of this magnificent story of the Newfoundland Regiment, it is possible only to touch upon the highlights. But if one is to look at the battle honours of this Regiment that is where we can fill in the blanks.

The battle of Langemarck, for example...

You know, such was the importance of the success of Langemarck that the Commanding Officer Sir Hubert Gough, issued an army order calling on all other divisions to emulate the example. And, of course, the Newfoundlanders had been in the vanguard of that attack. No doubt, the message was received with great satisfaction by our friend, Colonel Hadow.

Keith: Other battle honours indicate quite clearly, that the Newfoundland Regiment played an important role in many of the major campaigns throughout the entire First World War.

In those times between the major battles, the Newfoundlanders remained busy, often on their own initiative. One example serves to illustrate: Forbes-Robertson, who had reverted to Major when Colonel Hadow came back, formed a group called, somewhat dramatically, "The Raiders." The Regimental Diary tells of an exploit on July 17th of 1917, where this feisty group carried out a trench raid bringing back an important prisoner from the 102nd Saxon Regiment.

Stan Goodyear, from Grand Falls, was one of five brothers serving in France. He was the Battalion Transport Officer and much loved. The troops knew that whatever the obstacles, he would get through with supplies and ammunition. On October 9th of 1917, he was crossing a particularly dangerous stretch of road with his horse pulling the wagons. He was killed instantly by a stray German shell. He was awarded a Military Cross, posthumously.

Another chance shell took the life of one of the Regiment's best known soldiers, Lance Corporal John Sheewak, an Eskimo from Labrador. His loss was felt keenly. He had become a real favourite among the troops, and even on one occasion, while in the training barracks in Ayr, Scotland, he dressed up in a Highland Kilt.

Adele: The awarding of battle honours was the responsibility of the British War Office. This often caused consternation on the part of troops from the Dominions.

For example, although every Newfoundlander knew of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, when the battle honour list was first issued after the War, the name did not appear. The practice was to list only the major

operations, and Beaumont Hamel was part of the larger battle of Albert. Later, the British Government did allow the Regiment to add the name Beaumont Hamel after Albert.

This was the source of an interesting development which took place at a reunion in St. John's in 1923. The battle honours awarded the Regiment included the name Poelcappelle. Many of the survivors blinked with astonishment. Where was Poelcappelle?

H.C. Chadderton: Looking back at what is known as the Battle of Poelcappelle. The somewhat small, but very important part, which the Newfoundlanders played in that battle, was at a place called Broembek Creek. And, believe me, that is a name which the Newfoundlanders would never forget. Nevertheless, the fighting at Broembek, which earned the battle honour of Poelcappelle for the Regiment, was no small victory.

The Newfoundlanders were assigned to attack along the Ypres-Staden railway line, a distance of more than two miles in a war where successful advances were sometimes measured in yards. The first breakdown in the official plan was that the Newfoundlanders were required to cross the Broembek, which normally would have presented no problems, but which, on the 9th of October, 1917, was swollen to a small river. Anyway, somehow, they got across and they marched some four miles to their first objective, which was right here.

One reason for the success was the low cloud cover, which meant that the German aircraft spotters could not see what the Newfoundlanders were up against.

They got through to their third objective, or nearly so, and at the end of the battle, they were able to dig in along the Poelcappelle Road until they were relieved by the 2nd Hampshires.

Adele: Certainly the battle honour of Poelcappelle had been earned, not only from the gallant, carefree way in which they disposed of the enemy machine gun nests, but for the skilful tactical manoeuvres directed by their Company Commanders, including Joseph Nunns.

Captain James Ledingham, of St. John's, had been killed in the operation. The unusual award of Military Cross to a Non-Commissioned Officer was a further tribute. This went to Company Sergeant Major Albert Taylor, who had taken over from Captain Ledingham.

Other battle honours read like a blow-by-blow description of that terrible War:

Gallipoli – 1915
Arras – 1917
Ypres – 1917 - 1918
Cambrai – 1917
Courtrai
The Somme
Mount Kemmell

No British Regiment has more. The same may be said for Gallantry
Decorations:

1 Victoria Cross;
3 Distinguished Service Orders;
30 Military Crosses;
31 Distinguished Conduct Medals;
108 Military Medals;
17 Meritorious Service Medals; and
nearly 50 mentioned in dispatches.

Not even the famous British Regiments of the line did better.

1918 - The Final Year

H.C. Chadderton: 1918, at last, a four-year struggle might be coming to an end. The Newfoundlanders, at the start of the year, found themselves back in the Passchendaele section. They had a new Commanding Officer – Lieutenant Colonel J.S. Woodruffe from the Royal Sussex Regiment.

General Haig told his Commanders at the start of the year, to expect a very, very difficult time. Because, the British knew that the Germans were going to mount a major offensive.

The first action, in which the Newfoundland Regiment found itself, was at a place called Bailleul, and, it was on April the 9th. George Chalker takes up the narrative at this point. He talked about it many years later, and I was privileged to be sitting in on that meeting. George held in his hand, a copy of Sir Douglas Haig's Order of the Day. It read:

"There is no other course open to us, but to fight it out! Every position must be held to the last man, there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end. The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind alike depend on the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment."

And I could just imagine how the Newfoundlanders felt when they saw that particular Order of the Day. Anyway, George reminisces:

George Chalker: It was a rough, rough time. We were being shelled with mustard gas. The British Army was falling back all along the line. We lost places like Passchendaele and Poelcappelle. Then we were told to make a stand at Bailleul. I think they called the whole show the Battle of the Lys (like in Fleur de Lys). I think Bailleul started about April 13th. No, it was April 12th. The next day, the 13th, I got wounded for the second and last time. I had gunshot wounds in the thigh and the leg and ended up an amputee. The war was over for me.

Keith: The German offensive continued. The Royal Newfoundland Regiment had gone through its toughest trials at Beaumont Hamel, Gueudecourt, Monchy and Cambrai. They had sustained a terrible toll in casualties, but those battles were over in only a few hours. The rear guard actions in 1918 were different. They lasted for days on end, as the British fell back through Flanders. The attrition was intolerable.

On August 8th of 1918, the tide on the Western Front turned at last. It was a day that the German General Ludendorf called, "The black day of the German army." Let us trace, what some members of the Regiment came to call, the glorious month. They were in Belgium now, taking off from Ypres, the Newfoundlanders participated in the battles for Polygon

Wood, Keiberg Ridge, Ledeghem, (which was part of the bigger battle of Courtrai) then Steenbeek and St. Catherine Capelle. There was a brief rest out of the line and they were at it again. On the 20th of October, the Regiment moved by vehicle and on foot, ending on the 25th of October in a fierce fight for a small village in Belgium, Ingoyghem.

Now, they found themselves linked with Highland brigades, Lowland brigades, South African regiments. Their fame had spread.

In the years since Gallipoli and France, the “Homespun” Regiment had transformed itself into one of the crack units of the British Army.

H.C. Chadderton:

Let's backtrack to the Battle for Courtrai for a moment. The Royal Newfoundlanders were on the left of the advance, together with the Second Royal Scots Fusiliers. The objective was Steenbeek, and then on to St. Catherine Capelle to capture the railway line running north from Courtrai.

Attempts were made by various small parties, which resulted only in more casualties. Lieutenant Stanley Newman, of St. John's, with a handful of his men, succeeded in reaching a small depression, but could get no closer to the German guns.

Something had to be done, and what transpired was undoubtedly the bravest act of anyone in the Newfoundland Regiment in the entire war, and it was carried out by a 17 year-old, Private Thomas Ricketts, from Middle Arm, White Bay. Like many of his Newfoundland buddies, he had lied about his age on enlistment.

He had already been wounded at Marcoing back in November of 1917, but had rejoined the Battalion in time for the fighting at Bailleul. The extract from the London Gazette of January 6, 1919, tells the story of his heroism in the battle of October 14, 1918.

KEITH:

Here, we paraphrase:

“Private Ricketts at once volunteered to go forward. The enemy, seeing an opportunity to get the field guns away, began to bring up gun teams. Private Ricketts, realizing the situation, doubled back 100 yards under heavy machine gun fire, got further ammunition, and dashed back to the Lewis gun. By very accurate fire, he drove the enemy and gun teams into a farm. By anticipating the enemy intention and his utter disregard of personal safety, Private Ricketts secured the further supply of ammunition which directly resulted in these important captures and undoubtedly saved many lives.”

Private Ricketts was the youngest winner of the Victoria Cross in the British Army. At the investiture, King George introduced the youthful

Ricketts to Princess Mary saying, "This is the youngest VC in my Army."
Thomas Ricketts returned to St. John's and trained as a pharmacist. A monument stands today on Water Street, which was the site of his drug store.

H.C. Chadderton: After Ingoyghem, the British Army had finally completed its advance from the Lys right through to the Scheldt, a distance of some 35 miles.

On October 26th, 1918, just 15 days before the Armistice, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment finally handed over its front line positions for the last time to the British army. And isn't it interesting that the last battle casualty of this regiment was a man by the name of Ronald Courage. He was a regimental cook, miles behind the lines, hit by a stray German shell. And if that doesn't sum up all of the travesty, as well as the glory, of this story, I can't think of anything else that does.

Losses

CLIFF:

To understand Newfoundland, one must know a bit about the character and history of what is the oldest colony. And nothing indicates this better than the traditional way in which they decided that they would commemorate their war dead.

In 1919, the British adopted the poppy from Flanders Fields. But two years before that, the Newfoundlanders had decided to do it just a little differently. They had chosen the beautiful, blue forget-me-not as their symbol of remembrance, and they wear it to this day.

Amiens, Ypres, Passchendaele – as one drives through the battlefields of the First World War, there seems to be a military cemetery wherever the eyes turn. Neat, well-kept rectangles of green, most marked by a cross, or giant sword, pointing skyward. But the Newfoundland Government decided to do it differently.

The monuments marking the last resting place of those brave Newfoundlanders stand out, even as the soldiers from the Island Colony stood out at Beaumont Hamel and elsewhere, the visiting pilgrim will see a magnificent, bronze statue of a caribou always facing the enemy positions. These magnificent animals, thousands of which still roam the province, represent a remarkable tribute to those heroic men who came from a colony across the ocean, never to return.

Let's listen to a bit of the island's anthem, Ode to Newfoundland, as we see the names of some of the fallen.

Adele:

When the Florizel sailed for the United Kingdom on October 4th of 1914, there were some 500 blue puttees aboard. The total enlistment for the Regiment, in the four years of war, was 6,241.

Total fatal casualties were 1,305. In other words, one in every five paid the supreme sacrifice; that is 20 per cent. Comparisons are sometimes odious, but the corresponding proportion for the Canadian Expeditionary Force was 9.6 percent.

But the loss of many of its finest young men was felt in Newfoundland to a much greater degree than in other countries.

Looking at the honour roll of the Regiment, we see the names of families who had been in Newfoundland for many generations. They were the kind of young men who had faith in their developing Colony and they could not be replaced.

In analyzing the tremendous loss in manpower, another factor looms very large. In neighbouring mainland Canada there was a post war

boom of immigration, not so in Newfoundland. The displaced European would far rather take his chances on being absorbed into the fabric of a Nation like Canada where he would find a ready welcome from those of his own nationality who had preceded him. Newfoundlanders were mostly of British stock.

Newfoundland and Labrador had great potential, but dedicated men would be needed for the mines, the fisheries, the pulp and paper industry. Newfoundland left many of her finest buried in the soil of Gallipoli, France and Flanders.

The decimation of the finest sons of two families tell the story.

The Goodyears, of Grand Falls, were movers and shakers. Their interests ran all the way from retail stores to road building. Of the six boys, five joined the service. Hedley, graduate of the University of Toronto, was killed near Beaucourt, on August 8, 1918. His last letter to his mother was read in the House of Commons in Canada, on November 11, 1989. It said: *"This is the evening before the attack and my thoughts are with you all at home. But my backward glance is wistful only because of memories, and because of the sorrow which would further darken your lives should anything befall me in tomorrow's fray."*

Ray Goodyear, the youngest, was killed on October 12th, 1916, at Gueudecourt, his first battle.

Stan Goodyear met his death on October 9th, 1917, near Langemarck.

The two brothers who came back, Ken and Joe, along with Roland who remained in Newfoundland to look after the family's interests, did well enough, but if the other three brothers, one of them with a university education from Toronto, had come back, is it not fair to speculate that Grand Falls, and the surrounding community would have been the better for the combined effort which would have been possible with all six sons of a great family?

Probably even more tragic, was the loss of the Ayre dynasty. C.R. Ayre was a merchant prince, and a benevolent one, in St. John's. The development of his enterprises would need the impetus that would come from his four grandsons. They were all killed on that fateful July 1st on the Somme in 1916. Think about it!

War Memorial - Downtown St. John's

H.C. Chadderton: When I stand in front of a war memorial, be it at Beaumont Hamel, in France, or here in downtown St. John's, Newfoundland, I realize that it is a tribute to those who did not come back. But to me, there's a much more significant meaning, a deeper meaning.

Let's use the words, what might have been. Because we have to realize, in terms of economic loss, that the potential of those young men, who didn't come back, the potential died with them. Many people in Canada are not aware of the fact that in 1914, when the British Empire went to war, Newfoundland was the most prosperous Colony in the whole British Empire.

What happened? In World War I, in four years, they lost approximately 10 percent. And that 10 percent were the best. They left their lives, they left their potential, they left their imagination, they left everything on the battlefields of Flanders, in France and some of them in Gallipoli.

What does that absence mean? Well, it doesn't take too much imagination. If this was the most prosperous colony, it had everything. It had raw resources, it had minerals, it had forestry, it had fishing, but what it needed, after World War I, was it needed manpower. And that did not happen.

I would like to read from a book called *The Danger Tree* by David McFarlane. I think he says it, as well as I have heard it said anywhere. He says:

"...But the greatest change the war brought was one that no one could measure. It was an absence. It was marked eventually with war memorials and parades, which by their very existence, contradicted what they were supposed to represent.

"The best were gone...or doomed..., and what the world would have been like had they not died is anybody's guess."

H.C. Chadderton: Perhaps, we should consider a case in point, Sergeant Major Cyril Gardner, was from British Harbour. When he went away to war in 1914, British Harbour was a bustling out port community. After World War I, British Harbour petered out. It just doesn't exist any more.

But one has to wonder, that if the Cyril Gardners had come back and had been able to pour their expertise, to pour their work and their labour and their capital and their adventurous spirit, had been able to pour it into the out port community, would they really have disappeared? I can tell you one thing, that the descendants of Cyril Gardner do not think so.