

7-18-2018

The Forgotten Campaign: Newfoundland at Gallipoli

Tim Cook

Mark Osborne Humphries

Recommended Citation

Cook, Tim and Humphries, Mark Osborne (2018) "The Forgotten Campaign: Newfoundland at Gallipoli," *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 27 : Iss. 1 , Article 18.
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol27/iss1/18>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Canadian Military History by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

The Forgotten Campaign

Newfoundland at Gallipoli

TIM COOK & MARK OSBORNE HUMPHRIES

Abstract: Gallipoli has no place in the collective memory of most Canadians and even among Newfoundlanders, Gallipoli has not garnered as much attention as the ill-fated attack at Beaumont Hamel. Although largely forgotten, Newfoundland's expedition to Gallipoli was an important moment in the island's history, one that helped shape the wartime identity of Newfoundlanders. Like other British Dominions, Newfoundland was linked to the Empire's world-wide war experience and shared in aspects of that collective imperial identity, although that identity was refracted through a local lens shaped by the island's unique history. Gallipoli was a brutal baptism of fire which challenged and confirmed popular assumptions about the Great War and laid the foundation of the island's war mythology. This myth emphasized values of loyalty, sacrifice, and fidelity, affirming rather than reducing the island's connection to Mother Britain, as was the case in the other Dominions. When in the early 1930s economic depression, financial mismanagement, and political gridlock led the government of Prime Minister Frederick Alderdice to end responsible government in 1934 and return governing authority to the British crown, Newfoundland's war myth lost much of its meaning. After Confederation with Canada in 1949, Gallipoli was all but forgotten, but it has bled back into Newfoundlanders' historical consciousness in recent years.

GALLIPOLI HAS NO PLACE in the collective memory of most Canadians, many of whom may be surprised that the Royal Newfoundland Regiment served on the peninsula for more than four

months in 1915.¹ But even among Newfoundlanders, Gallipoli has not garnered much attention as all aspects of their war are overshadowed by the ongoing trauma of 1 July 1916, where the regiment was nearly annihilated on the first day of the Somme battles at Beaumont Hamel.² For the rest of Canada—as the two were separate Dominions until 1949—there is no other focus than the Western Front, with the battles of Second Ypres, the Somme, Passchendaele, and the Hundred Days all part of the nation’s narrative, albeit eclipsed again by the April 1917 offensive at Vimy Ridge. Canadians and Newfoundlanders over several generations have invested enormous energy in remembering Vimy and Beaumont Hamel. With Walter Allward’s towering memorial at Vimy and its conserved battleground, tunnels and trenches, the battle, and all that it stands for, remains a symbolic touchstone.³ The victory there is in direct contrast to the Newfoundlanders’ sacrifice and loss at Beaumont Hamel, although what nations chose to remember, celebrate, and martyr is a complex story.⁴ Defeat can be as empowering as victory when we unpack the shared stories and narratives of how nations and communities within them remember, forget, and make meaning of war—and so it is with

¹ On the memory of the war in Canada, see Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); Tim Cook, *Clio’s Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); Tim Cook, “Battles of the Imagined Past: Canada’s Great War and Memory,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 95, 4 (September 2014) 417-26 ; Mark Humphries, “Between Commemoration and History: The Historiography of the Canadian Corps and Military Overseas,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 95, 4 (September 2014) 384-97.

² Olivia Huybers, “Nationalism and Newfoundland’s Memory of the First World War,” *The Killick* 1, 1 (2015) 57-8; Robert J. Harding, “Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland’s Cultural Memory of the Attack at Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1925,” *Newfoundland Studies* 21, 1 (Spring 2006): 3-40. See also David Macfarlane, *The Danger Tree: Memory, War, and the Search for a Family’s Past* (Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter, and Ross, 1991); P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “War, Memory, and the Newfoundland Regiment at Gallipoli,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 15, 2 (1999): 176-214; Angela Duffett, “Memory, Myth and Memorials,” (MA Thesis: Carleton University, 2010).

³ See various essays in Geoff Hayes, Andrew Iarocci, and Mike Bechthold (eds.), *Vimy Ridge: A Canadian Reassessment* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007) and Tim Cook, *Vimy: The Battle and the Legend* (Toronto: Viking, 2017).

⁴ On the memorial itself see P. Gough, “‘Contested memories: contested site’: Newfoundland and its unique heritage on the Western Front,” *The Round Table* 96, 393 (2007): 693-705.

Newfoundland's experience on the Somme.⁵ But what becomes of these national myths when nations cease to be?

Although largely forgotten, Newfoundland's expedition to Gallipoli was an important moment in the island's history, one that helped shape the wartime identity of Newfoundlanders. In recent years, the battle has returned to prominence with the rise of Newfoundland nationalism. Like other British Dominions, Newfoundland was linked to the Empire's world-wide war experience and shared in aspects of that collective imperial identity, although that identity was refracted through a local lens shaped by the island's unique history. Consequently, there is much that is familiar for Canadian historians of the Great War about the story of Newfoundland's early war experience: patronage, political rivalries, and colonial insecurities mixed with a sense that Newfoundlanders were good soldiers, not by virtue of their military training but the hardships they endured as civilians, carving out a life from a harsh environment. Gallipoli, like the Battle of Second Ypres for Canada, was also a brutal baptism of fire which challenged and confirmed popular assumptions about the Great War and laid the foundation of the island's war mythology. This myth emphasized values of loyalty, sacrifice, and fidelity, affirming rather than reducing the island's connection to Mother Britain, as was the case in the other Dominions. When in the early 1930s economic depression, financial mismanagement, and political gridlock led the government of Prime Minister Frederick Alderdice to end responsible government in 1934 and return governing authority to the British crown, Newfoundland's war myth lost much of its meaning. After Confederation with Canada in 1949, Gallipoli was all but forgotten, but it has bled back into Newfoundlanders' historical consciousness in recent years.

NEWFOUNDLAND AT WAR

At the turn of the twentieth century, Newfoundlanders were fiercely proud to not be Canadians. The 220,000 Newfoundlanders from the

⁵ We have been influenced by Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24; Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Empire's oldest colony, which became a dominion in 1907, had long withstood pressure to join Canada. A popular anti-confederation song from 1869, which was sung while Canada was courting the island to join its young country, contained the lines: "Her face turns to Britain, her Back to the Gulf, Come near at your peril, Canadian Wolf."⁶ The relationship warmed very little over the succeeding forty-five years. Although a trans-island railway was built in the late 1880s and various British and Canadian firms engaged in mining and forestry to exploit resources in the island's interior, the lives of Newfoundlanders remained much as they had been for centuries: focused on the family-run salt-cod fishery. In 1914, the island was indeed oriented towards the cold North Atlantic.⁷

When Britain went to war on 4 August 1914, Newfoundland also found itself at war. Its people were spread out along more than 17,000 kilometres of coastline, including the continental territory of Labrador, in isolated fishing villages. About a fifth of the population was grouped in the capital, St. John's, on the eastern tip of the island. Both the island's politics and economy were characterized by deep differences defined by religion—Catholics, Methodists, Anglicans, and Non-Conformists—as well as long-standing tensions between outport fishermen and the St. John's merchants who controlled the trade in dried salt-cod. Over the next four years, the war would unify the colony behind the flag, while also creating new fissures, financial burdens, and bring a heavy human cost in lives.⁸

Political and economic differences were initially set aside, at least publicly. "We are warring in the cause of righteousness, truth and justice," intoned the *Daily News*, one of the larger St. John's papers.⁹ Newsmen and prominent Newfoundlanders echoed the sentiments expressed throughout the British Empire that this was a war against German militarism and a battle against tyranny.¹⁰ Newfoundland's

⁶ See Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador, 'The Anti-Confederate Song,' <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/song.html> (accessed 11 November 2016).

⁷ Sean T. Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 154-76. See also Patrick O'Flaherty, *Lost Country: The Rise and Fall of Newfoundland 1843-1933* (St. John's: Long Beach Press, 2005); S.J.R. Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

⁸ Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, 131-2; Sean Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts: National Tragedies and the Fate of Democracy in Newfoundland, 1914-34* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2013), 59-92.

⁹ *Daily News*, 24 August 1914.

¹⁰ Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*, 59-61.



Governor Walter Davidson inspecting a section of Newfoundland Regiment recruits. Note the rudimentary uniforms, civilian headwear, and blue puttees. [A 58-17, Parsons Family Collection, The Rooms Provincial Archives Division]

government immediately pledged support to London even though the Dominion had no permanent military force nor a militia around with which to form an expeditionary force. It did have a quasi-military Legion of Frontiersman, along with several church-sponsored paramilitary voluntary organizations and youth movements that combined moral teachings with military drill.¹¹ However, with the exception of the Legion of Frontiersman, which had a presence at the village of St. Anthony, all were based in St. John's.¹² In the capital, Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, and Non-Conformists all vied to train boys for war and, over the previous decade, this had created a cadre of military-minded young men.¹³

¹¹ Mike O'Brien, "Out of a Clear Sky: The Mobilization of the Newfoundland Regiment, 1914-1915," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 22, 2 (2007): 401-27.

¹² Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador, "Paramilitary Groups," Newfoundland & Labrador in the First World War, <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/greatwar/articles/paramilitary.html> (accessed 11 November 2016).

¹³ O'Brien, "Out of a Clear Blue Sky," 404; a similarly militarized climate prevailed in Canada. See Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 31; James Woods, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 70, 171.

Newfoundland's recruitment began within a week and patriotic organizations set about raising money, goods, and supplies. Somewhat unusually, the Newfoundland government of Prime Minister Sir Edward Morris created a civilian voluntary organization to oversee recruiting and the management of Newfoundland's defences. The island's British Governor, Sir Walter Davidson, was appointed head of a Committee of Citizens, a body of fifty prominent Newfoundlanders mainly from St. John's, to run the war effort. The committee was soon renamed the Newfoundland Patriotic Association, and, until the end of 1917, gave an unelected group of prominent citizens direction of Newfoundland's war effort.¹⁴

Despite being an island oriented towards the sea, Newfoundland had no navy. Britain had given the Dominion HMS *Calypso*, a three-mast corvette built in the early 1880s, as a training vessel, but it could have offered little resistance if any of the German warships, feared to be prowling the North Atlantic, entered the port of St. John's. *Calypso* did, however, provide training opportunities for the men of the Newfoundland contingent of the Royal Naval Reserve and within a month, 100 reservists joined HMCS *Niobe*, one of Canada's two outdated cruisers.¹⁵ Another 500 lumberjacks served as forestry troops in Scotland, while several dozen nurses went overseas. But the primary contribution, and the one in which Newfoundland remained most proud, was the Newfoundland Regiment, given the prefix "Royal" in late 1917.

THE BLUE PUTTEES

Although William Coaker, the head of the Fisherman's Protective Union and the official opposition in the House of Assembly, voiced fears that the small dominion would be unable to pay and equip

¹⁴ Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*, 61-5; O'Brien, "Out of a Clear Blue Sky," 405-6. On war organization, see Patricia O'Brien, "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association: The Administration of the War Effort, 1914-1918," (MA Thesis: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1981).

¹⁵ G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment* (St. John's: Government of Newfoundland, 1964), 102-3; Marc Brouillette, "Home Defence in Newfoundland, 1914-1918," in Department of History, *Newfoundland and the Canada in the Great War* (St. John's: Department of History, 2013); on the naval reserve, see Mark Hunter, *To Employ and Uplift Them: The Newfoundland Naval Reserve, 1899-1926* (St. John's: ISER Books, 2009).



Volunteers of the First Five Hundred at bayonet exercises beside Quidi Vidi lake, 1914. [VA 37-15.2, The Rooms Provincial Archives Division]

an infantry force, a first detachment of 537 men, aged nineteen to thirty-five, were ready to sail for the United Kingdom in early October 1914.¹⁶ Coaker may have been right as Newfoundland was all but impoverished. In hundreds of outposts, people were used to hard times and in the autumn of 1914, records show that about 250 additional recruits had to be turned down due to poor health—everything from chronic illnesses like rickets and pellagra to flat feet and poor teeth.¹⁷ There was, though, no lack of patriotic spirit. Those who enlisted did so for numerous reasons, from supporting the Empire to escaping the hardscrabble life on the island, or for steady pay, a chance to travel, and to represent Newfoundland in the global war effort. Many believed in the just nature of the war against German aggression. One popular parish priest, Father Larry of Ferryland, was reported as exhorting his flock, “These Germans, shoot them! Kick them to blue blazes!”¹⁸

¹⁶ Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*, 59-73.

¹⁷ Christopher A. Sharpe, “The ‘Race of Honour’: An Analysis of Enlistments and Casualties in the Armed Forces of Newfoundland, 1914–1918,” *Newfoundland Studies* 4, no. 1 (1988): 33–7. For a Canadian comparison, see Nic Clarke, *Unwanted Warriors: Rejected Volunteers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

¹⁸ Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, 105.

On 4 October, ss *Florizel* joined up with the thirty troop-carrying ships from Canada that were transporting over 31,000 Canadians to Britain.¹⁹ The first Newfoundlanders were seen off with much fanfare and forever known as the Blue Puttees because of the navy blue strips of cloth they wound around their ankle and lower leg. *Florizel*, a sealing ship that was usually stacked high with oily pelts, smelled rank, but the Newfoundlanders were excited to represent the dominion, even though at least one volunteer recalled that “we were stowed away like so many seals.”²⁰

The Canadians and Newfoundlanders both trained on Salisbury Plain in the mud and misery of that cold and wet winter of 1914. The Newfoundlanders fielded rumours with much indignation that they were to be swallowed up by the larger Canadian contingent, and matters were not helped when a Canadian, Lieutenant-Colonel E.B. Clegg, a fifty-year-old militia officer with 31 years of experience, was given command of the contingent, only about half the size of an infantry battalion. Clegg was unloved by the Newfoundlanders, who was not one of them and who they believed was a cast-off from the Canadians.²¹

The islanders, now kitted in British khaki, puttees and peaked hats, were keen to ensure they were not mistaken for their cousins from the mainland. This desire for separation was heightened when the Canadians acquired a reputation for being rowdy and ill-disciplined.²² Owen Steele, a prewar glass and china salesman from St. John's and recently promoted to sergeant, wrote home in early 1915: “Apart from the fact that we are much prouder of our distinction as Newfoundlanders, the Canadians generally have been getting a bad name for themselves.”²³ Another Newfoundlander, Private Francis “Mayo” Lind, a thirty-five-year-old officer worker who regularly sent home letters that were published in the St. John's *Daily News*, recounted an experience in which he explained vigorously to two

¹⁹ O'Brien, “Out of a Clear Sky,” 415-16.

²⁰ Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*, 74.

²¹ *A Blue Puttee at War: The Memoir of Captain Sydney Frost, MC*, ed. Edward Roberts (St. John's, NFLD: Flanker Press, 2014), 66-67.

²² Tim Cook, “Wet Canteens and Worrying Mothers: Soldiers and Temperance Groups in the Great War,” *Social History* 35, 70 (June 2003): 311-30.

²³ See Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1992), 299-300; Letter dated 26 May 1915, *Lieutenant Owen William Steele of the Newfoundland Regiment*, ed. David R. Facey-Crowther (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 30.

Scottish ladies who mistook him for a Canadian: “[they] looked at the badges on our shoulders and one said ‘Neld’ (they took the F. for an E.) ‘where is Neld?’ I said it is not Neld it is Nfld. – Newfoundland! ‘Oh,’ she said, ‘that’s in Canada, isn’t it?’ I looked around for a brick. Canada again! ‘No,’ I roared. ‘Newfoundland is a separate Colony. Do they teach geography in your schools here?’ We hurried on in disgust. How hard is it to teach the people that Nfld. and Canada are two separate colonies.”²⁴

By the end of the 1914, three additional Newfoundland companies had been raised and early next year the Newfoundland Regiment was formed with one service battalion in the field, a second depot battalion stationed at Ayr, Scotland, and a third recruiting battalion headquartered in St. John’s. Like the Blue Puttees, most of the new recruits had never left their island. An analysis of personnel files reveals that about 90 per cent of the Newfoundland force came from Newfoundland (with the remaining 10 per cent coming from the three Canadian Maritime provinces), while slightly over half (52 percent) came from St. John’s.²⁵ While the Canadian Division, the first of four, went to France in February 1915, the Newfoundlanders, as a single battalion, remained orphaned in England, especially after Sir Edward Morris refused to allow them to be brigaded with the Canadians.²⁶ Like all troops waiting for battle, officers kept the rank and file busy with long marches to harden them, musketry fire with their Canadian-made Ross rifles, and bayonet drill. Few of the tactical lessons from the front had made their way back to the Newfoundlanders, although most built up a healthy hatred of the Germans and the Kaiser after the chlorine gas attack at the Battle of Second Ypres in April 1915, which comingled with the harsh treatment of occupied Belgium and U-boat strikes against civilians and ships like the *Lusitania*. It would not be until 12 August, 1915, after an inspection and address by Lord Kitchener, that the Newfoundlanders, now led by a British regular, Lieutenant-Colonel Reginald de Hardwicke Burton, were told they would be sent to Gallipoli. “From eleven hundred throats,” recounted

²⁴ *The Letters of Mayo Lind: Newfoundland’s Unofficial War Correspondent, 1914–1916*, ed. Francis T. Lind (St. John’s, NFLD: Creative Book Publishing, 2001), 21–22.

²⁵ Sharpe, “The ‘Race of Honour,’” 37.

²⁶ Walter Davidson to Steel-Maitland, 30 July 1915, RG 38, Volume 437, File M-43-A, LAC.

one Newfoundland eye witness, “broke forth wave upon wave of cheering.”²⁷

GALLIPOLI

In the winter of 1914-15, the British cabinet fiercely debated the direction of the war. With the Western Front stalemated, First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill argued forcefully that the Royal Navy’s might should be thrown into action against Turkey. The campaign would be an audacious projection of power for Britain, with both the Royal and French navies seeking to break through the Turkish controlled 65-kilometre Dardanelles Straits that divides Turkey and connects the Mediterranean to the Black Sea and Asia. Turkey was the weakest of the Central Powers and it was hoped that if the Allies could gain control of the Straits, thus allowing for resupply of the Russian armies through the Black Sea, Germany’s surrender might be hastened.²⁸

The Royal Navy’s warships tried to force the straits on 19 February 1915, but soon mine and shell took its toll and the loss of three battleships forced the Admiralty to reconsider its approach. It was decided that an amphibious landing might achieve what the warships had been unable to do: a landward assault to knock out the Turkish guns controlling the straits. More than 75,000 British, Australian, New Zealand and French troops invaded the Gallipoli coast on 25 April, but the five-week delay in the operation had given the Turks time to reinforce their garrisons. The Allied forces came ashore under heavy fire and suffered withering casualties, and they had little opportunity to get off the beaches and up the steep inclines and rugged terrain. The 29th British Division secured a shallow beachhead at Cape Helles at the tip of the peninsula, while British and Anzac forces landed at what became known as Anzac Cove, about twenty kilometres further north. The hoped-for advance was soon reduced to a new grim form of trench warfare. The battle front

²⁷ John Gallishaw, *Trenching at Gallipoli: The Personal Narrative of a Newfoundlander with the Ill-Fated Dardanelles Expedition* (St. John’s, NFLD: DRC Publishing, 2002), 9.

²⁸ The literature on the Gallipoli campaign is vast. The best synthesis is Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).



The first boatloads of men of 1st Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers landing at 'W' Beach, to the west of Cape Helles. [© IWM (Q 102538)]

sucked in nine more Allied divisions by July, while the Turks rushed another 22 to the front. A late summer offensive on 6 August around Suvla Bay had pushed out the lines further into Turkish territory, but there was much confusion and inertia, and again no breakthrough. After this, there were no more large-scale offensives, although the casualties mounted and new troops were required.

NEWFOUNDLAND ARRIVES

The Newfoundland Contingent of thirty-four officers and 1,042 rank and file aboard the White Star liner HMTS *Megantic* arrived in Alexandria on September 1st, after an eleven-day voyage at sea. Wearing their newly issued light-weight khaki uniforms and tropical pith helmets, the islanders were given a few weeks to acclimatize to the heat and flies. They had the good fortune of encamping near Cairo and meeting Australians and New Zealanders recovering at hospitals.²⁹ Howard Morry, a twenty-nine-year-old fisherman from Ferryland, recalled that when he got to Cairo, he and his mates soon “met a few Aussies, who took us under their wing, or rather, seeing we were colonials, brought us around and showed us all the tricks, such as riding the street cars without paying, etc. One

²⁹ Ibid, 16.

chap [even] brought us out to the pyramids.”³⁰ Fast friendships were formed between some of the Newfoundlanders and Aussies, but there were also several run-ins in throughout Cairo, including a wild clash in an Egyptian bar that left much of the establishment’s furniture splintered and broken.³¹ “Piano after piano [were] coming out the upstairs windows. Then the fire started and whole blocks were burned,” recalled one soldier. But most often, Newfoundlanders like Mayo Lind wrote home of their exotic comrades and the fast mateships: “Go where you like in Cairo now, and the usual sight is several Newfoundlanders and several Australians together. Never two lots of individuals were more friendly. They are simply crazy about the Newfoundlanders, and our crowd are the same over them.”³²

After a fortnight, the Newfoundlanders left Alexandria on 14 September for parts unknown. As the regiment’s men studied the waters from the decks of *Prince Abbas*, watching the ships zigzag in convoy for fear of U-boat torpedoes, the rumour mill worked over time and soon most soldiers had narrowed down the landings, with best bets on the Gallipoli front. On the night of 19 September, the Newfoundland soldiers arrived at Suvla Bay, disembarking at Kangaroo Beach. As a forceful sign that the men from Terra Nova were going into battle, each was issued a sheet of paper and an envelope, used to write and keep a final letter to their next-of-kin in case the worst should happen.

JOINING THE 29TH DIVISION

The 29th Division, organized in January 1915 as the last infantry division to be formed during the war from regular battalions of the British army, had fought steadily at Gallipoli since the first landings on 25 April. It was desperately short of reinforcements.³³ On 21 September, the Newfoundlanders joined the 88th Brigade, under command of Brigadier D.E. Cayley, replacing the only other non-regular army battalion, the 1st Battalion, 5th Royal Scots, whose

³⁰ Transcribed by Howard Glendon Morry, “Memoirs of Howard Leopold Morry,” 3 August 1957, Item 726, Royal Newfoundland Regimental Association Archives, 2.

³¹ Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, 162.

³² Lind, *The Letters of Mayo Lind*, 62.

³³ See Captain Stair Gillon, *The Story of the 29th Division: A Record of Gallant Deeds* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1925) 1–72.



Soldiers of B Company, 1st Newfoundland Regiment in front line trenches, Suvla Bay. [The Rooms Archives, MG 110, item A 8-81]

ranks had been steadily worn away over months of fighting with few reinforcements to draw upon as an Edinburgh Territorial unit.³⁴ The Newfoundlanders were a welcomed infusion of fresh soldiers, but their integration into an established British professional brigade and division was not easy. As a regular division, the 29th was old army, with much emphasis on spit and polish discipline. Punishments were meted out for the most minor of infractions. The 29th Division's officers and rank and file were not terribly pleased to inherit into their ranks a bunch of fishermen, students, and merchant's sons. "One wondered how a unit coming from such absolutely different surroundings would fit in with the rest," recalled Brigadier Cayley. "Indeed, at first, when they eventually took over trenches on their own, they naturally fell far short of what that stern disciplinarian, the Divisional Commander, expected of them...[but] the regiment showed itself as keen as could be."³⁵

Like Australians and Canadians, the Newfoundlanders seem to have taken pride in their unconventional approach to war-making. Francis T. Lind wrote of the informal, even democratic nature of the Newfoundland forces. While the commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel R. de H. Burton, a fifty-three-year-old British regular who had come out of retirement, was a fierce soldier of the old mould, the more junior officers were often on a first-name basis with the rank and file, many of whom they knew back on the island in the prewar days. Lind wrote of his many chums in the regiment, both rankers, NCOs, and officers, and even when describing the company sergeant major, usually a bellowing beast of a disciplinarian, he observed that "although he keeps us all up to the scratch, yet the orders are given in such pleasant terms that the men feel it is a pleasure to obey."³⁶ Some of that might have been for home front consumption, but other letters and memoirs make note of the easy feelings between officers and men in the regiment.

The Newfoundland government also had a vested interest in the regimental officers, and like the interference of Canadian politicians, St. John's' leaders demanded that Newfoundlanders

³⁴ War Diary, 88th Brigade Headquarters, 21 September 1915, WO95/4312, The National Archives (TNA).

³⁵ Major-General D.E. Cayley, "The Royal Newfoundland Regiment," MG 439, Box 1, File 1, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL).

³⁶ Lind, *The Letters of Mayo Lind*, 10.

have opportunities for command. Although Davidson tried to warn Burton that promotions were an especially sensitive topic back in Newfoundland, the colonel responded sensibly that all promotions from the ranks would be made based on gallantry, military experience, and basic qualifications.³⁷ The Morris government was never happy with Burton but, given the patriotic fervour that greeted the regiment's arrival overseas, was unwilling to challenge him publicly. Instead, Morris opted to mount a surreptitious attack through the War Office. Even before the regiment landed at Gallipoli in early September, reports had reached Lord Kitchener, via Colonial Secretary Andrew Bonar Law, that Burton was "very unpopular with all ranks under his command" and had to be removed.³⁸ Undoubtedly, these rumours came from St. John's, although they appear to have been started by a disgruntled officer at the front. Lieutenant-General Julian Byng, a British commander who later went on to lead the Canadians—thanks in part to his experience dealing with colonial politics and intrigue—made some quiet inquiries but concluded that while Burton indeed appeared unpopular with some of the officers under his command, it was "obviously unfair" to sack him on "what may be an unprovable [sic] statement of one of his subordinates."³⁹ Whatever the case, the sentiment was not universal. "Our old Colonel Burton loved us and we him," recalled Private Morry of Ferryland. "We were quite a handful too. Whenever we had a mix-up with the Regulars in our Brigade he always took our part. Once he objected to the High Command that we were getting too much digging. He said 'these boys came over to fight, not to do all the dirty work.'"⁴⁰ Byng reluctantly agreed to closely watch the colonel's performance and remove him immediately if it became necessary.⁴¹

Although Colonel Burton did not know it, he was a marked man the minute he stepped onto Kangaroo beach. During the month of October, as news of field-commissions given to Newfoundlanders trickled back to St. John's, the *Evening Herald* ran a series of articles

³⁷ Governor Davidson, 'Memorandum on Officer Selection,' 28 October 1915, RG 38, Volume 437, File M-&-4 Pt. 1, LAC.

³⁸ War Office to GHQ, 29 and 30 September 1915, Sir Ian Hamilton Papers, 7/2/41, Liddel Hart Archives, King's College London.

³⁹ Bynd to Pollen, 1 October 1915, Hamilton Papers, 7/2/41, Ibid.

⁴⁰ Morry, "Memoirs of Howard Leopold Morry," 8.

⁴¹ MEDORCE to Troopers, London, 2 October 1915, Hamilton Papers, 7/2/41, Liddel Hart Archives, King's College London.

alleging that “undue preference is paid, in the selection of Officers, to the candidates belonging to the Anglican or Methodist denominations rather than to Roman Catholics.”⁴² The *Evening Herald* was not a strictly Catholic newspaper but was owned and operated by P.T. McGrath, a Canadian businessman and one of Morris’ chief political operatives.⁴³ The *Herald* was, in essence, the unofficial mouthpiece of Morris’ People’s Party and the series of articles were thus another attack on Burton’s leadership that could not help but find their way back to the men in the regiment through letters from home. Around this time, at the end of October, Burton left the regiment. Some of the surviving Newfoundlanders remembered that he got sick and was sent out, while others testified that he was shot in the arm; there is even an account that he was shot through the hand while walking a mile behind the front.⁴⁴ In any event, he left the regiment on 28 October and never returned. Soon after, the Army Council and Colonial Office made the Newfoundland government agree to respect all appointments made at the front and, moreover, to affirm that promotions did not require the assent of the Newfoundland government.⁴⁵

IN THE LINE

The Newfoundlanders were fed into the line on 20 September with two companies tasked to hold reserve trenches. Two days later, the other two companies were given their baptism of fire. As with all new troops, it was a bewildering and unsteady time. On the 22nd, the war diary reported the first Newfoundlander was killed in the line, the unfortunate Private H.W. McWhirter, done in by a Turkish shell; several more men were wounded, and Private W.F. Hardy, a

⁴² Governor Walter Davidson to Colonial Secretary, 28 October 1915, RG 38, Volume 437, File M-&-4 Pt. 1, LAC.

⁴³ Memorial University Library, “Evening Herald,” Historical Directory of Newfoundland and Labrador Newspapers, <http://www.library.mun.ca/cns/nlnews/title/df/> (accessed 11 November 2016).

⁴⁴ Morry, “Memoirs of Howard Leopold Morry,” 8; Lind, *The Letters of Mayo Lind*, 108; Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, 178.

⁴⁵ See various correspondence, 28-30 October 1915, RG 38, Volume 437, File M-&-4 Pt. 1, LAC.

twenty-one-year old fisherman, was killed by a bullet the next day.⁴⁶ His younger brother, Ed, was only seventeen and survived Gallipoli, although he was slain on the Somme in mid-October, 1916.⁴⁷

Mayo Lind wrote that it “was greatly to the credit of Newfoundland, the way our boys behaved under fire. One could think they were old soldiers.”⁴⁸ Lind’s letters home make it clear that several of the first comrades killed in his company were shot in the head; perhaps this was a sign that the Newfoundlanders—not yet “old soldiers”—still had much to learn as Turkish snipers lurked for open shots.⁴⁹ While there was no breaking of the line or wavering under fire, to the seasoned regular troops of the 29th Division, the Newfoundlanders seemed to be a jumpy lot. Private Morry recalled having to go out on “patrol one night without our rifles, on account of one of our chaps the night before had shot an English Officer and we were not allowed to bring our rifles.”⁵⁰ Adjusting to the confused, subterranean world of the Gallipoli trench system was a difficult business for fresh soldiers with no experience of war, but as Brigadier Cayley noted, the regiment soon adapted to the “ordinary routine of trench warfare, patrolling, sniping, and so on.”⁵¹

On 30 September, the Newfoundlanders took their first full rotation into the firing line, for a ten-day tour, with the companies cycling through the line every three or four days. They were responsible for a kilometre and a half of forward and support trenches on the 88th Brigade’s front. Opposite them, the Turks were in the 300-metre strongpoint of Tekke Tepe, and in places a mere fifty metres across no man’s land. It was soon apparent to the Newfoundlanders that their ill-dug trenches jutted into the enemy’s front and left them exposed to Turkish snipers who could fire into both flanks as well as from above.⁵² The losses mounted, in ones and twos, and they fell under that clinical term of wastage. Some men learned to stand the

⁴⁶ War Diary, Royal Newfoundland Regiment, 22 September 1915, MG40, Reel B-2302, LAC; see also Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*, 98-99.

⁴⁷ For their story, see Dan Black and John Boileau, *Old Enough to Fight: Canada’s Boy Soldiers in the First World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2015).

⁴⁸ Lind, *The Letters of Mayo Lind*, 67.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 67-68, 72.

⁵⁰ Morry, “Memoirs of Howard Leopold Morry,” 5.

⁵¹ Cayley, “The Royal Newfoundland Regiment,” 2.

⁵² War Diary, 88th Brigade Headquarters, 29-30 September 1915, WO 95/4312, TNA.



The British front line trenches, Gallipoli. [© IWM (Q 42355)]

strain, while others became more nervous at their fate. “Four or five of the young kids always hung around me,” recalled Morry. “I was ten or twelve years older than them and used to knocking around, and they seemed to think I’d keep them safe. Poor little kids.”⁵³ The Newfoundlanders strained against this Turkish strongpoint, which had held out against previous Allied attacks in August. After only a few days in the line, the Newfoundlanders even asked the General Officer Commanding of the entire British operation, Sir Ian Hamilton, that they “be allowed to storm Anafarter and Tekke Tipe singled-handed.”⁵⁴ General Hamilton wisely demurred, but was impressed by the Newfoundlanders’ ardour.⁵⁵

The British brigadier cycled the battalions through the front lines every ten days throughout October and November, and the Newfoundlanders learned to work with the 1st Essex Regiment, 2nd Hampshire Regiment, 1st Battalion, London Regiment and the 4th Worcestershire Regiment, as well as some of other battalions in the sister 87th Brigade.⁵⁶ The Gallipoli trench system snaked along the

⁵³ Morry, “Memoirs of Howard Leopold Morry,” 6.

⁵⁴ Ian Hamilton to Leo Murphy, MG 439, Box 1, File 3, PANL.

⁵⁵ “A Tribute from General Sir Ian Hamilton,” *Veteran Magazine* 8, 4 (April 1930): 62.

⁵⁶ War Diary, 29 Division, General Staff, 25 September 1915, WO 95/4305, TNA.

hills, ridges, and craggy outcrops, not far from the landing beaches. The Turkish soldiers harassed the trenches with shellfire, mortars, and rifle fire, with stray shots and explosives disrupting and shocking men out of temporary slumbers or periods of passivity. The islanders joked about the “Turkish Delight,” enemy shrapnel that whirled through the air in an impressive display of fright, but which usually struck few men unless a shell exploded at the perfect height to shower a trench with metal. There were no large-scale attacks. NCOs and officers filled the days by ordering the men to dig new trenches, communication lines leading to the rear, pits, and latrines, but there was much free time.

Men chatted and gossiped. Rumours flew up and down the line. Letters from home connected the soldiers to their communities on the island and occasional care packages filled with magazines, books, treats, and tobacco were welcomed. Like soldiers on the Western Front, the Newfoundlanders penned home appreciative letters, but official and self-censorship often constrained what could be shared. W.C. Baird of Nagle Hill wrote to his parents on 5 October, “The boys are all well and smart. We have a few wounded and a few killed, not many. The worse we find here is the heavy shell fire. There are lots of them going over our heads all day long. Don’t worry about me; I’m all right. If God spares my life...”⁵⁷

Soldiers in good spirit sang, running through the popular ditties, sardonic satires and vulgar sing-alongs. Songs created a buffer from the harsh military discipline and the Newfoundlanders, like other Anglo, Canadian, and Australian soldiers, often parodied the hardship of the war and their own officers. The regiment had many new verses for “Tavern in the Town,” including this chorus:

And when those Newfoundlanders start to yell, start to yell,
Oh, Kaiser Bill, you’ll wish you were in hell, were in hell;
For they’ll hang you high to your Potsdam palace wall,
You’re a damn poor Kaiser, after all, after all.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *The Evening Telegram*, 8 November 1915, 5. Cited in P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “War, Memory and the Newfoundland Regiment at Gallipoli,” *Newfoundland Studies* 15, 2 (1999): 209, note 47.

⁵⁸ Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, 176.

Singing helped relieve the tension of life at the front, reinforced a sense of shared community, while also expressing a unique Newfoundland identity.

DEATH BY SHELLS AND SNIPERS

“I could tell of scores of narrow escapes,” recounted Mayo Lind. For men who dodged death, most remained resigned to their fate, and continued to serve in the line. Others developed a fatalistic attitude. John Gallishaw provides insight: “We soon came to believe the superstition that a bullet would not hit a man unless it had on it his regimental number and his name.”⁵⁹ This was one of the many coping mechanisms for soldiers who faced an enemy at whom they could not strike back. Some soldiers sought a “blighty wound,” something that might take them out of the line but not lead to a crippling injury. A good wound among a mate was often met with approval and cheery goodbyes. However, there was always the chance of infection and, as one Newfoundland shuddered, “The shrapnel makes nasty, jagged, hideous wounds, the horrible recollection of which lingers for days in the minds of those who see them.”⁶⁰

As the Newfoundlanders settled into the line throughout October and November, they faced the hardship of campaigning. There were no large-scale battles for the Newfoundlanders to prove themselves, although the war of endurance became the mark of many battle-hardened regiments. One Newfoundlander, in writing under a pseudonym, and in a tale reminiscent of a boy’s adventure novel, penned a short account of Newfoundlanders as crack shots against the Turks. In his 1916 story, “Snipers Sniped,” the author recounted how the British heralded the Australian shooters. When a party of Australian, British, and Newfoundlanders supposedly go out together – an unlikely occurrence – this “inter-empire party” sought the enemy. A Newfoundlander pots a Turk sniper, which the British soldiers chalk up to luck. Then two more “Terra Novans” bag two additional snipers. “By the wicked devil!” shouted the Australian, “these Newfoundlanders are enchanted. Why, they have sniped all the

⁵⁹ Gallishaw, *Trenching at Gallipoli*, 66-69.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

snipers.”⁶¹ This tale is almost certainly a fabrication, but it reveals some interesting characteristics of the Newfoundlanders. They played up their hardy, even hard-scrabble existence on the Rock, and the Newfoundlanders in this story are exhorted as expert, tough, and innovative. This type of myth-making and identity construction also occurred among the Canadian soldiers, anxious to distinguish themselves from their British cousins.⁶² Yet the story also takes pride in placing the Newfoundlanders within the context of an “inter-empire” patrol, which reinforces the link of the Newfoundlanders with the whole of empire. While one should not digress too far into a literary analysis of a fanciful story, its publication in a Newfoundland journal on the island played to expectations at home, and, apparently, those in the firing line too. Perhaps more importantly, while some Australian soldiers developed anti-British attitudes as part of the Australian identity creation during the Gallipoli campaign, the same did not occur with the Newfoundlanders.⁶³

CARIBOU HILL, 4-5 NOVEMBER

While the major trench contours rarely changed on the headquarters’ maps behind the front, the forward trenches remained a hive of activity. Intelligence officers, NCOs, and men snuck out into no man’s land at night to patrol and size up the enemy, with the goal of snatching enemy sentries. On 4 November, the Newfoundlanders launched their first minor operation when a raiding party under the direction of Lieutenant James Donnelly and seven men slipped into no man’s land under the cover of darkness. Their target was a sniper post atop a knoll in the Turkish lines that enfladed parts of the Allied trenches.

At around 4:30pm, Lieutenant Donnelly and his men stalked into the empty snipers post atop Borders Knoll and occupied it, laying a

⁶¹ Bonna Vista, “Tales of the Great War: Snipers Sniped: A Tale of Newfoundlanders in Gallipoli,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* 16, 2 (October 1916): 34-36.

⁶² Tim Cook, “Documenting War and Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken and the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War,” *War In History* 10, 3 (2003): 265-95.

⁶³ See Carolyn Holbrook, *ANZAC: The Unauthorised Biography* (Canberra: University of New South Wales, 2014); Jenny Macleod, *Great Battles: Gallipoli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).



Caribou Hill. [VA 157-43, Gerald Joseph Whitty Collection, The Rooms Provincial Archives Division]

trap for the Turks who usually made their way forward under cover of darkness. At dusk on the 4th, three Turkish snipers were observed ascending to the knoll. The Newfoundlanders ambushed the group, killing all three but not before one of the regiment was wounded. At around 7:30pm, an NCO from the raiding party who had been shot in the neck stumbled back into the Newfoundland trenches. He reported to Captain Bert Butler that Donnelly and his men had engaged the enemy and would need support, and so another party of eight was sent forward to strengthen the garrison on the knoll. But in the darkness they lost direction and wandered into a Turkish patrol.⁶⁴ A fierce fight broke out in no man's land, with the "Turks making a regular Guy Fawkes night of it with their flares and heavy return firing," recalled Brigadier Caley.⁶⁵ As this was happening, the first group, led by Donnelly, continued to hold out against Turkish probing attacks.⁶⁶ As the brigade war diary recorded: "A good many

⁶⁴ War Diary, 29th Division, General Staff, 4 November 1915, WO 95/4305, TNA.

⁶⁵ Caley, "The Royal Newfoundland Regiment," 2.

⁶⁶ War Diary, 88th Brigade Headquarters, 4 November 1915, WO 95/4312, TNA.

Turks seemed to be on the hill, however this morning it was found that original party were safe and still on the hill.”⁶⁷ Donnelly and his small group held the position throughout the night of the 4th and 5th and over the next few days the position was consolidated into the British front lines. Thereafter it was known as Newfoundland Mound and then Caribou Hill. The Caribou was an emblematic symbol of the Dominion, like the beaver for Canada, and would later be used to mark the dominion’s battlefields on the Western Front.

The raid on Caribou Hill was an insignificant affair in the larger campaign, but it was an action that brought pride to Newfoundlanders at the front and at home. Lieutenant Donnelly was awarded the Military Cross, while Sergeant William Greene and Private R.E. Hynes—from the reinforcing party—received Distinguished Conduct Medals; Lance-Corporal Fred Snow was awarded the Military Medal. The raid was reported back in Newfoundland, with the *Evening Telegram* of 27 December labelling Donnelly as “The Hero of the Hour.” The approbations continued with messages of congratulations from Newfoundland’s Colonial Secretary directed towards the “parents of each of these courageous and honoured soldiers of the King for they are a credit to Newfoundland.”⁶⁸

Desperate for an heroic historical narrative of the campaign, the people of Newfoundland embraced the raid on Caribou Hill as a major turning point in the campaign. Inspired by the news, in 1916 Newfoundland poet Dan Caroll put pen to paper and offered ‘Caribou Hill,’ which thundered:

“With eight whose grit the Sultan’s horde
Defied, and whose renown
In song and story through the years
Emblazoned shall go down.”⁶⁹

Later in 1916, John Burke, one of Newfoundland’s most intrepid songwriters and composers, took a similar approach. “Lieutenant Jim Donnelly: The Hero of Caribou Hill,” was published and available

⁶⁷ Work Report, 88th Brigade Headquarters, 5 November 1915, WO 95/4312, TNA.

⁶⁸ *Evening Telegram*, 27 December 1915; 28 December 1915. Cited in Lackenbauer, “War, Memory and the Newfoundland Regiment at Gallipoli,” 206, note 13.

⁶⁹ Dan Carroll, ‘Caribou Hill,’ *Newfoundland Quarterly* 16, 4 (April 1916): 8.

for Newfoundlanders and North Americans. It contained the rousing chorus:

“Three cheers for Terra Nova,
And the plucky little band
Hurrah! for Terra Nova
And the boys from Newfoundland”⁷⁰

For an island desperate for some tangible victory at the front, the raid was hailed far and wide.

CONDITIONS AND DISEASE

While civilians at home pictured the front to be a whirling engagement of attack and counterattack, in the autumn and winter of 1915, by far the greatest threat to the Newfoundland Regiment was disease. This was a campaign where the water purification tablet and latrine discipline trumped the bullet and shell in protecting against wastage, and in ensuring that the army did not dissolve from poison and plague. After a while, even the labyrinth-like trenches began to feel like home and the Newfoundlanders left their mark by putting up ad hoc street signs that reflected life back home: like Torbay Road or Newfoundland Ravine. However, the no man’s land in front of the Allied lines was an open graveyard of garbage and filth. Corpses had laid out there for months on end, rotting in the elements. The gagging stench was an assault on the senses. And during a warm spell in October, the corpses became a breeding ground for maggots and larvae, with millions of new flies swarming as massive black shrouds sweeping over the front. Any food, from stew to biscuits, was almost immediately covered in a crawling layer of furry uglies. Newfoundlander Richard Cramm shuddered as these flies, feasting and living on the corpses and garbage of no man’s land, landed on their food and drink, “carrying disease and death in their trail.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ Michael Taft, “The Bard of Prescott Street Meets Tin Pan Alley: The Vanity Press Sheet Music Publication of John Burke,” *Newfoundland Studies* 6, 1 (1990): 68–70.

⁷¹ Richard Cramm, *The First Five Hundred of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment* (St. Philips, NFLD: Boulder Publishing, 2015) 36–37.



Captain Alexander Frew, Medical Officer, in trenches, at Suvla Bay. [VA 37-1.7, The Rooms Provincial Archives Division]

In such conditions, illnesses spread rapidly. Almost every soldier contracted stomach ailments from the dirty water and compromised food, which left them racing to the latrines. With shortages of toilet paper and with many of the latrines targeted by snipers or shellfire, defecation was a dangerous act. However, the lucky men suffered only from explosive diarrhea; the unfortunates were debilitated by dysentery, enteric, and jaundice. On 20 October, 150 unwell men lined up for the morning sick parade. By end of the month, about a third of the regiment was in hospital or prostrate behind the lines with various diseases and illnesses.⁷² Many men sought to escape the drudgery of the trenches through illness, but there were some, like Lance-Corporal Sydney Frost, who was terribly ill and saw his temperature spike to 104 before he was evacuated. He wrote in his diary as he was moved to a hospital ship, “The darkest day of my life. No longer shall I be able to share the hardship with my buddies.”⁷³

⁷² Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*, 100.

⁷³ Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, 178. Also see Frost, *A Blue Puttee at War*, 122.

Throughout the campaign, far more Newfoundlanders were felled by disease than bullet or shell.⁷⁴

THE BIG STORM

As the temperature dropped in November, soldiers shivered through the long nights. One islander muttered home in a letter: “All were under the impression that it was very warm in the Dardanelles, but not at all.”⁷⁵ Mid-November marked a particularly trying spell in the trenches as the Newfoundlanders cycled into the line on 16 November. They should have been rotated out eight to ten days later, but the relieving battalion was reduced significantly in numbers and so the Newfoundlanders found themselves holding the line during the bitterly cold period, without break, until mid-December.

On 26 November, a massive storm swept over the area. “I was awakened by the loudest thunder, the most vivid lightning and the heaviest rain I have ever witnessed,” wrote Private W.J. Culleton who was engaged in a “fire-step nap.”⁷⁶ An abnormal storm deluged the front. The Newfoundlanders were in a low point in the trench system and a flash flood of water channelled down the trenches, washing away everything in its path. Sandbags collapsed, trench walls slid down; rifles and equipment were swept away. Ron Dunn, a Bonavista fisherman, recounted after the war how “our trenches burst loose and went on down and swept everything down.”⁷⁷ In the low-lying trenches further down the line, men drowned while they slept in dugouts, although no Newfoundlanders were swept to their death.⁷⁸ Newfoundlanders were used to storms both at sea and on land but the Gallipoli torrent was, as Harold Morry recalled, something altogether different: “We did not know how lucky we were—we went in the front line the day before the day of the storm. It was awful hot that day; we lay down in the bottom of the trench to get a breath of fresh air.

⁷⁴ Strengths, 1 December 1915, 88th Brigade, Headquarters, WO 95/ 4312, TNA.

⁷⁵ Lind, *Letters of Mayo Lind*, 80.

⁷⁶ Captain Leo C. Murphy, “Newfoundland’s Part in the Great War,” in *The Book of Newfoundland*, ed. by J.R. Smallwood (St. John’s, NFLD: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937) 2: 69.

⁷⁷ Dan Black and John Boileau, *Old Enough to Fight: Canada’s Boy Soldiers in the First World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2015) 133.

⁷⁸ Gallishaw, *Trenching at Gallipoli*, 130.



Frost-bitten soldiers lying on straw in shelters constructed of biscuit boxes at a store dump at Suvla, after the frost at the end of November 1915. [© IWM (Q 13644)]



British troops drying blankets at Suvla Bay after the storm at the end of November 1915. [© IWM (Q 13678)]

About four or five in the afternoon of the 26th of November the rain began, the likes I never saw, and the thunder and lightning were also the worst any of us had ever seen or heard of.”⁷⁹ The freak storm led to a shocking 5,000 casualties throughout the Allied forces in the Suvla area, and some 200 deaths.⁸⁰

Some of the trenches were so badly submerged that soldiers stood in waist-high water. And then the temperature dropped swiftly the next night, to below zero degrees. The water turned to slush, and then ice as it alternately rained and snowed. Men developed hacking colds as they stood against the elements in their damp uniforms and ice-encrusted boots. Frostbite became a critical problem for all of the Allied soldiers. The Newfoundlanders were no exception. While some of the Allied forces in the trenches saw soldiers die from hypothermia, the Newfoundlanders did not suffer any fatalities. However, about 150 men were sent to hospital, most with frostbite and trench foot. Severe cases of both could result in loss of circulation in the extremities and the amputation of toes. By 29 November, the strength of the battalion was 543, but only 200 men were suitable for duty.⁸¹ Attesting to the severity of the storm and freezing weather, the 88th Brigade as a whole suffered roughly 50 per cent casualties from disease, exposure, and frostbite between 25 and 30 November.⁸²

The Newfoundlanders took a perverse pride in how they withstood the storm. They had been bred to withstand the worst weather in the world. Richard Cramm crowed a little when he wrote: “The severe winter weather of our own climate had provided our men with a physical adaptability that could hardly be expected of office clerks from the city of London.”⁸³ Owen Steele also turned to racial characteristics to explain that “thanks to the general hardiness of the Nflders, not one death resulted in our Battalion.”⁸⁴ The Newfoundlanders had a strong sense of identity and culture, and much of it was based on battling the elements. It was no different in times of war.

⁷⁹ Morry, “Memoirs of Howard Leopold Morry,” 9.

⁸⁰ Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, 181, 183.

⁸¹ Intelligence, 29 November 1915 and Strength: Newfoundland Regiment, 1915, Nangle Papers, Collection 308, Box 1, File 1.02, Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS), Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN).

⁸² GOC, 29 Division to Headquarters, IX Corps, WO 95/ 4312, TNA.

⁸³ Cramm, *The First Five Hundred*, 42.

⁸⁴ *Lieutenant Owen William Steele*, 99.

CHANGE OF COMMAND AND RELIEF FROM THE FRONT

Soon after the Big Storm, a new colonel arrived to replace Butler as commanding officer of the Newfoundland Regiment. Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Hadow, a thirty-eight-year-old British army veteran who had served in South Africa, Tibet, India, and the Sudan, had only been recalled from garrison duty there with the nominally independent Egyptian Army the previous spring. He had, like the Newfoundlanders, arrived at Gallipoli at the end of the summer, serving as brigade major to the 87th Brigade. “I had no knowledge of Newfoundland or personal knowledge of the Northern American Continent,” he recalled in a 1964 oral history.⁸⁵ He was selected for command because of his experience in working with colonial regiments and navigating the difficult politics involved in imperial commands. As he recalled, “Having been doing what was called in the British Army scallywag soldiering in the Sudan, I could adapt myself far more easily to [colonial command] than the ordinary soldier who had had no experience.”⁸⁶ Hadow soon found that despite warnings from the war office, the Newfoundland government was still meddling in regimental affairs. According to Hadow, the Morris government and the Patriotic Committee resented a non-Newfoundlander being given command of the regiment after Butler’s departure. Dealing with the civilian authorities proved trying, but Hadow had thicker skin than Butler. “The narrow outlook of the islander,” he recalled, was difficult to navigate, with those at home “never forgetting the claim to be the oldest British Colony, [and all the complexities of dealing with] the three religious denominations, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Non-Conformists. I had a complaint in a letter from the Governor that one of these were not getting their fair share of promotions.”⁸⁷ Hadow would serve as the regiment’s commanding officer through the Gallipoli campaign and on the Western Front until the winter of 1917, when he was sent back to Devon on the sick list—worn out emotionally and physically—while the Newfoundland Regiment was withdrawn from the line.

Hadow’s first task as commanding officer of the Newfoundland Regiment was to oversee its evacuation of the peninsula. The entry

⁸⁵ Interview with A.L. Hadow, May 1964, RG 41, Volume 18, File RNR, LAC.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*



Shell from the Turkish guns bursting near one of the four Piers at Lancashire Landing, 'W' Beach, Cape Helles on the day of the evacuation, 8 January 1916. [© IWM (Q 13696)]

of Bulgaria into the war in September 1915 on the side of Germany threatened Serbia and its defeat would allow Turkey to link up with Germany. In order to strengthen Serbia, the Allies moved a large force into Salonika, Greece, which drew down strength and resources from Gallipoli. From mid-October there was talk in the British cabinet of pulling out more troops from Gallipoli and a month later, on 23 November, the War Committee sensibly ordered an evacuation. A forced landing was one of the most difficult operations in a military campaign, but it was almost suicide to try an evacuation in an environment like Gallipoli, with armies in close contact. Even a gradual and secret withdrawal would likely result in a high number of captured and killed. But there were few other palatable choices, and it was planned that Suvla Bay and Anzac Cove were to be evacuated, followed by the southern tip around Cape Helles.

From mid-November until the middle of December, the 29th Division gradually and quietly removed personnel and equipment. The plan was to slip away quietly before the Turks knew what was happening. On December 18, the 88th Brigade began withdrawing its machine guns and all but a handful of men from each battalion.



Distant view over one of the gun turrets of the battleship HMS *Cornwallis* showing stores burning on the beach after the evacuation of Suvla Bay, December 1915. [© IWM (Q 13680)]

Each battalion, including the Newfoundlanders, delegated forty men to act as rearguards covering the final retreat to the boats. Starting at 7:00pm on the 19th, the entire front of the 29th Division was held by about 160 men.⁸⁸ The Newfoundland rearguard was led by Lieutenant Herbert Rendell who ordered surplus ammunition to be buried in a series of deep pits. At the same time, Sergeant Gordon Hicks placed a series of rifles on the parapet which could be fired via tripping devices as the party made its way towards the beach.⁸⁹ This gave the illusion of more men in the front lines. Fortunately, as Brigadier General Cayley noted, “The whole of the evacuation from start to finish was carried out with no interference from the Turks. Up till the last moment reports were being received from the firing line that the Turks were busily engaged, digging and wiring.”⁹⁰ The

⁸⁸ Major-General D.E. Cayley, “The Royal Newfoundland Regiment,” PANL, 2.

⁸⁹ Gordon Hicks to G.W.L. Nicholson, undated 1962, Nicholson Papers, MG 438, Box 1, File 2, PANL.

⁹⁰ War Diary, 88th Brigade, Headquarters, 19 December 1915, WO 95/4312, TNA.

last of the Newfoundlanders made it into the evacuation boats about 2:00am on the 20th.⁹¹

Given the 88th Brigade's successful management of the withdrawal from Suvla, the Newfoundland regiment spent only a single night recuperating on the island of Mudros before the brigade was sent back to Helles to oversee the final evacuation there. The Newfoundlanders spent Christmas 1915 in unfamiliar trenches and Hadow invited some of the regiment's officers into his dugout to share a Christmas dinner and cheer. "Many of the songs were from their country," he told his mother, "and so new to me! But they all seemed to enjoy it."⁹² But all was not well in the ranks: the all-important rum ration had been forgotten in the rush to get "surplus" supplies off the beach. Infuriated Newfoundlanders masquerading as a working party snuck back to brigade headquarters and stole Cayley's Christmas dinner. As he later recalled: "In retrospect, they were very welcome to it, but the Brigadier's language at the time when the atrocity was discovered was awful."⁹³

Just before New Year's, the Newfoundlanders—now considered a hardened and experienced unit—were sent to the edge of the peninsula to prepare the beach for the final evacuation planned for early January. There the Newfoundlanders took some of their final casualties of the campaign—one killed and three wounded—from Turkish shells and bombs dropped from airplanes.⁹⁴ On 6 January, Colonel Hadow received orders to embark his headquarters and the better part of the regiment at W Beach, leaving around sixty Newfoundlanders to act as orderlies over the next three days. Lieutenant Owen Steele commanded the small detachment and, as he wrote in his diary, he was glad to do it because he was hoping to "see the very end of it."⁹⁵ Steele was in charge of blowing the magazines just before his party withdrew to the last lighter waiting on the beach. "Before we had untied from the wharf, the first magazine went off with an immense explosion sending debris over us in clouds," wrote Steele. "It did no damage to us beyond the breaking of one man's arm in three places." The second magazine blew as the small vessel struggled against the

⁹¹ Gordon Hicks to G.W.L. Nicholson, undated 1962, MG 438, Box 1, File 2, PANL.

⁹² Hadow to Mother, 29 December 1915, Hadow Family Papers, Collection 5006 Box 7, Devon Record Office (DRO).

⁹³ Major-General D.E. Cayley, "The Royal Newfoundland Regiment," PANL, 3.

⁹⁴ Hadow to Mother, 9 January 1916, Collection 5006, Box 7, DRO.

⁹⁵ Owen Steele Diary Transcript, 6 January 1916, Collection 179, CNS.

currents and swirling winds, making it away from the beach just after 4:00am on 10 January. Steele recalled that many of the men snapped photographs of the flames and explosions on the beach before being ordered below decks as the ship pulled out towards Murdos.⁹⁶ Astonishingly, 83,000 soldiers, thousands of horses, and hundreds of guns were safely removed from the front in one of the most successful retreats in all of military history. But, as Churchill noted during the equally improbable Dunkirk evacuations a generation later, wars are not won by evacuations, no matter how heroic.

MEMORY AND MEMORIALS

At Gallipoli, the 29th Division earned its reputation as an elite formation, suffering 34,011 casualties. The Newfoundland Regiment came to Gallipoli as a raw colonial regiment and was greeted with skepticism by the regular soldiers of the 29th. But by the end of the campaign, it had earned its place within the division. Of the 933 officers and men who had landed in September, only 170 were left in the unit following the evacuation.⁹⁷ Most were felled by illness and disease.⁹⁸ Sixteen Newfoundlanders were killed by enemy action at Gallipoli, the last being Private Robert Morris, who was killed during the Helles evacuation on January 7th.⁹⁹ Historian P. Whitney Lackenbauer cites forty-nine members of the regiment who died as a result of the campaign and there is no single cemetery for the Newfoundlanders. The fallen are interred in ten cemeteries, from the fighting front to the hospitals in the rear, in Egypt, Malta, and Mudros, although with the majority (twenty-seven) are buried in cemeteries at Suvla Bay and Cape Helles.¹⁰⁰ Seven men died on medical ships and were buried at sea, with their names memorialized thousands of kilometres away at the Regiment's largest memorial at Beaumont Hamel on the Somme.

⁹⁶ Steele Diary Transcript, 9 January 1916, Collection 179, CNS.

⁹⁷ Lackenbauer, "War, Memory and the Newfoundland Regiment at Gallipoli," 181.

⁹⁸ Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*, 114.

⁹⁹ RNR, Killed in Action, RG 38, Volume 440, File M-33, LAC.

¹⁰⁰ For a list of the fallen, by name and location of cemetery, see Lackenbauer, "War, Memory and the Newfoundland Regiment at Gallipoli," 201–02. For different casualty figures, see Frost, *A Blue Puttee at War*, 127.

Private John Gallishaw wrote in his wartime memoir, “The Gallipoli campaign is fast becoming a memory, but things our men did there will not soon be forgotten.”¹⁰¹ In 1916 it must have seemed that way for Gallishaw who was wounded at Gallipoli and went back to his home in the United States soon after, but rapidly the experience at Gallipoli was overshadowed by Armageddon on the Western Front. On the morning of 1 July 1916, the Newfoundland Regiment was decimated at Beaumont Hamel during the 29th Division’s disastrous attack on the first day of the Somme—only sixty-eight men were found unwounded to answer the roll call next day. Over the next eighteen months, the regiment continued to serve with distinction on the Western Front, earning the right to carry the title “Royal” in late 1918. At the same time, the dominion struggled to find enough reinforcements to fill its ranks. In the winter of 1918, the unit had to be withdrawn from the line and, as in Canada, the failure of voluntarism provoked a bitter conscription debate that ultimately saw the introduction of compulsory military service, although no draftees ever reached the front. The regiment only returned to the line late in the Hundred Days campaign.

By war’s end, Newfoundlanders had enlisted for service in the forestry corps and the Royal Navy, while fifty nurses also served overseas. Another 3,300 Newfoundlanders served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, often in maritime units.¹⁰² Some 5,431 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians served with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. Of them, 3,565 were wounded and 1,281 killed.¹⁰³ A shocking number of these killed soldiers were underage, eighteen or younger, with 272 losing their lives while in service.¹⁰⁴

The Great War holds an ambiguous place in Newfoundland’s history. At first, as historian Robert Harding argues, the war represented the dominion’s emergence onto the world stage and was

¹⁰¹ Gallishaw, *Trenching at Gallipoli*, 237.

¹⁰² On the figures, see Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*, xii.

¹⁰³ David Mackenzie, “Eastern Approaches: Maritime Canada and Newfoundland,” in *Canada and the First World War*, ed. by David Mackenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 356–57.

¹⁰⁴ Gary F. Browne, *Forget-Me-Not: Fallen Boy Soldiers, Royal Newfoundland Regiment, World War One* (St. John’s, NFLD: DRC Publishing, 2010) 1–15. Also see Tim Cook, “‘He was determined to go:’ Underage Soldiers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force,” *Histoire sociale - Social History* 41, 81 (May 2008): 41–74

a source of significant national pride.¹⁰⁵ Given its small size, isolation, and marginal resource-based economy, the raising of an overseas regiment was regarded as a significant accomplishment. At the same time, Newfoundland's Prime Minister, Sir Edward Morris, became an important member of the Imperial War Cabinet and actually spent more time in London than in St. John's. For his service, Morris received a peerage and a seat in the House of Lords. He resigned from office in Newfoundland at the end of 1917—the only Dominion Prime Minister ever “promoted” in this way. The horror of Beaumont Hamel was also initially perceived and constructed in social memory through a sacrificial narrative that allowed Newfoundlanders to see themselves as an unfailing loyal part of the British Empire. While the battle had been one of carnage and futility, the Newfoundlanders had done their duty in service of King and country. Many assumed this sacrifice and loyalty would be recognized and rewarded by the mother country.

In this key way, Newfoundland's national myth and its memory of the war differed from the other dominions. While Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders used their participation in the war to carve out unique national identities often by contrasting themselves with British regulars, Newfoundlanders chose to emphasize loyalty as their defining national characteristic. A 1930 poem by Arthur Wheeler, “Our Heroes,” professed the sacred links between Newfoundland and the Empire, which had been strengthened—not struck down by the war—with the “brave sons of Newfoundland” having answered the call to defend “the Mother”.¹⁰⁶ While this sentiment was prevalent in the other dominions, there was not the same desire among Newfoundlanders to distance themselves from Britain through the active construction of a new national identity forged in the fire of battle.

During the first years after the war, Gallipoli played a supporting role in these emerging narratives. In 1915, those at home had yearned for information from the front, but the five-to-six-week lag time of transporting mail meant that there was no immediacy with the three-

¹⁰⁵ Robert Harding, ‘Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory of the Attack at Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1925,’ *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 21, 1 (2006): 2-3.

¹⁰⁶ Arthur Wheeler, “Our Heroes,” in *Arms and the Newfoundlander: Poetry of the Great War*, ed. by Elizabeth Russell Miller (St. John's: H. Cuff Publications, 1994), 51-53.

month campaign. In fact, the governor complained on 6 December 1915, “We have not heard at all yet as to how the men have behaved... We are thirsting for good news.”¹⁰⁷ This would soon change though with the publication of the first wartime stories of the Newfoundland Regiment: Gallishaw’s *Trenching at Gallipoli* and later Mayo Lind’s letters. The emerging narrative was that the Newfoundlanders had been tested in battle and had done so with one of the most illustrious of British divisions—the hard-edged 29th. They had made their mark in grim trench warfare; its soldiers had stood the trial by fire, and even engaged in victories like the capture of Caribou Hill. These events laid the regiment’s mythological foundation, allowing Newfoundlanders to argue the unit was already tested in battle when it went over the top at Beaumont Hamel and its soldiers went down fighting—loyal to the end. On the Somme, the Newfoundlanders were not inexperienced fishermen, but combat soldiers who had done their duty. No troops could have done better.

As in many countries, the war left Newfoundland with enormous debts, but with fish prices collapsing in the postwar years, the dominion was in no position to repay them. In 1914, Newfoundland had already been close to bankruptcy with its railway and few utilities nearly insolvent. The war not only required significant new public expenditures, but had also seen the failure of the island’s export economy. In the 1920s, medical care and pensions for ex-soldiers was a heavy burden to bear for a society that lacked a public education system, public health infrastructure, and even basic transportation infrastructure. When the Depression hit, the Newfoundland government was unable to secure the loans necessary to service its debts. In 1934, the Newfoundland legislature made an unprecedented decision: the House of Assembly voted away the Dominion’s sovereignty, turning to Britain to govern it. Newfoundland had ceased to be an independent nation and was again a crown colony, financed by London and led by a governor and council known as the Commission of Government. Paradoxically, the war played a decisive role both in creating a national myth of the dominion’s firm support of empire and in destroying its independence.¹⁰⁸

During the Second World War, as a major naval and air base for both Canada and the United States, Newfoundland once again returned

¹⁰⁷ Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, 179

¹⁰⁸ See Cadigan, *Death on Two Fronts*.



Beaumont Hamel dedication ceremony to Newfoundland Regiment, 7 June 1925. [Library and Archives Canada R112-3690-2-E]

to prosperity and talk started about what would happen after peace came. Would the island return to dominion status? Continue with the Commission of Government? Or would it join Canada? Deliberations over the island's future proved controversial and highly divisive with allegations of trickery and conspiracy dogging the proceedings to this day. Ultimately, though, Newfoundlanders voted by a narrow margin to join Canada as the tenth province in 1949. By coincidence, Canada's national holiday was held on 1 July, known as Dominion Day until the 1980s—the same day celebrated in Newfoundland as Memorial Day in honour of the tragedy at Beaumont Hamel. Ever since it has proved difficult for Newfoundlanders to reconcile the competing meanings of Beaumont Hamel and Canada Day. For some, what was once a day of national pride to honour the men who died for King and Country became a day of national mourning when Newfoundland finally severed its relationship with Britain. By the 1990s, while many Canadians might agree that the Great War was a “national war of independence,” it was common in Newfoundland to talk about the conflict as having robbed the province of its sovereignty.

Gallipoli continues to hold an ambiguous place in Newfoundland myth and memory. Detached from narratives of national sacrifice, the campaign is all but forgotten outside of the admittedly active local history community. Unlike the other Newfoundland battlefields in France and Belgium that are watched over by bronze caribou statues, the most famous of which stands over the Canadian National Historic Site at Beaumont Hamel, there is no monument at Gallipoli. In keeping with the prevailing myth, when the original statues were placed in the 1920s, the government's priority was on commemorating the regiment's participation in Britain's successful battles on the Western Front, not the failed Gallipoli campaign. The focus of the province's commemorations have centred on Beaumont Hamel. It is telling, though, that as Newfoundland nationalism experienced a resurgence in the midst of a new resource boom in the mid 2000s, interest in Gallipoli increased. Before the hundredth anniversary of the war, the Royal Newfoundland Regimental Association and the provincial government even expressed significant interest in placing a caribou statue at Suvla Bay, although these ambitions were never realized.¹⁰⁹ In the context of the larger Canadian commemorations, Gallipoli has gained new symbolic value to Newfoundlanders: it is the only part of the war that separates Newfoundland's experience from the rest of Canada. As such it has become emblematic of Newfoundland's unique cultural heritage and identity—a status which the battle never had when the island was a separate country.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tim Cook is the First World War historian at the Canadian War Museum (CWM) and the author of 10 books. He curated the permanent gallery at the CWM as well as other temporary, travelling, and digital exhibitions. His books have won many awards, including the RBC Taylor Prize, J.W. Dafoe Prize (twice), Ottawa Book award (twice), and C.P. Stacey award for best book in military history (twice). He is a frequent commentator in the media. For his contributions to history, he has been awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee

¹⁰⁹ "Regiment Hopes for Major Presence at Gallipoli," *The Telegram*, 7 August 2014, <http://www.thetelegram.com/News/Local/2014-08-07/article-3826066/Regiment-hopes-for-major-presence-at-Gallipoli/1> (accessed 11 November 2016).

and the Governor General's History Award for Popular Media. Tim Cook is a member of the Order of Canada.

Mark Osborne Humphries is Dunkley Chair in War and the Canadian Experience in the Department of History and Director of the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University. He has published eight books and more than a dozen articles on the operational and medical history of the Great War. His next book, *A Weary Road: Shell Shock in the Canadian Expeditionary Force*, will be published this spring by University of Toronto Press. He is currently working on a comparative study of Canadian Corps operations after the Battle of Vimy Ridge, based on newly available German and British sources.