

(FIRST SECTION)

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The Battle Fields of France and Flanders

By HON. W. F. COAKER.

WE were fortunate in securing Major Nangle as guide, for he knows the ground well and had his eyes wide open during the time he spent with our boys at the front. We secured a motor car from Cook's agency at Paris. The group consisted of Major Nangle, Andrew Murray, Joseph Sellars, C. Bryant and myself. Major Nangle, of course, was pilot.

We passed through Meru, Beauvais, Amiens, where we



C. Bryant in the barrel of "Big Bertha" near Bray.

spent the night. Along this route fighting had not been severe. Next day we proceeded to the spot where "Big Bess" was constructed, not far from Bray. This monstrous gun with its foundations was two miles from the railroad amongst hills and situated in a small grove of timber. How the Germans transported it thence and put the carriage together, so far from Germany, is hard to understand. It is an immense machine, every part of which was made in Germany, fitted and then transported to Bray, not far from Amiens. It threw a shell 75 miles and the day it was captured by the Australians it threw 35 shells into Paris. We took photos of it which will give the reader an idea of its immense size and power. The city of Amiens intends to keep it in its original form as a war souvenir. The Australians sawed off 7 feet of the smaller end of the gun, which they took to Australia as a souvenir. Anyone visiting the battle fields should see "Big Bess"; it is not far from Grovetown British Cemetery where several of our boys' graves can be seen.

We photographed some of the graves at Grovetown. They were buried early in March 1917. Here lie 2863, Pte. Bennett; 2209, Cpl. F. Connor; 2387, Pte. D. Chafar; 2nd Lieut. Samuel Manuel of Exploits, wounded March 3rd, 1917, and died next day; 2161, Pte. A. Toms; 2189, Sgt. J. E. Moore; 2268, Pte. J. Lucas; 2248, Pte. A. Toisin.



At Grovetown Cemetery—Messrs. Sellars and Coaker standing over the grave of Lieut. Manuel.

They lie amongst hundreds of British comrades. The accompanying photo shows where some of them were buried. Mr. Sellars and I are standing at poor Manuel's grave.

We left for Albert, but broke a spring in our car and made for Muricourt where the British had a repairing depot. We had to return to Amiens again for shelter—some 20 miles.

The next day we again passed through Albert—so familiar to our lads during 1916-17. Beaumont Hamel lies about seven or eight miles from Albert and the latter place will always be familiar to Newfoundlanders visiting Beaumont Hamel. We reached Auchonvillers, which was really the headquarters of our regiment in the action of Beaumont Hamel, so called. Auchonvillers connects with the trenches our boys left on that fatal morning. They passed from Auchonvillers to the front trenches through a trench they named Tipperary Avenue. Who can recall the passage across the road under the bridge where the lines were entered? Who remembers the kitchen dugout just south of the bridge. We took a photo of the kitchen dugout as it now looks; the roof has fallen in.

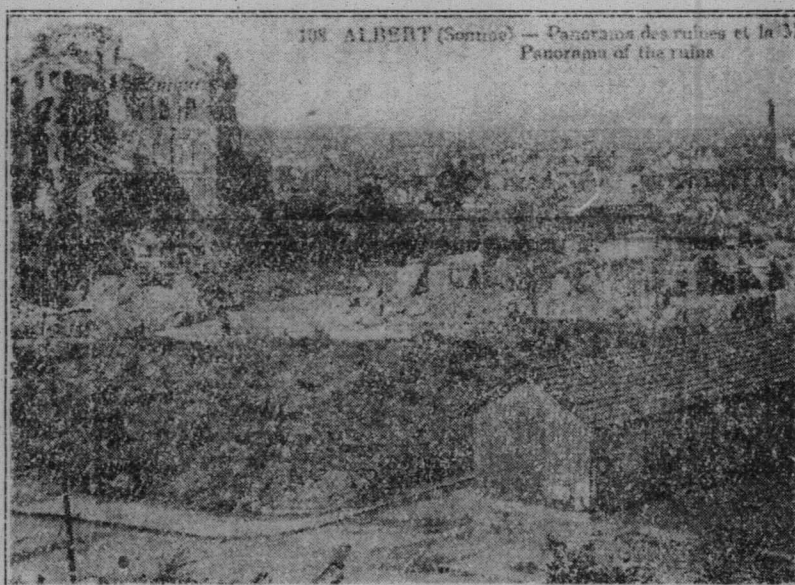
Near the kitchen dugout—a little to the North—is the village cemetery, and a little further North is the British Soldiers' Cemetery, where lie the bodies of Lieut. Grant, Pte. F. G. Whitten, who probably died before July 1st action, likely the victim of snipers.

We passed along the road a short distance and broke

over the rising ground covered with third line trenches on the back of the ridge over which our brave lads marched July 1st. The top of the ridge is about 100 yards from the road. The Newfoundland Government road to the field and trenches will connect with this road just outside of Auchonvillers, and all who visit the field will approach it along Tipperary Avenue, pass the Kitchen Dugout and take the road which our Government will build to the top of the ridge where the Caribou Monument, as per photo, will stand.

We passed through the three lines of trenches, and took photos of the same. I have the sign board "FIRST LINE TRENCH" which marked our first line trench at Beaumont Hamel. Anyone wishing to see it can do so at The Advocate Office.

On we travelled. At last we crossed over the trench our heroes left that fatal but glorious morning. It was the first time in daylight they had been out of those trenches. Before them, about 100 yards off, was the German First Line of trenches. The barbed wire protecting their own trenches had to be crossed. As they rose over the top they presented sure marks for the German machine guns, the bullets whizzed everywhere—on they went knowing that sure death awaited them as they had seen that very morning two battalions of British soldiers die to a man, amongst

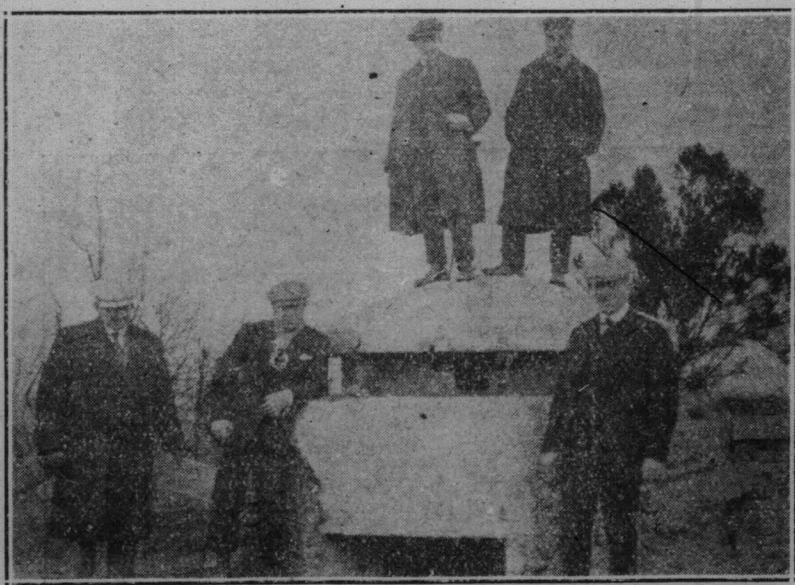


The Church at Albert where the statue of the Virgin Mary hung for so many months after the building had been destroyed.

them hundreds of the Black Watch regiment, who sleep side by side, with our dead heroes in the cemetery which is included in our land purchase, and situated in No Man's Land, as it was that July morning.

A picture of the sloping ridge where they all fell within a few minutes of going over the top, accompanies those notes. This is the ridge and slope that will forever be dear to all Terra Nova's true sons, for it was here Terra Nova was rediscovered and reconsecrated. I knew several who made the Supreme Sacrifice on that memorable morning. Some who fell dead have graves, many who fell dead have no particular spot that can be marked as containing their remains. Thirty-six who reached their trenches or were carried in that night and died that night or the next day, have graves in a small cemetery towards St. John's wood.

Those bodies will be transferred into the National Memorial Field, where they fought and fell. All the bodies in the vicinity will be concentrated at the cemetery inside the fence which will surround the Newfoundland National Memorial Field. A concrete fence about two feet high will surround that portion of the field our Government has purchased, which is situated in Auchonvillers and Hamlet, purchased from over 150 persons who have established their titles and transferred them to our country. Major Nangle had no little job to get those titles established and transferred.



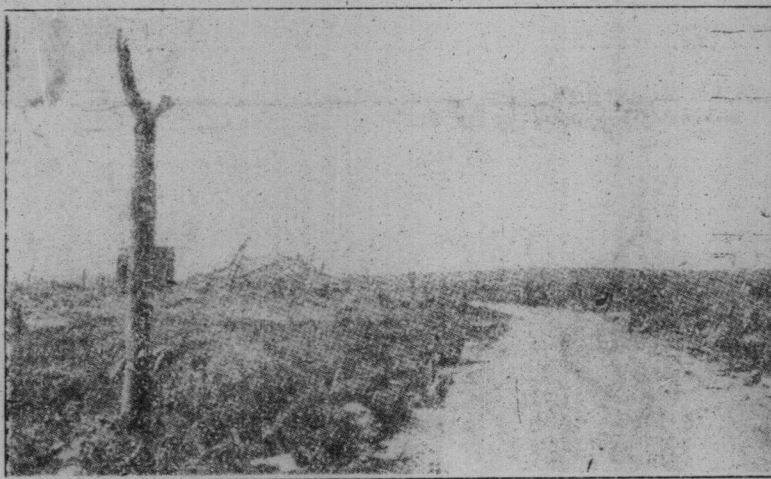
Copula at Auchonvillers Cemetery, near Tipperary trenches.

Our plot will measure 120 yards from the ridge, on past the German front line trenches, on past the ravine, and embracing the big crater which the British Sappers

blew up amongst the German trenches that morning. It will extend 80 yards across the field, and a road from the ridge to the road of Auchonvillers near Tipperary Avenue is also included.

Just to the right (see photo) looking towards the German trenches, about 50 yards from our front line trench, is a small hill with a sort of well at its base about 10 feet high. Just at the base is a tree. On this hill, about 20 feet from the base, Major Nangle found the body of the well known hero Frank Lind. Near him was Pte. Clancey. Poor Clancey's hand grasped the prayer book Padre Nangle had presented to the Catholic boys. They lived some hours in their agony; they were only about 40 foot-steps from their front trench where comrades were longing to aid them but they were in No Man's Land and no man dare move a finger or lift a hand, or bullets from German machine guns would be the price demanded. Poor Clancey and Lind died about 20 yards from a spot where we counted seven bodies lying together. Some of them fell forward when snipers others fell backward.

Just near the tree, named Danger Tree, under the wall of the hill I referred to, we saw parts of helmets over the ground. We moved two helmets, quite near together—about 3 feet apart. The letters N.F.L.D. were plainly discernible. In each helmet was a skull. We were standing over the bodies of two noble lads marked as "missing" on that fatal night when the roll was called; they could not be identified, they had rested there three years and eight



Tipperary Avenue.

months. Their bones will be given a grave in the Memorial Cemetery, but their head-stones will bear the inscription "An Unknown Newfoundland Soldier." I found their boots containing the feet bones and part of their stockings. We reverently placed all together and left their helmets in their original positions, to await Major Nangle's visit with a party of men to bury what we saw and thoroughly search the field, that no body should remain without a grave.

Just a few feet from the tree, to the right of the bodies just referred to, Messrs. Sellars and Murray found two more bodies and secured the brass badges N.F.L.D. from the coats. Just alongside, Mr. Sellars found an identity disk marked "G. Ivany, Methodist." Major Nangle took the disk. About ten feet back, on the base of the hill, we counted seven bodies side by side. Of course nothing remains now but half rotten pieces of clothing and the bones.

Who can understand what our feelings were at that moment! No words can express mine. I lingered by those bodies. How I wished I knew who they were in life! How grieved I felt that our Regimental or Militia authorities had not left some of our regiment to perform duties that all British battalions had not neglected.

At Monchy we met a searching party of British Tommies who belonged to the famous 29th Division, and who fought over those grounds the day our men fell at Monchy. I asked Major Nangle how it was our regiment went



Beaumont Hamel trench—Mr. Coaker standing on the firing steps. The hill in rear was occupied by Germans on July 1st.

home without attending to duties that all should feel it a privilege to perform—collecting the remains of brave fallen comrades. He replied, "I think Major Bernard

asked the Militia Department, St. John's, about keeping back a party for this purpose, but without favourable results." Will someone find out if this is correct, and if correct locate the man responsible for such inhuman and unmanly negligence.

Last year (1918) when we visited Beaumont Hamel we walked within 70 or 80 yards of this little hill. Our time then was very limited, as we were several hours



The so-much talked of Ravine at Beaumont Hamel just in rear of the German front line trenches.

ing the field and had to travel 30 miles to Perrone for lodgings that night. We had no guide, but had we come across a body unburied that day we certainly would have seen that someone searched the field. Last year we were not on the area where most of our boys fell. We first came across Capt. E. Ayre's grave, which was 50 yards from the Cemetery. He must have advanced much further than the hill referred to, as the grave was 50 or 60 yards from the hill.

In the Cemetery just at the edge of the German front line of trenches, situated of course in No Man's Land, but contained in our Memorial Field, lie the remains of many unknown Newfoundland and British soldiers, and the following graves dear to us:

1634, N. G. Hollands; 345, N. White; 826, R. Maddigan; 203, Pte. Pte. Taylor; E. Power, no number; 1624, J. R. Morris; 801, R. E. Hynes; 964, G. Warford; 1000, L./C. Ayre; 204, A. Randell; Small, without number or rank, likely belonging to Lewisporte, probably found in October 1917 when the Germans were driven out of this section by the New Zealanders and the identification only showed the word "Small"; (Any friends who lost a relative of that name on July 1st will know that his remains found a



Danger Tree—where Mr. Coaker is standing is where poor Frank Lind's body was found, also Pte. Clancey's. Just under the tree is where two bodies unburied were found as referred to by Mr. Coaker. Read his words carefully re this tree and mound.

grave, and will take steps to send Major Nangle his number, Christian name and rank, so that the new marble head stone will be properly inscribed). 1215, H. Saunders; W. Dunphy, Pte. J. A. Jens, no numbers; 1923, Snow; 274, Sgt. Tom Carroll; 616, E. Martin; Pte. J. Coisons, no number. (This name is as spelt on the metal disk attached to the cross—it should be verified). Lieut. F. W. Ross, Lukins, Pte. D. Lincham; 1534, A. Porter; 651, J. Carey; 896, C. E. Pike; 6535, Pte. Piercy (which must be British, as we surely had no number up to 6536 at Beaumont Hamel. This grave is stamped "1st Newfoundland Regiment.") 1480, Pte. Dunphy; 1099, A. Penny; Pte. Astor; 541, F. Lind; 365, E. Gladney; 618, Pte. O'Brien; L./C. James; A. O'Driscoll; (those without numbers are given just as the names appear on the crosses). I wonder if 1006, L./C. Ayre, is the same as we found last year outside the Cemetery, we could not find it this visit. Lieut. Small, M.H.A., was wounded July 1st about five minutes after he appeared over the top.

This Cemetery therefore contains about 33 identified Newfoundland graves and about as many more not identified. There is a cemetery towards St. John's wood containing 36 Newfoundland identified graves, but what are those where over 700 fell. I feel sure none fell further from the front trenches than 50 yards. What brain or pen

(Continued on Page 2)