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ST. JOHN'S — N. F. —

Our Heroes Graves.

Rev. (Major) Nangle's Report.

Fr. (Major) T. F. Nangle Reports on Graves.

The Minister of Militia received the following report from Father Nangle on Wednesday. The first letter is from Hon. R. K. Bishop, and explains itself:

Hon. R. K. Bishop to the Minister of Militia.

St. John's, Oct. 2, 1919.
The Hon. A. E. Hickman, Minister of Militia, City.

Dear Sir:—It was my purpose when I left St. John's some months ago to visit before my return, the battlefields of France and Belgium, and particularly those which I had visited in 1916, such as Beaumont Hamel and others where our Regiment had come to grips with the enemy.

When I was making preparations for going over to France, Major Nangle arrived in England and I learned of his commission by the Government to proceed to France and Belgium in connection with the work being carried on there by the Imperial War Graves Commission. Prominent officials of that Commission had expressed a desire previous to their knowledge of Major Nangle's appointment that I should go over and make myself acquainted with the conditions existing and the work being done there, so that I could upon my return convey my impressions to your Department, and it was thought the report of an eye-witness

known to many—probably to a majority—of the parents and friends of the gallant boys who went from and have not returned to the many homes around our Dominion where they are mourned would, if favourable, give satisfaction and a degree of comfort to many sorrowing hearts. In this opinion, Major Nangle concurred, and thought it desirable that we should go together, and accordingly Captain Anderson and myself proceeded to France with Major Nangle on Monday, August 25th, spending the week in a survey of the whole area, covering the operations of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment between Paschendael and Amiens, North and South, and Cambrai and Achille, East and West, and embracing all the Somme area, traversing at least six hundred miles of roads by automobile and on foot during that time—covering entirely the trail of the "Caribou" (Newfoundland Regiment) from 1915 to their departure from France.

The chief object of Major Nangle on this visit was a preliminary survey of the battlefields and areas over which our men fought and to ascertain through enquiries at headquarters of the Staff operating in the various sections of the devastated areas in France and Belgium under the "Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries," how best to commence his work. Thousands of men are engaged in this work, and as the operations are much more advanced in some sections than in others—some staffs expecting to finish

in a few months, while others will probably not cover their area during the next year, it is imperative that Major Nangle shall give his attention first to the areas upon which the Registration is furthest advanced, hence the necessity of his preliminary tour. The area is vast and the work necessarily slow, especially in the exhumation from solitary graves, which during the summer months could be undertaken only in early morning hours. These isolated remains wherever found are being brought into the nearest War Cemeteries, reinterred, and when identification is possible, registered.

We visited a great many cemeteries, some very large, such as at Lijssenhock, which contains 12,000 graves, where Capt. Charlie Strong and others are buried; Masnières, where Lieut. Arthur Herder, Tobin, Langmead, Edens, Bartlett and others fell; Goudecourt, where we lost Cecil Cliffe, O'Brien, Ebsary, and many others; Douai, a large and very beautiful cemetery, where there are three or four of our boys who were taken prisoners and died in German Camps; Helly, where I noted the graves of Capt. O'Brien, Noonan and others; Beaumont Hamel, where Lieut. Wilfrid Ayre and Melior lie; and Auchonvillers, which has a great many of our boys. The last mentioned is the only one of the many Cemeteries visited which showed lack of care, and speaking generally, the Cemeteries are well looked after and both graves and flowers kept tidy, and in several cases, flowers and shrubs evidenced the interest that is taken in our war graves.

Battlefields, such as Monchy and Goudecourt, which have not yet been cleaned up, present a very desolate prospect. Between the shell holes there is a rank growth of tall, coarse grass and nettles which makes travelling over Monchy particularly difficult, but judging from the number of skeletons which we saw on the ground we walked over, there must be a very great number of remains to be collected, which though they will receive decent burials, can never be identified. The work to be performed by Major Nangle will be tedious and arduous, but I should like to say that in my opinion the Government decided wisely when Major Nangle was selected for the work he has undertaken. He is most energetic and has an excellent knowledge of the important localities requiring his attention. He has great difficulties before him, but I am confident his time and energy will be devoted as assiduously to the satisfactory completion of his task, as it was during the week I was with him.

The mothers, who are naturally concerned about the resting place of their dearly loved boys, may be assured that they are not being forgotten or neglected. I notice enquiry in the public press

respecting a report from Major Nangle and while Major Nangle will doubtless be sending to you interim reports from time to time, he cannot, in my opinion, be expected to make any full report, or one that will be satisfying to our people generally for many months to come.

Faithfully yours,
R. K. BISHOP.

Preliminary Report from Major Nangle to Minister of Militia.

To The Minister of Militia, St. John's, Newfoundland.

According to orders, I herewith send you a preliminary report of the present condition of graves and the work being done by the various bodies in this country, and in the theatre of war.

(1.) The Directorate of the Graves' Registration & Enquiry is an army organization which is temporarily marking graves, collecting

bodies into cemeteries and registering them. When this is completed the cemeteries are handed over to:—

(2.)

The Imperial War Graves' Commission which was originally a National Committee, but on the suggestion of the Prince of Wales who is Chairman, it became an Imperial Commission including all parts of the Empire. The Commission is chartered to construct and decorate the Military Cemeteries in proper fashion, and mark each grave as permanently as man's art can devise.

On arrival I presented my credentials to Major General Fabian Ware the Director General of Graves, Registration and Enquiry. He has given me every assistance and help in the carrying out of my duties, as has Major Timewell, who has put all my records and voluminous correspondence on the subject at my disposal.

As per advice and copies of minutes of meetings of the I.W.G.C. sent to you from time to time by the Pay & Record Office, a Dr. Greene was first appointed to represent Newfoundland, who later retired in favor of Sir Edgar Bowring on his appointment as High Commissioner. In this connection reference may be made to P. & R. O. memoranda:—

2701/114/C. 18/2/18.
3773/171/C. 9/3/18.
4229/194/C. 15/3/18.
4621/213/C. 22/3/18.
7255/312/C. 3/5/18.
15393/516/C. 26/9/18.
16013/530/C. 3/10/18.
19158/517/C. 23/11/18.

which among other data has been placed at my disposal, but which so far, I have only been able to glance through.

Division of Work. For convenience of working, I have divided graves of our Contingent into various Sections:—

I. United Kingdom.
II. Gallipoli.
III. France and Belgium, subdivided into:—
(a) Base Hospitals.
(b) Ypres Sector.
(c) Arras.
(d) Beaumont Hamel.
(e) Somme.
(f) Cambrai.
(g) Prisoners of War.
IV. Newfoundland.

V. United Kingdom. Under this heading we have graves in the following places:—
Fort George.
Edinburgh.
Ayr.
Paisley.
Isle of Arran.
Glasgow.
Blackpool.
Birmingham.
Bristol.

Family Mess Pork.
New York Beef.

FRESH RABBITS.
FRESH COUNTRY EGGS.
SMOKED SALMON.

T. J. EDENS,
151 Duckworth Street.

Liverpool.
Winchester.
Plymouth.
Cambridge.
Bodelwyddan (Flintshire).
Tidworth.
Dunkeld.
Kenmore.
Wandsworth.
Brookwood.

Seventy-six bodies lie in all these at Brookwood, this I would not consent to as I think the next-of-kin would not (wherever the graves were in a proper cemetery) wish to have remains disturbed. And, secondly, those scattered graves stand as monuments to blaze the "Trail of the Caribou" through the Mother Country.

At Brookwood I found a special plot had been set aside for the Dominions: (a blue print of which I am sending.) Our graves here are in poor condition, some awaiting crosses, the markings of others indistinct. We shall get into touch with the Brookwood Committee and have the plot put in proper shape to hand over.

From what I can gather the Committee responsible for this cemetery is a dud. From Memorandum 10900/591/C 27/11/19, forwarded to you by

Pay & Record Office, you can see the way things stand.

Magdalen Hill Cemetery (Winchester.)

In this cemetery our graves are in fairly good order, but owing to lack of foresight no plot was selected, the result that our graves are scattered over the cemetery. I propose to have those collected in a plot and looked after as at Brookwood. I might add that a very nice tribute was paid our dead on U.S.A. Decoration Day, May 30th, 1919. A deputation came from the Knights of Columbus to decorate the U.S. Soldiers graves; they also laid a wreath of palms on the grave of each of our men, with a card attached, on which was printed "He died that we may live." In grateful memory from his Fellow Countrymen—K. of C. U. S. A."

Wandsworth. I also visited Wandsworth Cemetery. Here I found the Newfoundland plot in the course of alteration. Originally they had buried four bodies in one grave. They have now exhumed them and placed each in a separate grave. This plot was surrounded by a Portland stone border, but during the exhuming some of the slabs were broken. There was also erected by

(Continued on next page.)

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Our Heroes Graves.

the N.W.C.A. in the centre of this plot a small temporary cross made of stone and painted. It looks cheap and unworthy. I propose to plant a yew hedge round two sides and use the stone for the other sides. I also think we shall have a simple granite cross in the centre of the plot. (A cross has been erected by some private person to Chesley Mercer, the name and particulars of death were painted on the stone, but have now become quite illegible.)

I understand the N. W. C. A. has had the special care of this site in hand and has under consideration the erection of a memorial, but up to the present I have not been able to see Mr. Reese, to whom I have written on the subject. Meanwhile, since I am responsible for all Newfoundland graves in Europe, I presume the N.W.C.A. will have no objection in co-operating with me.

In the course of time I propose to visit all the graves, have them put in proper order, and a photograph taken of each.

In cemeteries such as Brookwood, Magdalen Hill, Wandsworth and Arras, I think besides the Regimental Headstone we should have a central cross in each cemetery. I was accompanied by a monumental mason and sculptor, Mr. Buchanan, an alderman of the Borough of Wandsworth, and most reliable man. He priced the various crosses in Wandsworth cemetery, the cheapest, about three feet high, was £40. An average stone costing about £75.

Photo No. 1 gives you an idea of a £100 stone cross. Anything cheaper than that would be out of place.

Gallipoli.

I had an interview recently with an officer who had been to Gallipoli in connection with the Australian Graves. He told me that our graves are still there, but in a very bad condition.

France and Belgium.

I have just returned from a preliminary visit to France and Belgium. I was accompanied by Hon. R. K. Bishop, and Captain Anderson, M.B.E., so that they, on their return to Newfoundland may be able to give you some idea of the work done by the Directorate of Graves' Registration and Enquiries. I am very glad I had them with me, because it is impossible for anyone who has not seen the battlefields to realize the work required. The task in hand has been greatly augmented by subsequent fighting over our battlefields. The healing forces of nature having made it impossible to recognize old landmarks—not to speak of isolated unmarked graves.

I first visited Passendale and the Ypres Sector. As the object of this visit did not extend to identifying individual graves, I looked for none, but the graveyards are in good condition, and the graves are in good condition.

From Ypres I passed through Lijssenhock where several of our men killed in the retreat from Armentières, are buried. This is the largest cemetery in France, containing some 12,000 bodies, and is kept in excellent condition.

Our next visit was to Douai on the way to Monchy, where we found the graves of four of our men who died in a German hands from wounds received at Monchy. This is the prettiest cemetery in France. The Germans erected a large monument on which is written in English, French and German: "In memory of Brave Commonwealth." The people of Douai tended this cemetery with all the love and care of any mother tending the grave of her soldier son.

Monchy is about the worst sight in the whole line. It was No Man's Land from April, '17, until the end. I hope to begin my task of searching the battlefields here in a week or ten days, but I am afraid the task is hopeless and that very few identifications will be made.

From Monchy I went to the Cambrai area. The fields look as if they had never been fought over. The Newfoundland cemetery and the wooden crosses erected here in November, '17, have lost their identity, but the Directorate has taken the matter up at once and is investigating. However, I know this cemetery well and there is no fear of the remains being lost.

Next I visited Guedecourt. This was almost as bad as Monchy, and as nearly three years have elapsed since we fought over the ground, the prospect of identifying bodies is next to impossible.

The last place to be visited was Beaumont Hamel. Here all the bodies have been collected into cemeteries and any that have not will never be found. Those cemeteries have been fought over in the advance of 1918, so that they are a bit knocked about, but the Registration Department has complete records of each.

The Directorate is making excellent progress, but owing to the nature of the work and the distance to be covered each day, it is very hard to get labour. I must take my time from now, because I have to work with my parties in each sector, but it is hoped to have all isolated bodies collected by April or May and then to begin the work of erecting headstones and confirming each man's part.