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NEWSLETTER # 73  
MAY 1987

Here we go with Newsletter No.73. We have had something to do with each one of them and it seems like we have been at it forever! One of these days a NEW EDITOR must show up and give us all some new ideas.

NEW MEMBER

Omitted from our last issue was the name of new member -  
Kim Dodwell. Middle House, Cruckmeole, Hanwood,  
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY5 8JN, England.

You may recall from N.L. 71 that Kim is working on WW II Canadian censors and units. Am thus reminded that I have a packet of such I must post to him. Kim would be glad to hear from you too!

FRANK WAITE- BNA TOPICS

No, this is not an obituary - Appreciation is hereby expressed to Frank Waite for the work he puts in on his column "The Study Group Centerline". Thanks for the reviews Frank. By no means taking a back seat is John Burnett, the Co-ordinator of Study Groups who keeps us all in line!

GROUP DUES ETC.

Since our last N.L., Canada's postal rates have gone up 2 cents to 36 cents while to the US it is 42 cents, up 3 cents. Overseas now takes \$1.12 to deliver this letter!  
Dues have come in from all members but four and, due to higher costs those four may not get this issue!

FEATURES THIS ISSUE

A good response came in as a result of the request for one pagers, etc. Thank you to those who have contributed.

The two main topics this month, although not strictly postal, are:

- 1. Belmont Days (South Africa - 1900) by Steve Luciuk
- 2. Ships in Convoy, Conclusion, Part 5, by Colin Campbell

Clarence Stillions, whose main interest is in the many facets of Newfoundland, sends along this page on the US Forces in Newfoundland in 1940.

Coming up soon, if we can just get at it, will be a feature from the Forces Postal History Society on the WW II Ferry Command - Transport Command that involved Canada to a great degree - both in bases and personel.

Rec'd

3rd CANADIAN CASUALTY CLEARING STATION - Rec'd

J.C.C.



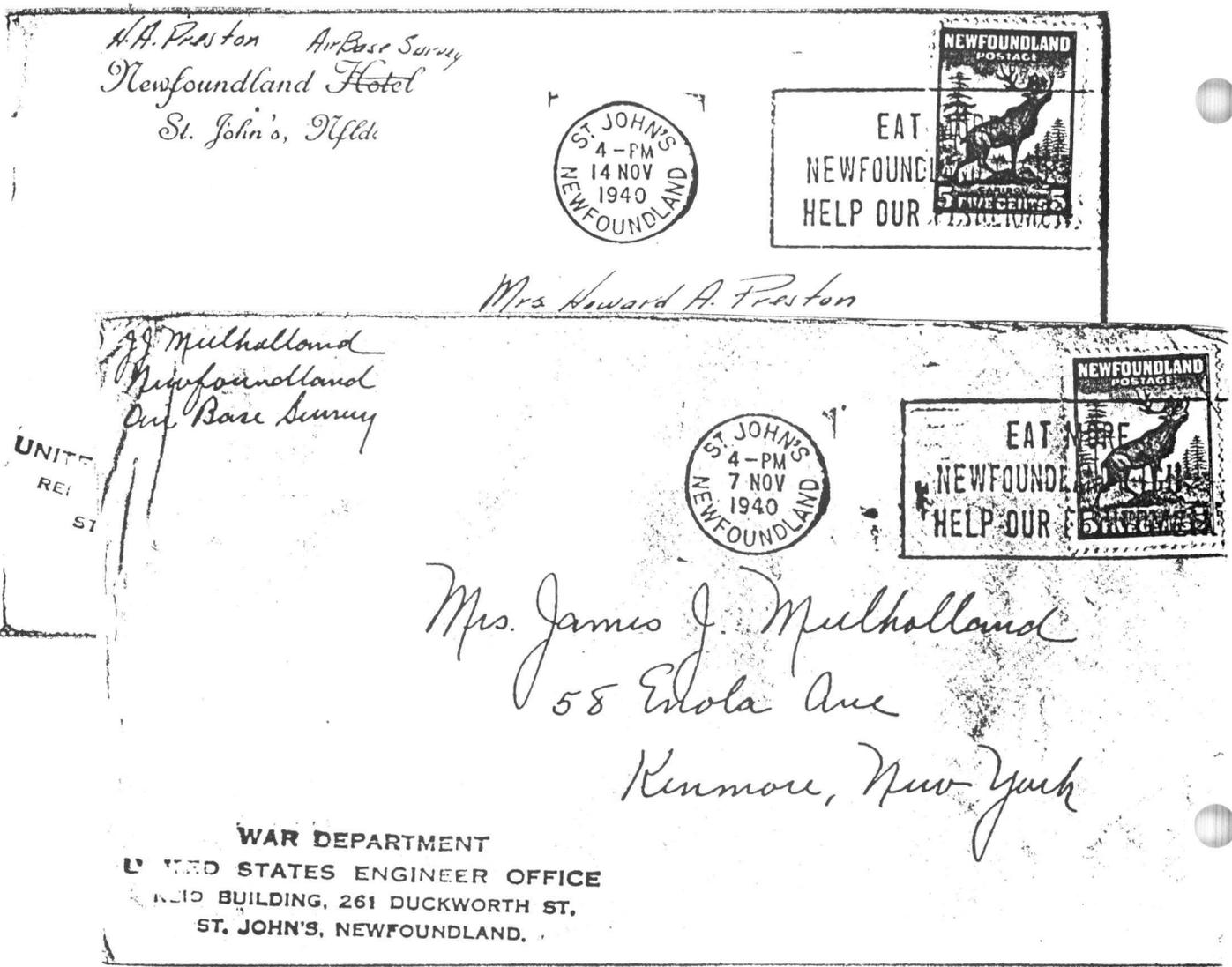
This receiving item was struck in lilac ink and has been enlarged here for clarity. Note Rec'd above circular marking. It appears to have been cut from a piece of stationery. On the date of the strike the C.C.S. was at Remy Siding (France). One month later it was moved to Frévent. Lt. Col J.L. Biggar was the Officer Commanding the Station. According to Sir Andr Macphail's book THE MEDICAL SERVICES the 3rd C.C.S. was formed at Winnipeg in June 1915, arrived in England in July and in France in April 1916. The bed capacity of the station varied from 200 to 900 beds. The station was closed out in March of 1919.

A PAGE FROM THE COLLECTION OF Clarence Stillions

Before there were American Bases in Newfoundland, in World War II, and in 1940 to be exact, there was a survey made by the United States Engineer Office. This survey provided the details necessary to build the several bases that were being proposed.

These covers are dated in November 1940 and it was in January 1941 that the first US troops landed. Prior to this, an agreement was signed by Britain, the US and Canada on 27 March 1941 on the US involvement in Newfoundland. Under the main agreement the US acquired six leased areas: one constituted the naval base at Argentia and Fort McAndrew: two at Quidi Vidi Lake where the army post of Fort Pepperrell was established; a small area on the White Hills near St. John's, for an emergency landing ground; an airfield site at Stephenville; and a site for a dock installation on St. John's Harbour. Subsequently some small additional plots of land adjacent to the original sites were also ceded.

More information on the background to the US involvement in Newfoundland is given in ARMS. MEN AND GOVERNMENTS, from page 360 on. This book by C. P. Stacey was published by the Department of National Defence in Ottawa in 1970. This is an interesting aspect of Canadian history, and these covers signal the beginning of the episode.



BELMONT DAYS: A DIFFICULT BEGINNING FOR THE CANADIAN FIRST CONTINGENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

Steven Luciuk

Much has been written about Canada's involvement in the South African War, the nation's first overseas conflict. Less is generally known, however, about the rather frustrating first months following the arrival of the Canadian first contingent at Cape Town. This postcard is associated with training at Belmont, a camp where Canada's hastily assembled and poorly trained military force was brought up to an acceptable military standard.

After a mobilization order on October 14, 1899, a force of just over 1000 men was organized. It consisted of 8 companies raised from across Canada. Pte. Edmund Bull, the sender of this card, was a member of D Company recruited in the Kingston and Ottawa areas. <sup>1</sup> The contingent was designated the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment. Volunteers enlisted for a 6 month period with a provision to extend their length of service to 12 months, if required. <sup>2</sup>



The force was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel W.D. Otter, Canada's consummate soldier. Upon arrival in South Africa, the battalion would come under Imperial command. An important concession, however, was won by Canada. The contingent would not be broken up and simply used to reinforce British Army units. Instead, it was agreed that Otter's force could keep a separate identity and fight as a regiment.

Remarkably, the contingent sailed from Quebec just over two weeks after mobilization. The Canadian government made arrangements for an Allan Line cattle ship, the SARDINIAN,

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to transport the force. The vessel was small. Consequently, the long journey to South Africa was associated with overcrowding and discomfort.

The military inadequacy of the contingent was very apparent. Many of the recruits had never fired a service weapon, and most had little idea of military routine. (It should be noted that more care was taken when a second contingent was fashioned.) On board ship, attempts were made to address some of the military shortcomings. The 8000 mile trip was used to drill the men, offer elementary weapons training, and provide some firing practice. Extensive additional training, however, would be needed before the contingent could be deemed ready to face a clever and determined enemy.

The SARDINIAN arrived at Cape Town on November 29, 1899. The contingent disembarked on the following day and marched to Green Point Common on the edge of Cape Town. One day later, they were sent by train to De Aar, a supply depot over 400 miles to the north-east. Finally, after a brief stopover, the Canadians were moved further north to Belmont for training.

The month-long voyage to Cape Town on the cramped little ship (re-christened "The Sardine") and two more months at Belmont in South Africa were Otter's only chance to transform raw volunteers into a fair replica of a British line regiment. The experience was unpleasant and few of the Canadians gained any affection for their harsh, elderly colonel.<sup>3</sup>

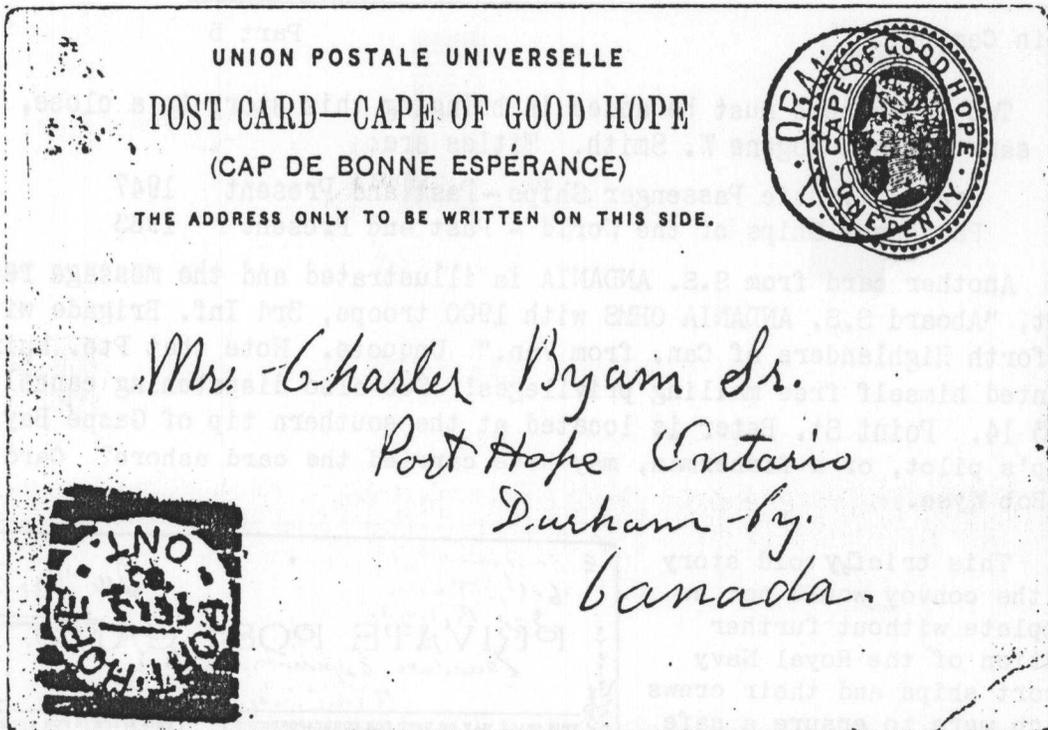
At Belmont the battalion was subjected to more drill and rifle training, as well as basic tactics. Efforts were also made to instill more military discipline. As well, in this period the contingent was given responsibility for various outpost duties.

In addition to the rigors and monotony of military routine, other factors conspired to make the contingent's stay at Belmont even less pleasant. Belmont, a recent battlefield,

...stank from the corpses of unburied animals, water was in short supply and the commissariat bread, frequently brought up from Orange River on the floor of an unwashed coal truck, was unappetizing. The local fauna were unfriendly....More annoying still was the fact that at Belmont, the Canadians acquired the first of the lice they would carry throughout the campaign.<sup>4</sup>

Even Christmas Day did little to lift sagging spirits. In addition to homesickness, supply problems led to a less than satisfactory Christmas dinner.

More than anything else a sense of frustration predominated at Belmont. Many contingent members believed that this training period was removed from their true purpose in Africa. They simply wanted to "get on with it", to engage the enemy, end the conflict, and return home. The message on this postcard suggests such a desire. "Have not been in a battle yet but we are soon going forward to the fighting line and may be at it soon." Pte. Bull's prediction was premature. Over a month of training at Belmont was still ahead.



The combination of dates from South Africa present an interesting coincidence. January 10, 1900, the day the card was written, was exactly one month after the arrival of the contingent at Belmont. The date of the cancellation, January 12, 1900, was exactly one month before the battalion was sent forward to join the 19th Brigade. By late February, the Canadians had participated in the fighting at Paardeberg, a battle which led to the surrender of Boer General Cronje. Later, the Canadian contingent was involved in the capture of Bloemfontein as well as scattered minor actions.

This postal stationery card featured views around Durban. The postcard was printed in Germany. A Cape of Good Hope one penny red was cancelled by an Orange River, C.G.H. circular postmark dated JA 12, 00. This postmark was used on some of the early mail sent by the Canadian first contingent.<sup>5</sup> A smudged Port Hope squared circle receiving mark appears to be dated FE 15, 00.

NOTES

1. W.J. Bailey and E.R. Toop, The Canadian Military Posts: Colonial Period To 1919 (Volume 1), Edward B. Proud, 1984, 49.
2. For a concise review of Canada's involvement in the South African War, see G.F.G. Stanley's, Canada's Soldiers: The Military History Of An Unmilitary People, (Revised Ed.), Toronto, MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1960, 277-289.
3. Desmond Morton, A Military History Of Canada, Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1985, 116.
4. Desmond Morton, The Canadian General: Sir William Otter, Toronto, A.M. Hakkert Ltd., 1974, 177.
5. Kenneth Rowe, The Postal History Of The Canadian Contingents In The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902, Vincent G. Greene Philatelic Research Foundation, 1981, 95-96.

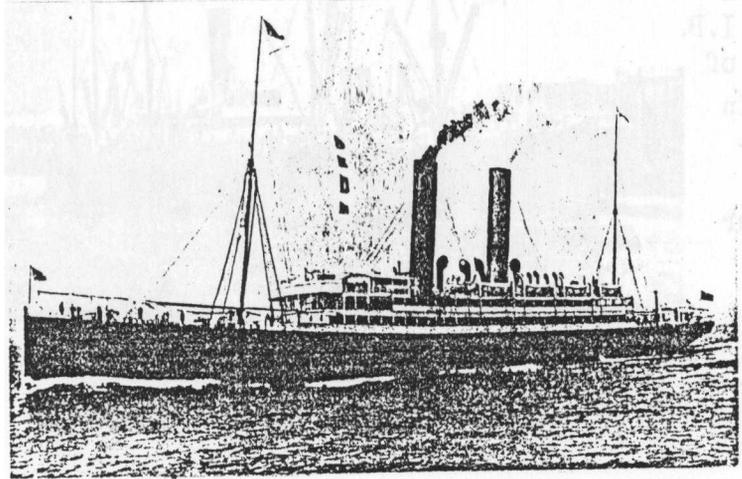


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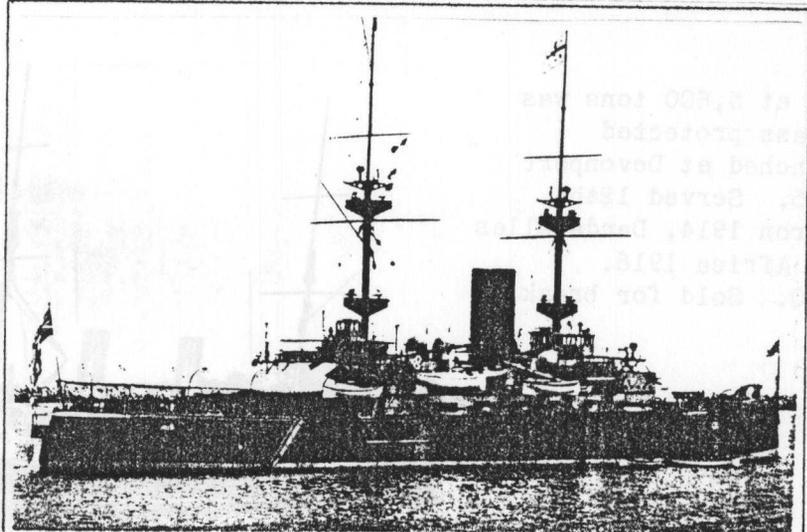
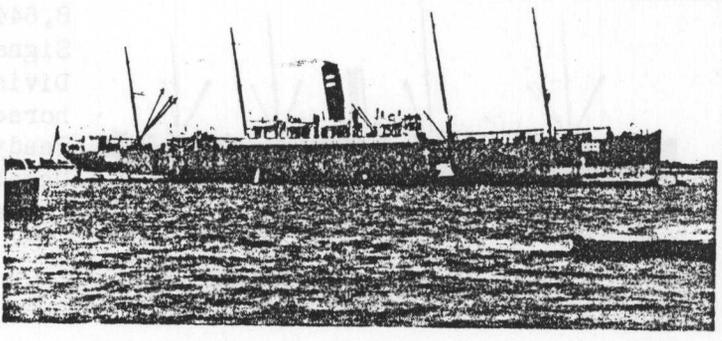
MONMOUTH - belonged to the C.P.R. Built in 1900 and tonnage was 4,075. She carried 54 members of Lord Strathcona's Horse and Div. Sigs (4). Also 646 horses, 1886 sacks of flour, grain and lumber. Ready to sail September 29 and offloaded October 16. She survived the war.



BERMUDIAN built 1904 for Quebec Steamship Co. with tonnage 5,530. Carried 562 troops - Lord Strathcona's Horse (549), 8th Battalion (8) and Army Medical Corps (5). Also ammo. Completed loading September 30 and disembarked troops October 16.

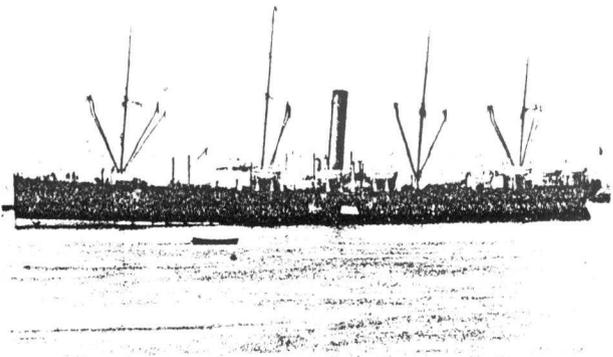
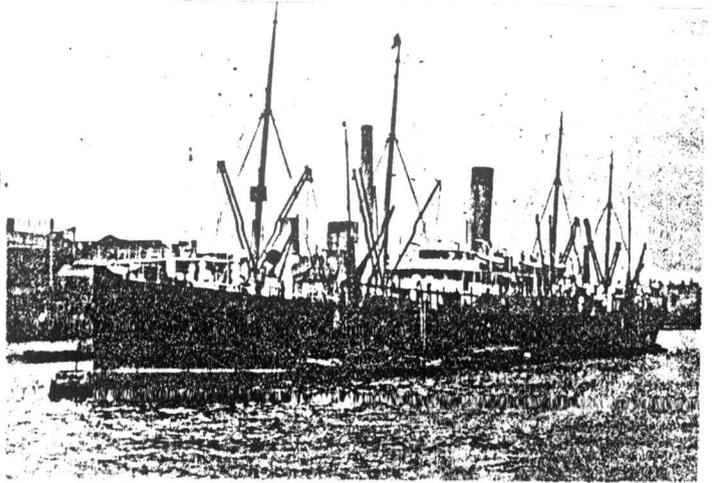
BERMUDIAN

TYROLIA belonged to C.P.R. Built 1900 at 7,535 tons she carried the 4th Battalion (1st Infantry Bde.) 1165 Officers and men. Also grain. Completed loading September 26 and disembarked passengers October 23. Sold to Admiralty in June 1916 she survived the war.



H.M.S. MAGNIFICENT (completed 1895)  
Battleship. Displacement 14,900 tons. War Service 1914-18. Complement 757. Disarmed - reduced to trooping 1915 and then ammunition/stores ship 1918. Sold 1921.

MONTEZUMA, 1899, belonged to C.P.R. Tonnage 8,360. As trooper carried 154 troops consisting of Divisional Ammunition Column (125) and 1st C.I.B. Transport (28). Also 6,600 sacks of flour plus hay, oats and straw. In 1915 she served as a dummy battleship and was torpedoed in 1917. Ready to sail from Quebec September 24. No date of disembarkation.



MONTREAL completed 1900 for C.P.R. Tonnage 8,644. Carried Cavalry troops (21), Div. Signals (4), 3rd C.I.B. Transport (28) and Divisional Train personnel (39). Also 815 horses, grain, wheat, flour and lumber. Ready to sail September 26 and offloaded October 15. Montreal sank January 1918 in Mersey River due to marine accident.

H.M.S. TALFOT at 5,600 tons was an Eclipse Class protected cruiser. Launched at Devonport Dock Yard 1895. Served 12th Cruiser Squadron 1914, Dardanelles 1915 and East Africa 1916. Complement 450. Sold for breaking 1921.

