

# P.T. McGrath's 1918 Account of "Newfoundland's Part in the Great War"

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[See table of contents](#)

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## DOCUMENT

# **P.T. McGrath's 1918 Account of "Newfoundland's Part in the Great War"**

MELVIN BAKER AND PETER NEARY

## INTRODUCTION

On 2 February 1918, in response to a request from London for "the Collection of materials as a basis for Articles on the Dominions and the War," Governor Sir Charles Alexander Harris of Newfoundland forwarded to Secretary of State for the Colonies Walter Long the narrative of the history of Newfoundland's participation in the Great War, which is printed below (The Rooms, Provincial Archives Division, St. John's, GN1/1/7, box 27). The author of this document, which was accompanied by photographs, was the prominent journalist and public figure P.T. McGrath, who wrote from the perspective of a true believer in the British Empire and a staunch supporter of the colony's military effort. His drum-and-trumpet narrative is succinct and comprehensive and, almost a century after it was written, can still be read with profit — hence its publication here. In editing the document, we have silently corrected obvious errors; dropped archaic language and understanding; adjusted spelling, capitalization, format, and punctuation; and added italics and explanatory words as required, in the interest of easy reading.

McGrath, whose given names were Patrick Thomas, was born in St. John's on 16 December 1868 and was educated by the Irish Christian Brothers.<sup>1</sup>

Despite leaving school at age 14 and being afflicted with a nervous tremor and partial paralysis, he quickly climbed to the top in the highly charged and intensely combative Newfoundland newspaper world. Politically, he was a strong supporter of Robert Bond (premier 1900–1909) and, following a break with Bond, of Edward Morris (premier 1909–1918). In May 1912, in a series of scathing articles in the St. John's *Evening Chronicle*, he turned the full force of his considerable literary ability on William Ford Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union, an organization Coaker had launched in 1908 that had quickly become a force to be reckoned with in Newfoundland politics.<sup>2</sup> In 1912 also, McGrath was named to the Legislative Council of Newfoundland and from 1916 to 1920 was President of that body.

His contributions to the war effort were numerous and exemplified the outlook of the Newfoundland Roman Catholic elite of Irish descent, who seized on the conflict to consolidate their position in colonial society by parading their loyalty.<sup>3</sup> McGrath was honorary secretary of the Newfoundland Patriotic Fund, finance secretary of the Newfoundland Regiment formed in 1914, and the first chairman of the War Pensions Board, an organization he had worked to get started. In 1917, he was named to a committee, eventually known as the "War History Committee," formed by the Patriotic Association of Newfoundland, the body that directed the country's war effort.<sup>4</sup> In 1918, in honour of his wartime service, McGrath was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire. During the 1920s, he did the research that formed the basis of Newfoundland's winning case in the Labrador boundary dispute with Canada, a matter settled by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 1927.

In January 1928, McGrath torpedoed the publication of a draft history of Newfoundland's 1914–18 war effort by the British writer Frederick Arthur McKenzie.<sup>5</sup> This work had been commissioned by the Newfoundland government but in McGrath's view did not do justice to the subject: omitting much, padding more, and being riddled with error. What McGrath wanted was a history that covered "all our activities" and formed "a real record for all time of the part Newfoundland [had] played, on sea and on land, abroad and at home, in the great struggle."<sup>6</sup> His own 1918 narrative of wartime events pointed in this direction but the larger work he imagined was never written.

Sir Patrick McGrath died in St. John's on 14 June 1929. His extensive papers on the Labrador boundary are in the holdings of The Rooms, Provincial Archives Division, St. John's (MG 8). When the Health Sciences Centre officially opened in the provincial capital on 26 October 1978, the building was dedicated to the

people of Newfoundland and Labrador and to the memory of McGrath, who is described on a plaque there as “Publisher” and “Patriot.”<sup>7</sup>

### *Document*

#### NEWFOUNDLAND’S PART IN THE GREAT WAR

That Newfoundland, though by far the smallest in point of population of the self-governing dependencies of the British Empire, should play a prominent and honourable part in helping the Mother Country in the Great War is not surprising when it is Terra Nova’s proudest boast that she is “the most ancient and loyal British Colony,” the first territory overseas in which the English flag was planted, and the most British of all the overseas dominions ... being settled entirely by people of English, Irish, and Scotch stock.... [T]oday Newfoundland holds within her borders 250,000 people of British descent, though 99 per cent of them native-born, to whom the United Kingdom is “home,” to whom a voyage there is “a run home,” and to whom the mail steamer is “the home boat.”

Discovered by John Cabot in 1497, claimed by Sir Humphrey Gilbert for Queen Elizabeth in 1584, and the first permanent settlement made in 1610, when John Guy, a merchant of Bristol, located at Cuper’s Cove, now known as Cupids, in Conception Bay, the Island’s fisheries, known to be among the richest in the world, made it for two centuries a bone of contention between Britain and France, till ultimately it passed into the undisputed possession of the British crown, though the fishery rights of the French were not extinguished until 1904, by the Convention of London, through which France gained certain territory in Morocco in exchange for relinquishing her claims on the West Coast of Newfoundland.

During the last half century, Newfoundland has made great progress. Sixty-two years ago, when, in 1855, ... responsible government was granted to the Island, the population was only 87,000, while today it has almost trebled. Still, since in bulk it is the tenth largest Island in the world, with an area of 42,000 square miles, one-sixth larger than Ireland and about four-fifths that of England (excluding Wales), these quarter-million settlers barely occupy the sinuous coastline of 6,000 miles, fisher-folk naturally locating within sight and sound of the sea from which they draw their sustenance, the only inland settlements of any import being those around the pulp and paper mills established in recent years.

Such an aggregation of midget settlements, therefore — for of the 1,256 in the Island 747 have less than 100 inhabitants, 245 more have less than 200, and a further 189 count under 500 souls — makes recruiting a difficult problem, for education is necessarily backward; there are no large centres of population — St. John’s, the capital, with 30,000 people, being the only town in the country — and consequently the agencies which operate in other parts of the Empire to stimulate patriotism and to enlighten the people as to the aims and objects of the Empire in the war do not exist in Newfoundland.

Nevertheless, the robust patriotism of the Newfoundlanders speedily manifested itself, and two days after the declaration of war on August 4, 1914, the Administration authorized the Governor to cable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, asking authority for the enlisting of men for service by land and sea, undertaking to increase a naval reserve force already embodied in the Island from 600 to 1,000, and to enroll a military contingent of 500 also.

Two days later, the Secretary of State replied, accepting the offer to raise troops for land service abroad, and intimating that after consultation with the Admiralty, a further dispatch would be sent respecting the naval reserve force, and on August 14th the Admiralty accepted the offer in relation thereto.

On August 12th, a public meeting was convened in St. John’s with the Governor (Sir W.E. Davidson) in the chair, and representatives of every interest in the community present, and it was decided unanimously and enthusiastically, amid scenes of enthusiasm never equaled in the Island, to recruit men for the two organizations, and—because a naval drill-ship, the *Calypso*, since renamed the *Briton*, had been stationed in St. John’s for some years before for training purposes, and possessed all the necessary facilities for the enlisting of blue-jackets — to create the necessary machinery for the raising, training, and transporting overseas of the modest force of half a thousand men which has since grown over eight-fold.

#### *Royal Naval Reserve*

As it represented the senior service, it may be permissible to say that when the war began, Newfoundland had had a Royal Naval Reserve force, a branch of the Imperial service, in operation here for about 15 years. It had been started in 1899 as a result of the Colonial Conference of 1897. Its maximum had been fixed at 600 men, and it had become very popular amongst the young fishermen, as the training was done during the winter months, when seafaring pursuits were rendered impossible for great numbers of the fisher-folk by the ice blockade around the coast, and it gave them an opportunity of seeing

somewhat of the great world outside, because the cruises were taken in southern waters, and frequently developed some very interesting aspects.

In August, when war was declared, the fishing season was in full swing and the men then on the Naval Reserve rolls were dispersed all round the coast of the Island, over the Grand Banks, and along the seaboard of Labrador as far north as Hudson Strait, and to the credit of the men be it said that when the summons came, all hurried to answer it, abandoning their fishing boats and gear, and reaching St. John's as rapidly as means of communication would admit, so that by the end of August there were only 43 unreported, some of whom were on long voyages to remote foreign ports.

At that time, the Admiralty had not decided upon its policy as to the utilization of the force, and so, after being left in St. John's for some time, the men were disbanded again and sent back to their employments, and it was not until October that they were called upon for active service. The circumstance was very regrettable because it discouraged many who otherwise would have joined, and it took a long time for the bad impression resulting from this decision to wear off; but gradually new recruits came, and at the end of 1917 the record was as follows:

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Number of men entered                          | 1,807 |
| No. lost in action, died of diseases, etc.     | 137   |
| No. invalided, etc.                            | 113   |
| No. discharged, completion of engagement, etc. | 268   |
| Present strength of Reserve                    | 1,289 |

This is regarded here as a really creditable total, seeing that the pay of the men is only 56 cents per day, they being enlisted under Royal Navy rules and subject to Royal Navy rates of pay, whereas the men of the Newfoundland Regiment are paid at the Canadian rate of \$1.10 per day, or virtually twice the naval figure, in addition to which the men of the regiment get re-issues of clothing whenever they are required, while the sailors have to buy articles to replenish their kits. It is thus evident that from the very outset the naval service was at a serious disadvantage as compared with the army and it is highly creditable to the spirit of the young fishermen that under these circumstances so many of them joined the Reserve.

It has been decided latterly by the Newfoundland Government to make up the difference to the naval men, so as to put them on an equality with their military brethren, and an appropriation of one million dollars has been voted

by the Legislature for that purpose, but serious difficulties have been experienced in the endeavour to give effect to that decision, first because of the undesirability of having two rates of pay for men serving in the same capacity on the same ship, and, second, because this fixed rate does not take cognizance of the separation allowances provided for the dependants of naval seamen, and varying with the number in each family. A settlement satisfactory to all, however, will doubtless be effected after the war, when it will be possible to hand to every man his deferred pay "in a lump," and when it will in all probability be all the more acceptable in that fashion.

The story of the work of the Newfoundland Naval Reservists will never be adequately told. Through the very nature of their labours, distributed as they were amongst hundreds of vessels in the fleet, concerted action to exalt the name of their native land was not possible, but numerous individual records have come to hand showing the men to be sailors of the finest quality, to be brave and daring fellows with capacities in some departments of naval duty unsurpassed by the men of the regular service. This is especially true in the matter of patrol work. It is the universal admission of naval officers under whom they serve that there were no men more keen-sighted on the look-out, none more capable in the handling of small boats, none who show such familiarity with and contempt for the ocean in its wildest moods, than the Newfoundlanders. They have served in all classes of war-ships, from dreadnoughts to drifters, from seaplanes to submarines, and they have latterly been set apart especially for patrol work and have been drafted in large numbers into vessels designed for that service, for the reasons above stated. Some were in ships that served at the Dardenelles, more were on the *Alcantara* when she sank the *Greif*,<sup>8</sup> others were with Surdee's<sup>9</sup> squadron when they swept the ocean of Von Spee's<sup>10</sup> ships, several were in Beatty's<sup>11</sup> squadron when the *Blücher* was sunk,<sup>12</sup> and still others played their part in the great battle of the Jutland Bank in May 1915. In all aspects of naval work they have proved so satisfactory that the Admiralty some time ago formally intimated its desire to secure a still larger enlistment of them, and scores of published notices from officers of every rank in the navy testify to their sterling qualities and to the excellent service they were giving.

#### *Organizing a Military Contingent*

That the Newfoundland fishermen would, as the Americans say, "make good" in the navy in wartime was never doubted by those who knew them and the perils they endured from day to day in the pursuit of their ordinary seafaring

toil, for the hazards of actual hostilities were but little different from those encountered in the quest for cod amid the ocean's bellows or the chase of the seal on the ice floes off the Grand Banks. But as to how these fine fellows and the young townfolk of St. John's would take to military duty and comport themselves amid the unfamiliar conditions of army life was another matter, and one that gave occasion for serious concern at the outset. Fortunately, thanks to the high spirit of patriotism and loyalty animating them, the experiment proved completely successful, and has repaid the Colony a hundredfold in the glory it has brought to her, and in the sense of duty well performed, for all the sacrifices it has involved — and may still involve, before the demon of Prussian militarism is finally subdued.

It should be explained here that Newfoundland was, up to the beginning of the war, a country without any armed force whatever. It enjoyed the reputation of being perhaps the most law-abiding in the world, public order being maintained by a force of 100 policemen, half of them stationed in St. John's, where they did duty as a fire-protecting force as well, and the remainder being distributed in ones and twos in the larger of the fishing settlements around the coast.

Except for some of the Naval Reservists, who had been in training ships which operated in Venezuela some years previously, when Britain and Germany made a demonstration against President Castro,<sup>13</sup> not one man in ten thousand in Newfoundland had ever fired a shot in action. There was not even a militia or volunteer force, and the only organizations possessing even the rudiments of drill were cadet corps in connection with the different colleges in St. John's, a fortunate circumstance indeed, because it was from the ex-members of these boys' brigades that the first 500 soldiers were virtually all enlisted.

As Newfoundland had only a few months before passed through the throes of a bitterly contested general election, and as party feeling still ran high, it was decided that it would be inadvisable for the government to undertake the work of carrying out the direction of the Colony's war activities, and accordingly this work was entrusted to a group of citizens known first as the Patriotic Committee, and subsequently, on its enlargement so as to include representatives from all parts of the Island, as the Patriotic Association, with His Excellency the Governor as chairman, and committees appointed to carry out the recruiting, equipping, training, and paying of the men and the other subsidiary tasks involved.

The spirit in which the Colony entered upon this war enterprise is best evidenced by the following circumstances. Of the first five hundred men, somewhat over four hundred were enrolled in the city of St. John's within a fortnight,

the remainder coming from the "outports," every place in the Island except the capital being grouped under the generic term of "the outports." This result is regarded as due to the better knowledge of what the war meant, arising from the educational standards in the city, and also to the military spirit inculcated by the brigades. Incidentally, it may be remarked that the second best recruiting area in the Island was the district of St. George's, on the West Coast, which gave a very large representation to the navy, a circumstance due to the presence of British and French warships there for many years previously in connection with the disputes arising out of the famous French Shore Question.<sup>14</sup>

All interests in the Colony vied with each other in the endeavour to forward the good work. The railroad and steamboat companies carried the recruits to St. John's free of charge, and carried back, on the same basis, those who were rejected. In many instances, private citizens took the men to board until quarters could be secured for them. The city physicians gave their services without charge for the medical examination of the recruits. The various brigades gave their armories for drilling purposes. The leading garment-makers and other dealers in wearables accepted assignment as an Equipment Committee to see the men properly equipped, and to pass upon the materials supplied. The members of the local Rifle Club volunteered as musketry instructors, and the businessmen and representative men in the mercantile community, and others, undertook the actual detailed work of the various committees and gave ungrudgingly of their time and money in response to every call made upon them.

In due course, the men were put into camp on the city's cricket ground, and housed in tents composed in some instances of sails taken from vessels then in port; and, in other instances, of marquees owned by private citizens, for there was a shortage of suitable tents, as of everything else, in a community which was slowly and laboriously, but with dogged determination, building up under pressure of driving necessity, a military undertaking from the very foundations.

It was decided to embody this force on the lines of the Canadian militia, grading and paying the men as in that dominion, and the work of recruiting was carried through with such conspicuous success that within two weeks the full complement of 500 was secured and rudimentary training was begun, being continued for six weeks until the contingent was dispatched to England in October, 1914, on a Newfoundland steamer, the *Florizel*, in conjunction with the first Canadian contingent, the 30 ships comprising which it joined off Cape Race, and so formed one of the modern Armadas, the greatest that ever crossed the Western Ocean, arrayed for the new crusade inspired by the needs of

civilization and liberty against the horrors threatened by Germany's iniquitous course in defying the world.

This Newfoundland contingent was surely the most unique, in many respects, that ever put to sea. It included but two men with any knowledge at all of warfare — a retired British Officer, who, being on board a steamer passing through St. John's, volunteered his services and was given a captain's commission, and an ex-private in the Imperial Army, temporarily sojourning at St. John's, who was made Regimental Sergeant Major.<sup>15</sup> All the rest, officers and men, were "greenhorns." Serving in the ranks on sheer equality were the sons of millionaire merchants of St. John's and of poor fishermen from remote outports, with representatives of every class in between. The officers were ones who had held commissions in the various boys' brigades of the city, and whose preferment was due entirely to what rudimentary knowledge of drill they had acquired thereby; and the senior captain,<sup>16</sup> a local man, waived his right to command on the voyage across the Atlantic, in favour of the retired military officer above mentioned, because the latter has some previous experience in this sort of work. It was a contingent, moreover, without a lethal weapon amongst its outfit, because rifles were at that time notoriously difficult to get. Newfoundland had none herself, the export of firearms from England had been prohibited, Canada required all she could secure for the arming of her own men, and the varieties obtainable in the United States were not suited to "service" requirements. The Duke of Connaught, then Governor-General at Ottawa, finally contrived, at the request of Governor Davidson, to obtain 500 rifles from the Canadian Militia Department, but these, though sent to St. John's by rail, arrived a day too late for the *Florizel*, and had to be forwarded afterwards by a freight ship to Liverpool. The transport herself was a Newfoundland sealing steamer of the ice-breaking type, powerfully built and capable of withstanding all weather, and included in her company were many who had only a few months before trod her decks in the annual sealing cruise which is one of the outstanding industries of the Island.

After landing at Plymouth with the 30,000 Canadians, the contingent was sent to Salisbury Plain with them and remained there for some time, being then transferred to Fort George, Inverness, Scotland, because its numerical weakness, five hundred strong, did not admit of its being given a place as an independent battalion, and it was felt at first that it might have to be included with some other contingent to form a unit for the field.

The public spirit of the young men of the Colony, however, was such, and recruits offered so readily, that a second five hundred was enrolled shortly

afterwards and was sent to join the first in Scotland early in 1915, enabling "The Newfoundland Regiment" to acquire form and substance and to remain a definite entity in the firing line up to the present time.

Continuously, since the first day, recruits have been offering and during the three and a half years of the struggle more than 4,000 men have volunteered for service with this force, enabling one battalion, 1,000 strong, to be maintained continuously on the actual fighting line, a second battalion about the same strength to be in training in the British Isles, and a third battalion to be receiving rudimentary instruction at St. John's, men being sent to England as they became fit and thence, after a further period of training at the depot (located up to the end of 1917 at Ayr, Scotland, and then transferred to Winchester, England), to be passed on to the battalion in the field.

From Fort George, Inverness, "The Newfoundland Regiment" was transferred to Edinburgh and given the high honour of being the first overseas contingent ever to be quartered in the historic Edinburgh Castle, where it remained for some weeks and where it won the admiration of the people of the Scottish capital, the physical fitness of the men being such that they were regularly paraded through the main streets with the idea that this would assist in the recruiting for the Scottish regiments.

From Edinburgh the regiment went to Aldershot<sup>17</sup> to complete its training, and in August, 1915, was found to be fit for service overseas and dispatched to the Mediterranean. Rumour says that its original destination was Khartoum, but its arrival at Alexandria synchronized with the call for reinforcements for the expeditionary force then at the Dardenelles, and where it was accordingly sent.

After a brief period of training in association with a more experienced battalion, to accustom the men to the conditions of actual warfare, it was included in the "immortal" 29th Division, which won such glory both in Gallipoli and later in France, and with that historic force it has ever since remained as a unit.

The Newfoundlanders did their full share of fighting in Gallipoli, and enjoyed the distinction of having captured a hill nearer to Constantinople than any other ground secured by the Allied armies engaged in the combat there. This is appropriately known as Caribou Hill, from the crest of the regiment (a deer's head), and was captured from the Turks by a squad of Newfoundlanders in a daring night attack, for which the officer in charge, Lieut. [J.J.] Donnelly, later killed in France, gained the Military Cross, and two of his men the "D.C.M,"<sup>18</sup> the first distinctions won by the regiment in the field.

In the great blizzard which at the end of November swept the Gallipoli Peninsula, the Newfoundlanders were sorely buffeted, but, although according

to John Buchan's<sup>19</sup> history, two hundred men were frozen to death during the storm and 10,000 were evacuated from the territory the following week, the familiarity of the Newfoundlanders with such conditions stood them in such good stead that only one man out of the entire regiment suffered amputation as a result of the exposure endured, he losing the toes off both feet; while, thanks to the measures which the TerraNovans were able to devise to cope with this storm, the battalions in their immediate vicinity were able to benefit greatly, and escape some of the worst of the consequences which befell those less fortunately situated.

In the withdrawal from the peninsula, the Newfoundlanders won further recognition, being utilized as a connecting link between the army that was leaving the coast and the navy that was facilitating the withdrawal, a function for which the experience of the TerraNovan lads in seafaring work rendered them specially adapted.

After the evacuation they were taken to Mudros,<sup>20</sup> and after spending some days there were conveyed back to Cape Helles and landed on Gallipoli Peninsula a second time, to do similar duty in connection with the withdrawal of the forces holding that position, so that Newfoundland enjoys the unique distinction that her men took part in both these notable achievements.

#### *On the Western Front*

The regiment was then sent to Egypt and located at Port Suez where it remained until the spring of 1916, when, with other units of the 29th Division, it was moved to France. After a brief period, it participated in the battle of the Somme, having a most unfortunate experience on the opening day of that conflict, July 1st, 1916. In company with other units of the 29th Division, it was sent against the strongly fortified position held by the Germans at Beaumont-Hamel, where it was decimated. It suffered perhaps as heavily as any of the British battalions engaged in the war, except those in the ever memorable retreat from Mons, but the gallantry with which the men attempted an attack on an impregnable position, one that was not captured until six months later, won instant and unstinted recognition from the generals directing the advance.

For instance, Brigadier-General D.E. Cayley, commanding the 88th Infantry Brigade, forming part of the famous 29th Division ... in France, [in a letter] to Governor Sir Walter Davidson under date of July 18th, 1916, says: "The 29th Division was put in against what proved to be the strongest part of the German line, and, as it proved, impregnable to direct assault. Battalion after Battalion was sent forward without any success. Finally, two Battalions of my Brigade,

the Newfoundland and another, were ordered forward. I was in a position to observe the advance of the Newfoundland Regiment. Nothing could have been finer. In the face of a devastating shell and machine gun fire, they advanced over our parapets, not a man faltering or hanging back. They literally went on till scarcely an officer or man was left unhit. Their casualty lists are sufficient proof of this. It was a cruel fate, which, in this their first real attack, allowed them to be nearly destroyed, without the compensating satisfaction of having got at the enemy. Also, that the one unit in the Field of a Colony which has made such sacrifices, should suffer such a fate is indeed tragic. I cannot sufficiently express my admiration for their heroism nor my sorrow for their overwhelming losses, which admiration and sorrow will be shared by all in Newfoundland."

Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, writing to the Governor on July 9th, said: "Newfoundland may well feel proud of her sons. The heroism and devotion to duty they displayed on July First has never been surpassed. Please convey my deep sympathy and that of the whole of our armies in France, in the loss of the brave officers and men who have fallen for the Empire, and our admiration of their heroic conduct. Their efforts contributed to our success and their example will live."

General Hunter-Watson,<sup>21</sup> commanding the Army Corps, which included the 29th Division, declared in an address to the men of the Newfoundland Regiment at his first meeting with them after the action of July first: "Well done Newfoundlanders. You have proved equal to the best."

The London *Times* correspondent at British headquarters in France, writing on July 13th, said: "The Newfoundlanders were the only overseas troops engaged in these operations. The story of their heroic conduct cannot yet be told in full, but when it is it will make Newfoundland very proud. The battalion pushed up to what may be called the third wave in the attack, probably the most formidable section of the whole German front, through an almost overwhelming artillery fire, across ground swept by enfilading machine gun fire from the hidden positions. The men behaved with complete steadiness and courage."

In the action at Beaumont-Hamel the Newfoundland Regiment lost 260 killed and missing (none of the latter were ever reported since) and 530 wounded, and when the survivors assembled next day they showed only 83 bayonets. The regiment was subsequently reconstituted by drafts from Scotland, and its next great exploit was at Gueudecourt, on the 14th of October in the same year, when it captured a German position there with three guns, consolidated and extended its lines, and, when another regiment, withdrawing from

a certain position in response to orders, left a portion of the line unprotected, the Newfoundlanders, disdaining to retire, threw a small contingent into the vacant trenches and held them against the Germans until next day, when supports from another battalion were sent forward to relieve them. For this action, the senior officer, Capt. J.W. March, was honoured with the Military Cross and also with the French *Croix de Guerre*. Respecting this operation, General Cayley, writing to Governor Davidson on October 28, says: "I have much pleasure in writing to you again to tell you of the great deeds of the Newfoundland Regiment on the 12th of October.... As far as this Brigade was concerned, the attack was entirely successful. The Newfoundland Regiment carried out their part most brilliantly, with the utmost dash and determination, nothing could have been finer than their behaviour, and they fairly got into the Germans, killing larger numbers and capturing many others. They also captured three machine guns, which I have applied, should be handed over to the Newfoundland Regiment as trophies. The Regiment's losses were serious but very slight, considering the important success won and the heavy losses in killed on the enemy. The success was all the more gratifying as it was the only real success recorded on that day ... I beg to congratulate you on the grand services to the Empire which your gallant Regiment has rendered."

The losses in this engagement were so serious that, coupled with the normal wastage, large drafts of nearly 500 men had to be secured to fill up the gaps, and General Cayley, speaking of these, says that when he inspected the regiment a few days previously, he was immensely struck with the stamp of men they were, and felt confident that, when called upon, they would gloriously uphold the splendid reputation their regiment had gained.

During the winter of 1916–1917 and the ensuing spring, numerous minor engagements were participated in, and the regiment fully maintained the high record won in its initial encounters, and earned the recognition of commanders, press correspondents, and British public men.

Another epoch-making event in the regiment's history was at Monchy-le-Preux, on April 14th, 1917. At this point, the Newfoundland Regiment was sent against a wood in which a whole German division had been massed for an advance unknown to the Newfoundlanders. Two companies of these were swallowed up amongst the thousands of Germans, though fortunately, a great number of them were not killed but were taken prisoners. Their audacious onset paralyzed the German advances, and the Teutons were further intimidated by the gallantry of the colonel, a lieutenant, and twelve men composing the headquarters staff of the regiment, who, when they saw the catastrophe

that had befallen the advance, seized a trench in the face of the advancing German host, and by their sharpshooting held back the Germans for a whole day. It was a feat of which the annals of this war will disclose few equals, and it is not surprising that Colonel [James] Forbes-Robertson was awarded a D.S.O.,<sup>22</sup> Lieut. [Kevin] Keegan a Military Cross, and the eight men who survived with them a Military Medal apiece.

General Allenby,<sup>23</sup> the commander of the army in which the Newfoundland battalion was fighting at this time, says: "The Newfoundlanders did gallant work in repelling very heavy counter-attacks by the Germans. Their casualties were high, but they showed splendid staunchness and fought like heroes. The divisional commander reports that the Germans were advancing and that the Eastern defenses appeared weak, whereupon the commanding officer and the remainder of the headquarters' gunners signalled, and, proceeding as rapidly as possible to the southeastern corner of the town, got into a sort of ditch from which they were able to fire all day at close range, and getting a trench in nearly enfilade, accounted for a large number of Germans. I have personally recommended the good work of the Battalion and of the Commanding Officer and his headquarters staff in particular, as by his promptness and personal bravery he averted what might have been a very serious situation."

Subsequently, the regiment, though reduced to twelve officers and 220 men, did good service in the fights following upon that engagement, and, further drafts being sent forward, the battalion was in due course increased in strength, so that later it was able to prove a really effective unit again.

In August 1917, the regiment was moved to Belgium to a position near Woesten,<sup>24</sup> north of Ypres, where, on August 15, the Newfoundlanders took part in an advance against the German line along a wide front, capturing two objectives, killing many of the enemy, and securing two machine guns in the first position taken, and two others in the second. In this action, the sterling qualities of the men as a whole and the resourcefulness of individuals were both splendidly displayed, and the gallantry of all was again warmly attested by commentators on the engagement.

In October, the battalion was moved to the vicinity of Ypres, and here, about the middle of that month, or almost on the anniversary of the Gueudecourt fight, was engaged in another deadly struggle in which, owing to difficulties of ground and foggy weather, the Newfoundlanders found themselves in the front line of the advance instead of in a supporting line as had been planned. However, with their customary dash, they secured their objective, and, though heavily sniped from various points, held their ground all day, putting down

two vigorous counterattacks until a regiment in their vicinity being forced back, leaving the Newfoundlanders' flanks exposed, they had to retire for some two hundred yards, though they retook part of the ground during the night. In this action again the regiment suffered severe losses, but gained compensating glory, its achievements by this time having become widely known, and it being recognized by the soldiers all over the Western Front as one of the most dependable battalions in the army.

This reputation involved its full weight of responsibility, however, and towards the end of November the Newfoundlanders and their associated units of the 29th division were moved back to Cambrai to take part in the famous advance by General Haig, which, with the aid of "tanks," broke through the Hindenberg line and in turn had to face the full brunt of the German counter-attack a few days later, which cost the British army so severely. In this fight, the Newfoundlanders lost thirteen officers and over five hundred men, killed and wounded, the proportion of killed, however, being somewhat smaller than in previous engagements, but reducing the strength of the regiment to a minimum and calling for virtually all the reserves available at Ayr in Scotland. Thus, in eighteen months of fighting, the regiment had been virtually renewed three times; had gained the distinction, rarely accorded, of being mentioned as a regiment in General Haig's dispatches for its work in the Somme Battle; had won undying glory and a reputation for the country from which it came which will never perish; and had gained up to 1st December 121 honours and awards as follows: Lieutenant Colonel [A.L.] Hadow has been given the C.M.G.<sup>25</sup>; Lt. Col. Forbes-Robertson has gained the D.S.O. Other decorations won included Military Crosses, 18; Bar to Military Cross, 3; D.C.M., 14; Bar to D.C.M., 1; Military Medal, 57; Bar to Military Medal, 1; Royal Victoria Medal, 1; Mentioned in Dispatches, 15; mentioned in Home Dispatches, 2; French *Croix de Guerre*, 4; Italian Bronze Medal, 1; Russian Medal of St. George, 3rd class, 1.

Finally His Majesty, at the end of 1917, conferred upon the regiment the rarely accorded distinction of the Sovereign's favour by permitting it the prefix "Royal" so that it is now "The Royal Newfoundland Regiment."

The enlistments and casualties in the Newfoundland Regiment up to December 31st, 1917, were:

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| ENLISTMENTS      | 4,195      |
| Missing          | 447        |
| Killed in Action | 386        |
| Dead of Wounds   | 213        |
| Dead of Disease  | 53         |
| Prisoners of War | 137        |
| Discharged       | <u>452</u> |
|                  | 1,688      |

Out of this entire number of over 4,000 men, only 37 were not natives of the Colony.

#### *The Forestry Battalion*

Early in 1917, the needs in the British Isles for foresters to cut down timber so as to help satisfy the requirements for this material caused by the shortage of tonnage, were so great that an appeal was made to Newfoundland for men experienced in this work, and it was decided to enroll a Forestry Battalion. This task was placed in the hands of a special committee of the Patriotic Association which went about it actively and energetically and soon had the first company ready for dispatch and another in process of formation. The original contingent is now located at Dunkeld, Scotland, where it is engaged in timber cutting on an estate owned by the Duke of Atholl, and where a daily output of 20,000 feet is being made.

The men enlisted in the Forestry Battalion are either married, over 35 years of age, or unmarried men who have been rejected for the regiment or Naval Reserve, so that no men fit for actual war service are permitted to find a place in the log-cutting contingent. In this regulation, Newfoundland shows a marked advance on Canada, because in the Canadian Forestry battalions heretofore, many men physically fit for actual war service have been permitted to enlist.

The Newfoundland foresters have won a great name for themselves both for their aptitude for the work and for their kindly social qualities. In competition with the Canadian unit, working some miles away, the Newfoundlanders won more than two-thirds of the prizes contributed for special feats of strength, skill, and aptitude in connection with the various branches of the work, at a competition given at Stanley, a convenient centre between the two, and the service has proved very popular for those engaged in it.

The enlistments and casualties in the forestry companies up to December 31st, 1917, are as follows:

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| ENLISTMENTS    | 446       |
| Dead of wounds | 1         |
| Discharged     | <u>12</u> |
|                | 13        |

Of those 446 foresters, all but 11 are natives of the Colony.

### *Recruiting*

For the first three years of the struggle, all the work in connection with the war activities of the Colony was accomplished through the Patriotic Association, described by Sir Walter Davidson in an address in England lately as “an improvised War Department,” and in no branch was better service given than in that of recruiting. Every agency calculated to be helpful was pressed into service. The Governor and Lady Davidson, in their visits to different parts of the Island, gave addresses on the war — the Governor to the men on the progress of events, and Lady Davidson to the women on the part they could play in furnishing articles for the use of the soldiers and sailors or for the Red Cross organizations; the judges and lawyers addressed meetings wherever the circuit courts convened; the magistrates in the different districts were turned into recruiting officers; and the school inspectors, in their travels through their different territories, proved most effective helpers. The businessmen of St. John’s, besides their givings in other directions, provided steam launches and motor boats and contributed to a special private fund for the payment of the expenses of speakers in recruiting tours that were organized for different sectors of the country, and clergymen and many others did very useful service. All this was voluntary work, it being a point of honour that none should be paid; and, thanks to the energetic action, very excellent results were secured.

To have raised some 6,000 young fellows in a country like Newfoundland, with its population so dispersed in small settlements around an extended and sinuous coastline, where travel is ordinarily difficult, and where, during the winter months, two-thirds of the coast is so blocked by ice floes as to be almost untraversable, is therefore no mean achievement; particularly when it is remembered that the Colony was without any military organization whatever until the war began, and that to spread knowledge of the real conditions, and to emphasize the imperative necessity of the country helping, was rendered all the more difficult by the background condition of education and the infrequent opportunities for the dissemination of literature.

It is also a source of gratification that the contingents representing

Newfoundland in the military, naval, and forestry forces of the Empire, are almost entirely native born.

*Non-Combatant Helpers*

From the very outset of the war, many young women of [the] Colony, anxious to do their part, undertook nursing courses, and upon the organization of the V.A.D.<sup>26</sup> movement in London, an opportunity was afforded for Newfoundland to be represented therein. Similarly, some clergymen offered to undertake chaplain's work at the front, medical men volunteered for the R.A.M.C.,<sup>27</sup> and men physically unfit for active service desired to get places as hospital orderlies, so a Non-Combatant Selection Committee of the Patriotic Association was appointed to take charge of this work, with the result that up to the end of 1917 there had been sent overseas eight graduate nurses, twenty-six V.A.D. nurses, five chaplains, nine surgeons, and five hospital orderlies.

The V.A.D. movement has spread extensively throughout the Colony, and, if the facilities existed for getting a largely increased number overseas at present, they could be supplied.

*A Memorial Day*

July 1st, 1917, the anniversary of the fight at Beaumont-Hamel, was observed as a memorial day for the men of the Newfoundland forces who had paid the great price on active service, and it is the intention that it shall be continued as a perpetual remembrance of those from the Colony who fought and died during the great struggle. On that occasion, being Sunday, church services were held in the forenoon and a joint parade in the afternoon, to the Parliament buildings, from the front steps of which addresses appropriate to the occasion were delivered by the Governor, the Chief Justice, the Acting Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Mayor of St. John's, and others, while thousands of citizens watched the proceedings with the keenest interests.

*Militia Department Formed*

It was felt, with the beginning of the fourth year of the struggle, that to impose an indefinite continuance of the various forms of war work, in which they had been engaged, on those who were active in the several departments, would be unreasonable, because all were giving their services without pay; and a Union Government<sup>28</sup> having been formed in the Colony, it was decided to create a Department of Militia which would direct affairs in future. This was accordingly done, and although the Patriotic Association continues in existence to

undertake from time to time such tasks as the raising of funds for the various war charities and the accessories which are not properly an obligation of the state, the guiding of the Colony's direct participation in the conflict hereafter will be in the hands of a responsible member with a seat in the Legislature.

#### *Newfoundland's War Finance*

When Newfoundland decided upon taking part with the other portions of the Empire in the Great War, its unambitious effort of a contingent of 500 men did not seem likely to call for any large expenditure and it was hoped in some quarters that the requisite amount could be raised by public subscription, as the notion was widely prevalent that the war would be a short one. When, however, the question was more fully considered and the magnitude of the undertaking and the uncertainty of the period for which the men would be required were taken into account, it was seen that the matter was one which would call for financing by the Colonial Administration; and in order to avoid the suspicion of any partiality it was decided to place the whole of the monetary features of the work in the hands of a Finance Committee composed, in the main, of the principal merchants and businessmen of St. John's. The committee carried on the work through an unpaid board for three years, and during that period disbursed three and a half million dollars in the enlisting, training, equipping, and paying of the men while in Newfoundland, transporting them to England, and continuing to pay them during their service in the field, the Imperial Government, for purposes of convenience, providing them with rations, clothing, and arms as a unit in the Imperial Expeditionary Force. The carrying out of this work involved the establishing of a Pay and Record Office in London with a staff therein controlled from St. John's, and the details of the expenditures effected through an audit department furnished by a British accounting firm free of charge, while in St. John's the whole of the detail work incident to the operating of the Pay and Record Office was carried out under the immediate supervision of the Executive Board. It is the proud boast of the gentlemen connected with this feature of Newfoundland's war work, and publicly endorsed by the outgoing Governor, Sir Walter Davidson, that the whole of Newfoundland's war expenditure has been without the shadow of suspicion of any impropriety, deliberate waste, or aught but the most honest and economic administration; and also that the cost of carrying on this service has been less by far proportionately than in any other part of the Empire.

Newfoundland provided for the financing of her war activities by raising loans in the American markets, it being felt undesirable to burden the British

markets with them, though temporary advances are obtained from the Imperial authorities when such become necessary during the periods in which the regular loans are floated. After the war began, and it was seen that heavy monetary burdens could have to be faced by the Colony, customs duties on articles of import which had been relaxed or remitted altogether in previous years were reimposed, and the result was that, except for the first year of the war, when the chaotic conditions which disturbed every part of the world were reflected in Newfoundland, there has been a substantial surplus every year, enabling not alone the increased interest due to these loans to be met, but affording the means by which public improvements of a very useful and necessary character have been carried out.

To more equitably adjust the financial burdens on the various classes in the country, a death duties act was introduced in 1914 and a business profits tax in 1917; and it is thought probable that an income tax will be enacted in 1918.

#### *Pensions*

Inasmuch as Newfoundland decided to provide her soldiers with pay and allowances at Canadian rates, it became virtually inevitable, when the question of pensions and gratuities came to be considered, that Canadian rates be also agreed to, and the principles governing Canadian pensions taken into account as far as possible. In accordance, moreover, with the spirit of unpaid service characterizing those connected with Newfoundland's war work from the outset, the working out of the pension scheme was entrusted to an unpaid board representative of all the various interests in the Colony. The gentleman chosen as chairman<sup>29</sup> made two visits to Ottawa and Washington at his own expense, and studied the question very thoroughly on the spot, and with the assistance of his colleagues devised a scheme, not alone for the providing of pensions for men returned and disabled, and for the widows, children, and other dependants of those who had lost their lives, but also for the establishment of institutions wherein soldiers and sailors suffering from wounds, injuries, or ailments due to active service could be treated; wherein tuberculous patients could receive the care so essential in restoring them to health, and wherein men unfitted by their disabilities from pursuing their previous vocations, could secure training for other pursuits. Necessarily, because of the comparatively small number of men returned to Newfoundland so war-broken as to require further treatment, these institutions were of a modest kind, thoroughly adequate for all the needs. Thanks to the generosity of Sir Edgar Bowring, a representative citizen, and the chairman of the Patriotic Finance Committee, a splendid private residence in

the suburbs of St. John's<sup>30</sup> was placed at the disposal of the Pensions and Disabilities Board to be used as a naval and military convalescent hospital, with accommodation provided therein for some thirty-two cases, and it is being now operated by an unpaid board of ladies and gentlemen representing various organizations connected with the war work of the Colony; the funds required to supplement those raised through the efforts of these organizations, being furnished by the Pensions Board. Similarly, patriotic ladies who felt that a large sphere of usefulness lay before them in assisting tuberculous members of both services established a sanatorium, known as the Jensen Camp,<sup>31</sup> in which there is now accommodation for some thirty patients. The story of the instituting of this little hospital is a romance in itself. A Newfoundlander named Jensen,<sup>32</sup> who had joined a Canadian regiment and was wounded and gassed in one of the early battles of the war, returned to the Colony and at a public gathering at St. John's recounted the story of some of the early fighting. He proved a natural-born orator of such quality that applications for addresses from him began to pour in from different parts of the Island, and he conceived the idea of lecturing to raise a fund for such an institution with the result that in the course of a year he succeeded in accumulating, through his lectures, a sum of over \$5,000, which proved the principal item in providing this institution. It is operated along similar lines and has now 26 inmates.

Provision for the re-education of returned men has not made progress commensurate with the work done by the other institutions, because of the difficulties in the way, but several men have been taught navigation and are serving as masters and mates on board steamers and vessels plying from St. John's; others have been trained for wireless operators; and still others for new forms of industry to which they have found themselves adapted.

The total expenditure of the Pensions Board from Jan. 1st, 1917, to December 31st, 1917, and the grants made, were as follows:

| Pensions    | General Expenditure | Total       |
|-------------|---------------------|-------------|
| \$58,031.78 | \$17,631.85         | \$75,663.63 |

Grants. From January 1st, 1917, to December 31st, 1917.

|            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| Military   | 297       |
| R.N.R.     | 3         |
| Widows     | 31        |
| Orphans    | 2         |
| Gratuities | <u>29</u> |
|            | 362       |

### *Giving Up Sealing Ships*

An important contribution by Newfoundland towards the winning of the war was the giving up of all her powerful steel steamers to assist the Russians in rendering the port of Archangel more available than it would otherwise have been. Two ships so transferred were the *Bruce* and the *Lintrose*, of the Reid Company's fleet, used as mailboats on the route between Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, and North Sydney, Nova Scotia, the finest ships of their class in the world, built greatly in excess of Lloyd's requirements so that they might the more effectively contend with the ice masses that are met on Cabot Strait every winter, and which had proved conspicuous successes in this respect. Also there were ceded the whole of the steel sealing fleet, the *Adventure*, *Bona-venture*, *Bellaventure*, *Nascopie*, *Beothic*, and the steamer *Iceland*, which was then being constructed in a British shipyard as an addition to the fleet and which, on being completed, was sent direct to Russia. These ships were of special type and very essential to the Newfoundland trade, being used for general commercial purposes during the ten months of the year when the seal hunt was not in progress, and the loss of them has proved a serious drawback to the country's requirements since they were transferred.

### *Shipbuilding Activities*

In addition to permitting the withdrawal of so many fine steamers from the Colony's shipping trade, the war stimulated greatly the building of wooden vessels throughout the Island, and the purchase of others in Canada and the United States, with the result that today Newfoundland has the largest fleet of sailing crafts in modern times, all owned in the Colony, and representing an investment during the past two years of nearly two million dollars for this purpose.

More than eighty per cent of the total exports are of fishery products, and the great bulk of these are in the form of dried codfish, which finds a market in southern Europe, West Indies, and Brazil. Wooden sailing crafts of moderate tonnage are most convenient for the freighting of this fish to market, the vessels then bringing back cargoes of salt suitable for curing the next year's catch. Although the competition of steam for some years before the war had caused a decline in the sailing fleet, because when "sailers" were lost they were not replaced, but steam vessels chartered instead — the coming of the war, the gradual diminution of tonnage, and the necessity to rely on our own efforts, all compelled a return to the era of the "sailers" and today there are owned and operated out of Newfoundland some 150 modern vessels suitable for deep-sea voyaging and engaged in the carriage of the Newfoundland codfish to market. These vessels

will constitute a fleet which will be available for many years to come, augmented, as they will be, by other fine fabrics, the output of the local shipyards and those in maritime Canada and the Eastern States.

Two large shipbuilding plants have been established in Newfoundland during the past two years,<sup>33</sup> designed to construct vessels up to about 1,000 tons burden, and in addition to these several smaller yards are also engaged in turning out ships. In other words, the war is serving to lay the foundation, not alone for a valuable shipbuilding ... [industry] at the present time, but for a merchant marine which will absorb, to a larger extent, the young fishermen of the country who, at the present time, are serving overseas as members of the Newfoundland branch of the Royal Naval Reserve. Already some of these, who have returned condemned by the medical boards as unfit for further active service, have taken courses in navigation, and, on the strength of their naval service, have secured "tickets" as mates and masters and are now filling responsible positions on board several of these merchant vessels, while others, lacking education and opportunity, are making up in goodly measure the personnel of the crews.

The importance of this is enhanced by the conviction of the best naval officers that the man brought up on a sailing vessel is far and away the best all-round mariner. Already the C.P.R.<sup>34</sup> has given public notification throughout Newfoundland that after the war it will be prepared to find places on its ships for all the Newfoundland naval reservists who desire such employment.

### *Prohibition Enforced*

Early in 1915 the movement for temperance reform in Newfoundland, already gaining great headway, was immensely stimulated by the indisputable evidence of the detrimental effect of numerous liquor stores in St. John's on the great numbers of young soldiers and sailors enlisted and under training there, and accordingly a prohibition measure was enacted, to come into effect at the end of May 1916, forbidding the importation, manufacture, or sale in Newfoundland of any intoxicating liquors, or the use of alcoholic compounds in any manner except for sacramental, medicinal, or manufacturing purposes. The entire Colony came under the operation of this law on the first of January 1917, and with a year's experience of its operations meanwhile, it is safe to say that it is even exceeding the anticipations of the most sanguine supporters of the movement and that even great numbers, who, at the outset, felt doubtful whether it would achieve the expected result, are now entirely convinced that it is one of the best ever put on the Colonial statutes. Its value, moreover, it is generally agreed, will be greatly enhanced when the war is over and our military and naval contingents

return, and when those who, under the stimulus of the excitement of active warfare or military life overseas have given way to the temptations of liquor, find themselves in a community where no more it is to be obtained.

#### *Production Campaign*

In the early months of 1917, the Patriotic Association, in view of the growing shortage of foodstuffs throughout the world, appointed a special committee to undertake the task of stimulating the production of foodstuffs in the Island, and its operations were attended by a gratifying measure of success, chiefly in the line of inducing a more widely extended planting of potatoes, one of our staple crops. This task was undertaken extensively, not alone in St. John's — where some scores of people cultivated allotments, some of them in the grounds of Government House, given for the purpose by His Excellency the then Governor — but also in every fishing settlement around the seaboard; and this was fortunate, indeed, because in the autumn the price of flour and other imported foodstuffs had risen to such a figure that the fisher-folk found it economical to substitute potatoes to a large extent and thus relieve themselves from having to buy so much flour at high rates, and were also able to see for themselves the many and varied advantages accruing from an increased cultivation of the soil.

It is expected that during 1918 not only will the potato planting campaign be ever more vigorously carried out, but that the raising of pigs will also be stimulated, because in this country, pork and salted meats are among the staple fat-supplying foodstuffs, and with imported pork now \$50 a barrel, or more than twice the ordinary figure, it is a matter of the utmost importance to the people that they should relieve themselves from the need of purchasing so much of this imported article at so high a rate.

#### *Food Control*

At the legislative session which ended in August 1917, provision was made for the Colony to protect itself, as its neighbours were doing, in the matter of food control and conservation, for the rest of the war. A measure was enacted creating a Food Control Board and investing it with powers similar to these possessed by like organizations in the United States and Canada, and the work of this department was undertaken promptly and effectively. Relations were established with the Canadian and American Food Control Departments and an arrangement was effected whereby Newfoundland was assured of an adequate supply of essential foodstuffs for the winter months, so that, during the period when much of the coast is blockaded with ice and it is difficult for shipping to

traverse the waters of the Island, those residing in Newfoundland might be protected against the risk of famine, it being undertaken, on the other hand, that food economies fashioned along the same lines as the neighbouring countries, would be put into effect, and the regulations made more and more stringent as our neighbours increased the stringency of their enactments.

#### *Patriotic Fund*

With the outbreak of war, steps were taken for the creation of a Patriotic Fund to serve the same purposes as the similar fund started about the same time in Canada, namely, to provide assistance for the families of the men on active service, so that those who saw where their duty lay and did it, should not be obliged to leave their dependants subject to any financial privation. An appeal to the country succeeded in eliciting contributions to the sum of \$100,000, and by judicious husbanding of this amount, it had been possible to satisfy all legitimate calls upon the fund up to the end of 1917, and to have still in hand a sufficient amount to meet requirements for 1918, and possibly for a longer period. The limited financial possibilities of the country not permitting the raising of anything like a proportionate sum to what has been obtained in Canada, where the benefactions of the wealthy contributed in a large measure to swelling the total, payments on anything like the scale in Canada were out of the question, but the trustees of the fund, having adopted the principle of placing the dependants in every deserving case on at least as good a footing financially as when the breadwinner was at home, have been able to do at least this in 892 cases, with the result actually that the dependants in every case assisted are somewhat better off in reality, because most of the deductions inevitable under normal conditions of life for wage earners in a country like this — sickness, unemployment, etc. — are [not] experienced by the dependants, and therefore these enjoy a real advantage in this respect.

#### *Other War Funds*

For a country peopled mainly by fisher-folk, and without very many rich men, in the accepted sense of the word, the contributions of Newfoundland towards patriotic objects since the war began have been somewhat noteworthy.

Including the Patriotic Fund, previously noted, the Colony had raised, up to the 31st December 1916, roundly \$300,000. The detailed figures for 1917 are not available at this writing but must be at least \$150,000 more. One of the largest items for the first two and half years of the war was the Ambulance Cot Fund, amounting to nearly \$80,000, due to an inspiration of the Chief Justice of the

Colony, Sir William Horwood, the head of the local branch of the St. John Ambulance Association. When, after the destructive fight at Beaumont-Hamel, on July 1st, 1916, in which the regiment suffered so severely, the casualty lists began to come in, he issued an appeal for contributions for beds for the Newfoundland soldiers, and the movement spread over the Island like a prairie fire. This resulted in a very large sum being raised in a short period, and the amount sufficed to endow 300 cots in the British Isles for a year, while the maintenance of many of these was further assured for the duration of the war and six months afterwards. The number of cots maintained represents approximately the average number of cots occupied by sick and wounded men of the Newfoundland Regiment and the Colonial Naval Reserve in the war hospitals in France and the British Isles.

Another very successful fund, organized in somewhat the same way previously, was the Aeroplane-Machine Gun Fund. An organization in the Old Country having appealed to the Dominions overseas for contribution for aeroplanes for the Imperial Air Fleet, the proposal was very favourably received in Newfoundland and, synchronizing with a movement to supply fresh machine guns for the Newfoundland Regiment (because it had been reported about that time that there was a shortage of these guns), every settlement in the Island, of any consequence, joined in the effort to raise as much money for this purpose as possible, and a sum of \$54,000 was quickly contributed.

The Empire Day and Trafalgar Day Red Cross Funds brought in during 1916 nearly \$40,000 and minor contributions for local and foreign purposes accounted for the remainder.

During 1917 the principal appeals to the public were for the Empire Day and "Our Day" (the previous year Trafalgar Day) Red Cross Funds [and] produced about \$70,000.

On July 14th, the fete day of the French Republic, a "tag day" movement in St. John's secured \$5,000.

In passing, it might be added that, following immediately after the direful catastrophe in Halifax,<sup>35</sup> an appeal for help for our stricken fellow-colonists of the Nova Scotian capital resulted in the Colonial Government voting \$50,000 from public funds, the citizens of St. John's subscribing another \$50,000, and the rest of the Island contributing about \$20,000 more for the same purpose.

#### *Women's Work in the War*

Almost with the firing of the first shot in the present conflict, the women of Newfoundland were organized to help in the great undertaking. At a public meeting in St. John's called by Lady Davidson, wife of the then Governor, a

Women's Patriotic Association was inaugurated as the complement to the men's organization, and arrangements were made for its spread by the establishment of branches in all the important towns and villages throughout the Island. By the end of 1917 the total had increased to slightly over 200 branches, and the membership was estimated at about 10,000 altogether. The W.P.A. occupied itself at the outset with providing comforts in the way of additional articles for the men of the Newfoundland Regiment. Afterwards this was extended so as to provide for the supplying of similar materials to the general British collection for this purpose, through Queen Mary's Needlework Guild, with which the W.P.A. was ultimately affiliated. In St. John's, for the first three years of the war, Lady Davidson placed at the disposal of the main city organization, the principal rooms in Government House, and here scores, if not hundreds, of women gathered four days a week carrying on various departments of the work. At the same time, subsidiary branches connected with the various churches also occupied themselves in their own meeting-places with similar work, while the vast majority of the members of the W.P.A. took proceed material from Government House and these clubs from time to time, and worked this up into shirts, socks, mufflers, mittens, and such like articles. Altogether, in money and materials, the W.P.A. raised nearly a quarter million dollars for various war purposes of the Mother Country and the Allies. The statement up to the end of 1917 has not yet been compiled, but up to December 31st of the previous year the showing was as follows:

Funds Raised by the Women's Patriotic Association Complete to 31st December 1916

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Value of "Comforts" supplied to Soldiers and Sailors           | \$86,249.70  |
| Value Hospital Supplies, per St. John's and Q.M.N.G.           | \$44,468.79  |
| Contributions in cash or purchase of materials, etc.           | \$53,126.81  |
| Belgian Relief Fund  | \$7,728.71   |
| Motor Ambulances (2) presented to 29th Division                | \$4,511.06   |
| Soldiers' and Sailors' Club                                    | \$1,774.30   |
| "Flower Fund" for British prisoners of War in Germany          | \$1,200.00   |
| By sale of <i>Distaff</i> (W.P.A. Magazine) net profits        | \$770.00     |
| Contribution to St. Dunstan's Home for Blind                   | \$300.00     |
| Contribution to Order of St. John and British Red Cross (cash) | \$300.00     |
| Total  | \$200,429.28 |
| Daughters of Empire to various funds                           | 1,990.00     |
| Khaki Club Fund for returned disabled Soldiers and Sailors     | 1,800.00     |
| Grand Total  | \$204,219.28 |

*Newfoundland War Contingent Association in London*

The task of looking after the Newfoundland soldiers, sick, or wounded, or on furlough, in any part of the British Isles, and of Newfoundland prisoners of war in enemy countries, has been undertaken and carried out very admirably by the Newfoundland War Contingent Association with headquarters at 59 Victoria Street, London. This association is composed of Newfoundlanders resident in the British Isles, and of others residing there who have been associated with the Colony in one way or another, and this organization of volunteer workers is certainly giving the most self-sacrificing service on behalf of the men of the Colony. The chairman is Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland who, at the time it was organized, was Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, and who has continued to fill the position through sheer love for the work and desire to recognize, as fully as possible, the part the oldest Colony is playing in the struggle, while the list of members includes ladies and gentlemen of every walk in life, readily doing their part on behalf of the Colony.

The average number of Newfoundland wounded in hospitals in England during 1917 was about 230, and in France about 100, and the activities of the Red Cross organization in Newfoundland have enabled 300 beds to be maintained in English hospitals, so that Newfoundland is able to take care in this respect of her sick and wounded. These are visited from week to week by members of the N.W.C.A., cablegrams reporting their condition are sent to St. John's and published in the Colonial newspapers for the benefit of their relatives, and they are supplied with necessities from time to time in the shape of writing paper, envelopes, stamps, and other materials, attention being also given to their requirements in other respects. In addition, this association stores, handles, and dispatches to the men on active service such stocks of requirements in the shape of woollen garments and the like as may be called for from time to time, and makes similar provision for men arriving in England whose needs in this respect have to be met. In the matter of caring for the prisoners of war, the association does a most helpful service and one the magnitude of which is steadily increasing. The number of Newfoundland prisoners of war from the beginning of the struggle until May 1917, or for nearly three years, amounted to three — one Naval Reservist, Seaman Edward Samson, and two soldiers, Privates [Peter] Barron and [Thomas] Coombs.<sup>36</sup> Gradually, though, the number increased until a total of about 150 was reported. Some Newfoundland mercantile seamen have also been interned in Germany, taken there by raiders who sank their ships on the Atlantic, and the customary parcels provided by international agreement are sent to all of these prisoners every

fortnight, letters and post cards are exchanged with them, and every other effort is made to lighten their lot by the agencies which the organization can enlist for the purpose.

#### *War History Committee*

A strong committee was formed by the Patriotic Association during the early months of 1917 under the presidency of the then Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Morris, to take the necessary steps for the production of a creditable history of Newfoundland's participation in the war. The idea was that this should be a sumptuous publication, accurate in every particular, embellished with photographs, and technically of such a character as to form a treasured memento in every home, and that a copy of it should be provided for every man and woman who had gone on active service, or for the relatives of those whose representative had given his life for the cause.

Extensive collections of material were obtained by circularizing the relatives of those on active service. The official records of the regiment were also available, the diaries of officers and soldiers were secured, letters and articles contributed to the newspapers were collected, and by these means a great mass of material has been assembled which will be of inestimable value when the actual work of writing the history comes to be undertaken.

The program is that Sir Edward Morris shall be editor-in-chief, and that gentlemen familiar with the different subjects to be treated in the volume shall collaborate with him in the preparation of this special material.

#### NOTES

- 1 For his career, see Melvin Baker, "Patrick Thomas McGrath," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 87, 4 (Winter 1992-93): 37-38; Melvin Baker, "McGrath, Sir Patrick Thomas," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 15, 1921-1930 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 643-44 (available at [www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcgrath\\_patrick\\_thomas\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcgrath_patrick_thomas_15E.html)); Robert H. Cuff, Melvin Baker, and Robert D.W. Pitt, eds., *Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography* (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, 1990), 209-10.
- 2 Melvin Baker, "'Coaker Week,' May 1912: The clash between Patrick McGrath and William Coaker," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 107, 1 (Summer 2014): 53-57.
- 3 See Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, "Whitty, Gerald Joseph," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 15, 1075-76 (available at [www.biographi.ca/en/bio/whitty\\_gerald\\_joseph\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/whitty_gerald_joseph_15E.html)).
- 4 For the work of the committee, see Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, "A real record for all

- time’: Newfoundland and Great War Official History,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 27, 1 (Spring 2012): 5–32.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 The Rooms, Provincial Archives Division, St. John’s, GN2/5, file 379 (2), McGrath to Mews, 7 Apr. 1928.
- 7 The full text of the plaque (some punctuation added) reads: “This Health Sciences Centre is dedicated to The People of Newfoundland and Labrador and to the Memory of Sir Patrick Thomas McGrath, K.B.E., 1868–1929, President of the Legislative Council, Publisher, Patriot, to whose unflagging efforts this province owes the establishment, by the Privy Council, of the Labrador Boundary which confirmed Labrador as an integral part of the Dominion of Newfoundland. The Health Sciences Centre officially opened by the Hon. F.D. Moores, 26 Oct 1978.”
- 8 HMS *Alcantara*, formerly an ocean liner, sank the German armed merchant cruiser SMS *Greif* in the North Sea on 29 Feb. 1916.
- 9 Admiral Sir Frederick Charles Doveton Sturdee (1859–1925).
- 10 Vice Admiral Maximilian Reichsgraf Von Spee (1861–1914).
- 11 Admiral David Richard Beatty (1871–1936).
- 12 In the Battle of Dogger Bank, 24 Jan. 1915.
- 13 José Cipriano Castro Ruiz (1858–1924). Refers to the Venezuela Crisis of 1902–03.
- 14 See Peter Neary, “The French and American Shore Questions as Factors in Newfoundland History,” in James Hiller and Peter Neary, eds., *Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Essays in Interpretation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 95–122.
- 15 The retired British officer was Conn Alexander and the ex-private was Joseph Moore. See Mike O’Brien, “Out of a Clear Sky: The Mobilization of the Newfoundland Regiment, 1914–1915,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 22, 2 (Fall 2007): 410.
- 16 William H. Franklin (1871–1941), St. John’s merchant, born in Liverpool, England; came to St. John’s in 1891. See Joseph R. Smallwood, ed., *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, vol. 2 (St. John’s: Newfoundland Book Publishers (1967) Limited, 1984), 391.
- 17 Hampshire, England.
- 18 Distinguished Conduct Medal.
- 19 1st Baron Tweedsmuir (1875–1940). Wrote extensively on the events of the war.
- 20 Greek port on the island of Lemnos.
- 21 Lieutenant-General Sir Aylmer Gould Hunter-Watson (1864–1940).
- 22 Distinguished Service Order.
- 23 Edmund Hynman Allenby (1861–1936), 1st Viscount Allenby.
- 24 G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlanders: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment* (St. John’s: Government of Newfoundland, 1964), 378.
- 25 Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George.
- 26 Voluntary Aid Detachment.

- 27 Royal Army Medical Corps.
- 28 Morris announced the formation of a National government on 16 July 1917. S.J.R. Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 124.
- 29 McGrath himself. See Patricia O'Brien, "The Newfoundland Patriotic Association: The Administration of the War Effort, 1914–1918," M.A. thesis (Memorial University, 1982), 217.
- 30 Waterford Manor, 185 Waterford Bridge Road, St. John's (see [www.heritage.nf.ca/society/rhs/rs\\_listing/140.html](http://www.heritage.nf.ca/society/rhs/rs_listing/140.html)).
- 31 Located off Blackmarsh Road, St. John's (see Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage website, [www.heritage.nf.ca/society/fighting\\_tb.html](http://www.heritage.nf.ca/society/fighting_tb.html)).
- 32 Private Philip Jensen of Harbour Breton (see Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage website, [www.heritage.nf.ca/society/jensen\\_camp.html](http://www.heritage.nf.ca/society/jensen_camp.html)).
- 33 At Harbour Grace and Port Union.
- 34 Canadian Pacific Railway.
- 35 The explosion of 6 Dec. 1917.
- 36 See The Newfoundland Great War Heritage Project: 209.128.7.253/nfarchives/display\_regt\_details.asp?id=2303 and 209.128.7.253/nfarchives/display\_regt\_details.asp?id=2036.