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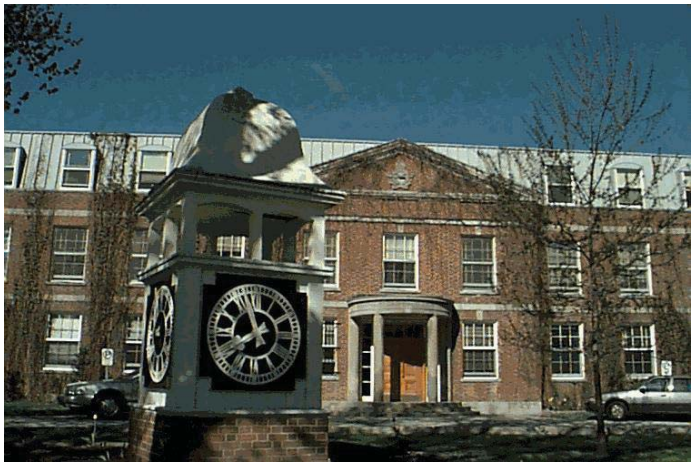

DEAD MEN ADVANCING: NEWFOUNDLAND'S MYTH, MEMORY, AND REMEMBRANCE OF BEAUMONT HAMEL

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ABSTRACT

On the first day of the Somme Campaign, 1 July 1916, the Newfoundland Regiment was destroyed in less than 30 minutes. From the moment that reports of the battle started flowing back to St. John's, Newfoundlanders have tried to make sense of it, attaching significance and meaning to the catastrophe. This process has been evolutionary. Newfoundland's remembrance of Beaumont Hamel has always been affected by Newfoundlanders' sense of nationalism and self-perception, a perception that has gone through many iterations in the century since World War I. This paper will examine the evolution of Newfoundland's cultural remembrance of Beaumont Hamel, and relate this remembrance to Newfoundlander's evolving identity.

Chapter 1 provides a brief history of the Newfoundland Regiment's Great War experience up to and including Beaumont Hamel.

Chapter 2 examines the period from 1916 to 1934, and how Newfoundlanders initially attached significance and meaning in the battle.

Chapter 3 examines the period from 1934 to present, and surveys how Newfoundland's cultural remembrance of Beaumont Hamel evolved under Government by Commission, through confederation with Canada, and during the cod moratorium and subsequent economic decline of the 1990's.

Chapter 4 examines Newfoundland's contemporary cultural remembrance of Beaumont Hamel, at the centennial.

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Mother of our three Fighting Newfoundlanders,

William, Max, and Tom.

Pro Patria.

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PREFACE – DEAD MEN ADVANCING

It was a magnificent display of trained and disciplined valour, and its assault only failed of success because dead men can advance no further.

- Brigadier-General Cayley, Commander of the 88th Brigade, in correspondence with the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris.[1]

The following story is deeply personal. Three of my great-great uncles fought with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment (then simply the Newfoundland Regiment) during World War I: Robert, Cecil, and Allan Meadus. The eldest, Allan, went on to be a Company Sergeant Major in the Regiment, and was awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre. After surviving the Somme, Cecil was captured on 14 April 1917, probably at Monchy-le-Preux in the opening stages of the Battle of Arras. The youngest, Robert, was killed at Beaumont Hamel on the first day of the Somme Campaign, 1 July 1916. Born little more than a month later, my Grandmother was christened Irene Allison Beaumont Meadus. Her son, my father, was named Robert.

During my honeymoon, which happened during a three-week leave period from the war in Afghanistan in 2009, my wife and I travelled to Newfoundland Park at Beaumont Hamel. I traced my fingers over the monument to the fallen and the sharply inscribed Meadus name. I read John Oxenham's epitaph at the entrance to the park:

[1] G.W.L. Nicholson. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.* Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006, 281.

Tread softly here –
Go reverently and slow,
Yeah, let your soul go down upon its knees
And with bowed head and heart abased
Strive hard to grasp the future gain in this sore loss.
For not one foot of this dank sod
But drank its surfeit of the blood of gallant men
Who for their Faith, their Hope, for Life and Liberty
Here made the sacrifice.
Here gave their lives, and gave right willingly for you and me. . . .

My story is not unique or peculiar in Newfoundland. Beaumont Hamel was a defining event in the history of the colony. Later, it would define the province by its own slightly different terms. As Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson describes in his definitive history of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the casualty lists of Beaumont Hamel "reached into every community of the island colony."[2] The Meadus brothers were from St. John's, but the effects of the battle were felt Dominion-wide. And the effects are felt there still.

These lingering communal effects demonstrate the historical importance of Beaumont Hamel to Newfoundland's identity, and are the substance of the following pages. It is not principally a history of Beaumont Hamel, of the decimation of the Newfoundland Regiment in 1916, where Robert Meadus' story ended. It is an examination of these lingering "effects," of Newfoundland's collective memory of the battle, and how this collective memory has evolved in the pre-confederation, post-

[2] Ibid., 282.

confederation, and modern eras. Given my connection to the Meadus brothers, I am simultaneously the author and a primary source. Beaumont Hamel casualty lists reached into every community of the island community, and the memory reaches there, even now.

INTRODUCTION: WAR MEMORIALS AND BOUNCY CASTLES

On the 30 June 2016, the St. John's *Telegram* ran an article titled, "Where to commemorate and celebrate July 1."[3] A long list of events followed. To celebrate Canada Day (the 149th in the nation's history), there would be a Sunrise Ceremony at Signal Hill National Historic Site. At 1:30 p.m., there was a festival on Confederation Hill, complete with a children's inflated bouncy castle and face painting. Canada Day celebrations would come to a crescendo with the annual fireworks from Quidi Vidi Lake, as the local Celtic band *The Navigators* played from the grandstand below.

Memorial Day commemorations assumed a markedly more solemn tone. 1 July 2016 would be the centennial of the first day of the Somme Campaign, and the Newfoundland Regiment's "baptism of fire" at Beaumont Hamel. In 2016, *The Telegram* announced that there would be memorial services at churches of almost every denomination, and wreath laying ceremonies wherever one could find a cenotaph. Princess Anne had travelled to Newfoundland to take part in the commemoration, and she would attend the 10:30 a.m. memorial service at the National War Memorial in downtown St. John's. Following this service, she would move to The Rooms, a structure erected in 2005 that holds the Provincial Art Gallery, Provincial Museum, and Provincial Archives. On 1 July, The Rooms opened a new permanent wing: The Royal Newfoundland Regiment Gallery. Two thousand people toured the gallery that weekend. A spokesperson for The Rooms, Vanessa McBray, announced that the gallery was "overwhelmed" by the response, "but in some ways, not surprised." McBray continued,

[3] "Where to Commemorate and Celebrate July 1, *The Evening Telegram,* http://www.thetelegram.com/section/2016-06-30/article-4575346/Where-to-commemorate-and-celebrate-July-1/1, last accessed 27 March 2017.

"Everybody that leaves, many of them stop at our front desk . . . and say how amazing it is. And everybody has a connection . . . The power of Beaumont-Hamel . . . it connects back to all of us in some way . . . People are loving the personal stories."[4]

Newfoundlanders "loving" the "personal stories" is a remarkable departure from the way in which Beaumont Hamel had been commemorated over the last decades. For seventy years, Beaumont Hamel - and indeed the entirety of the Newfoundland Regiment's Great War experience - had been portrayed almost exclusively as an epic tragedy. The predominant narrative is that of a proud people, exceeding all expectations in generating a hardy regiment from the best of a generation, only to have that regiment butchered in a matter of minutes at Beaumont Hamel. The British High Command usually took the brunt of the blame. Typically in this narrative, the lasting tragedy of Beaumont Hamel is that, robbed of its best and brightest, Newfoundland was unable to make a "go" of it, leading to the economic collapse of the 1920's and 1930's, the loss of self-governance in 1934, and ultimately the requirement to join with Canada in 1949. Within this narrative, the schizophrenic symbolism of 1 July is clear.

The narrative was not always this way. In Beaumont Hamel's immediate aftermath, after the casualty lists were posted and the grieving had begun, support for the war effort actually increased, despite a drastically diminished capacity to offer such support. For the rest of 1916 through to the end of the war, the Newfoundland Regiment's action at Beaumont Hamel was principally a point of pride, inspiration, and a reason to continue the war effort. The sacrifice of the sons of Newfoundland would

[4] Barry Garrett, "Huge Response to The Rooms Regiment Gallery on Opening Weekend," *CBC News*. http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/rooms-newfoundland-regiment-gallery-opening-weekend-visits-1.3662947, last accessed 28 April 2017.

otherwise be in vain. Newfoundlanders were proud that they had been able to do "their part" in supporting the British Empire, and proud that their Regiment had not faltered in the face of such overwhelming odds. Far from a reason to oppose the war or the British High Command, the Regiment's casualty rate at Beaumont Hamel was proof of this unfaltering courage, proof that Newfoundlanders, proud citizens of Britain's oldest colony, were equal to the demands of the Western Front. The remainder of the war reinforced this attitude, and after, the reinforced Regiment played a significant role in such epic engagements of the Western Front as Arras, Ypres, and Cambrai.

Immediately following the war, the collective responsibility turned to commemorating those who had fallen, despite severe post-war economic hardships. In 1924, the National War Memorial was completed in St. John's, in a ceremony presided over by the architect of the Somme Campaign and Beaumont Hamel, Earl Haig.[5] A year later, the Beaumont Hamel Memorial Park was opened in France, sponsored largely by the Newfoundland government. Cenotaphs were erected across the province to honour the war dead. This tradition mostly continued through the 1930's and 1940's, through Newfoundland's transition from a self-governing Dominion to government by a six-member commission.

A subtle change started to develop in 1949, following the close-run vote for confederation with Canada under the stewardship of Joey Smallwood. A revisionist narrative was beginning to form, proclaiming that Beaumont Hamel was not exclusively a point of national pride, and that the tragedy of it all deserved more attention.

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[5] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*, 516.

Momentum for this "subtle change" gathered during the 1950's and 1960's. The revisionist attitude lost any subtlety and reached a crescendo in the 1990's, with the collapse of the cod fishery and the accompanying disintegration of four centuries of the so-called Newfoundland way of life. By now, Beaumont Hamel was portrayed almost exclusively as a tragedy, the result of an incompetent British High Command that sacrificed the lives of "colonials" so that the lives of the sons of "London merchants or the fishermen of Cornwall" could be preserved.[6] Beaumont Hamel was seen as yet more evidence of Newfoundland's historical victimization by forces outside its control. It was a gradual but complete reversal of the predominant narrative, and the revisionism has only recently begun to be challenged. This challenge has been oblique, and almost all narratives still concede that Beaumont Hamel was tragic. But this new challenge to the revisionist narrative is willing to accept that Beaumont Hamel represents something more than simply a tragedy.

This essay will show that Newfoundland's remembrance of Beaumont Hamel is based more on subjective understandings of significance and self-perception than on any objective history of the battle. Newfoundlanders' memory of the battle has been an evolutionary process rather than a static point of understanding. Cultural remembrance (or, variously, cultural, collective, or social memory), and the way in which individuals access and understand this remembrance can be impacted by a variety of factors, including new information, new experiences, or evolved perception of circumstance. With Beaumont Hamel, there is clearly a correlation between Newfoundlanders' cultural

[6] Kevin Major. *As Near to Heaven by Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador.* Toronto: Penguin Books, 2002, 331.

remembrance of the event, and how Newfoundlanders perceive themselves, or how Newfoundlanders perceive others to perceive Newfoundlanders. During the war, Beaumont Hamel was a remembered as a point of pride, and Newfoundlanders were honoured by their sacrifice. Gradually, as the socio-economic-political situation of an independent Newfoundland devolved and deteriorated, so too did the memory of Beaumont Hamel. When the situation was most dire, when the economic and social climate was in complete decline with the collapse of the cod fishery, Beaumont Hamel ceased being a point of pride, and became yet another historical example of external factors subduing Newfoundland's potential. Now that there is economic recovery in the form of growing resource development and industry, pride has once again been allowed to enter a conversation about Beaumont Hamel.

Cultural Remembrance: The Contested Ground between Memory and History

Before describing the evolution of Newfoundland's collective memory of Beaumont Hamel, it is important to define what is meant by "collective memory" or, as is sometimes used synonymously, cultural or societal memory, or, preferred here, "cultural remembrance." There is in fact no academic consensus on how to describe these concepts, or on how to best apply them within a historical study. Despite the so-called "memory boom" of the last several decades, a "boom" that has seen the emergence and prioritization of new museums, memoirs, exhibitions, and (particularly in Canada) heritage-based infomercials, there is little scholarly agreement on how to measure the phenomenon in order to gain increased understanding of the culture from which it originates.

Cambridge's Jay Winter is perhaps the preeminent scholar of collective or cultural memory of twentieth century warfare. Standing on the shoulders of the French historian Jacques Le Goff, the English tradition in Paul Fussell, and the German concept of *Erinnerungskultur* (Cultural Remembrance), Winter's interest is in the divergence and convergence between capital-H "History," and how that History is remembered collectively.[7] In *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History,* he emphasizes this interplay between collective memory and history: "History is not simply memory with footnotes; and memory is not simply history without footnotes."[8] For Winter, the disputed ground between collective memory and history is fruitful terrain for enhanced understanding of a society, and "History and memory are braided together in the public domain, jointly informing our shifting and contested understandings of the past." Despite this public "braiding," Winter demarcates between the two: "History is a profession with rules about evidence, about publication, about peer-review . . . Memory is a process distinct from history, though not isolated from it."[9] The inference is clear: in order to study a given society's perception of the past, one needs to first understand both the capital "H" History (the peer-reviewed, factually-based, documentary record of events), and how that society has chosen to remember that History: the commemorations, the stories, the prioritizations, and the omissions. The following chapters will explore both.

But what is meant by the term "memory," or even in this case, "collective"? An individual's "memory" by itself is a problematic term. Memory is subject to distortions

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[7] See: Paul Fussell. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975. Jacques Le Goff. *History and Memory.* New York: Columbia Press, 1992.

[8] Jay Winter. *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, 6.

[9] Ibid., 5.

and manipulations. Winter argues that a given society's (or "collective's") memories of an event are equally subordinate to subjectivity, with the further complicating factor that with few exceptions (for example the attacks of 11 September 2001 or the assassination of John F. Kennedy), individuals within a given society do not all have personal, shared memories of the subject event. In the context of the Great War, there are no individual, first-hand memories of the event left: Canada's last World War I veteran died in 2010, and Newfoundland's last veteran, Wallace Pike, died in 1999. The last of the "Blue Puttees," the famous first 500 men who volunteered to join the Newfoundland Regiment for the Great War, died in July 1993. His name was Abe Mullett, and he was one of the few who survived Beaumont Hamel unscathed in his capacity as a stretcher bearer.[10]

There's no one left who remembers the actual historical events. What we are left with is not the first-hand historical memory, but a collection of heritages, of memories of histories, indirect, incidental. Although this collective remembrance is hopefully informed by the work of historians (or, so hope historians), in reality it is more a reflection of the society which is doing the "remembering," than any avenue of understanding the actual history. For this reason, Winter and others privilege the use of collective "remembrance" over collective or cultural "memory," and this distinction is instructive. At the heart of the memory boom of the last several decades is not the study of individuals' memories, but how societies' remember the individuals, and the events from which the individuals' memories emerged.

[10] Owen William Steele. *Lieutenant Owen William Steele of the Newfoundland Regiment: Diary and Letters.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002, 201.

It makes sense then that Newfoundland's collective remembrance of Beaumont Hamel should evolve. Newfoundland has evolved over the last century from a self-governing Dominion with a mostly rural population of a little less than a quarter million, to a province of Canada, with a mostly urbanized population of over half a million. In the interim, Newfoundlanders experienced the pains of dire economic failures, the loss of self-governance, the controversy of confederation with Canada and the resettlement of hundreds of outport communities, the predictable but sudden collapse of the cod fishery, and always the hope and optimism for an improved future. Beaumont Hamel was collectively remembered differently through each iteration of this Newfoundland identity.

CHAPTER ONE – HISTORY WITHOUT MYTH: THE NEWFOUNDLAND REGIMENT DURING THE GREAT WAR

"So what really happened?" Perhaps that is the best place to begin answering the question**.**

- *What Became of Corporal Pittman?*
Joy B. Cave[11]

A "Nice Little Christening" - Gallipoli

A frame of reference is needed in order to contextualize the evolving cultural memory of Beaumont Hamel. This frame of reference is of course the objective, de-mythologized, capital "H" History of the battle: the historical narrative of what precisely occurred on 1 July 1916. Locating and validating such an objective history is however problematic. The evolution of the History of an event is as certain as the evolution of the culture and society from which it is produced and promulgated. The so-called "History" of Beaumont Hamel in the 1920's differed markedly from the "History" of the battle post-confederation. As Winter suggests: "Historians do matter, but not as much as they think they do. Those who try to reconstruct their "memory" of past events need historians to establish the boundary conditions of possibility."[12] The work of historians serves only to "prevent people from either misconstruing or lying about the past."[13] But the history of a given event surely must achieve more than this. Knowledge of a history that seeks an objective detachment from the surrounding mythology is necessary for understanding how and why that mythology has evolved. This chapter presents as objective a capital "H" History as the present allows.

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[11] Joy Cave. *What Became of Corporal Pittman?* St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1976, 5.

[12] Jay Winter. *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, 10.

[13] Ibid.

One of the most remarkable features of Newfoundland's cultural memory of Beaumont Hamel is the way in which it has so completely come to represent the entirety of Newfoundland's World War I experience. Beaumont Hamel has in fact come to represent the entirety of the Newfoundland Regiment's history. When writing a history of the Regiment from 1775-1815, Bernard D. Fardy felt it appropriate to title the volume *Before Beaumont Hamel*, even though his account ended more than a century before the Somme campaign began.[14] The Newfoundland Regiment has ten Great War Battle Honours emblazoned on its Regimental Colours. One Battle Honour occurred before Beaumont Hamel: Gallipoli 1915-1916. (Egypt 1915-1916 is considered a Battle Honour, but does not appear on the colours). The remaining eight read like a register of the most momentous engagements on the Western Front: Arras 1917, Bailleul, Cambrai 1917, Courtrai, Langemark, Le Transloy, Poelcappelle, and Ypres 1917-1918. During the war, 12,000 Newfoundlanders volunteered in the Navy, Army, Air Force, and Merchant Marine. Of these 12,000, nearly 4,000 were killed.[15] Nonetheless, for present-day Newfoundlanders, a remembrance of Beaumont Hamel is perceived to be an encapsulated remembrance of Newfoundland's total war experience. Any other narrative of Newfoundland at war is one which occurred after or (in Fardy's case) before Beaumont Hamel.

The Gallipoli Campaign was especially significant for the Newfoundland Regiment, and some details bear repeating here. After landing at Suvla Bay on 19/20 September 1915, the Allies fought a "monotonous and arduous" defensive that

[14] Bernard Fardy. *Before Beaumont Hamel: The Royal Newfoundland Regiment 1775-1815*. St. John's: Creative Publishing, 1995.

[15] Owen William Steele. *Lieutenant Owen William Steele of the Newfoundland Regiment: Diary and Letters. . .*,10.

foreshadowed the trench warfare of the Western Front and the Somme.[16] Soldiers on both sides were continually harassed by Turkish snipers, inclement weather, flies and lice, a lack of drinking water (one-half pint per day), and dysentery.[17] After a violent winter storm in late November, Allied evacuations from the hopeless Suvla Bay operation commenced. The Newfoundlander Regiment, the only North American unit to take part in the campaign, was assigned a rearguard action. Their task was to deceive the Turks into imagining that the Allied evacuation was less complete that in reality. Their preparations included emplacement of delayed-action Mills bombs and an ingenious setting of unmanned rifles to fire. A member of the Newfoundland rear party, Sergeant (later Captain) George Hicks later recalled: "Suspended from the trigger of a rifle was a tin can partially filled with sand. Above it was another can filled with water, which very slowly leaked into the can below." Once the weight of the lower can was seven pounds, "the trigger would be pulled and the rifle discharged."[18] The memory of such ingenuity has been eclipsed by the memory of the thirty-minute charge on 1 July 1916.

The Newfoundlanders were very probably the last troops to evacuate the bay, and the entire evacuation of Suvla was as successful as the Gallipoli operation itself was a failure. In Colonel Nicholson's account:

[16] Sydney Frost. *A Blue Puttee at War: The Memoir of Captain Sydney Frost, MC.* St. John's: Flanker Press, 2014, 120.

[17] Ibid, 118.

[18] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*, 187.

> The impossible had been achieved. There had been withdrawn in safety from Anzac and Suvla 83,000 officers and men, 186 guns, nearly 2000 vehicles, and 4700 horses and mules. At Suvla not a single casualty occurred on the final night, and not a gun or an animal was left on shore. . . "As long as wars last," wrote a German military correspondent, "the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac will stand before the eyes of all strategists as a hitherto unattained masterpiece." To the Newfoundlanders there was cause for satisfaction that in the achievement of this success they had played their part with distinction.[19]

As a historical footnote, for the Newfoundland Regiment, the Gallipoli Campaign did not end with the Suvla Bay evacuation. On the 22 December, the Regiment was moved to Helles to conduct another rearguard action. This operation was achieved on the night of 8-9 January 1916, and the Newfoundlanders were again among the last to evacuate the peninsula. Of the 1,167 men of the Newfoundland Regiment to serve in Gallipoli, there were 647 casualties, including 522 evacuated due to illness. Of these 522, seventy-four were evacuated due to frostbite from the inclement November tempest, and an unknown number died subsequent to their evacuation. Forty-one Newfoundlanders were killed in action or died of wounds in Gallipoli.

And yet, Gallipoli is not commemorated with anything approaching the fervour of Beaumont Hamel. Even during the war, Beaumont Hamel was considered the true "baptism of fire," while Gallipoli was always considered subordinate, important only in the way that it set the conditions for the Regiment on the Western Front. This myth was cultivated even by soldiers of the Regiment. On describing conditions at Gallipoli in *The Telegram,* one soldier recalled that ". . . with shells bursting and the rapid firing of rifles one has no time to think of anything. However it was a nice little christening, and now when it really comes to us we won't mind it."[20] Lieutenant Colonel Arthur A. Hadow, the

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[19] Ibid, 188.

[20] P. Whitney Lackenbauer "War, Memory, and the Newfoundland Regiment at Gallipoli" – Newfoundland Studies, 15 2 1999, 188.

British officer who took command of the Newfoundland Regiment at Suvla Bay and retained command at Beaumont Hamel, described the Gallipoli Campaign as follows: "Trench warfare in Gallipoli was a splendid training ground. But of course none of us had experienced yet the big battle that came afterwards in France on the 1st of July, the Battle of the Somme."[21] The mythification of Beaumont Hamel, and the accompanying de-mythification of the Regiment at Gallipoli, began during the war and continues to the present. It is as if the memory of Gallipoli had to be sacrificed in order to fully memorialize the glory and tragedy of Beaumont Hamel.

"The Big Battle that came Afterwards" - The Somme

Commencing mid-January, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment conducted a three-month reconstitution in Suez under the new Commanding Officer, Colonel Hadow, a Norfolk Regiment officer.[22] The Regiment arrived in France in April 1915, in order to take part in "The Big Push," a British-led offensive in the Somme region of the Western Front.

The intent of the Somme offensive was three-fold. First, it sought to relieve Joffre's French forces at Fortress Verdun. On 21 February 1916, the German army launched an attritional offensive at Verdun, with the intent to "bleed France white."[23] Von Falkenhayn's plan very nearly succeeded at numerous points throughout the winter. Within the first month of the offensive, 90,000 French had been killed at Verdun, and

[21] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.* . .,194-195.

[22] Ibid, 184

[23] William Philpott. *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme.* London: Little, Brown, 2009, 83.

many more were injured.[24] On 28 March 1916, Joffre impressed upon the British (specifically, Lord Kitchener and Sir William Robertson), that it was "time for the British to play their part."[25] In May, Lord Kitchener warned the War Committee in London that the German Army was in fact "wearing out" the French at Verdun, and that the Germans were threatening to "wear through and go on to Paris."[26] The French Army needed the British to conduct an offensive, if only to lessen German pressure against Verdun. The British needed to conduct this offensive, if only to preserve their ally for the war effort.

Secondly, the Somme offensive was meant to produce a manoeuvrist victory, if on a limited scale. Haig's intent was for "the big push" to result in the "breakthrough." Concentrating indirect fires and infantry along a 16-mile front, Haig's plan was for an initial advance of eight miles through the German trench system to the village of Bapaume.[27] The optimism of his plan is revealed in his diary entry of May 10, where he records his orders to General Hunter-Weston, commander of VIII Corps at Gallipoli: "I impressed upon him that there must be no halting attacks at each trench in succession for rear lines to pass through! The objective of the attack must be as far as our guns can prepare the Enemy's position for attack – and when the attack starts it must be pushed through to the final objective with as little delay as possible."[28] Once the infantry had achieved its initial objectives, Haig envisioned a cavalry-based forward passage of lines along a Northern-axis. Ultimately, this plan did not foresee a collapse of the German Army of 1918 proportions, but a limited but nonetheless decisive victory that would end

[24] Martin Gilbert. *The Somme: Heroism and Horror in the First World War.* New York: Henry Holt, 2006, 21.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 25.
[27] Martin Middlebrook. *The First Day on the Somme.* New York: WW Norton & Company, 1972. 52-54.
[28] Martin Gilbert. *The Somme: Heroism and Horror in the First World War. . .*, 24.

in large swaths of contested lands return to Allied control. When Hunter-Weston offered misgivings in the plan based on his Gallipoli experiences, Haig offered the dissimilarities between Gallipoli and the Somme. Operations in Gallipoli "were under very different conditions: then he [Hunter-Weston] had landed from ships, a slow proceeding: now his troops can be forward in succession of lines in great depth, and all can start at the same moment!"[29] For Haig, the lessons learned at Gallipoli were not applicable to the Western Front.

With hindsight, the third goal of the Somme campaign appears more realistic than the above described manoeuvrist breakthrough: a methodical, attritional offensive meant to weaken German strength and resolve, not unlike the German effort at Verdun. The endstate of this plan acknowledged that victory in 1916 was unlikely, but that victory in the summer of 1917 was realistic, provided that the German army was sufficiently attritted from both their Verdun offensive and imminent Somme defensive. Given their experience at Verdun, this intent was principally of French origin. In communication with Haig on the 6th of June, Joffre stated: "But from our experience of previous attacks indicates that, to drive the enemy from his prepared positions, we have to conduct a long drawn out battle, the final form of which it is impossible to predict."[30] In the same letter from Joffre, however, Haig underlined what he perceived to be the more compelling, manoeuvrist argument: "We can envisage a knockout of the German army on the Western Front, or at least an important part of their forces."[31] Even among allies, there

[29] Ibid.
[30] William Philpott. *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme. . .*, 122.
[31] Ibid.

was no singular intent to the Somme campaign. The evolution of the consequent collective remembrance of the campaign would show similar uncertainty.

The Coming "Climax of our Troubles:" Beaumont Hamel

On June 26, the General Officer Commanding the 29th Division (to which the Newfoundland Regiment belonged), Major-General Sir Henry de Beauvoir De Lisle, addressed the Newfoundlanders. According to Lieutenant Owen Steele, who maintained a diary of his war experiences, General De Lisle "spoke for about 10 mins. He said he was glad to have the honour of addressing us as a battalion, for the first time, on the eve of what is going to be the greatest battle in the history of the world."[32] Nationalistic myth-making was central to De Lisle's speech. "He impressed upon us the dangers we would have to encounter, but that he had no doubt that we, who had the sole honour of representing Nfld., would bring honour and credit to ourselves and Nfld., . . . he knew he would have the pleasure in a very short time of sending a message to our friends in Nfld. telling them of the glorious work we had performed in this Great Attack."[33] De Lisle concluded on an optimistic note, as did Steele in his journal entry:

> He also said that in the 4th Army front we had an overwhelming majority of guns and men and an almost unlimited supply of ammunition . . . If our gun ammunition were loaded on trucks it would form a line of trucks 46 miles long. In men we had 21 Divns. or 263 Battns., whereas opposite to our Army Front the Germans had only 32 Battalions and the most they could bring up in a week was 65 Battns and the French have 20 Divns so we need fear nothing. [34]

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[32] Owen William Steele. *Lieutenant Owen William Steele of the Newfoundland Regiment: Diary and Letters. . .*, 186.

[33] Ibid

[34] Ibid., 187. As Nicholson notes: "In actual fact the Order of Battle of German infantry on the Somme front on July 1, 1916, totaled thirty-three *regiments*. A German regiment was the equivalent of a British brigade and normally comprised three battalions. The disproportion in strength was thus nor nearly as great as the G.O.C. [General Officer Commanding] indicated." (G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*, 261.)

General De Lisle had some reason to be optimistic. In the background to his speech, the largest artillery bombardment in history up to that point was ongoing. Beginning June 24, along a fourteen-mile front, British artillery fired 1,732,873 shells from 1,500 guns and howitzers.[35] The morale effectiveness of such a fireplan was no doubt clear, but unknown to General De Lisle, the physical effect was questionable. Many of the shells were duds and failed to explode. Of those that did explode, many "merely churned up the already pockmarked and battered surface of the ground."[36] On June 26 and again on June 27, the Newfoundland Regiment and other VIII Corps units conducted platoon and company-sized raids, with the tasks of capturing German soldiers for intelligence purposes and reporting back to Brigade and Corps Headquarters on the status of the enemy's defensive wire. Neither raid was successful in capturing a German prisoner. Despite the shelling, the German front and wire remained intact. In his diary on the eve of the battle, General Haig's last words were "the only doubt I have is with regard to the VIII Corps Staff, which has no experience of the fighting in France and has not carried out one successful raid."[37] For Haig, the failed raids were evidence of poor planning, and not enemy strength.

On June 30, with the battle mere hours away, Steele wrote a post script to his diary entry that "it is great to see how happy and light-hearted everyone is, and yet this is undoubtedly the last day for a good many. The various battalions marched off whistling and singing, and it was a great sight. Of course this is certainly the best way to take things

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[35] Martin Gilbert. *The Somme: Heroism and Horror in the First World War. . .*, 37.
[36] Ibid.
[37] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*, 259.

and hope for the best."[38] On the same day, he wrote a letter to his family back in Newfoundland: "I believe the climax of our troubles will be reached within the next few days (after which the day of peace will quickly draw near), though they will undoubtedly bring trouble to many."[39] Steele could not have known that he was understating the coming disaster.

"Trouble to Many"

The artillery bombardment that began on the 24 June culminated between 7.00 and 8.00 a.m. on 1 July. In that hour, more than 3,500 shells were fired every minute against the German lines. Nearly a quarter of a million rounds were fired in sixty minutes.[40] Compounding the effects of the bombardment, at exactly 7:20 a.m., a 40,600 pound ammonal mine exploded at the Hawthorn Redoubt, a once imposing position on the Northern edge of the 14 mile front, in the vicinity of the tiny, strategically insignificant village of Beaumont Hamel.[41] The mine produced a crater 130 feet wide and 60 feet deep, and was 1000 yards away from where the Newfoundland Regiment waited for the signal to begin the assault.[42] At 7:28 a.m., sixteen more mines exploded under the 14 miles of German front.[43] H-Hour was two minutes later, and British troops attacked along its entirety.

Initial attacks gained little or no ground. An infantry observer with the "Arrington Pals" Battalion later described the scene: "We were able to see our comrades move

[38] Owen William Steele. *Lieutenant Owen William Steele of the Newfoundland Regiment: Diary and Letters. . .*, 188.

[39] Ibid., 189.

[40] Martin Gilbert. *The Somme: Heroism and Horror in the First World War. . .*, 50.

[41] Cave, Nigel. *Battleground Europe: Somme – Beaumont Hamel.* London: Leo Cooper, 1994, 29.

[42] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*, 265.

[43] Martin Gilbert. *The Somme: Heroism and Horror in the First World War. . .*, 51.

forward in an attempt to cross No Man's Land, only to be mown down like meadow grass. I felt sick and remember weeping."[44] During these initial attacks, the Commanding Officer of the Newcastle Commercials, Colonel Ritson, had to be restrained by his bugler, Lance Corporal S. Henderson. Prior to the attack, Commanding Officers were explicitly ordered not to join the advance of their battalions, in response to the General Staff's fear that they become casualties themselves. Lance Corporal Henderson later recalled: "Colonel Ritson had watched the leading companies in No Man's Land. I vividly remember him standing in the British front line, tears streaming down his face, saying over and over, "My God! My boys! My boys!"[45] By 8:30 a.m., nearly half of the initial wave of 65,000 soldiers were casualties. 30,000 infantry were killed or wounded in one hour, most before advancing beyond their own forward-most trenches.[46] Nonetheless, failures continued to be reinforced.

All the while, the Newfoundland Regiment waited in the support trench named "St. John's Road" in their honour. In the original plan, the Newfoundlanders were to advance with their sister regiment of the 88th Brigade, the Essex Regiment, at 8:20 a.m. This order was however countermanded given significant confusion at 29th Division Headquarters about the attack's progress. At approximately 8:30 a.m., the headquarters learned that white flairs had been observed from the front, indicating that the first objective had been reached. (In fact, these flairs were German, and indicated that indirect German fires were falling short). Later, the divisional commander, Major-General de Lisle, would offer the following explanation in his official report of the battle: "I

[44] Middlebrook, Martin. *The First Day on the Somme. . .*, 131-132.
[45] Ibid, 146
[46] Ibid, 129.

therefore decided to make another effort to capture the front line, and thus supporting the parties of the 87th Brigade who were, I believed, fighting in the enemy's trenches. At 8:37 a.m., consequently I ordered the 88th Brigade to attack the enemy's front."[47] At 8:45 a.m., the commander of 88th Brigade issued orders to the Newfoundland and Essex Regiments to attack "at once." The Commanding Officer of the Newfoundlanders, Colonel Hadow, asked if the German front line had been captured. The answer from Brigade was ominous: "The situation is not cleared up."[48] At 9:15 a.m., Brigade Headquarters received the message: "The Newfoundlanders are moving."[49]

The Newfoundland Regiment was to advance 300 yards and through four belts of their own wire before reaching the British front line. Once passed, No Man's Land was an additional 300 yards before the initial German trenches.[50] Unknown to Colonel Hadow, the "more experienced" Essex Regiment adopted a more cautious route to the forward British line, through the communication trenches.[51] The Newfoundlanders would therefore advance without support on either flank. There were no supporting artillery fires, nor is there any indication that fires were requested. The Regiment marched forward with a total strength of 767 officers and soldiers, with "A" and "B" Companies forward, and "C" and "D" Companies following in reserve. They advanced in accordance with the conventional infantry tactics of the day, later described by Liddell Hart as "symmetrically aligned like rows of ninepins ready to be knocked over."[52]

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[47] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*, 268.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid, 270.
[50] Martin Middlebrook. *The First Day on the Somme. . .*, 169-170.
[51] Ibid, 171.
[52] B.H. Liddell Hart. *History of the First World War.* London: Cassell, 1970, 312.

Few reached the forward British lines. As they had done during the initial assault, German machine-gunners trained fire on the gaps in the wire that canalized the "symmetric alignment" of Newfoundlanders. Of those few that made it beyond the British wire, fewer still made it to the initial bands of German wire. Many became casualties in the vicinity of what would become known as "The Danger Tree," a "stricken trunk, standing gauntly" in No Man's Land.[53] A British eyewitness to the attack remarked that, "the only visible sign that the men knew that they were under this terrific fire was that they all instinctively tucked their chins into an advanced shoulder as they had so often done when fighting their way home against a blizzard in some little outport in far off Newfoundland."[54] Those that were wounded had little chance of making it back to friendly lines. In addition to the 50 to 60 pounds of equipment that each man carried, they had been ordered to emplace a disc made of silver "biscuit tins" on their back, to aid intelligence officers and reconnaissance airplanes to track the progress of the advance. When wounded, the disc only served to advise German snipers of their location in the gleaming sunlight.[55] Of those few who made it to the German wire, there is stark evidence that any inflicted a single casualty on the enemy. It is indeed likely that no member of regiment fired his weapon.[56] The advance lasted no longer than 30 minutes. At 9:45 a.m., Colonel Hadow advised Brigade Headquarters that his Regiment's attack had failed.[57] He was given the order to reorganize his companies to renew the attack. After Hadow returned to Brigade to report that he could find no one from the Regiment to

[53] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*,271

[54] Ibid, 270.

[55] Sydney Frost. *A Blue Puttee at War: The Memoir of Captain Sydney Frost, MC.* St. . . 206.

[56] Harding, Robert James Allen. "Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1949," Master's thesis, Dalhousie University, 2004, 47.

[57] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*, 272.

reorganize, a senior officer at Corps Headquarters countermanded the order to re-attack.[58] The Newfoundland Regiment's part in the Somme was ended.

The full scale of the destruction of the Newfoundland Regiment only became clear with nightfall. Of the 767 men who went "over the top," 233 were killed, and 477 were wounded or missing, for a casualty rate of 91 percent.[59] Every single officer who made the attack was killed, wounded, or missing. The next morning, 68 men answered the roll call. Of all British battalions to make the charge on July 1st, only the 10th West Yorks suffered more casualties. 32 battalions in all suffered more than 500 casualties. The Newfoundland Regiment's 29th Division incurred the second most casualties during the day, at 5,240.[60] Of the approximately 100,000 men from the British 4th Army who attacked on the first day of the Somme Campaign, 57,470 were casualties, including 19,240 killed or died of wounds. It was the single bloodiest day in the history of the British Army, and British casualties exceeded those of the Crimean War, Boer War, and Korean War combined.[61]

The Newfoundland Regiment's initial objective on 1 July, the shattered village of Beaumont Hamel, would not be taken until 13 November 1916.

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Robert James Allen Harding. "Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1949," . . ., 48.

[60] Middlebrook, Martin. *The First Day on the Somme*. . . .,311.

[61] Ibid, 246.

CHAPTER TWO – "THE ADMIRATION AND THE SORROW" – NEWFOUNDLAND"S CULTURAL MEMORY, 1916-1949

First Reports – "In Spite of the Losses"

War diaries provide the first account of the Newfoundland Regiment's advance at Beaumont Hamel. Without exception, these diaries describe the Regiment's advance in terms of the individual soldier's determination and courage in the face of staggering odds, instead of focusing on any failures on tactical or operational levels. On the evening of the attack, Colonel Hadow recorded in the diary that "the men were mown down in heaps," but that, "in spite of the losses, the survivors steadily advanced until close to the enemy's wire by which time very few remained."[62] He concluded his account of the failed attack with, "a few men are believed to have actually succeeded in throwing bombs into the enemy trench," although there exists little supporting evidence for this claim elsewhere. In the days that followed, more expressive accounts of the attack began to emerge from more senior British commanders. The 88th Brigade Commander, General Cayley, wrote to Newfoundland's Governor, Sir Walter Davidson, that he had been "in a position to observe the advance of the Newfoundland Regiment. Nothing could have been finer . . . not a man faltering or hanging back . . . They literally went on until scarcely an officer or man was left unhit."[63] Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig – the architect of the Somme campaign – offered the most compelling testimony, again to Sir Davidson: "Newfoundland may well feel proud of her sons. The heroism and devotion to duty they displayed on 1st July 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

[62] Royal Newfoundland Regiment War Diary, September 1915-March 1919: 11 http://www.rnr.therooms.ca/docs/WarDiaryComplete-Sept1915-Mar1919.pdf.

[63] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*, 281.

have fallen for the Empire, and our admiration for their heroic conduct. Their efforts contributed to our success, and their example will live."[64] In Jay Winter's model of the braiding together of history and memory, Haig is clearly emphasizing the latter strand. A futile thirty minute charge is a living "example," and a "contribution to our success." A failed attack is to be remembered for its heroism and devotion, and not that it was a failure.

These first-hand accounts informed initial reactions in Newfoundland. A true understanding of the enormity of the Regiment's decimation was in fact slow to emerge. News of the Somme offensive was reported in *The Telegram* on 1 July, and indicated that "a large number" of German prisoners had been taken, and that British casualties were "so far comparatively light, according to official reports."[65] Within a week, however, regular casualty reports began to appear. After 48 casualties were reported on 6 July, the newspaper issued its first of many editorials that commemorated the sacrifice of the Regiment, titled "When Shall Their Glory Fade?" "The Regiment was foremost in the attack. This the terrible death roll shows, but we need not to be told of it. These brave dead were among the best in the land. It is a national loss. Their places will never be filled, but their memory will never fade. God rest their heroic souls!"[66] In the same issue, *The Telegram* editors also endeavored to stress the utility of the sacrifice, describing it with a confident tone best reserved for victories:

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[64] Ibid.

[65] "British Launch Great Off'nsive" *The Telegram,* 1 July 1916. http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/telegram19/id/8152/rec/1.

[66] "When Shall Their Glory Fade?" *The Telegram,* 6 July 1916. http://collections.mun.ca/utils/getarticleclippings/collection/telegram19/id/8178/articleId/DIVL84/compObjId/8185/lang/en_US/dmtext/1916-07-06

> The action of July 1st was no defeat. It was the first and greatest step toward the final victory that will crush German power and humble German arrogance. In it our men played no small part, of that we may be sure . . . we know they did not give their lives for nothing. The very size and nature of the casualty list is eloquent. It speaks of an advance, impetuous and fearless, through a hail of bullets. When . . . their achievement in all its glorious detail is told, there will be a thrill of pride throughout out Island such as it has never felt before.[67]

While memorializing the loss, editorialists at *The Telegram* nonetheless emphasized the bravery of the Newfoundlanders, and incorrectly insinuated that the Regiment was in the first wave of attackers. The sense of loss, and its accompanying "eloquent" casualty lists, is never distinct from the sense of purpose and pride.

In response to these ever growing casualty lists, Newfoundland's Prime Minister Edward Morris issued a statement in *The Telegram* on July 8 that revised the number of dead and wounded to 230. He wrote that "we are profoundly affected by the casualty list," but that "the superb daring and devotion of officers and men has maintained and added lustre to the most brilliant records of British arms. Their conduct and deeds will prove undying in the memory of the Empire."[68] Such a sentiment echoed that of the senior British officers. Already the mythification of the battle was becoming the prevailing narrative.

This narrative would remain dominant for the rest of the war, even after the complete destruction of the Regiment was revealed to Newfoundland on 29 July. On that day, Colonel Hadow's report, titled "Official Report to His Excellency," was published in *The Telegram.* Even in this edition of the paper, which reported that 110 men were killed, 495 wounded, and 115 missing, the editors composed an article that tried to balance the

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[67] Ibid.

[68] "Message from the Premier" *The Telegram*, 8 July 1916. http://collections.mun.ca/utils/getarticleclippings/collection/telegram19/id/8200/articleId/DIVL69/compObjId/8207/lang/en_US/dmtext/1916-07-08

horror and the heroism. On the horror, this article was revealingly named "Newfoundlanders' Charge Hopeless Task." The heroism of the attack is the predominant theme. The editorial is prefaced by a quote from the Regiment's unnamed "General," De Lisle: "Newfoundlanders I salute you individually. You have done better than the best." It continued that the "Newfoundlanders were given what is now recognized to be an impossible task, and although they failed, the story of their bravery and daring will live forever."[69] De Lisle had made good on his promise to Lieutenant Owen Steele to inform Newfoundlanders of the "glorious work" that the Regiment had performed in the "Great Attack." For De Lisle, writing nearly a month after the attack, hopelessness did not imply futility, and "bravery and daring" were proposed to be ends in themselves. Newfoundland's sons had represented themselves proudly. That all possible outcomes of the attack were "hopeless" was of secondary importance.

Mythification During the War

For the remainder of the war, the memory of Beaumont Hamel was leveraged primarily in support of the war effort. In the month following the attack, soldiers' accounts of their part appeared in the Newfoundland press that evidenced the barbarity of the German soldier, echoing opinions voiced throughout the British Empire. This barbarity was positioned in contrast to the nobility and determination of the Newfoundlanders. *The Telegram* published Private James McGrath's "Letter From a Plucky Survivor" on 31 July 1916.[70] Addressed to his mother and written from the 3rd London General Hospital, McGrath described his role in the attack on Beaumont Hamel.

[69] Ibid.

[70] "Letter from a Plucky Survivor." *The Telegram*. 31 July 1916. http://collections.mun.ca/utils/getarticleclippings/collection/telegram19/id/8200/articleId/DIVL69/compObjId/8207/lang/en_US/dmtext/1916-07-31

It begins, "Dear Mother – It gives me great pleasure in taking up a pencil to write you a line; by the time you get this you'll know all about the Regiment, they got a terrible cutting up." McGrath wrote that he actually got to German wire on the first of July, but that the Regiment's attack was ultimately repulsed because they were "mowed down . . . like sheep." What McGrath then described would have appalled the July 1916 reader in Newfoundland, still absorbing the news of ever growing casualty lists. After sustaining two bullet wounds during the assault, McGrath "lay in No Man's Land for 15 hours" before he "went to crawl which is a distance of a mile and a quarter." He then recalled: "They fired on me again, this time fetching me in the left leg, and so I waited for another hour and moved again, only having the use of my left arm now. As I was doing splendidly, nearing our own trench they again fetched me, this time around the hip as I crawled on."[71] In *The Telegram*, two other war-related articles appeared on the same page as McGrath's account. The first reported on the death of Lieutenant H.C. Herder, "one of the best rugby and hockey men that ever lined-up with the college teams." The second, titled "Kaiser Delivers Pious Address to Chaplains," quotes Wilhelm as urging his audience to "live simply and according to [the Lord's] acts and deeds." The incongruity of this message next to McGrath's description would have been clear to the 1916 reader.

McGrath's account of trench warfare, of firing on retreating, bullet-ridden, but nonetheless "plucky" soldiers, would have presented a sharp contrast to the image of the valiant Newfoundlanders, rugby and hockey men who charged across open terrain against incredible odds. For the 1916 reader, the significance of the juxtaposition comes not in the failure of the Newfoundland Regiment or of the British High Command, but in the

[71] Ibid.

barbarity of the enemy. Such a narrative was fostered throughout the war in order to add significance to a culture's memory of loss. Paul Fussell recounts one particularly pervasive fictional account of German atrocities, that of the "Crucified Canadian." The story went that "the Germans captured a Canadian soldier and in full view of his mates exhibited him in the open spread-eagled cross, his hands and feet pierced by bayonets. He is said to have died slowly."[72] For the rest of the war, the memory of Beaumont Hamel, like that of the Crucified Canadian, was leveraged to justify the war effort, to validate the sacrifice.

During the war, the legacy of Beaumont Hamel was also constructed to instill a sense of pride and nationalism. The first Memorial Day was held on the first anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel. This chosen date is in itself significant. The Regiment conducted heavy fighting and sustained high casualties before the 1 July 1916 (at Gallipoli), and would again after (at Arras, Ypres, Cambrai, and elsewhere). Already by 1 July 1917, with still nearly a year and a half left in the war, Beaumont Hamel had come to represent the entirety of Newfoundland's Great War experience. This interpretation would be lasting.

This first Memorial Day was an occasion to formalise collective remembrance of Beaumont Hamel, to cultivate both the solemn remembrance and nationalist pride. Politicians, media, community organizers, and most especially the clergy began to construct the narrative that Beaumont Hamel was a moment of tremendous but worthwhile and meaningful sacrifice. On the second of July, *The Evening Telegram* gave a summary of the preceding day's activities, consisting primarily of a synopsis of the

[72] Paul Fussell. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. . ., 126.

Archbishop's sermon from the Roman Catholic Cathedral.[73] This sermon deliberately addressed significance of memory and remembrance in cultivating meaning from Beaumont Hamel. He began by "recalling to the minds" of the congregation that "it was just twelve months ago that day since the dread realities of war had been brought home to our people in a sense in which they had not realized them before." Gallipoli is indirectly referenced as a prior "comparatively light" engagement, but on the "first of July [Beaumont Hamel is not explicitly referenced] the Newfoundland Regiment was thrown into the vortex of battle and was practically annihilated, eight hundred of our bravest and best being numbered amongst the killed." The Archbishop then spoke to the meaning of the battle, the memory: "The First of July would ever remain a memorable day in our annals. To future generations it would be a day of sad and glorious memory – of sad memory because of the suffering and sorrow which it brought into the lives of so many throughout the land, and a glorious day because of the glory which it brought upon our Regiment and upon our native land." Significantly, he then addressed current (and likely, prospective) members of the Newfoundland Regiment:

> Turning then to the members of the Regiment present His Grace addressed some words of exhortation and advice. When the time came for them to go forth to take the places of those that had fallen, he hoped that they would emulate the noble example of those whose memories we were honouring that day. Every account that had come from the other side had spoken in terms of the highest praise of the splendid spirit of our Newfoundland soldiers and sailors, of their coolness in the face of danger, their discipline, their resource and their absolute fearlessness . . . everywhere their record had been one of which all in Newfoundland had reason to be proud. We looked, then, to those who were going forth from amongst us in the future to uphold the good traditions of those who had gone before them, to walk in the footsteps of those had fought so bravely, borne so cheerfully, and died so nobly.[74]

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[73] Complete text of speech found at *The Telegram,* "Fallen Heroes of Beaumont Hamel Remembered Yesterday. 2 July 1917. http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/telegram19/id/11361/rec/2

[74] Ibid.

Throughout the remainder of the Great War, the experience of the Newfoundlanders at Beaumont Hamel was therefore something to cherish and emulate, and not to bemoan or evade. The actions of Newfoundlanders on the Somme were part of a "good tradition" to be upheld. Indeed - during the war, at least - the memory of Beaumont Hamel was leveraged to encourage others die as "nobly" as those who had fallen on the first day of the Somme.

In December 1917, King George V bestowed upon the Regiment the title "Royal," ostensibly due to the role it played at Ypres and Cambrai. It was the only instance during the First World War of a British Army regiment receiving such an honour. Indeed, it was only the third such instance in the history of the British Army that the title had been awarded when the nation was still at war, following the Royal Regiment of Foot of Ireland (in 1665) and Prince Charlotte of Wales' Royal Berkshire Regiment (1885).[75] It was a validation of the sacrifice being made by Britain's oldest colony, and an important event of the Newfoundland's Great War mythology.

Memory Mythologized – Post-War Remembrance

In June 1919, when the first grouping of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment returned home, Newfoundland was quickly approaching financial bankruptcy. In 1914, the colony's population was approximately 250,000. Its annual revenues were only $3.6 million, and its public debt was $30.5 million.[76] The wartime economy brought some financial benefit to the island. The value of fishery exports was at record levels, and as a

[75] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*,423.

[76] Owen William Steele. *Lieutenant Owen Wilson Steele of the Newfoundland Regiment: Diary and Letters. . .* ,12

result, total trade with the island tripled.[77] However, global economic trends shifted dramatically on 11 November 1918, and fighting a war from such a minute economy is comparatively costly. The total financial burden of the war to Newfoundland's economy is conservatively estimated at $35 million.[78] The market for cod returned to 1914 or below levels, and Newfoundland was left with a $43 million debt by 1920, and a $55 million debt by 1923. The four years of war cost Newfoundland dearly. It was a burden from which the Dominion could never really recover.

The economic catastrophe facing Newfoundland did not prevent Newfoundlanders from collectively commemorating and celebrating the war which caused it, or the battle that came to represent the war. Immediately following the war, a series of articles, diaries, and histories were published of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment's wartime experience. Indeed, this process began when the war was still ongoing. The first was the war diary of Lieutenant Owen Steele, whose quotes appear above. Steele and his brother remarkably both survived Beaumont Hamel. Six days later, Owen, miles away from the front and acting as a Billeting Officer for the already annihilated regiment, was killed by German artillery.[79] In order to honour his son's service and raise funds for the Newfoundland Patriotic Association, Steele's father published 1,000 copies of his wartime diary in the autumn of 1916. Governor Davidson wrote the forward of this 1916 edition. Other commemorative narratives published after the war included *The Letters of Mayo Lind: Newfoundland's Unofficial War*

[77] Robert James Allen Harding.. "Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1949." . . ., 35.

[78] Owen William Steele, *Lieutenant Owen Wilson Steele of the Newfoundland Regiment: Diary and Letters.* . ., 14

[79] G.W.L. Nicholson, G.W.L. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.* . ., 276.

Correspondent (1919), and the unofficial regimental war history, *The First Five Hundred* (1921), where Beaumont Hamel was described as "an action by the entire Regiment, which . . . was probably not excelled by any circumstance of instance of the entire war."[80] Newfoundlanders consumed stories of its regiment with zeal.

Francis ("Frank, Mayo") Lind's letters were particularly popular. Lind was a member of the "First Five-Hundred" Newfoundlanders who signed-up for the war effort. Through his letters home, published in the St. John's *Daily Mail,* he quickly emerged as the "Unofficial War Correspondent" of the Regiment. Thirty-two letters were published during the war. Topics ranged from the mundane (his expressions of thanks for the "Mayo Tobacco" sent from the homefront, from which he earned his nickname), to the comical. He frequently interrupted his letters with "------- oh! Pardon me Mr. Censor, I nearly said it," and also recounted this story:

> The German is a different man from the Turk. Fritz tries to be funny sometimes. On arrival of the Australians in the trenches a notice board went up from the enemy trench, saying: Welcome Australians and sons of convicts." When we went up one of them shouted, "Hullo, red men." How on earth they find out things is a mystery to me, but they seem to be aware that Newfoundland was once inhabited by the Red Indian."[81]

For wartime Newfoundland, Lind personalised the war effort as no *Telegram* editorial ever could. Reading his journal entries allowed Newfoundlanders to share the experience, the develop second-order memories of the Regiment's ordeals.

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[80] Richard Cramm.. *The First Five Hundred: being a historical sketch of the military operations of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment in Gallipoli and on the western front during the Great War (1914-1918) together with the individual military records and photographs, where obtainable, of the men of the first contingent known as "The first five hundred", of "The blue puttees.* Albany: CF Williams & Son, 1921, 45.

[81] Francis Lind. *The Letters of Mayo Lind: Newfoundland's Unofficial War Correspondent 1914-1916.* St. John's: Creative Publishers, 2001, 136.

Lind's last letter was penned on 29 June 1916, and includes the line "we are out to billets again for a short rest returning to trenches tomorrow, and then -------." The letter closes with, "Tell everybody that they may feel proud of the Newfoundland Regiment, for we get nothing but praise from the Divisional General down. With kind regards."[82] Frank "Mayo" Lind was killed at Beaumont Hamel, and is buried at Y Ravine Cemetery.

In 1919, Mayo's letters were published with an introduction by J. Alex Robinson, a journalist from St. John's. Despite the fact that the war had concluded five months prior, his letter is rife with a pride and respect for Lind and his peers that was typical of his generation. There's a authentic simplicity to Robinson's patriotism, as when he describes Lind's decision to join the Regiment, despite the fact that he was over thirty-five years old and therefore entitled to what was known as the moral exception: "The Old Grey Mother [Newfoundland] needed him, there were wrongs be righted, foes to overcome, evils to be uprooted, justice to be done, and the young man hastened to do his part . . . which enabled him to play a man's part in the greatest crisis of centuries."[83] Lind's death is more romanticized than mourned. On Lind's final letter prior to Beaumont Hamel, Robinson wrote that "he told the story which Newfoundlander's were not to read until the writer with many of the flower of the Old Colony's manhood had been enrolled in the glorious army of soldiers, faithful unto death, to whom the gates of immortality have been opened by the golden keys of service and sacrifice."[84] Ever the romantic and religious tone, such descriptions were typical of the post-war narrative.

[82] Ibid, 144.
[83] Ibid, xi.
[84] Ibid, xxii.

Commemoration and collective remembrance took other forms in post-war Newfoundland. Memorial Days continued with a dedication and enthusiasm that matched those of 1917 and 1918. On 2 July 1919, three years and a day after the battle, *The Telegram* reported on its first page of a Memorial Day that was "fittingly observed." There is still no mention of any tactical error, or the futility of the charge. Instead, the narrative is nationalist, of justified and significant sacrifice.

> No more impressive ceremonies were ever witnessed in St. John's than those which took place yesterday in commemoration of Newfoundland's National day, the anniversary of the baptism of blood endured by the Royal Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont Hamel on July 1st 1916, and the effects of yesterday's proceedings will remain with them who took part as an ever living memory of the events which brought about such tributes to the valour, glory, and heroism of the best and bravest of the dominion's sons.[85]

The first of July, then, is portrayed as much more than the anniversary of a battle in France, fought by soldiers. The first of July is a "National day," commemorating the "baptism" of that nation's "sons." The nationalist and religious symbolism is clear, and it pervaded decades of Memorial Day ceremonies across the island. In the few years following the armistice, cenotaphs commemorating Newfoundland's "sons" were erected at large and small population centers. In the tiny community of Arnold's Cove, the town's thirty families came together in 1921 to erect a significant but plain "granite shaft" to remember the fallen.[86] In the same year, Botwood raised funds for a 12-foot granite obelisk with the epitaph "Their Names Liveth Forevermore," and the small

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[85] "Memorial Day Fittingly Observed." *The Telegram*, 2 July 1919. http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/telegram20/id/1769/rec/1.

[86] Jenny Higgins. "First World War Commemorations at Home." *Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador*. Last accessed 30 April 2017, http://www.heritage.nf.ca/first-world-war/articles/commemorations-at-home.php.

community of Grand Falls erected a replica of the cenotaph in London at the considerable cost of $8,000.[87]

Of course, the largest and costliest monuments were erected in the capital city. The most prominent of these is the National War Memorial, unveiled in downtown St. John's in 1924. The naming of this monument is significant. The memorial was intended as a place where the "nation" could congregate to commemorate sacrifices made during the Great War. The memorial is at once a meeting point for collective remembrance of the nation's role in the war, and a symbol of the role the war played in forming the nation. As part of a week-long period of commemoration, the National War Memorial was opened on Memorial Day, exactly eight years after Beaumont Hamel, at 11.00 a.m.. Attended by approximately 20,000 spectators, the ceremony was presided over by none other than Field-Marshal Douglas Haig.[88] Clearly, the controversy surrounding Haig's legacy and memory had not yet matured.

On the 3 July 1924, *The Telegram* ran the full text of Haig's speech. After conceding that he previously had the "privilege" of opening up many such war memorials, Haig emphasized the role that the war had played in the nation building of Newfoundland: "In the days when the whole Empire was endangered . . . your young men . . . joined up in their thousands to serve Newfoundland and the Empire."[89] For Haig, the significance of such collective remembrance is the recognition of the bond among Commonwealth nations: "There are many ties which unite the British Commonwealth of nations, but no bond should be stronger or more enduring than that bond of common

[87] Ibid
[88] Ibid.
[89] "Unveiling Ceremony of Newfoundland's War Memorial" *The Telegram*, 3 July 1924. http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/telegram19/id/11361/rec/2

service to which in all quarters of the world, memorials such as this bear lasting testimony." Far from something tragic, the sacrifice made by Newfoundlanders is depicted as something to be celebrated for the role it played in contributing to the Commonwealth, and in developing the dominion's sense of identity within that Commonwealth.

Haig concluded his remarks by offering an "episode" that demonstrated the "steadfastness" of the Newfoundlanders. Despite the fact that the unveiling occurred precisely eight years after Beaumont Hamel, Haig spoke to a more successful operation that occurred on the 30th of November 1917, Cambrai. Beaumont Hamel is never explicitly referenced in his lengthy speech.

A year later, Haig was again called upon to open a monument to Newfoundland's war dead, where addressing the first day of the Somme campaign would have been obligatory. On Sunday, the 7 June 1925, Haig opened Beaumont Hamel Park (variously called "Newfoundland Park"), over the trenches where nine years prior so many Newfoundlanders had perished. He revealed the Caribou Monument, a "resilient icon" of Newfoundland and Labrador.[90] The ceremony was well attended by the involved actors: Marshal Fayolle, Chief of the French General Staff, Major-General De Lisle (29th Division Commander), Major-General Cayley (88th Brigade), and two former commanding officers of the Regiment, including Lieutenant-Colonel Hadow.[91]

[90] Frank Gogos. *The Royal Newfoundland Regiment in the Great War.* St. John's: Flanker Press, 2015, 32.

[91] Description of opening ceremony found in G.W.L. Nicholson. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. . .*,518.

Haig was atypically humble in his introductory speech. His tone was markedly different that that which he adopted in St. John's, although many of his themes were similar. He described Beaumont Hamel as a place "where courage, devotion, and self-sacrifice were poured out, as it seemed at the moment, to no purpose. You have chosen a scene which in July, 1916, seemed to many remarkable for the failure of British arms." To question the purpose of the Somme offensive would be counter to any prevailing narrative in Newfoundland about the utility of Beaumont Hamel. It's unsurprising then that Haig went on to define the purpose of the attack in higher terms, evoking the vocabulary of faith, religion, and nationalism.

> This spot will become a place of pilgrimage which, generation after generation, will draw Newfoundlanders to France; which will bring them on their way hither to the shores of England, and by the undying memories it evokes, will keep green among you and us and the people of France the knowledge of the ideals we share, and of the responsibility which is laid upon us by our dead for the future peace and happiness of the world.[92]

The Newfoundlanders who visited Beaumont Hamel were therefore less historians than pilgrims, further propagating the ideals of England and France, of "peace and happiness of the world." According to Haig, Beaumont Hamel was not to be remembered for its tactical significance, which he admits could be construed as a "failure of British arms." Beaumont Hamel is understood as something more, as a "spot" where remembrance signifies adherence to greater ideals. In Haig's parlance, the Great War confirmed these ideals. Haig had recreated Beaumont Hamel as a pilgrimage site, a quasi-religious site, and not a site of mere historical relevance. In this narrative, the Newfoundlanders who fell at Beaumont Hamel were not to be remembered for their deaths, but what was meant by their resurrections, confirmations of the "peace and

[92] Ibid.

happiness" ideals of England and France.

Reinforcing Remembrance, 1925-1934

For much of the next decade, remembrance of Beaumont Hamel was relatively static. Haig's narrative, of Beaumont Hamel as a worthwhile and momentous engagement that distinguished Newfoundland in the annals of history, remained predominant. But the lingering economic impacts of the war remained, and Newfoundland faced the steadily growing threat of complete financial collapse. The Great Depression, and the accompanying depreciated market for cod, was particularly devastating. Poverty was rampant, and starvation was a grim but very real prospect for many outport families. The government commissioned the Bradley Report in 1934. This report concluded that it required an annual salary of $600 to sustain a single outport family. The average income of a Newfoundland fisherman was estimated at $153.82.[93]

Plagued by corruption and mismanagement, Newfoundland Prime Minister Squires' government exhausted all avenues of income generation. In 1932, they attempted to raise $2.5 million internally through poorly named "Prosperity Loans." The public purchased less than $350,000 of the debt.[94] In the same year, the government made an offer to Canada to sell the resource-rich territory of Labrador. Itself in the dire economic straits of the Depression, Canada balked at the $110 million price tag.[95] With no other options, facing an insurmountable debt, in November 1933, the Newfoundland House of Assembly passed legislation that would see it "cease to exist."[96] As of 16

[93] Kevin Major. *As Near to Heaven by Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador. . .*, 355.
[94] S.J.R. Noel. *Politics in Newfoundland.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971, 204.
[95] Ibid, 205.
[96]Kevin Major. *As Near to Heaven by Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador. . .*, 364.

February 1934, Newfoundland would be ruled by a "Commission of Government," consisting of six commissioners. Under a British governor, three commissioners would be appointed by the British government, and three would be Newfoundlanders. So ended 79 years of responsible government.

What is truly remarkable about the Commission of Government is the complete willingness of the population to accept the loss of their democratic rights. By modern standards, it is incredible that the Commission in fact ushered in a new period of optimism. As S.J.R. Noel wrote in his seminal text *Politics in Newfoundland*:

> That a "rest from politics" was the best solution to Newfoundland's political problems was a belief by no means confined to the members of the commission; it was, by all accounts, widely held by the people themselves. There was indeed a widespread revulsion against the excesses and corruption which were believed to spring from the operation of open electoral politics.[97]

The British seemed more dismayed by the colony's loss of responsible government than Newfoundlanders. By 1940, H.A. Innis wrote that "[Britains] cannot base our argument on the importance of the British Empire to the maintenance of democracy when we calmly allow the light to go out in Newfoundland.[98] Embroiled in a quickly deteriorating Second World War position, arguments on the importance of the British Empire were vital.

That Newfoundlanders so willingly abandoned responsible government, and so happily accepted foreign rule, is significant in two ways. First, it signals a complete reversal of the prideful nationalism so evident in the Haig mythology of Beaumont Hamel. The concept of Newfoundlanders doing "their part," of pulling "above their

[97] Peter Neary. *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929-1949*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988, 221.
[98] Ibid., 217.

weight" that pervaded post war commemorations is completely distinct from the reality of Newfoundlanders forfeiting their right to self-determination because they perceive that they are unable succeed under such a responsibility. Second, the loss of national self-determination came to represent yet another tragic consequence of the war effort. The argument followed that Newfoundland could not sustain self-governance due to the economic crisis, and the economic crisis was caused principally by the massive debt incurred during the war. The validity of this argument is questionable. Recall that Newfoundland's debt in 1914 was $33 million. Nonetheless, in this second narrative, far from a source of nationalism, the Great War and Beaumont Hamel are construed as the primary reason that the nation ceased to exist independently. Both of these narratives would have severe consequences to the Province of Newfoundland's collective remembrance of Beaumont Hamel.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND'S CULTURAL MEMORY

Pre-Confederation: National Days without Nationalism.

Under the Commission of Government, Newfoundland did not experience the expected sustained economic recovery. After a brief few years of respite, 1936 to 1939 was a "Renewed Economic Crisis," marked by ballooning deficits, disastrous years for the cod fishery, and increased international tariffs against Newfoundland's primary exports, its natural resources.[99] By April 1939, 84,659 able-bodied Newfoundlanders (out of a total population of 240,000) relied upon government subsidies for survival, the most since March 1934.[100]

Relief came through circumstance, and the Second World War brought a period of renewed prosperity. International markets for Newfoundland's resources grew exponentially, and by 1942, government revenue reached an all-time high of $23 million, resulting in a budget surplus of nearly $7,250,000.[101] Moreover, Newfoundland's strategic importance was fully realized when the British leased three pieces of its territory to the United States for ninety-nine years, to be used as American military bases. By 1942, 20% of the total labour force in Newfoundland was employed in base construction.[102] In return, Britain received 50 aged destroyers.[103] Newfoundland was beginning to turn a profit for Britain, at minimal cost.

Given the lasting financial consequences of the First World War, Newfoundland

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[99] Peter Neary. *The Political Economy of Newfoundland, 1929-1972.* Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing, 1973, 84

[100] Ibid., 85 and S.J.R. Noel. *Politics in Newfoundland.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971, 242.

[101] S.J.R. Noel. *Politics in Newfoundland. . .*, 243.

[102] Kevin Major. *As Near to Heaven by Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador. . .*,373.

[103] S.J.R. Noel. *Politics in Newfoundland. . .*, 243.

was ill-equipped to generate and sustain a fighting force during the Second. Nonetheless, Newfoundlanders volunteered for service in foreign armed services, including the Royal Navy (Churchill in 1939 declared Newfoundlanders the "hardiest and most skillful boatmen in the rough seas who exist"), and the Canadian Armed Forces (with whom 1,700 Newfoundlanders volunteered).[104] Still in the long shadow of the Great War and inspired by the remembrance the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and Beaumont Hamel, Newfoundlanders volunteered to fight, even if it meant fighting under a different flag.

Through this turbulent period, Memorial Day ceremonies continued uninterrupted. However, the tone of these public remembrances was markedly different to that of the pre-Commission period. Any sense of Newfoundland nationalism is conspicuously absent. This was an implicit recognition that the nation which formed the Newfoundland Regiment in the Great War no longer existed. Memorial Day ceremonies during this period commemorated the collective "courage and determination" of Newfoundlanders, as opposed to the contributions made by the nation or the role that the colony played in defending the British Empire and its interests.[105]

This represents a significant departure from the prevailing post-war narrative. With the romanticism of the "Old Colony" removed, Beaumont Hamel no longer represented a nation-building experience. The tragic sacrifice was becoming detached from national glory. This shift began in earnest in the 1930's and 1940's. It would flourish when the first-hand remembrance of national glory faded, and the transition from the "temporary" Commission of Government became the more permanent condition of

[104] Kevin Major. *As Near to Heaven by Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador*. . .,382.
[105] Robert James Allen Harding.. "Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1949." . . ., 113..

confederation.

Post-Confederation Commemoration

At 11:59 p.m., 31 May 1949, Newfoundland became the 10th province of Canada. The decision was not taken lightly. Two referendums preceded confederation. The first, on 3 June 1948, resulted in 44.5% of Newfoundlanders voting for responsible government, 41.1% for confederation, and 14.3% for continued government by commission.[106] Because the British government mandated that a clear majority was required to determine the fate of the island, a second run-off referendum was held on 22 July 1948. The results were then 52.3% for confederation with Canada (78,323 votes), to 47.4% for responsible government (71,344).[107] Campaigning was deeply divisive and the outcome was decided along religious and rural/urban lines, with Catholics favoring responsible government and Protestants favoring confederation, and St. John's favoring responsible government and the outports favored confederation.[108] There was little public celebration with the results, perceived more as something lost than something gained. Kevin Major captured the sentiment in his popular history, *As Near to Heaven by Sea*:

> . . . When all was said and done, the rejection of nationhood was not without remorse . . . It was bound up with the indignity of having relinquished it in 1934. . . No person who walked into a polling booth wanted anything more than a chance at building a workable nation, where independence was coupled with equality of opportunity. But a majority of voters didn't see that as one of the options before them. . . So they opted for the next best thing: Canada.[109]

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[106] S.J.R. Noel. *Politics in Newfoundland. . .*, 257.
[107] Ibid., 259.
[108] Ibid., and Kevin Major. *As Near to Heaven by Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador. . .*, 401.
[109] Kevin Major. *As Near to Heaven by Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador. . .*, 402.

Confederation therefore signaled a regrettable but definite end to the Newfoundland nationalism that permeated the public consciousness from 1916 to 1934. The most profound symbol of Newfoundland's nationalism was its remembrance of World War I. The central mythology to this remembrance remained that of Beaumont Hamel. Removed of its association with nation-forming, the memory of Beaumont Hamel was no longer inspirational, but only tragic. Beaumont Hamel was progressively becoming "an event which Newfoundlanders ought to remember, but . . . also an event which they would dearly love to forget.[110] 1949 and confederation marked a sharp up-shift in this transition. Corner Brook's newspaper, *Western Star*, ran a semi-regular editorial called, "The Ex-Serviceman's Corner." On 1 July 1949, the unidentified author wrote the following:

> Friday, July 1st is Memorial Day. A day set aside by Government proclamation since the Battle of Beaumont Hamel in memory of those gallant comrades who did not return from the "Ravine" in front of the German trenches. In previous issues of this "Corner" you were informed or reminded . . . of several gallant episodes in connection with activities of the Newfoundland Armed Forces in World War I, but the imperishable action of the Regiment on the Somme in France in July 1916 was too well known to our countrymen to require repetition. However on this day (July 1st, 1946) is an appropriate time to write about it.[111]

The author then recounted the history of 1 July 1916 and the ill-fated attack. The implication of the editorial's preamble is clear: what was unnecessary in pre-confederation Newfoundland (to remind Newfoundlanders of the basic history of Beaumont Hamel) was, post-confederation, "appropriate." Whereas before, the basic history was "too well known" to the editor's "countrymen" to require repetition, the

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[110]Robert James Allen Harding.. "Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1949." . . .,16.

[111] "The Ex-Serviceman's Corner," *Western Star*, 1 July 1949. http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/compoundobject/collection/westernstar/id/20971/rec/1.

author assumes that the post-confederation reader would benefit. Stories of "gallant" action by members of the "imperishable" Regiment are less important to tell, if it cannot be assumed that the reader knows the larger historical context. In post-confederation Newfoundland, Beaumont Hamel's significance as a moment of nation building was being replaced by its significance as a moment of national loss. National pride was being replaced by a sense of national remorse. This remorse would steadily increase over the five decades that followed confederation, as any remembrance of pride was slowly forgotten.

Of course, there were exceptions to this trend. The collective remembrance of the last generation did not (or, could not) vanish with confederation. Veterans of the Newfoundland Regiment were still alive as a testament to what could have been, but they were also alive as evidence of what was. Indeed, in the early 1960's, there was an echo of the memories of the 1920s. On 1 July 1961, 45 years after Beaumont Hamel, a contingent of Newfoundlanders returned to the site to lay a commemorative plaque, in a ceremony to re-open the restored battlefield. The plaque, which listed the Regiment's battle honours, read as follows:

TO THE MEMORY OF THE FALLEN
OF
THE ROYAL NEWFOUNDLAND
REGIMENT
WHO
CAME ACROSS THE SEAS
AT
THE CALL OF DUTY
IN THE GREAT WAR
1914-1918
IN DEFENCE UNYIELDING
IN ATTACK UNFLINCHING
STEADY UNTO DEATH.

The romanticism of the Regiment unflinchingly and unyieldingly marching steadily unto death was atypical for post-confederation Newfoundland. Nonetheless, in addition to the re-opening of Caribou Park, Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson published *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, in 1964. It was a complete history of Newfoundlanders in battle from the 17th century to the Second World War. With introductions from the Regiment's Honourary Colonel, and the then Colonel-in-Chief (Princess Mary), the Provincial Government distributed a copy to every surviving member of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment from the Great War. Although significant as the "standard" history, and later republished by McGill-Queens University Press as such, *The Fighting Newfoundlander* is rife with a subjective romanticism that often serves to cultivate the memory of the Regiment, as opposed to objectively examining it. When concluding the chapter on Beaumont Hamel, Nicholson writes:

> And so, while the rest of Canada light-heartedly celebrates July 1 as the anniversary of Confederation, to the people of the newest province this day will always be one on which to foregather beneath the War Memorials throughout the land and renew their pledge of dedication, in proud memory of those of dauntless courage who fought and fell in Freedom's cause."[112]

Such examples of romantic sentimentality were however the exception in the Province of Newfoundland. A more typical narrative of Newfoundland's remembrance of Beaumont Hamel is found in Joy Cave's *What Became of Corporal Pittman?*, a popular and accessible account of the Regiment at Beaumont Hamel that was first published in 1976.[113] Frank Wall, then President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, wrote a foreword to the book, and stated that the "story of the Regiment equals any work of fiction but unfortunately is true . . . If this work

[112] G.W.L. Nicholson. *The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.* . .,283.

[113] Joy Cave. *What Became of Corporal Pittman?* St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1976.

accomplishes nothing more than presenting the futility of war, it will have served its purpose."[114] This was the prevailing narrative of post-confederation Newfoundland. Cave's "Introit" presents an exchange with who is presumed to be her young daughter, when they are visiting the park at Beaumont Hamel. Her daughter's incredulity with the Somme would have been typical of the era:

> "What do you mean?" she demanded. "A whole battalion marched down that slope and just disappeared?
> "I didn't say they disappeared. I said they were annihilated – inside twenty minutes or so" [. . .]
> "Shelling?" she hazarded.
> "Not altogether! Mainly well-placed machine guns."
> "Who were they and what were they trying to do? What did they win?" [. . .]
> "They were the men of the First Battalion, the Newfoundland Regiment and they were trying to capture the village of Beaumont Hamel – down there, behind the trees. They didn't actually *win* anything. Beaumont Hamel wasn't captured till five months later."
> "Poor souls," she said softly. "What a tragedy! What a pity! What a *waste*!"[115]

The daughter speaks to what was then Newfoundland's collective remembrance of Beaumont Hamel. Removed of nationalistic pride and glory, all that was left was the tragedy, the pity, and the waste.

A New Low: Memory During the Moratorium

In 1992, the Honourable John Crosbie, then Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and future Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador, declared a moratorium on the Northern Cod Fishery. Decades of mismanagement of the fishery were to blame, notably since confederation of 1949. In that year, approximately 270,000 tons Atlantic Cod was landed off the East Coast of Newfoundland, principally by

[114] Ibid., xii.
[115] Ibid., 1-2.

Newfoundlanders using traditional methods. By 1968, nearly two decades after confederation, over 800,000 tons were landed from the East Coast, by the fisheries of many seafaring nations and using techniques that now included trawlers, radar, and sonar.[116] In 1949, Newfoundlanders and Canadians fished approximately 300,000 tons of Atlantic Cod, while all other countries captured 400,000 tons. By the late 1960's, the domestic fishery catch remained constant, while foreign nations had increased annual catch rates to 1.5 million tons.[117] It was unsustainable. By 1992, the total catch was little more than 100,000 tons, one third of pre-confederation totals. Newfoundlanders equated such statistics to confederation.

With Crosbie's announcement came the end to the preceding four centuries of Newfoundland's social identity, way of life, and means of sustaining itself. With the announcement, over 35,000 fisheries workers from 400 outports were made unemployed.[118] For many Newfoundlanders, there was a single factor to blame for the collapse of the fishery: the federal government's systemic mismanagement, represented by the incompetence of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Indeed, even in 1992, the year that would end in the complete moratorium, Crosbie's DFO set the quota for cod at 187,969 tons, even though the total catch from 1991 was 129,033 tons.[119]

On 1 July 1992, mere weeks prior to the announcement of the moratorium, the Honourable John Crosbie headed to the Newfoundland outport of Bay Bulls to celebrate

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[116] Lawrence Hamilton *et al*. "Above and Below the Water: Social/Ecological Transformation in Northwest Newfoundland." *Population and Environment* 25.3 (2004): 195-215 . . . 200.

[117] Higgins, Jenny. "Cod Moratorium." *Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador*. Last accessed 30 April 2017. http://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/economy/moratorium.php.

[118] Lan Gien. "Land and Sea Connection: The East Coast Fishery Closure, Unemployment and Health." Canadian Journal of Public Health 91.2 (2000), 121.

[119] L. MacDowell. Chapter 12: Coastal Fisheries. In *An Environmental History of Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press 2012.

Canada Day, the 125th in the nation's history. It was also the 76th anniversary of Beaumont-Hamel, although the battle was noticeably absent from many of the day's leading headlines. At Bay Bulls, Crosbie was accosted by a large group of protesters who would be affected by a moratorium, leading the Minister of Fisheries to angrily retort that "I didn't take the fish from the God damned waters." He then attempted to lead the crowd in a rendition of the provincial anthem, "Ode to Newfoundland." Few, if any, members of the crowd joined him.[120]

Newfoundland's way of life had ceased, and with it, a sense of pride that Newfoundlanders shared in their history was lost. Crosbie himself recognized as much in his 1997 autobiography: *No Holds Barred: My Life in Politics.*[121] "Through four centuries, the northern cod was the economic foundation for the settlement and growth of communities along the east coast of Newfoundland and the coast of Labrador. Without the abundant fish stocks, there would have been no Newfoundland as a British colony, a British dominion, or, after 1949, a province of Canada. . . . Cod was the reason why Newfoundland was settled; it permitted our people to survive."[122] Crosbie later continued that the "way of life of the outports of Newfoundland has been centred on the fishery from the earliest days, but the nature of people's dependency has changed. In recent years, their economic survival has depended less on the fish they caught than on their ability to qualify for financial-support programs. Federal unemployment insurance is the lifeblood of rural Newfoundland."[123] Relative self-sufficiency, even in the face of

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[120] "Newfoundlanders Protest Cod Moratorium on Canada Day" *CBC Digital Archives.* http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/1992-newfoundlanders-protest-cod-moratorium

[121] John C Crosbie and Geoffrey Stevens. *No Holds Barred: My Life in Politics. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997.*

[122] Ibid., 375-376.

[123] Ibid., 384.

overwhelming hardship, had been replaced by a dependency on federal subsidy. Many Newfoundlanders blamed that same federal government for their inability to maintain that self-sufficiency in the first place.

In the decade that followed the cod moratorium, there was a renewed interest in the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont Hamel. The predominant narrative was wholly that of the sombre tragedy, leaving little room for any discussion of pride, and still less room for talk of inspiration or utility. Kevin Major, the St. John's writer who has authored 18 fiction and non-fiction books, was a leading proponent of this narrative. In 1995, he published *No Man's Land*, a semi-fictional portrayal of the Newfoundland Regiment during its preparations for Beaumont Hamel, and the conduct of the actual attack.[124] The novel would later be incorporated into the curriculum of many Newfoundland high-school English students, and became the limits of those young Newfoundlanders' understanding of the history of the battle.

In *No Man's Land*, purpose and valour are replaced by futility and humiliation. In a blatant and palpable confrontation with the symbolism of the caribou, Major describes the assault: "The Hun were having their way, their guns fixed on the gaps in the wire. The men were felled like caribou on the Island, channeled together by fences of toppled spruce."[125] Major thus attempts to reappropriate the symbolism that had previously been made to signify the proud Newfoundlander, ever standing on guard over battlefields of Europe and Gallipoli. Now, the caribou is meant to represent the hunted, the sacrificed, and the desperate.

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[124] Kevin Major. *No Man's Land.* Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1995.
[125] Ibid., 237.

In 2001, Major continued with this theme by authoring the best selling and accessible history of Newfoundland, *As Near to Heaven by Sea.* Beaumont Hamel is defined only by its futility. Any suggestion of utility or nationalism is completely absent. The actual assault is described in few lines: "Just past 9 a.m. the British generals surveying the scene from behind the lines, in a display of unfathomable stupidity, sent word that yet another regiment would be sent into the brunt of the German fire. Many of the Newfoundland Regiment died, unable to get past their own barbed wire; many were felled in no-man's land like so much colonial excess."[126] For Major, the legacy of Beaumont Hamel is not found in such depictions of the attack. Indeed, he argues that descriptions of the "incredible courage" of the men only serve to detract from the real legacy, the "unanswered questions about the event itself."[127] He emphasizes the last of these unanswered questions by recalling Newfoundland's historical sacrifice to the colonial power. Why were the Newfoundlanders, who throughout their history had given "so much" to Britain, "sent into such a hopeless situation merely to satisfy the egos of the brass who knew there would be less to answer for than if they had been the sons of London merchants of the fishermen of Cornwall."[128]

Major's bias is clear here, and such an "unanswered question" could only be offered by an author who is ignorant of the fact that 32 battalions suffered more than 500 casualties on the first day of the Somme. Only one of them, the 1st Newfoundland, was an Empire battalion. The remainder were all either Regular Force, part of Kitchener's New Army, or Territorial Force, and included such units as the 1st London Rifle Brigade, and

[126] Kevin Major. *As Near to Heaven by Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador.* Toronto: Penguin Books, 2002, 330.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid., 331.

the 1st London Scottish. Other units suffering more than 500 casualties included the 10th West Yorks (the only unit suffering more casualties than the Newfoundlanders on the first day of the Somme), the New Army's Leeds Pals Battalion and the Public Schools Battalion, and the British Regular Force 1st Border Battalion, which suffered 575 casualties on the first day, and whose Pte P. Smith was later quoted with the following: "It was pure bloody murder. Douglas Haig should be hung, drawn, and quartered for what he did on the Somme. The cream of British manhood was shattered in less than six hours."[129] No objective reading of 1 July 1916 casualty lists can conclude that the "brass" sacrificed the lives of Newfoundland Regiment men so that the lives of sons of "London merchants" or "fisheremen from Cornwall" were preserved.

Nonetheless, *As Near to Heaven by Sea* presented a compelling narrative for the time, that of a self-interested foreign power sacrificing the future promise of Newfoundland. Similar terminology was adopted in the campaigning that led-up to confederation, and Major employs the same phrasing to describe the impact of Beaumont Hamel as he does to describe the emigration of Newfoundlanders following the cod moratorium. On this exodus, Major says that "nothing matters more to Newfoundlanders than family. The sons and daughters didn't come home [after the cod moratorium], of course . . . Except for the vacation days of summer, whole outports have turned ghostly quiet.[130] Rife with this narrative of sacrifice and loss, *As Near to Heaven by Sea*, made it to the *Globe and Mail* and *Maclean's* National Bestseller Lists, and was nominated for the Pearson Writer's Trust Non-Fiction Prize.

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[129] Casualty figures drawn from Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme* . . ., 311.
[130] Kevin Major. *As Near to Heaven by Sea* . . ., 449.

At the time of publication of *As Near to Heaven by Sea*, there was almost no competing narrative to that of tragedy and loss. In 2004, Robert Harding, then a Master's Degree candidate at Dalhousie University, published a thesis entitled "Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, 1916 - 1949." His position was that from the Great War to confederation, Newfoundlanders were "encouraged" to remember Beaumont Hamel with "solemn pride as an inspiring moment in their nation's history."[131] In 2004, 55 years after confederation and 12 years after the cod moratorium, this "encouragement" was almost inconceivable when positioned within Major's myth of the first of July, that of a "sombre anniversary of their nation's death."[132] That Newfoundlander's could take pride in Beaumont Hamel was inconceivable; that Newfoundlander's ever took pride in the sacrifice was ignorant, the result of external manipulation.

The generation that followed the cod moratorium also oversaw huge growth in the publishing and republishing of diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies of the Newfoundland Regiment soldiers. Almost exclusively, these texts adopt the post-confederation narrative of tragedy. *The Letters of Mayo Lind – Newfoundland's Unofficial War Correspondent 1914-1916* was reprinted in 2001, 82 years after its initial release in 1919. Recall that in the original 1919 edition, Mayo's letters were published with a romanticised introduction by the St. John's journalist J. Alex Robinson, who expressed that Lind "told the story which Newfoundlander's were not to read until the writer with many of the flower of the Old Colony's manhood had been enrolled in the

[131] Robert James Allen Harding. "Glorious Tragedy: Newfoundland's Cultural Memory of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, 1916-1949," . . ., 4.
[132] Ibid.

glorious army of soldiers, faithful unto death, to whom the gates of immortality have been opened by the golden keys of service and sacrifice."[133] The 2001 edition is prefaced by Dr. Peter Neary. Neary's introduction completely lacks the sentimentality of Robinson's. Instead of rejoicing Newfoundland's past status as British Empire colony, Neary laments it as a primary cause for Newfoundland's automatic entry into the war, a war he summarizes in its entirety with the line "as death and destruction piled upon death and destruction, there seemed to be no way out, until, finally, the Allies were able to gain the advantage and force surrender."[134] Neary even tempers this victory by explaining that the subsequent peace was temporary, and that the Great War had achieved little more than "sow the seeds" of World War II.

The 85 years of conflict between the Robinson and Neary narratives represents three generations battling for the cultural remembrance of the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont Hamel. Winter describes a "braiding" between remembrance and history, where the threads jointly inform "shifting and contested understandings of the past."[135] The competing Robinson and Neary narratives suggest that this braiding is more complex. Remembrance of Beaumont Hamel has instead been a tug of war.

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[133] Francis Lind. *The Letters of Mayo Lind: Newfoundland's Unofficial War Correspondent 1914-1916*. . ., xxii.

[134] Ibid, vii.

[135] Jay Winter. *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*. . ., 6.

CHAPTER 4 – CULTURAL MEMORY AT THE CENTENNIAL

The Complexity of Commemoration

Newfoundland in 2016 is a province defined by contradiction; of growing confidence (having become a so-called "have" economic province over the last decade), balanced by uncertainty (in, for example, the source of the province's recent economic prosperity, the oil and gas industry).[136] This uncertainty is captured in an interview between *MacLean's Magazine* and the CEO of The Rooms, Dean Brinton. In the lead-up to the centenary of Beaumont Hamel, he was asked to comment on the significance of the commemoration:

> If you're from Newfoundland, you think, 'For Christ's sake, will it ever end?' From the cod moratorium, through the boom and bust of oil and gas, why do people have such pride in their place of birth? . . . Isolation, really terrible weather, economic hardship—why do people put up with this? A lot has to do with the fact that we have these symbols."[137]

Brinton then cited a recent survey of Newfoundlanders, conducted by The Rooms, which asked the public to identify the formative event in the province's history, that which "most created its unique culture and sense of identity." Over 90 percent identified the Battle of Beaumont Hamel.[138] The significance of this survey is certain: for these 90 percent of respondents, the collective remembrance of Beaumont Hamel is indivisible from Newfoundlanders' sense of culture and identity. One hundred years later, Beaumont Hamel has emerged to be simultaneously a symbol of tragic loss (the predominant post-

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[136] Rachelle Younglai. "A Boom Goes Bust." *The Globe and Mail.* 19 March 2016. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/newfoundlands-economic-woes/article29297377/

[137] Patricia Treble. "Why Beaumont Hamel is so close to our hearts." *Maclean's Magazine.* 22 June 2016. http://www.macleans.ca/society/why-beaumont-hamel-so-close-our-hearts/

[138] Ibid.

confederation narrative), and as a formative source of identity (a crucial component of the pre-confederation narrative).

Such a complex collective remembrance is evident in Memorial University's Fall 2016 Alumni Magazine, *Luminus.* By its very existence, the university is a testament to public remembrance. It was founded in 1925 "in the name of those who fought and died [in the First World War].[139] To commemorate the centennial of the First World War, the issue is titled "Acts of Remembrance," and it offers a "series of reflections" from alumni and patrons to "honour their sacrifice through the living memorial that is our university."[140] "Acts of Remembrance" begins with a message from the university President and Vice-Chancellor, Gary Kachanoski. The conflicted memory of Beaumont Hamel is clear. He opens by stating that commemorating the First World War is Memorial University's "special responsibility," again as a "living memorial," to those who were killed during the war.[141] He then quotes a passage from the university's memorial wall: "In freedom of learning their cause and sacrifice might not be forgotten."[142] Kachanoski next links the memory of Beaumont Hamel with the collective identity of the province. He does so not by emphasizing a sense of loss, but of collective pride. "In the pages that follow, our alumni tell the stories of their own acts of remembrance, each one a personal reflection of their relationship to our shared history. . . Clearly these tributes are offered with great pride by each of our contributors. Pride is also what we should all share in the collective demonstration of our provinces growth and

[139] "Acts of Remembrance." *Luminus* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2016), 1.
[140] Ibid., 1.
[141] Gary Kachanoski, "Message from the President." *Luminus* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2016), 2.
[142] Ibid.

progress."[143] For Kachanoski, the First World War represents a foundation from which the province flourished. This is a significant departure from the post-confederation narrative, when the First World War was considered more a tragic affliction, from which the Dominion perished.

Kachanoski's appraisal of the prideful tone of the alumni's tributes is accurate. Throughout the journal, sacrifice is paired with pride. Frank Gogos, described as an "author and historian" who manages the Newfoundland Bronze Factory, recalls that Beaumont Hamel was more a birth than a funeral. On the battle, he says that the story of the Newfoundland Regiment "does not end there, it is where it actually begins. In fact, the advance on Beaumont Hamel is also significant in that it was the one time for the entire war that the Regiment was assigned an objective and failed to reach it."[144] For Gogos, Beaumont Hamel is remarkable in that military objectives weren't met. His story continues with a description of the Regiment's "unfaltering" operations at Gueudencourt, Monchy-le-Preux, Langemarck, and Poelcapelle, "sometimes not only taking the objective, but that of the neighboring battalions as well." The attack at Beaumont Hamel is interpreted as a tragic blip in the series of First World War Newfoundland Regiment successes. This is a narrative that had largely been muted since the armistice, after which Beaumont Hamel came to represent the totality of Newfoundland's Great War experience.

Gogos' sentiments are consistent throughout the journal. Tracy Madore, great-niece of Private George A. Madore, describes a trip to Beaumont Hamel that was

[143] Ibid.
[144] Frank Gogos. "After Beaumont Hamel." *Luminus* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2016), 5.

"everything [she] thought it would be and so much more." With some pride, she recounts that during the trip, when she said she was from Newfoundland, it "brought about a completely different level of respect."[145] Elsewhere in *Luminus*, Heather Bambrick, a Memorial University alumnus, describes researching Newfoundland's wartime history with "tremendous pride and remarkable grief."[146] She came to a single conclusion: "While these boys may have been fighting for King and country (Britain), they were doing so representing one place and one place only: Newfoundland."[147] At Beaumont Hamel's centennial, nationalism has again been allowed to enter the conversation.

Nonetheless, the same issue of *Luminus* concludes with an editorial piece called "Last Post," written by Kevin Major, Memorial University class of 1973.[148] For Major, Beaumont Hamel and Newfoundland's experience in the Great War remains fundamentally tragic, and there is no sense of the preceding pages' pride or nationalism. Instead, there is only the same sense of lost potential that characterized *As Near to Heaven by Sea* and *The Danger Tree*. He concludes his remarks with, "It is sobering words we recite each July 1, each Nov. 11. *We will remember them*. Most surely we will, and think of them as the men they would have become had war not denied them the chance to live out their youth and to grow old . . ."[149] Newfoundland's remembrance of Beaumont Hamel at its centennial contains elements of both the pre and post-confederation mythologies. Major remains firmly planted in the latter.

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[145] Tracy Madore, "Pte George A. Madore" *Luminus* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2016), 7.
[146] Heather Bambrick. "For the Boys." *Luminus* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2016), 19.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Kevin Major. "Last Word." *Luminus* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2016), 31.
[149] Ibid.

There are other signs though that the remembrance of Beaumont Hamel is generating a renewed sense of pride and nationalism. As with the early 1920s and at the turn of the century, the number of published memoirs, novels, articles, etc. has increased noticeably. Frank Gogos wrote and published *The Royal Newfoundland Regiment in the Great War – A Guide to the Battlefields and Memorials of France, Belgium, and Gallipoli,* in 2014. As with his article in *Luminous,* he contends that the Newfoundland Regiment's wartime service goes beyond 1 July 1916, and the failure of that day was an exception when examining the Regiment's experience in full.[150] Further evidence of a renewed interest in Beaumont Hamel is found in Captain Sydney Frost's memoir *A Blue Puttee at War,* published in 2014.[151] Frost was one of the original "Blue Puttees," the first 500 volunteers to the Regiment, and was one of the few able to fight throughout the entire war. His unpublished collection of writings was well known to scholars of the Newfoundland Regiment, and was heavily relied upon as a reference for Colonel Nicholson's *The Fighting Newfoundlander*. That they were finally published in 2014, 29 years after Frost died, is suggestive of a renewed interest in the Regiment. This "renewed interest," with its sometimes uneasy nod to the patriotic and prideful remembrances of the pre-confederation era, signifies yet another evolution in the way Newfoundlanders remember Beaumont Hamel.

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[150] Frank Gogos. *The Royal Newfoundland Regiment in the Great War.* St. John's: Flanker Press, 2015.

[151] Sydney Frost. *A Blue Puttee at War: The Memoir of Captain Sydney Frost, MC.* St. John's: Flanker Press, 2014.

CONCLUSION – EVER ADVANCING

Newfoundlanders' relationship with the memory of Beaumont Hamel has always been an uneasy topic. Even during those patriotic wartime *Evening Telegram* or *Western Star* editorials, extolling the sacrifice for the benefit of the greater good, there was always the tacit acknowledgement that such a sacrifice implied absolute devastation for households all across the province. At a more macro-level, most wartime readers must have understood that Beaumont Hamel, and the combined losses of the Great War effort, were to have dire consequences on the Colony's future. In describing members of the Regiment, these newspaper editorials often spoke in generational terms, referring to them as "the pride of the Dominion," or "the best of a generation." Though it was often unstated, for so small a colony to lose such a significant segment of its best and brightest in the span of 30 minutes in France was sure to mean that some of that colony's potential would never be realized.

That Newfoundland sacrificed so much at Beaumont Hamel has never been contested. The decimation of the Regiment on the Somme has been regarded as tragic since the first reports arrived back in Newfoundland in mid-July 1916. The question has always been whether there could be pride, nationalism, or some other utility drawn from the sacrifice, or whether the attack was so futile, the tragedy so absolute, that it overshadows all else.

Newfoundlanders' answer to this question has never been definitive. How Newfoundlanders have answered has depended largely on their self-perception, or their confidence in Newfoundland. During the war, when the tragedy was freshest, it

represented Britain's oldest colony, pulling above her weight in the service of the Empire. The enormous casualties were proof that Newfoundland was willing to sacrifice so much for a cause so just. Beaumont Hamel became then a point of national pride, and this pride was leveraged to strengthen support for the war effort. In the years that followed, when Newfoundland was burdened by the financial and societal toll of its wartime commitment, remembrance of the sacrifice was again leveraged as evidence of Newfoundland's resolve. When Haig spoke in St. John's and in France of the pride he felt in having commanded the Newfoundland Regiment, he was cultivating this narrative.

In 1934, after Newfoundland had willfully given up its right to self-determination by submitting to the rule of Government by Commission, this narrative began to evolve. The evolution was slow at first. At this point, not yet two decades removed from the Somme, when Newfoundlanders remembered those who died at Beaumont Hamel they were remembering relatives, and not old black and white photographs. They were remembering brothers, husbands, and sons. Nonetheless, the nationalism of the post-war narrative was beginning to fade. It was counterintuitive to feel patriotic about an event that was at least indirectly related to the loss of one's country. This attitude matured in the years following confederation, when the loss of sovereignty became permanent. It came to a crescendo during the cod moratorium, when Newfoundlanders felt robbed not only of their nation, but also of their way of life. Remembrance of Beaumont Hamel, now completely stripped of its patriotism, became a study in lost potential, of "what ifs," of collective regret.

The centennial of Beaumont Hamel saw the re-emergence of certain pre-confederation attitudes. For some, pride and nationalism have been permitted to reenter

the conversation. Perhaps this is due to Newfoundlanders' renewed self-confidence with improved economic prospects. No doubt, it is also related to the fact that a century has allowed sufficient time to heal the some scars of the Somme. Whatever the cause, future historians will look back to centennial commemorations as yet another evolution in the public remembrance of Beaumont Hamel. The only certainty is that these future historians will be examining the remembrance from yet another perspective. The legacy of Beaumont Hamel, and how Newfoundlanders choose to remember it, will continue to evolve. The study of Newfoundland's remembrance of Beaumont Hamel is thus the study of dead men, ever advancing.

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