

THE FORESTERS' SCRIBE

*Remembering the Newfoundland Forestry
Companies Through the First World War Letters of
Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant John A. Barrett*



URSULA A. KELLY

© 2020 Ursula A. Kelly

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior written consent of the publisher.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

Title: The foresters' scribe : remembering the Newfoundland Forestry Companies through the First World War letters of Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant John A. Barrett / Ursula A. Kelly.

Names: Kelly, Ursula A. (Ursula Anne), 1956- author. | Container of (work): Barrett, John A., 1872-1955. Correspondence. Selections.

Series: Social and economic studies (St. John's, N.L.) ; no. 87.

Description: Series statement: Social and economic studies ; no. 87 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20200355082 | Canadiana (ebook) 20200355880 | ISBN 9781894725736 (softcover) | ISBN 9781894725842 (EPUB) | ISBN 9781894725859 (Kindle) | ISBN 9781894725866 (PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Barrett, John A., 1872-1955—Correspondence. | LCSH: Great Britain. Army. Newfoundland Forestry Companies—History. | LCSH: World War, 1914-1918—Regimental histories—Great Britain. | LCSH: World War, 1914-1918—Personal narratives, Canadian. | LCSH: World War, 1914-1918—War work—Great Britain. | LCSH: World War, 1914-1918—War work—Newfoundland and Labrador. | LCSH: Lumbermen—Newfoundland and Labrador—Biography.

Classification: LCC D547.N55 K45 2020 | DDC 940.4/12718—dc23

Front cover images: Postcard portrait of Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant John A. Barrett by A.F. MacKenzie, Birnam, Scotland, 1918. (Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, World War One Artifacts 09.01.004, Memorial University of Newfoundland). Newfoundland Forestry Companies shoulder badge. (Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, World War One Artifacts 04.03.007, Memorial University of Newfoundland).

Back cover images: Newfoundland Regiment caribou pin. (Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, World War One Artifacts 23.03.012, Memorial University of Newfoundland). Original letters of Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant John A. Barrett. (Courtesy of the Barrett family).

Copy editing: Sandy Newton

Cover design, page design and typesetting: Alison Carr

Published by ISER Books

Institute of Social and Economic Research

Memorial University of Newfoundland

PO Box 4200

St. John's, NL A1C 5S7

www.hss.mun.ca/iserbooks/

Printed in Canada

26 25 24 23 22 21 20 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Funded by the Government of Canada



CONTENTS

List of Images	ix
Foreword by Melvin Baker	xi
Acknowledgements	xv
Abbreviations	xix
1. Introduction	1
The Newfoundland Forestry Companies, 1917–1919	7
Wartime Correspondence and the Letters of Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant John A. Barrett	33
John A. Barrett: A Short Biography	49
2. The Letters of Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant John A. Barrett, June 1917 to January 1919	53
3. Conclusion	251
Commemorating Those Who Served	256
The Newfoundland Forestry Companies and the Great War	259

Appendices

Appendix A – The Newfoundland Forestry Companies: A Timeline	271
Appendix B – The Newfoundland Forestry Companies: The Nominal Roll	275
Appendix C – The Newfoundland Forestry Companies of the First World War by John A. Barrett	297
References	307
Index	325
About the Author	333

LIST OF IMAGES

Members of the Newfoundland Forestry Companies, Craigvinean, Dunkeld, Scotland, 1917	ii–iii
A partial map of Scotland featuring the area around Dunkeld and Kenmore, Perthshire, where the NFC operated	2
Governor Davidson’s call to the men of Newfoundland	12
Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant John Archelaus Barrett and Ena Constance Culbard on their wedding day, June 17, 1920, Dunkeld	51
Regimental Quartermaster Corporal (later Sergeant) John A. Barrett by A.F. MacKenzie, Birnam, Scotland, 1918.	54
The first draft of the Newfoundland Forestry Companies was welcomed at Ayr, Scotland, by Mayson M. Beeton of the UK Timber Supply Department, June 12, 1917	62
Three NFC members at Craigvinean, Dunkeld, ca. 1917	71
An NFC member on horseback, Craigvinean, Dunkeld, ca. 1917.	74
NFC foresters at the lumberyard, Craigvinean, Dunkeld, 1917.	88
Stacked lumber at the foot of Craigiebarns, 1917	92
An advertisement for a patriotic concert	122
A group of Newfoundland foresters, Craigvinean, Dunkeld, 1917	132
Foresters and visitors at a mill at Craigvinean, Dunkeld, 1917.	142
Dalguise Castle, Dalguise, Scotland, ca.1915	144
A log rollaway from a tramline near B Company Camp, Craigvinean, Dunkeld, 1917.	149
The NFC motor car parked at camp	176
Two foresters with swagger sticks at Craigvinean, Dunkeld, ca. 1917	183

An NFC camp at Craigvinean, with the north rail line to Inverness in the background, Dunkeld, 1917	187
Some NFC members gathered inside a mill at Craigvinean, Dunkeld, 1918	193
An NFC member does camp repairs, ca. 1918	208
Gravestone of Private Selby Taylor, Little Dunkeld Presbyterian Church, Dunkeld	212
The SS <i>Florizel</i> , sometime after 1909 and before 1918	219
A Newfoundland First World War recruitment poster	223
The funeral procession of Private Gerald Hogan, August 18, 1918, Kenmore, Scotland	229
Loch Tay and a denuded Drummond Hill, with Ben Lawers in the background and Taymouth Castle in the right foreground, ca. 1920	236
RQMS John A. Barrett, ca. 1919	241
Gravestone of Private Gerald Hogan and Private Arthur Wyatt, Kenmore Parish Churchyard, Kenmore	246
Newfoundland soldiers board the SS <i>Cassandra</i> at Glasgow, June 24, 1919	249
Gilbert Bayes' model for the forester and fisher, National War Memorial, St. John's, 1923	252
The National War Memorial, St. John's, ca. 1924	257
A War Office truck at an NFC camp, ca. 1918	274
Loading lumber for transport to Aberfeldy railway, Drummond Hill, Kenmore	305

FOREWORD

Newfoundland and Labrador does not yet have a balanced historical overview of its participation in and contribution to the United Kingdom's effort in the First World War, an account that would be what St. John's journalist Sir Patrick T. McGrath (1928) called "a real record for all time of the part Newfoundland played, on sea and on land, abroad and at home, in the great struggle" (p. 2). In this regard, until the publication in 1964 of the government-commissioned history by Gerald W.L. Nicholson—*The Fighting Newfoundlander*—on the 50th anniversary of the start of the war, several previous efforts to produce a general account had fallen short. What had been completed and published generally concentrated on the gallant efforts of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment (RNR) and its heroic participation in the Battle of the Somme at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916. That tragedy, resulting in the near depletion of the Regiment's ranks, has received the most attention and understanding.

As historian James Candow (2016) recently observed in his review of The Rooms' major centenary commemoration of the war and postwar Newfoundland and Labrador, public memory is "dominated" by an emphasis on the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and Beaumont-Hamel. There has not been much commemoration for the thousands of other Newfoundland men and women who served in other branches of the country's military. There is much still to be known of all who served in the Newfoundland war effort—not only the soldiers of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, but also the naval volunteers, merchant seamen, medical doctors, nurses, and airmen, as well as those who served directly in the armed forces of the UK, Canada, and the United States.

In *The Fighting Newfoundlander* (running to over 500 pages), Gerald Nicholson devoted nine pages, about 3,700 words, to one little-known

aspect of the Newfoundland war effort, the Newfoundland Forestry Companies (NFC). Their service to King and Country has now been documented in Ursula Kelly's *The Foresters' Scribe*, which provides a welcome contribution to our understanding of another aspect of the Newfoundland war effort.

Newfoundland loggers in 1917 were needed to harvest forests in Scotland for the war, a safer alternative to the UK's dependence, now threatened by German submarines, on importing timber by sea from Norway, Finland, Sweden, Portugal, Canada, and the United States. Kelly provides a historical overview showing how the unit was established and the foresters were recruited, as well as detailed information on the controversies over commissions and other aspects of the NFC's formation. There is information on the recruits' transport to Scotland and life there, including their work and off-hours activities, their relationship to Canadian foresters, their ability to adapt their logging methods to meet local conditions, and their re-integration into civilian life in Newfoundland.

Kelly has published widely on the twentieth-century history of local loggers. Her latest effort is based on the published writings of Curling resident John A. Barrett, a journalist and forester who also served the Forestry Companies as their press correspondent, from its formation in April 1917 to the foresters' return to Newfoundland and the unit's disbandment in August 1919. Captain Leo Murphy did similar yeoman duty as a reporter for the Newfoundland Regiment. Kelly has compiled from the Newfoundland press Barrett's letters for the 1917–19 period, which describe the departure of the first foresters from Newfoundland to Scotland and their living and working conditions in Scotland. Kelly provides an analysis of the content of these letters as well as a biographical essay on Barrett, who—like several foresters—returned with a Scottish war bride.

Barrett's letters provided reassurances to those on the home front. On November 18, 1917, Barrett informed his Newfoundland readers that the foresters were well supplied with dried cod and that ten quintals had recently been received as "a free gift" from Bowring Brothers of Liverpool. "It is quite a treat," he wrote, "to have some of our own codfish served up to us once or twice a week, and it being such a palatable article, is much enjoyed in the

mess.” A month later, the foresters were visited at their work camps by Newfoundland Governor Sir William Davidson and Prime Minister Sir Edward Morris, who had gone first to France to visit the soldiers of the Newfoundland Regiment. The Governor informed the public on his return to Newfoundland that the “foresters have done their work thoroughly well.” The Newfoundlanders had introduced a “number of improvements previously unknown in Scotland and looked upon as welcome novelties, and the output . . . was many times as great as the output would have been under normal conditions, if the work had been placed in the hands of local woodsmen.”

Along with others ineligible for combat service, the Forestry Companies provided the opportunity for males over the age of 30 to participate directly in the war. Barrett was 43 when he enlisted, while John R. Martin, NFC #8232, of Manuels, for example, was 50 when he enlisted on June 9, 1917. (His son, Corporal Robert B. Martin, RNR #499, was a Blue Puttee.) More than 500 men served overseas in the NFC, with three deaths occurring in the line of service.

After the war, however, it was the exploits of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment that gained the most attention from government and public alike. Despite an apparent oversight from the Regiment’s Padre, Father Thomas Nangle, foresters were included in the monument unveiled on July 1, 1924, at the National War Memorial in St. John’s, but their contributions to the war effort have otherwise long been forgotten. *The Foresters’ Scribe* is a major contribution in bringing the foresters back into the narrative of Newfoundland and Labrador’s Great War history.

Melvin Baker, PhD
St. John’s, NL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was my great pleasure to meet and to consult with the family of John and Ena Barrett—their children Rose E. Barrett Gillam, David G. Barrett, and Arthur W.F. Barrett, and their grandchildren Helena Barrett MacLean and John Barrett. Together they deepened my understanding of Quartermaster Sergeant John A. Barrett and the postwar life of John and Ena. I thank each of them for graciously embracing this project and displaying consistent openness and generosity toward me.

I have been fortunate to meet and work with a large number of wonderful archivists and librarians during my research for this book. Jane Anderson, archivist at Blair Castle Archive, in Pitlochry, Perthshire, Scotland, fielded a steady stream of questions related to the area where the Newfoundland Forestry Companies worked. David Arbuthnott and Ruth Brown of Dunkeld Community Archive and Michael Haigh of Aberfeldy Museum, Perthshire, were also very helpful. I am thankful to the staff at The Rooms Provincial Archives, St. John's, in particular Melanie Tucker, Craig Tucker, Charles Young, and Larry Dohey, as well as to the staff at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. Kory Penney of the Maritime History Archive at Memorial University was also helpful. I have benefitted greatly from the expertise of Pauline Cox, archivist at the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, throughout several other related projects. I also thank the staff of the Queen Elizabeth II Library of Memorial University, including those with Archives and Special Collections, the Digital Archives Initiative, and the Centre for Newfoundland Studies.

Many people in both Scotland and Newfoundland and Labrador answered questions or provided information, advice, or professional services to me. They include Major Michael Pretty, The Trail of the Caribou Research Group; Frank Gogos, Royal Newfoundland Regiment Museum, St. John's;

Sydney House, Forestry Commission Scotland; Norman Davidson, Forestry Memories, Scotland; Clive Ashton-Clements, Wee Country at War, Aberfeldy; David Mercer, Church Lads Brigade, St. John's; Daniel Devine, Grand Falls-Windsor Royal Canadian Legion #12 Museum; Dr. Ean Parsons, military and family historian, St. John's; Bryan Marsh, blogger, Paradise; Audrey Burke, Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society; Daphne Clarke, Trinity Historical Society; Neville Samson, Church of the Holy Martyrs, Port Union; Pat Angel, genealogist, St. John's; Myron R. King, Environmental Policy Institute, Grenfell Campus, Memorial University; and, Dr. Melvin Baker, prolific, generous, and respected historian of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I extend my thanks to the impressive team at ISER Books: Dr. Fiona Polack, a fabulous academic editor whose thoughtful suggestions strengthened my work; Alison Carr, the managing editor and designer, who listened carefully and patiently so as to create the elegant aesthetic of this book; and Randy Drover, book publicist and fine poet and conversationalist. I also thank the two anonymous reviewers who offered excellent suggestions, as well as enthusiasm and support for the book.

This book is the third project in as many years for which Sandy Newton was editor. It was my privilege and pleasure to collaborate again with such an exceptionally skilled and engaged editor. Sandy has an immense and positive impact on my experience of publishing and the quality of the finished product.

The Foresters' Scribe has been published with the help of a grant from the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The expeditious writing of this book was enabled by a University Research Professorship. I sincerely appreciate the support of Memorial University and the Faculty of Education. I am especially thankful to Dr. Rhonda Joy, Associate Dean of Graduate Programs and Research, whose kindness and collegiality over the years have helped sustain me in my work. I also thank Dr. Karen Goodnough, Dean of Education, for her support. As well, I thank Cathy Madol and Helen Manning of the Finance and Administration Office of

the Faculty of Education, who oversaw the research funds for this book and from whose diligence, integrity, and good will I benefit on a regular basis.

I warmly acknowledge my colleague and friend, ethnomusicologist Dr. Meghan Forsyth, School of Music, Memorial University, who was a collaborator on previous instalments of the “labour-of-love” series about the woods workers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am blessed with the friendship of Dr. Clar Doyle—scholar, educator, artist, playwright, theatre director, music aficionado, and more; truly, a man for all seasons.

I am thankful for the care and support of my siblings—Ed, Linda, Glenis, and Andrea—and a large cluster of nieces and nephews of whom I am immensely proud.

Finally, in all aspects of my life, I benefit immeasurably from the steadfast love and companionship of Patricia Singer.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANDCo – Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company

CEF – Canadian Expeditionary Force

CFC – Canadian Forestry Corps

FPU – Fishermen’s Protective Union

GWVA – Great War Veterans’ Association

NFC – Newfoundland Forestry Companies

NOFU – Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit

NPA – Newfoundland Patriotic Association

RFC – Royal Flying Corps

RNR – Royal Newfoundland Regiment

RQMS – Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant

UK – United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (In 1927, “UK” became an abbreviation for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.)

VAD – Voluntary Aid Detachment

WFS – Women’s Forestry Service

WPA – Women’s Patriotic Association

I

INTRODUCTION



A partial map of Scotland featuring the area around Dunkeld and Kenmore, Perthshire, where the NFC operated. (Courtesy of Myron R. King, Environmental Policy Institute, Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland)



Several years ago, in 2012, I undertook a study of the songs and stories of woods workers in Newfoundland and Labrador. My purpose was to explore how those who had built our early lumbering and logging industries had documented and shared their experiences through such compositions. The first pulp and paper mill, which had opened at Grand Falls in 1909, closed in 2009, but there was limited popular evidence of the cultural impact of the century-old industry, as might be seen in professional song recordings and published accounts like those available in other locations where woods work was a central occupation. Through my research, I discovered a large, albeit fragile, body of related archival materials, specifically songs, recitations, poems, and oral histories, that demonstrated an extensive but largely overlooked creative production of woods workers in the early decades of the industry.

Similarly, despite its economic and cultural significance, few scholars have attended in any comprehensive manner to the history of the forestry sector of Newfoundland and Labrador.¹ Fewer still have studied its expressive culture, in particular, the legacy of songs and stories,² or attempted to

1 Historians Rainer Baehre (2011), James Hiller (1982, 1990), and Dufferin Sutherland (1991, 1992, 1995) are notable exceptions.

2 Folklorist John Ashton's study of the lumber-camp song tradition of Central Newfoundland is the exception. Ashton challenged the preconceptions of early collectors who ignored this sector and this aspect of its expressive culture. See Ashton (1986).

make this legacy accessible for public remembrance and revitalization. Several projects and publications later,³ some of these gaps have been addressed, although there remain important stories to tell arising from this original research. One such project, the multimedia and interactive travelling exhibit *Songs and Stories of "The Forgotten Service"* (Kelly & Forsyth, 2018a), celebrated the Newfoundland⁴ foresters who served in the United Kingdom (UK), mostly in Scotland, in both the First and Second World Wars. Descendants of the foresters with whom I spoke during the research for that project often commented, "What did they do in Scotland? What was life like for them while they were away?" The exhibit attempted to answer these questions, but it became clear during the research that there was far less known about the foresters of the Great War than those of the Second World War, whose story is better documented.⁵ Upon their return from service, foresters of both wars, like other veterans, talked little about their overseas experiences. Family history pilgrimages to Scottish towns in search of answers are increasingly common—to Dunkeld and Kenmore, near the sites of First World War forester camps, and to places such as Ballater, Carrbridge, and Grantown, near some of the numerous Second World War camps. But there is very little material about the Newfoundland foresters available in Scottish archives, and about the foresters of the Great War, in particular.⁶ This dearth of information intensified my desire to explore and

3 See, for example, Kelly (2014) and Kelly and Forsyth (2018a; 2018b).

4 Historically, "Newfoundland" was the official settler name of the geographic entity that included both the island of Newfoundland and the mainland of Labrador. In 2001, the province's official name was changed to "Newfoundland and Labrador." Usage throughout this book is in keeping with the official name in the period of time under discussion. At the time of the Great War, "Newfoundland" was not yet a part of Canada.

5 See Curran (1987) for an account of the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit (NOFU) of the Second World War. See also Jeddore (2015) for a Mi'kmaw forester's account of service in the NOFU.

6 In her social history of Scottish forestry in the twentieth century, *Voices of the Forest*, Mairi Stewart (2016) included a photo of the camp at Craigvinean and a single sentence about the impressive log chute built there by the NFC.

to document their story more fully, both as part of the history of Newfoundland in the Great War and of early twentieth-century woods work in Newfoundland, generally.

There is now much written about the members and activities of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment (RNR) during the First World War.⁷ A central focus of this material is the Battle of the Somme and the Regiment's role on July 1, 1916, at Beaumont-Hamel. The staggering losses for the Allied forces on that first day of the four-and-a-half-month battle—the highest death toll of any day of the war—included the near annihilation of the First Battalion of the Regiment.⁸ The pall cast over Newfoundland by the magnitude of those losses, combined with the desperate efforts of politicians to reinvent immeasurable tragedy for political gain, shrouded all else. Historic attention to the Great War has, in ways, reproduced this myopia, resulting in an uneven account of Newfoundland's role within the conflict.

More recent scholarship, however, questions and reinterprets this role, thereby revitalizing an increasingly expansive account by adding nuanced analysis and highlighting other service contributions. For example, two books have focussed on the contributions of the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve (Hunter, 2009; Parsons & Parsons, 2009). Feminist historians have added important analyses of Newfoundland women in a variety of wartime roles, including in the Women's Patriotic Association (Duley, 2012) and the Voluntary Aid Detachment (Bishop-Stirling, 2012). As well, historian Sean Cadigan (2013) has developed a compelling and substantive critique of historic commemorative practices and the political consequences for Newfoundland of the contestation and manipulation of the memory and meaning of Beaumont-Hamel.

The Regiment's forestry unit, the Newfoundland Forestry Companies (NFC), however, has remained an underexamined wartime service whose

7 For a discussion of efforts to document Newfoundland's First World War history, see Baker and Neary (2012).

8 Of the 800 or so soldiers of the Regiment who fought at Beaumont-Hamel with the 29th British Division, more than 700 were killed, wounded, or missing in action (Baker, 2017).

story has been a mere historical sidebar to that of the combat battalions of the Regiment. *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, an official history of the Newfoundland Regiment by G.W. Nicholson, includes only a short essay devoted to the NFC. This partial chapter of a few pages in a 15-chapter, 600-page tome⁹ was, until now, the most comprehensive account of the forestry unit. Despite this lack of substance, historians writing since Nicholson's 1964 publication have not redressed the short-shrift coverage, a slight most recently repeated in the marginal place of the unit's story in First World War centenary remembrance practices in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Today, more than a century since its formation, little is known of the Newfoundland Forestry Companies. There exists no thorough account of the unit that details its emergence, its work in Scotland, where the NFC was posted from mid-1917 until early 1919, and the importance of its contribution. In addition, there has been no analysis of what such an account might add to our understanding of the Great War. This introduction and my concluding essay, in which I reflect on the Newfoundland Forestry Companies and the Great War, address these gaps. They provide a context for reader engagement with the letters included in the middle section of this book, penned during the war by Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant (RQMS) John A. Barrett, NFC #8028, who wrote regularly from Scotland about the doings of the NFC. Barrett's letters—another example of the creative production of Newfoundland's forestry sector—also construct a foundation for a reconsideration of the historic significance of the wartime service of the NFC.

9 Nicholson (1962) made even shorter shrift of the large Canadian Forestry Corps (CFC) in his history of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), devoting only two pages to it.

THE NEWFOUNDLAND FORESTRY COMPANIES, 1917–1919

On August 4, 1914, the United Kingdom declared war on Germany. A year later, with no end to the conflict in sight, a shortage of tonnage—ship cargo-carrying capacity—pressed on the government of the UK. The destructive impact of German U-boat warfare on vessel traffic compromised the government’s ability to supply the nation in continued conflict, including meeting its timber needs. Timber was essential to the war effort and huge quantities¹⁰ were required for a variety of purposes: to make pit props, the support beams used in coal mines (coal being a main energy source for the war); to construct and maintain trenches; to build barracks, duckboards, and fence posts; to make poles for communication lines and anti-landing structures; and to build bridges, railways, and ships.

The forest industry of the UK was small; since the time of the Napoleonic Wars, most of its supply of timber—more than 90 percent (Oosthoek, 2013)—was imported from the colonies, the Scandinavian countries, and Russia.¹¹ The importing of timber put a huge demand on tonnage and, by 1915, to create room for munitions, foods, and other wartime essentials, a large home supply of timber became necessary.¹² To address the problem, the government formed the Home-Grown Timber Committee under the Board of Agriculture—later the Timber Supply Department of the Board of Trade—which identified for harvest the forests and wooded estates of England and Scotland (“Newfoundland and the War,” 1917).

There was a shortage of skilled woods workers—tree fellers, haulers, and sawyers—in the UK, as well. Most eligible men were on the front lines of war.

10 For an analysis of the provenance of the timber used at the Front, see Haneca, van Daalen, and Beeckman (2018).

11 In 1913, the UK imported 11,589,811 imperial tons (11,775,792 tonnes) of lumber; in 1917, it was reduced to 2,875,143. Home-grown timber production in 1913 was 900,000 tons; in 1917 it was three million (Great Britain War Office, 1922, p. 716).

12 For an overview of the problem, the solutions, and the impact of the timber crisis on forestry in Scotland after the war, see House (2017).

In early 1916, the government appealed to Canada, a major source of its timber imports, to establish a forestry battalion. The response was rapid and, by May, Canadian foresters and equipment were on the ground in the UK, producing timber for the war effort. Several battalions followed and, by late 1916, for more efficient administration, they were reorganized into companies under the Canadian Forestry Corps (CFC). By war's end, the CFC's total strength—including officers, support personnel, foreign nationals, and prisoners-of-war—exceeded 30,000, and its 101 companies were located in various parts of the United Kingdom and France (Bird & Davies, 1919; Nicholson, 1962).

As noted earlier, Newfoundland was not a part of Canada during the First World War.¹³ Like Canada, it was a dominion—and it was the oldest colony of the British Empire. For hundreds of years, the settler economy of Newfoundland had centred on fishing, but in the second half of the nineteenth century a commercial lumbering industry emerged, based mainly on the harvesting and milling of white pine. By the 1890s, there were several large lumber mill operations in bays around the coastline, developed by entrepreneurs from Canada and Scotland (Thoms, 1967). By the early 1900s, white pine resources had waned, but the spruce and fir so well-suited to pulp and paper production had caught the attention of foreign investors. By 1909, the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company (ANDCo), owned by English newspaper barons and brothers Alfred and Harold Harmsworth—Lord Northcliffe and Lord Rothermere, respectively—were operating an integrated mill at Grand Falls. As well, Albert E. Reed, an English papermaker, had established a large pulpwood enterprise at Bishop's Falls in 1911.¹⁴

At the onset of war, Newfoundland focused its first support efforts on recruitment for the Regiment, which had distinguished itself by late 1916 in both the Gallipoli Campaign and the Battle of the Somme. When the government of the UK indicated a need for foresters from the colonies, Newfoundland

13 Newfoundland became the tenth province of Canada in 1949.

14 For an account of the emergence of the pulp and paper industry in Newfoundland, see Hiller (1982). For an overview of the history of woods work in Newfoundland and Labrador, see Kelly and Forsyth (2018b).

leaders responded again. As they saw it, the emerging industrialization of the forestry sector of Newfoundland provided an available pool of professional woods workers who could help fulfil the wartime timber needs of the Empire. The Director of Timber Supply in London, Mayson M. Beeton, was the first president of the ANDCo and was keen to see a Newfoundland contribution to resolving the problem of timber supply for the war. Beeton (1917c) later called it “a fine opportunity for showing what the Newfoundlanders can do as woodsmen in comparison with the various other nationalities which are engaged on this work throughout the United Kingdom” (p. 2).

Volunteer recruitment to maintain the Regiment, however, had stretched the limits of Newfoundland’s small and widely dispersed population. In outport communities, where most Newfoundlanders lived, life was organized around a family-based fishery. It was a household subsistence economy in which men held a central role on a year-round basis: fishing occupied the spring to fall months, along with the spring planting of vegetables and the fall harvesting. Hunting (caribou, birds, rabbits) was a fall-through-spring activity that included sealing at the front¹⁵ during March. Gathering the family fuel supply of wood occupied winter months. Removing men from this cycle of production could have dire effects on a family’s well-being.

As losses from fatalities and injuries began to steadily outnumber new recruits for the Regiment, the limits of volunteerism grew increasingly apparent to those organizing the war effort, and debates about conscription intensified. Away from the outports, in the mainport and seat of government in St. John’s, there seemed to be limited understanding of the demands of outport life (Martin, 2009). The finger of blame for low recruitment numbers was regularly and unfairly pointed toward the men of the outports,¹⁶ as well as the women some believed might be holding them back from their duty to serve. An entreaty by Governor Harris (“An Appeal,” 1918) at the launch of

15 This “front” is the local term for where seals amass on ice floes in late winter and early spring off the coasts of northeastern Newfoundland and southern Labrador.

16 Despite a prevalent belief that outport residents were not doing their part, approximately 73 percent of those who joined the RNR and NFC during the war came from rural Newfoundland (Cadigan, 2009, p. 187).

the final recruitment campaign of April 1918, prior to the introduction of conscription later that spring, was addressed to all the people of Newfoundland “but especially to those of the outports” (p. 3).

**Establishing the Unit: “Men We Must Have,
and Tonnage; Nothing Else Matters”¹⁷**

Despite known recruitment challenges, Prime Minister Morris (1917a) wrote to Governor Davidson in February 1917, while visiting the United Kingdom, to say that officials were “keen here in London to establish a battalion of Newfoundland foresters” (p. 2) to contribute to the work of Timber Supply, at that time a Department of the War Office. Morris thought it possible to send men for the early spring-to-fall period, to avoid a negative impact on the woods industries at home, which were operating largely on a fall-to-spring schedule. Davidson (1917a) responded quickly on March 25, writing to Walter Grieve, Secretary of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association (NPA)—which oversaw recruitment until August 1917—asserting: “No man deserves the claim to Manhood or the right to Citizenship who fails to answer to this summons” (p. 3).

In a telegram on April 2, Viscount Walter Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, outlined the terms of the proposal developed in consultation with Beeton (Long, 1917). Beeton’s understanding of the culture of the Newfoundland lumber woods was evident, especially so in Long’s recommendation that “each Company should be composed of men, where possible, who had already worked together in the logging camps of Newfoundland in order to facilitate recruiting and to encourage esprit de corps” (Long, 1917, p. 7). The Companies would join foresters from Canada,¹⁸ the United States,¹⁹ Portugal, and Finland, as well as those from the UK, including over 1,600 members of

17 A line from Davidson (1917a).

18 For an early account of the Canadian Forestry Corps of the First World War, see Bird and Davies (1919).

19 For an account of the Twentieth Engineers, the American regiment of forestry engineers, see Simmons and Davies (1920).

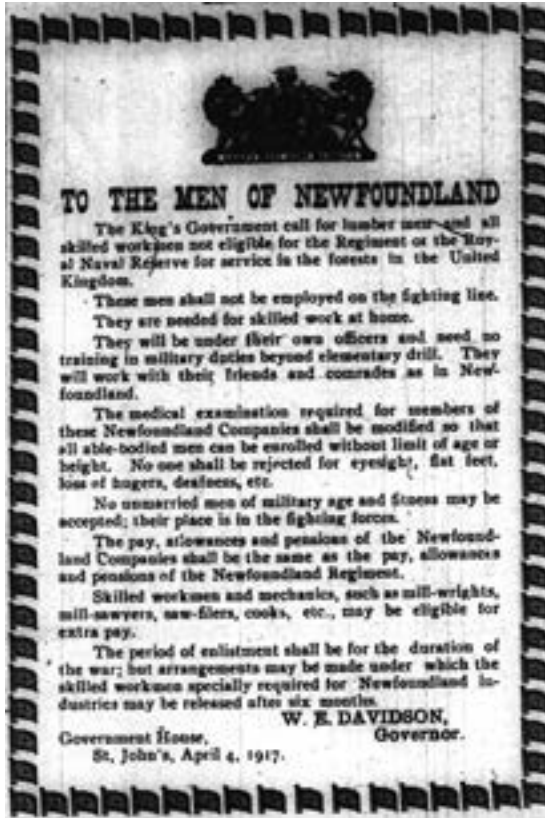
the Women's Forestry Service (Great Britain War Office, 1922, p. 716), the so-called "lumberjills."

Long officially confirmed the need for a non-combat, uniformed military unit, organized into companies not battalions, and with all costs from enlistment to demobilization borne by the government of the UK. "Newfoundlanders will work under the control of their own officers," Long (1917, p. 6) stipulated, and under the general direction of the British War Office Timber Supply Department and its director, Mayson Beeton. The pay for foresters was on par with those for other services, with bonuses for men with specialized skills.²⁰ Provision for postwar pensions was also included. Wages were set out as per diem rates, which were included in Schedule 1 of "Regimental Rates—All Arms." Wages typically included regular daily pay and a per diem field allowance, and they increased with rank. For example, privates earned \$1 per day plus a 10¢ field allowance, sergeant foremen and sawyers earned \$1.65 per day, and captains earned \$3 per day plus a 75¢ field allowance (Bennett, 1917).

Plans unfolded quickly. On April 4, 1917, Governor Davidson (1917a) issued a call to "lumber men and all skilled workers not eligible for service in the Regiment or the Royal Naval Reserve to serve as foresters in the United Kingdom" (p. 3). The NPA endorsed Long's proposal at a meeting on April 8 at which the name of the unit—the Newfoundland Forestry Companies—was also decided.²¹ The NPA also agreed with Long that only those ineligible for the Regiment due to age or impairment would be considered (Davidson, 1917e). They followed the Canadians with this restriction, who had changed their target recruit pool when the fifth forestry battalion was requested; they sought, instead, men who were suitable for forestry work but did not meet the standards for combat services (Bird & Davies, 1919).

20 For the complete pay scale, see Bennett (1917).

21 Nevertheless, the NFC is commonly referred to as the Newfoundland Forestry Corps and, sometimes, the Newfoundland Forestry Battalion. In official correspondence, it was also called the First Newfoundland Regiment Forestry Companies—see, for example, "An Appeal to the People" (1917). As well as being historically correct, "Companies" is also technically correct within the British Army organization.



Governor Davidson's call to the men of Newfoundland.
(*The Western Star*, April 11, 1917, p. 3.)

At a follow-up meeting on April 16, the terms and official name for the unit were confirmed ("The Forestry Companies," 1917). In a telegram to Governor Davidson that same day, William Scott, manager of the ANDCo at Grand Falls, identified some of the tools of the trade required to equip the Companies for overseas work. His list included: 12 dozen 3½-foot crosscut saws; 6 dozen 6-foot lance-tooth saws; 600 double-bit axes; 200 single-bit axes; 1,200 double-bit axe handles; 400 single-bit axe handles; 200 peavie²²

22 A long wooden stick with a two-ended hook—one end short and pointed and the other long and curved—that is used as a leverage tool in logging. It is also spelled peavey.

handles; and 40 sets of double-team harnesses (Scott, 1917). Governor Davidson (1917b) emphasized to Beeton the importance of the men having tools familiar to them and “not the English tools” (p. 1). Enlistment in the NFC for the duration began immediately, with provision for exceptions for those whose skills might be needed in industries at home.

On April 17, Eldon Sellars, a draper from St. John’s, was the first to enlist in the newly formed unit. He was assigned service number 001, prefixed by the numeral 8 to denote the regular members of the NFC.²³ Sellars had two brothers with the Regiment and another brother with the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). Sellars was among the first draft of foresters to depart St. John’s on May 19 aboard the SS *Florizel*. His brother Newman boarded the same ship in February 1918 to join the RFC—and died when the *Florizel* went aground in a blizzard near Cappahayden, Newfoundland. After the war ended, Eldon Sellars was also among the last few foresters to leave Kenmore, Scotland, the final site of NFC operations. He was demobilized at St. John’s on June 29, 1919.

Commissions: “Newfoundlanders First, Where Capable and Available”?²⁴

Secretary Long also included terms of organization and leadership—a proposed unit of five companies, each commanded by a Captain and two subalterns selected from a pool of Regiment officers who were no longer fit for combat on the Western Front. Non-commissioned officers, Long suggested, could be drawn from the pool of camp foremen with the ANDCo at Grand Falls and the Albert E. Reed and Company at Bishop’s Falls (Long, 1917).

Several experienced lumberers wrote Governor Davidson to request commissions in the new unit. Davidson, in consultation with the Executive

23 Commissioned officers had service numbers beginning with a zero.

24 The editor of *The St. John’s Daily Star*, H.M. Modsell, argued that this rule should apply to the assignment of commissions in the NFC (“Capable, Available,” 1917, p. 1).

Committee of the NPA, decided on leadership for the NFC. But the process quickly became contentious when, in a secret memo to Prime Minister Edward Patrick Morris, copied to NPA Forestry Committee Chair Walter Grieve and J.A. Clift of the NPA Reserve Force Committee, Davidson named his choice of officers for A Company. When the NPA Joint Committee assigned the task to recommend and endorse commissions heard of the memo, at the May 9 meeting to discuss officer selection, several members walked out, forcing Davidson to explain his overstep and withdraw his recommendations (Davidson, 1917d).

The officers of the NFC were gazetted on May 15, 1917 ("Published by Authority," 1917). As Officer Commanding, the Forestry Committee and Davidson appointed Major Michael S. Sullivan, NFC #0-191, who had been an engineer with the Reid Newfoundland Company, an assistant manager with the ANDCo at Grand Falls, and an independent pulpwood agent in St. John's. Formerly of Placentia, Sullivan had represented Placentia and St. Mary's in the Liberal government of Sir Robert Bond from 1904 to 1909 (Bates, 1994). Beeton believed that Sullivan's familiarity with woods operations through his dealings with the ANDCo and his leadership experiences were both important assets for the NFC.

Acknowledging Sullivan's lack of military experience, Beeton (1917a) noted that there was "a small nucleus of officers and non-coms from the Newfoundland Regiment who are unfit for active service at the Front who will be able to fulfill the more purely military duties in connection with the organization and work of these Companies" (p. 1). The appointment as Adjutant of Captain Hector H.A. Ross, RNR #768, of St. John's, who had been injured in the Gallipoli Campaign, brought this military experience to the leadership of the unit. Ross, who was born in Toronto, was studying electrical engineering with the Reid Newfoundland Company when he enlisted with the Regiment, after which he quickly earned a commission ("New Lieutenants," 1915). Ross was attached to the NFC on May 18, 1917. The appointment of other Regiment soldiers would follow.

Other initial commissions were assigned to leaders in the woods industries, most of whom had arrived in Newfoundland at the turn of the century to take advantage of lumbering and logging opportunities. All had extensive knowledge of, and experience in, woods operations.

Major William H. Baird, NFC #0-192, of Norris Arm, was commissioned as Captain in the newly formed NFC. Baird had immigrated to Newfoundland in 1900 from Macan, Nova Scotia, to pursue lumbering operations in Central Newfoundland with the Exploits Lumber and Pulp Company. By 1905, he was operating a mill at Northern Arm. In 1907 he had a mill at Burnt Arm and, in 1909, one at Botwoodville, where he was also Justice of the Peace ("Entries," 1907-11). At the time of his enlistment, he had been the Manager of the Carbonear-based Saunders, Howell and Company logging and milling branch at Norris Arm for several years.

Captain Hugh W. Cole, NFC #0-170, of Badger Brook, was from Farnham, Surrey, England. He had come to Newfoundland in 1905 to work with the ANDCo, where his cousin served as Secretary to Lord Northcliffe at Grand Falls. In 1908, Cole was the ANDCo lead on the great "Reindeer Trek" led by Mi'kmaw guide Mathieu (Mattie) Mitchell of Norris Point, which delivered Lapland reindeer overland from St. Anthony to Millertown in late winter, where they would be used as experimental hauling animals.²⁵ Cole became Superintendent at Badger Brook in 1912, where he was dubbed "King Cole" or "King of Badger" (Thoms, 1975). He was also immortalized in "The Badger Drive," one of the earliest and most popular song compositions about the pulp and paper industry in Newfoundland (Kelly & Forsyth, 2018b, pp. 71-73).

Michael J. Gillis, NFC #8044 / #0-193, a lumberer from Highlands, Codroy Valley, and Guy W.N. Harvey, NFC #0-194, an English civil engineer with the ANDCo, were both commissioned as Second Lieutenants. William T. O'Rourke, NFC #0-195, a clerk from St. John's and former member of the Regiment, was assigned as Quartermaster, with an honorary rank of Lieutenant. Albert J. Noble, NFC #0-26, an accountant with the London office of the ANDCo, was a civilian appointed to the position of Liaison Officer between

25 Sir Wilfred Grenfell imported 250 reindeer in an experiment to meet the food needs of the people in northern Newfoundland. The ANDCo added 50 animals to Grenfell's order. There are several extant accounts of this journey; for a narrative by the foresters' scribe, see Barrett (1945).

Timber Supply and the Pay and Record Office, as requested by Beeton and at an unpaid and honorary rank of Lieutenant.

Captain Henry S. Crowe, NFC #0–25, of Millertown, joined the NFC in the summer of 1917. The nephew of timber baron Harry J. Crowe, he had immigrated to Newfoundland from Nova Scotia in 1905 to work with his uncle. He had operated his sales and shipping office in St. John's and worked at several of Harry Crowe's Newfoundland lumber operations. He later joined the ANDCo and became Woods Superintendent at Millertown in 1915 (Thoms, 1967). At the time of the formation of the NFC, Crowe had already served six months with the Canadian Forestry Corps in France. Mayson Beeton (1917c) requested Crowe's transfer based on the value of his experience at Millertown and suggested a lack of experienced Newfoundland-born personnel from which to draw to lead the NFC.

Crowe's transfer was controversial, particularly in the context of some public dissatisfaction with the lack of commissions for Newfoundland-born foresters that played out in the St. John's newspapers. *The St. John's Daily Star*, in particular, took issue with the lack of commissions for local foresters. In an editorial on May 16 ("Alas! The Poor Native!," 1917), the day following the announcement of commissions for the NFC, the editor of the *Daily Star* asserted:

The man on the street now holds that wire-pulling, and not merit, is the decisive factor [in commission appointments for the NFC]. He is persuaded that family and business connections count overmuch in this connection. He thinks that the ordinary native will figure only when an appointment is not coveted by the influential stranger and the influential fellow countryman. (p. 1)

Beeton and Harry J. Crowe²⁶ had become well acquainted with each other through the formation of the ANDCo. Crowe had moved to Newfoundland

26 For a biography of Harry S. Crowe and his ventures in Newfoundland, see Baker (2005).

from Halifax in 1902 and purchased dozens of mills and timber leases in central Newfoundland to build his company, Newfoundland Timber Estates, which was incorporated in 1903. Seeing the potential of the plentiful softwood timber for paper-making, he had entered into negotiations with the Harmsworths who, in 1904, sent Mayson Beeton to Newfoundland to investigate the feasibility of a pulp and paper enterprise. The ANDCo subsequently acquired many of Crowe's holdings. Crowe had also been influential in attracting papermaker Albert E. Reed to Bishop's Falls (Thoms, 1967; Baker, 2005).

The younger Crowe's transfer and commission were spearheaded by Mayson Beeton himself. In a lengthy letter to Governor Davidson, dated June 22, 1917, which was later heavily redacted for distribution to Minister of Militia Bennett, Sullivan, and Grieve—and subsequently published in *The Evening Herald* (Beeton, 1917e)—Beeton (1917c) wrote candidly about his unflattering impression of Newfoundlanders, while revealing that he relied on Davidson to excuse the “slight irregularity of procedure” he had invoked to obtain Crowe from the CFC (p. 4). In a later letter to Governor Davidson dated August 18, Beeton (1917f) dismissed public concerns about commissions, stating, “one must consider efficiency and not place of birth as the true test of selection” (p. 1). Following strong lobbying by Beeton, which was accompanied by a threat to resign his position (Beeton, 1917d), Crowe's transfer was approved by the Forestry Committee in late July 1917 (Grieve, 1917).

At headquarters, District Officer Commanding Major Alexander Montgomerie, perhaps aware of the potential effect on esprit de corps, as well as public perception in Newfoundland, countered with a recommendation for promotion to Captain of Lieutenant David Thistle, NFC #0-181, of St. John's, formerly of the Crown Lands Office. Montgomerie (1917) noted in a memo to Minister Bennett that Thistle “would seem to rank on an equality” (p. 2) with the others. Thistle's son was manager of *The St. John's Daily Star*. The editor of *The Evening Herald*, Patrick T. McGrath, a friend of Beeton's, argued it was the disaffection of said manager that was the real impetus for the criticisms of commissions levied by the *Daily Star* (“Native Officers,” 1917). Amidst the disagreements around Crowe and commissions, Sergeant Josiah R. Goodyear,

RNR #573 / #0-166, of Grand Falls, who transferred to the NFC in mid-July, was also approved for commission as Captain (Davidson, 1917g).

Still, the public wrangling continued. When Second Lieutenant Noel James, NFC #0-171, who was originally from England and married to Major Sullivan's sister-in-law, returned to St. John's on extended compassionate leave, the father of a Regiment soldier objected in a letter to *The Evening Advocate*. He questioned why James was allowed to remain in Newfoundland when soldiers "belonging to this Country" who had been wounded multiple times were returned to the theatre of war, and others with years of war service could not get leave at all ("Those Lieutenants," 1918, p. 6).

Recruitment: "An Absolute Failure"

The physical requirements for service in the NFC were amended from those of the Regiment. Minor impairments—such as flat feet, loss of digits, reduced vision or hearing, and inadequate weight and height—were no longer reasons for ineligibility to serve. The attestation files of the NFC include several recruits who wore a glass eye, experienced reduced hearing, or exhibited other features that would have rendered them unfit for combat service. Of the 778 who came forward for the NFC, 278 were rejected ("Report," 1920, p. 10), a rejection rate of almost 36 percent. The total rate of rejection for the Regiment, despite the relaxing of standards earlier in the war, was almost 47 percent (Martin, 2009, p. 70).

The average "apparent" age of the NFC members was 26 years. It was not uncommon, however, for recruits to adjust their age at attestation. The youngest recruit, Private Harry Stares, NFC #8265, of Port Blandford, declared he was 17, but he was only 14; the oldest, Lance Corporal Thomas F.J. Sullivan, NFC #8125, St. John's, stated he was 53, but he was actually 70. Boys the age of Stares often worked in the woods operations of Newfoundland by secretly adjusting their ages, as Stares had. Sullivan's age, however, was no secret. *The Evening Telegram* announced Sullivan as "the oldest man in khaki in the Newfoundland forces . . . physically a strong man and although

having reached the allotted span of years is as active as many men fifty years his junior" ("70 year old," 1917, p. 2).

Enlistment ultimately reached 500, a number that included 484 foresters,²⁷ 14 officers, and two additional enlistments in the UK ("Report," 1920, p. 10).²⁸ Only four men who enlisted with the NFC later transferred to the RNR.²⁹ On the advice of the Canadian Forestry Corps, which had been reorganized into companies of approximately 170, the recruits were organized into three companies,³⁰ not five as initially planned. Despite three dozen or so transfers from the Regiment to the NFC, including a small number of Blue Puttees,³¹ the unit came nowhere near reaching Beeton's hoped-for number of 1,500 (Beeton, 1917a).

27 There is a small discrepancy between the numbers documented by the Department of Militia in Newfoundland and those compiled by the Great Britain War Office (1922) in London, which listed a total of 479 foresters who went overseas.

28 These tallies did not include the men who transferred to the NFC from the RNR. Their names are listed in the Nominal Roll included in Appendix B. At least 4 percent of those who served with the NFC later also enlisted in the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit, a Second World War civilian unit of approximately 3,600 foresters that was formed in 1939 to provide timber for the UK effort in that war. This percentage is conservative and could be as high as 12 percent. Given incomplete files from both wars and a plethora of identical names of enlistees in both units, it is difficult to ascertain exact numbers.

29 They were Private George Newell, NFC #8492, St. John's; Private Brian Potts, NFC #8093, Millertown; Private Dorman Rideout, NFC #8187, Pilley's Island; and Private Michael J. Walsh, NFC #8306, Unknown.

30 G.W.L. Nicholson (1964) stated that only two companies were formed. Information in forester attestation papers and the correspondence of Barrett and other foresters confirm that there were three.

31 The "Blue Puttees" was the home-grown name for the First Five Hundred of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the first draft who departed St. John's for the UK aboard the SS *Florizel* on October 3, 1914. They were so named for the non-standard colour of their puttees, made of blue cloth because of the unavailability of the standard issue khaki at the time of enlistment. There is some variance in the quoted number of men in this first draft. Sharpe (1988) cites 536; 537 is the number used by Roberts (2014).

Despite the ANDCo projections of lower employment opportunities in all its sectors for the 1917–18 season, because of reduced production related to the shortage of tonnage available to export paper, officials felt the numbers from the outports were disappointing (Davidson, 1917e). Added to the labour needs of the family-based economy, which limited the number of available men, the fishery was also doing well, providing what was believed to be another disincentive to enlistment. In a letter to Minister Bennett in early May, Governor Davidson (1917c) frankly stated that, with the cuts to jobs with the ANDCo in the coming year, “the men thus free from local work would be fools not to join the Foresters under these circumstances. If they don’t, and then call on the Government for subsistence next winter, they deserve to be in want.” Elsewhere, Davidson (1917e) expressed his belief that “the men need time for reflection,” and that Newfoundland’s “champion woodsmen” would eventually embrace the benefits of service under what he saw as attractive terms (pp. 8–9).

But among Newfoundlanders, there was both less enthusiasm for the war and increasing suspicion of government motives following the losses at Beaumont-Hamel. In a letter to Beeton shortly after recruitment for the NFC began in May 1917, Governor Davidson recounted some of the local lore that surrounded enlistment. Some feared that the NFC was a Trojan horse and, once recruits arrived in Scotland, they would be transferred to the Regiment and re-directed to the Front. There were also rumours tied to social divisions that prevailed at the time, particularly those related to religion. Some believed Prime Minister Morris, a Roman Catholic, was targeting Protestant denominations for recruitment and leaving Roman Catholics at home to ensure electoral support in an imminent election (Davidson, 1917f). Beeton (1917c) disdainfully replied:

I thoroughly realize from my knowledge of men and affairs in Newfoundland the difficulties you are up against, especially now that, unfortunately, sectarian and political issues appear to have been raised in connection with the Forestry Corps. I note your analysis of the causes to which may be attributed the lack of recruits. In any other country it would be difficult to imagine how

such arguments could be seriously advanced, but apparently in Newfoundland no theory appears to be too wild to advance, once the spirit of sectarian politics is aroused. (pp. 2–3)

The Evening Herald (“Recruiting,” 1918) presented in unequivocal terms its case against those men eligible for the NFC who failed to enlist, noting that men who enlisted could

make about twice what they can make at home, while they take no risk whatever, except the unlikely one of being torpedoed on the way across. . . . Nevertheless, in spite of this, recruiting has collapsed. . . . One may ask, what are the reasons, and the only plausible ones that can be assigned are cowardice, indifference, and men being so well off otherwise that there is no compulsion on them to seek employment in this way. (p. 5)

The recruiters’ frustration with the perceived indifference of the recruit pool could be seen in some of the correspondence to the Forestry Committee. A case in point was a telegram to Walter Grieve from Magistrate H.F. Fitzgerald of Grand Falls, following Fitzgerald’s recruitment visit to Millertown in the spring of 1918. Fitzgerald (1918a) wrote:

[We] went to Millertown Friday, taking Sergeant Goodyear and Private Rendall. Both returned wounded soldiers. [They] met there about thirty strapping men just paid off from the river drive. We talked and pleaded with them, urging enlistment in any branch but got no response. They apparently regarded all with stolid indifference and later left for their homes on the coast. In my opinion, ’tis high time some drastic measures were adopted to meet these conditions. (p. 1)

The men Fitzgerald described would likely have been at Millertown since the fall of the previous year, and would have participated in the fall cut, the winter

haul-off, and the spring drive with only a short Christmas break at home, if that. Perhaps they were reluctant to entertain the prospect of yet another prolonged absence from home—or, in this case, one of indeterminate length—which would bring more hardship for their families. What the recruiters saw as “stolid indifference” may have been more akin to polite patience, as they readied for the trip home to take up the responsibilities that awaited them there.

Following two major recruitment drives for all service sectors, one in October 1917 and another in April 1918, the Newfoundland government invoked conscription on May 11, 1918. Small drafts of foresters continued to cross the Atlantic until the war ended, six months later—the final draft arrived at Kenmore in October 1918. Among the last drafts, only a few men were conscripts. As the forestry operations were ending in Scotland, Major Montgomerie (1919) wrote to Minister of Militia Bennett on January 4, describing recruitment for the NFC as “an absolute failure” and adding that “the people simply look upon this [forestry] work as a job and they would prefer to stay home where they can make more money [in the fishery]” (p. 34).

Enlistments: “A Motley Crowd”³²

A large majority of the men who enlisted with the NFC were unmarried. Approximately two-thirds were of a Protestant faith—specifically, Church of England, Methodist, and Salvation Army; the remainder were Roman Catholic. Approximately one-third listed St. John’s as a home address. The other two-thirds arrived for their training in St. John’s by rail and coastal boat from all parts of the Island and Labrador. They were drawn from small communities—some of which no longer exist—in distant bays and peninsulas,³³ places where distinct identities were expressed through language and dialect, stories and songs, lineage and faith.

32 A term used by John Gallishaw (1916, p. 4) to describe recruits for the Regiment.

33 See Sharpe (1988, p. 43) for a breakdown by area.

For many, travel between St. John's and home communities, especially those in northern Newfoundland and Labrador, could involve a journey by dog sled to meet a coastal boat and/or train, and often involved overnighing in communities along the way. It was a particularly long, costly journey for the men of Labrador—and its intricacies and challenges were not necessarily appreciated at headquarters. Dr. Harry Paddon of the International Grenfell Association wrote to Chief Staff Officer Lieutenant Colonel Rendell on behalf of some Labrador soldiers who had not been fully reimbursed for their travel costs. Upon returning from overseas, these men had left by steamer from St. John's on November 24, 1918, and disembarked at Battle Harbour, Labrador, still some 300 miles from home. There they awaited dog teams to complete the journey, arriving home January 26, 1919—two months later! In this letter of 1922, Paddon called it a “tax on patriotism” (p. 1) to have to bear travel expenses and inconveniences oneself due to the short-sightedness of those in command.

There were several recruits to the Regiment from Indigenous communities of Labrador, but only two who joined the NFC. Robert G. Learning, NFC #8454, of Cartwright, a 34-year-old labourer, was married with four children and living in St. John's when he enlisted on December 14, 1917. Learning served for the duration. Joseph (Job) Michelin, RNC #637, a 19-year-old trapper from Grand Village,³⁴ was a student at Bishop's College in St. John's when he enlisted in the Regiment in 1914. Michelin was wounded at both Gallipoli and the Somme. Following a medical discharge in 1917, he became a recruiter. When the NFC was formed, he re-enlisted and embarked for Scotland with the fourth draft on December 11, 1917, where he served for the duration.

The cultural, linguistic, and geographic communities from which recruits came also included the Mi'kmaq and Francophones of the Island. Among them was 33-year-old Private Lawrence Mitchell, NFC #8373, a lumberer from Norris Point. Mitchell had accompanied his father, Mik'maw guide and prospector Mathieu Mitchell, on part of the 1908 Reindeer Trek and at that

34 Originally Mud Lake, Labrador. Mud Lake was renamed Grand Village by Albert Dickie of Stewiacke, Nova Scotia, who established the Grand River Pulp and Lumber Company there in the early 1900s.

time likely met Hugh Wilding Cole who would become an NFC officer. Private Julian Benoit, RNR #4224, a 26-year-old fisher from Ship's Cove, was one of several Francophones in the NFC. Benoit transferred from the Regiment to the NFC because he could neither read nor write English, the language of military instruction. His experience in lumbering, however, translated well in the NFC, in which he served for the duration.

As with the general population of Newfoundland, first-language skill levels in reading and writing varied among the men of the NFC.³⁵ Signing—the ability to sign one's name—is sometimes used to estimate literacy rates in historic contexts, with caveats.³⁶ A review of enlistment files shows that approximately 20 percent, or 1 in 5, of the foresters signed "X" as their attestation. Of those who signed "X," approximately 80 percent, or 4 of 5, listed a home address outside St. John's and off the Avalon Peninsula. It is not possible to know the actual literacy levels of the men of the NFC, but these figures correspond with the picture of a family-based subsistence economy that explains the limits of both literacy and voluntary recruitment: labour was needed to maintain the family economy and school attendance and war service reduced available labour.

Nor is it possible to know the extent of the challenges produced by limited literacy. Given the ongoing issues with allotments, allowances, expenses, pay, promotions, and pensions documented in the attestation files, however, it is reasonable to question the relationship of literacy—in this context, the extent to which one could both read *and* write—and self-advocacy for the men of the NFC. Attestation files suggest that many with higher literacy and education levels articulated their concerns regularly to headquarters. But any perceived drawbacks were often countered by a strength: the recruits were drawn from communities with a tradition of interdependence, and they were

35 While definitive rates are not available, literacy rates for this period in Newfoundland have been estimated to be lower than other jurisdictions (parts of Canada, for example). For a discussion of literacy rates in late-nineteenth-century Newfoundland, see Alexander (1980); for a rebuttal of Alexander, see Curtis (1990).

36 For a discussion of the limits of signing as a literacy measurement tool, see Curtis (1990).

used to relying on the skills of the collective, which compensated somewhat for individual challenges. Many files contain letters written or transcribed by others on behalf of a forester.

There were also strong familial links among the Companies, with at least six father/son sets and eight pairs of brothers, as well as men who were cousins and in-laws. Many had left large families of several dependents in order to serve overseas. In the face of illness, accident, death, and other difficulties, their absence often caused great hardship. For example, Sergeant John Hancock, NFC #8065, a lumbering foreman from Norris Arm and father of five, enlisted at age 40 along with his oldest son, Howard, NFC #8073, who was 18. In March 1918, while they were in Scotland, the family home at Norris Arm was destroyed by fire. The NFC organized a fund to restore the house and belongings, and contributions were published in St. John's newspapers throughout the spring of 1918.³⁷

In some families, all eligible men and boys had enlisted in either the Naval Reserve or the Regiment, thereby reducing sources of subsistence at home; even with the separation allowance, the absence of men intensified the burden for women during the war. In rare cases, a request, sometimes mediated by a minister, doctor, or teacher, was made to return a forester in order to help an ill or bereaved parent. Ellen Howell of Northern Bay raised her nephews, the Hogan boys, from their early years, following their parents' sudden deaths. Two enlisted with the NFC—Gerald, the oldest at 21, and John, 17—and one with the Regiment. By the time Gerald and John enlisted in the NFC, Private Bernard Hogan, RNR #2252, was a prisoner-of-war. When Private Gerald Hogan, NFC #8111, was killed at Kenmore in August 1918, Ellen Howell (1918) wrote to Governor Harris to explain the toll his loss would take and to request that one of the two boys remaining overseas—Bernard or John—be sent home. Some of her words would have resonated across the country:

I reared the boys well with a noble, heroic spirit as you will notice by their volunteering so young, before they were expected. They

37 See, for example, "Generous Donations" (1918) and "Hancock Benefit" (1918).

gave in their ages older than they were so as they would be accepted. I could have stayed them if I chose as they were obedient, but the Country's call was there. (pp. 2–3)

Governor Harris (1918), through his private secretary, replied to reassure Howell that he realized “how nobly your nephews have done their duty” (p. 1) and that he would inquire about Private Bernard Hogan. Hogan was repatriated from Germany in December 1918 and returned to Newfoundland in June 1919.

Skills, Training, and Fitness: “All Well and in the Pink of Health”³⁸

Approximately half of the men who joined the NFC named lumbering or lumbering-related work—lumberer, woods worker, mill hand, or scaler, for example—as their occupation.³⁹ Those without lumbering or logging experience were trained at the Catholic Cadet Corps Armoury, St. John's. Large logs and other props were used to develop and test skills and progress was vetted by a Qualifications Committee. Some members of the public with extensive experience in woods camps, however, were not convinced of the effectiveness of such training. Lemuel Simmonds (“Forestry Battalion,” 1917), an experienced woods operator, wrote to *The St. John's Daily Star* to express his “outrage” at the lack of experience of those being accepted for the NFC. He questioned “how many camp foremen would employ fifty clerks, office hands or typists from the city offices to work in a lumber camp” (p. 8).

Led in military training exercises by Sergeant-Instructor Benjamin Hussey,⁴⁰ all recruits were expected to learn only elementary drill procedures.

38 Private John R. Martin, NFC #8232, of Manuels, described the foresters thus in a letter from Scotland to a friend in Newfoundland (“Our Soldier Lads,” 1917).

39 Not all files are available or complete, but the number of cases where occupation was unavailable is not large enough to change significantly this broad calculation.

40 He was later appointed Company Sergeant Major Benjamin Hussey, RNR #4325, St. John's. Hussey applied for a commission with the NFC upon its formation

Delays in dispatching the recruits could result in work hold-ups overseas, so there was little time for more advanced training. This minimal preparation may have contributed to some of the disciplinary issues that arose in camp. Conduct sheets reveal dozens of foresters with a long list of infractions that ranged from absence from roll call, overstaying pass, disobedience, insolence, drunkenness, and assault, to crimes that resulted in incarceration at Perth Prison, such as a breach of peace conviction that received a two-week sentence and a bigamy conviction for which a nine-month sentence was imposed.

In an appeal for recruits in the spring of 1917, then Lieutenant David Thistle (1917) wrote that the government of the UK requested Newfoundland lumbermen “because of their knowledge of the business and general fitness” (p. 33). Attestation files, however, record numerous cases where medical issues arose for foresters while overseas, raising questions about the general health of the unit. At the time, many communities in Newfoundland had no health services and poverty was common. There was a dearth of knowledge about basic disease prevention; vaccinations for illnesses that are taken for granted in the twenty-first century were non-existent.⁴¹

Early instances of medically discharged foresters drew attention to the need for stricter medical testing and for younger and more robust recruits. By March 1918, 29 foresters had been discharged, almost all for medical reasons (Timewell, 1918). Major Montgomerie (1918) flagged the problem in a letter to Adjutant Captain Ross: “One thing that has caused considerable trouble is the sending back of Forestry men on the medical certificate of the M.O.⁴² especially as in some cases there did not appear to be any good Medical reason for their return” (pp. 1–2). But according to Corporal Henry Stewart, RNR #618, of Paisley, Scotland, who was a 26-year-old medical-room orderly with the NFC, many foresters were unable to maintain the pace and

but was refused on the basis of his essential service as trainer at the Regimental Depot at St. John’s (Ayre, 1917).

41 For a historical discussion of health services in Newfoundland and Labrador, see Baker and Miller Pitt (1984).

42 Medical Officer.

physical demands of the work. Stewart (1917) commented on the “heavy” sick parade,⁴³ which was due, in his estimation, to “the men not being quite strong enough for the heavy work they attempt to do” (p. 2). In May 1918, on the eve of conscription in Newfoundland, the Legislative Council emphasized the need for strict medical testing for conscripts, citing unsatisfactory medical examinations and the case of the NFC—from which, it noted, “fully fifteen percent of those enlisted . . . have had to be discharged because they were not fit for service” (p. 3).

Along with minor illnesses were more serious and chronic conditions. Some men were diagnosed with heart conditions or developed respiratory illnesses, including influenza and pneumonia. There were cases of measles, mumps, and scabies, as well as syphilis and gonorrhea.⁴⁴ A small number of foresters later died of diseases diagnosed while in, or exacerbated by, service—including carcinoma, epilepsy, and pulmonary tuberculosis.⁴⁵ At demobilization, 109 foresters—or more than one in five men—were discharged as medically unfit (“Report,” 1920, p. 10).

Work in Scotland was demanding and dangerous and the hilly terrain was a challenge to harvest. Work accidents resulted in two deaths,⁴⁶ and more serious injury or death was barely averted on some occasions. One such incident involved Private Charles Rideout, NFC #8087, of Moreton’s Harbour, a teamster who was injured while descending Craigvinean with a load of iron. As recounted by witness Private Ephraim Hull, NFC #8191, of Springdale, the rear brake of the sled Rideout was driving broke, and the

43 “Parade” refers to the formal assembling of troops for inspection or marching.

44 A perusal of attestation files suggests that these sexually transmitted infections (STI) were common among the Regiment. According to Peter Neary (1998), by 1930, venereal disease (VD—“STI” is the current medical usage) was identified as a serious health problem in Newfoundland. Neary did not examine the problem in the context of the First World War. Cases of STI in the Canadian Expeditionary Force were estimated at over 15 percent, the highest of any force on the Western Front (Herring, 2014).

45 In this book I have limited my discussion to the fatalities that occurred while the NFC was in Scotland, of which there were three.

46 Sergeant Barrett includes accounts of each of these fatalities in his letters.

horses were unable to bear the full weight of the load on the decline. When Rideout's reins broke under the pressure of trying to control the horses, he jumped off the sled—but it, and a piece of iron, struck him, fracturing one of his arms and some ribs (Hull, 1923).

The attestation files, which cover the foresters' time in the unit, provide little evidence of accidents and injuries. Given the nature of early twentieth-century woods work, however, other incidents than the one in which Rideout was injured likely occurred. The NFC had a medical hut at all its locations, which is where foresters whose condition was not serious enough to require hospitalization beyond camp were treated.

Chutes and Scows, Salt Cod and Mayos

In the early days, as the NFC was being formed, the nature of its work in the United Kingdom was unclear. There was the possibility of cutting pit props in Wales or doing clean-up work throughout the country in small groups. In June 1917, Beeton confirmed the NFC's assignment would be felling and milling timber at Dunkeld, where approximately 1,200 acres (485 hectares) of forest were available, and at Kenmore, where there were approximately 800 acres (325 hectares) of harvestable forest (Beeton, 1917c). Anticipating the job ahead, he emphasized to Davidson the need for men with experience in building railways and scows—the flat-bottomed boats used to transport cargo that were a staple of Newfoundland woods operations (Beeton, 1917b). At each site, the NFC won the praise of officials and locals alike for their use of home-grown solutions to solve transportation problems that improved efficiencies, met the demand for wartime timber, and earned the NFC the moniker of “handymen of the Empire” (“The Responsibilities,” 1919, p. 4).

At Dunkeld, the NFC faced the challenges of a steep mountain of forest: Craigvinean. Scottish authorities believed the work required a costly rail system for removing felled timber. The Canadian Forestry Corps had walked away from the job, deeming it too difficult (Woodford, 1930). But the Newfoundland officials, with the guidance of Captain William Baird, saw a

solution: building a timber chute of the sort used in Newfoundland woods operations.⁴⁷ Touted as the longest in the world, the chute the NFC built was a lumbering marvel for those in the Scottish timber industry, as well as for locals. The use of horses and sleds also increased efficiencies. At Craigvinean, a railway siding was also built to expedite the loading and movement of lumber. Overall, the NFC provided inexpensive solutions to what were believed to be costly transportation problems (“Our Foresters,” 1918).

At Drummond Hill, approximately a mile from Kenmore, where the Companies were fully relocated from Craigvinean by early summer 1918, the NFC also faced challenges. There, the timber source was nearby, although the hill was very steep, but efficient and economical transportation of timber was a problem. The initial plan was to transport timber down Loch Tay to Killin Station, but it would require costly upgrades to the existing railway (Maxwell, 1919). The use of scows, a cost-efficient transport solution drawn from woods practices in Newfoundland, could have added another aspect of Newfoundland logging operations to the workscape of Scotland. In the end, however, it was decided to transport harvested wood to the mills by horse and sled, where it was dressed, loaded onto trucks, and taken to the railway at Aberfeldy for shipment. Still, road transportation was also costly and trucks were in limited supply, which resulted in backlogs and delays, and extended overseas service months beyond Armistice.

Their inventive approach to challenges, characterized by a quick intelligence accented by broad-based skills—being “Jacks-of-all-trades”—was a source of pride for the foresters. Peter C. Mars (1924), a Scottish-born, Newfoundland-based poet, captured these traits in “The All-'Round Newfoundlander,” an 18-verse poem from which these two verses are excerpted:

As a logger, he's a princeling; he can drive a stream as well
And, often, when he blasts the jam, he takes a chance on hell.

47 Barrett provided descriptions of the chute in his letters. Lance Corporal William J. Woodford, NFC #8211, St. John's, described the chute in an essay in *The Veteran* (Woodford, 1930).

He's a devil in white water when the logs go racing by
And he revels in the danger for he's not afraid to die.

To build a house from sill to roof, he needs no college pass
He's a handy man with axe and saw; there's no one in his class.
He saws his lumber, cuts his stone, and oftentimes bakes his brick
Where another would be daunted, he simply works the trick. (p. 53)

The foresters wore their accomplishments in Scotland as badges of honour, pinned firmly to their identity as Newfoundlanders, the King's subjects from "the Ancient Colony."

When pitted against the Canadians, with whom they were often confused in the Old Country, the desire to excel ran deep, as indicated in events such as sports day competitions between the NFC and the Canadian Forestry Corps. The common conflation of Newfoundland and Canada was a sore point for Newfoundlanders generally. Lieutenant Owen Steele, RNR #326 / #0-89, of St. John's, recalled that during the Regiment's first trip overseas in 1914 the *Princess Royal* was sighted and its crew greeted them with the Canadian anthem. The Newfoundlanders corrected with "Britannia Rules the Waves." Steele (Facey-Crowther, 2002) explained: "We are very particular here that we are not classed as Canadians . . . we are much prouder of our distinction as Newfoundlanders" (p. 30). Captain Sydney Frost, RNR #28 / #0-123, a Canadian from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, who had been working in St. John's when the war began, also recounted this incident, additionally noting that, before launching into "Britannia Rules the Waves," the Newfoundlanders first responded with the "Ode to Newfoundland," which "conveyed nothing to [the crew]" (Roberts, 2014, p. 65). Frost added that "not being close enough to pick up the Newfoundland accent, doubtless the entire ship's company of the *Princess Royal* still took us for Canadians" (Roberts, 2014, p. 65). It is entirely likely, however, that, had the crew been able to hear, they might have noted the resemblance of the accents to those of their own West Country, as well as Ireland, from where so many of the Newfoundlanders' ancestors came and whose inflections could still be detected in their speech.

Private Francis T. Lind, RNR #541, of Little Bay, also bemoaned the regularity with which the Regiment's soldiers were mistaken for Canadians in both England and Scotland (Lind, 2001, p. 3, pp. 21–22). As Adjutant Captain Arthur Raley (1916) wrote to Captain Hugh A. Anderson of the Newfoundland Contingent of the Pay and Record Office, in his report about the Regiment at Gallipoli, “the common mistake of associating [the Regiment] with Canada is hard to get out of the public mind. It makes every true Newfoundlander rightly indignant to be confused with any country other than his own” (p. 3).

The proud distinction also extended to diet, especially the penchant for dried salt cod, which the Newfoundland foresters and the Regiment generally shared.⁴⁸ The strict implementation of rations in the United Kingdom during the War meant a meagre diet for foresters, who spent long hours at physically demanding work. In Scotland, the foresters supplemented their rations with local fish and game—deer, salmon, birds—as they did at home. Merchants on both sides of the Atlantic who had connections to the fish trade also donated regular supplies of dried cod. In a letter of thanks to the donors, written by the Minister of Militia on behalf of Major Sullivan, Bennett noted the importance of such donations, because “the difficulty of getting food on the other side, especially fish, is daily increasing” (“Fish Donations,” 1918, p. 4).

Another staple—tobacco—was also in short supply. Tobacco in the UK and Europe was expensive and its taste unpopular with the Newfoundlanders. In both the Regiment and the NFC, the Mayo brand cut plug tobacco was preferred for chewing or smoking. Private Francis Lind noted the shortage of good tobacco in one of his regular letters to *The Daily News* in St. John's. A tobacco drive followed that resulted in an approximately 1,700-pound (770-kilogram) shipment to the Regiment at Stobs Camp, Scotland, which earned Lind the nickname “Mayo.” Other drives and shipments of “Mayo-O-Linds”

48 The Fish and Brewis Fund was one of several developed by the Women's Patriotic Association. Its purpose was to supply the Regiment with the so-called “national dish” (Davidson, 1917e, p. 13), which is a combination of cooked salt fish and hard tack (hard bread), served with drawn butter or small pieces of fried fatback pork called “scrunchions.”

followed. Quartermaster Sergeant John A. Barrett also mentioned Mayo tobacco in his letters, noting at one point, “If a person is seen here with a stick of Mayos he is envied beyond measure, and the owner of it has to guard well his treasure.” As with the Regiment, regular supplies of tobacco were shipped to Scotland from St. John’s for the NFC, throughout its time overseas. As late as fall of 1918, as the war was ending, approximately 1,000 pounds (450 kilograms) of tobacco—half Mayo and 250 pounds (115 kilograms) each of British Colonial Dark and Light—were shipped to Kenmore (Bennett, 1918).⁴⁹

WARTIME CORRESPONDENCE AND THE LETTERS OF QUARTERMASTER SERGEANT JOHN A. BARRETT

Writing letters was the primary way those overseas communicated with home, though postcards and telegrams were also used. Letters maintained ties during long, stressful, and grievous separations, boosted morale for everyone overseas and especially those at the Front, and provided friends and family at home with some reassurance, along with a small, partial glimpse of the realities of wartime service. As Martha Hanna (2014) points out, generally broader literacy rates at the beginning of the twentieth century enabled the flourishing of written correspondence by soldiers and civilians during the war. In Newfoundland, increased (although still limited) literacy among the population, regular mail service, and the existence of numerous newspapers—in both the capital of St. John’s and other places such as Harbour Grace, Twillingate, and Bay of Islands—meant that letters were more readily and easily crafted, delivered, and shared at home and on the Front.

49 J.O. Hawvermale, an American and manager of the Imperial Tobacco Company (Newfoundland) Limited, was well known for his generous donations of tobacco to both the Regiment and the Forestry Companies.

In his letter of October 29, 1917, then Quartermaster Corporal John A. Barrett commented on the letter-writing activity at the NFC camp at Dunkeld. Describing the newly constructed recreation hut, he wrote:

It was intended to have a room in it set apart for a library and to be used by our men as a place where they could go and transact their correspondence. Such a room is very necessary, as the men find it rather difficult to write letters in the huts, which are not very brilliantly lighted at night.

While most letters home were written to individuals and families, in many cases, as letters in this book demonstrate, they were shared with local newspapers, which gave them a wider audience.

Like their counterparts worldwide,⁵⁰ historians of First World War Newfoundland show an increased interest in wartime memoirs and letters that deliver a sense of the experiences of those who left home to serve. In the past two decades, several memoirs and collections of letters have been published: the memoirs of Sydney Frost (Roberts, 2014), Howard Morry (Morry, 2014), and Anthony J. Stacey (Stacey & Edwards Stacey, 2012) of the Newfoundland Regiment; and the letters of Francis Lind (2001), Owen Steele (Facey-Crowther, 2002), and Curtis Forsey (Riggs, 2007), also of the Regiment, and of Frances Cluett (Rompkey & Riggs, 2006) of the Voluntary Aid Detachment. All were published as important primary sources of the wartime experiences of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. As Facey-Crowther (2003) points out, diaries and letters such as these serve a two-fold purpose: “to bear personal witness and . . . to document for future reference” (p. 33).

In this latter respect, especially, another series of locally written wartime letters, those of RQMS John A. Barrett of the Newfoundland Forestry Companies, is important, yet they have been largely ignored by historians. I first read some of Barrett's letters while researching *Songs and Stories of “The*

50 For an annotated account of Canadian letters and memoirs, see Tennyson (2013). For an international overview of war letters, see Jolly (2001).

Forgotten Service” and was surprised by the detail they provided about the unit, which had not translated into any comprehensive account of the NFC’s activities. Coupled with the paucity of available historical accounts and information (alongside what was sometimes misinformation) about the NFC, the lack of attention to Barrett’s letters struck me as a significant oversight. It is the purpose of this book to present Barrett’s letters, which, while largely written as official correspondence, are nonetheless a complement to these other collections of Newfoundland letters from the First World War. In so doing, I also hope to tell the story of the NFC in a more substantive manner, one that encourages a re-examination, appreciation, and remembrance of its contributions and that prompts a rethinking of the dominant narrative of Newfoundland in The Great War.

Introduction to Barrett’s Letters

Along with the many other duties in the Quartermaster’s Office, in 1917 Timber Supply assigned to Corporal Barrett the responsibilities of press correspondent. A professional journalist, Barrett had worked in the Newfoundland newspaper industry for decades prior to enlisting with the NFC. While there may have been many official reasons for his regular letters home—to encourage enlistment was one of the most important—Barrett outlined his own intent to his readers in an early letter on July 28, 1917, written only a few weeks after the first draft of foresters arrived in Scotland: “[H]ere I am again writing you on behalf of the Company,⁵¹ so that their relatives and friends in dear old Terra Nova may have the pleasure of hearing from us all at one time.” To these friends and relatives—his readers—he was “your scribe,” and the foresters were “our boys.”

Despite Barrett’s intention to inform those at home, because of low literacy rates and limited access to newspapers in isolated and less populated areas of Newfoundland, many relatives and friends were unable to glean information

51 At this point, there was only one company of the NFC in Scotland.

about the overseas lives of their loved ones by reading them in print when they first appeared. As well, Barrett's original letters⁵² were addressed to *The Evening Herald*, a St. John's-based newspaper whose editor, P.T. McGrath, was a member of the Forestry Companies Organization Committee, suggesting that the arrangement to publish them was between Timber Supply and that newspaper. Given the friendship between McGrath and Mayson Beeton, this arrangement was likely. But if the letters were intended both to inform and to encourage recruitment, their availability to the largely St. John's-based readership of the *Herald* limited their reach.

Many of Barrett's letters, however, were eventually also published elsewhere, including in *The Western Star*. That paper was based in Curling and Barrett's brother Andrew was its editor. In addition, *The Western Star* published several apparently personal letters sent from John to Andrew Barrett. Over the duration of Barrett's service, 32 letters were published in *The Evening Herald* and 30 in *The Western Star*; 25 of these are duplicates. There are 37 letters reproduced in this volume, and they are drawn from both sources.

The Western Star began to print the same letters as *The Evening Herald* in September 1917, by which time *The Herald* had already published eight and *The Western Star* only two (which were, in all likelihood, personal letters from John Barrett to his brother). Much of the content of these two early *Western Star* letters is similar to that of the first letter published by the *Herald*. Because the two early letters to *The Western Star* were published first and offer more detail—for example, about the NFC's departure from St. John's and the voyage to Halifax—they are included here in lieu of the first letter to *The Evening Herald*. Seven of Barrett's "official" letters (published in *The Evening Herald*) follow, and the remaining 28 are Barrett's letters (official and personal) as they appeared in *The Western Star*.

A few of Barrett's letters—those detailing what may have been considered more widely appealing and newsworthy events (the visit of Governor

52 There are 32 originals extant; they were written at Dunkeld between July 9, 1917, and April 21, 1918. All were typed on 8- by 13-inch foolscap. They are part of the private collection of the Barrett family.

Davidson, lumber sport competitions with the Canadians, etc.)—were also published by *The Twillingate Sun*, *The Evening Advocate*, and *The Evening Telegram*. Typically, Barrett's letters were published in Newfoundland three to four weeks after they were written in Scotland. They range in length from approximately 300 to 1,300 words, with an average length of 800 words. Of the total number of published letters, 27 were written during the period between the NFC's departure from St. John's in May 1917 and the end of that year.

Beginning in spring of 1918, Barrett's letters became less frequent. After the NFC's move to Kenmore in late spring of 1918, he wrote only four until the disbandment of the unit in 1919. This period was a busy time for the Companies—the logistics of the move, the complexities of operations at Kenmore, and a general shortage of officers (both Quartermaster Lieutenant O'Rourke and Lieutenant James were on compassionate leave) increased Barrett's duties in the Quartermaster's office. His correspondence tasks were clearly difficult to maintain. As well, a fire at the *Herald* building in late 1918 resulted in suspension of publishing until spring 1919. Barrett's last two letters, possibly personal letters to his brother, were published in *The Western Star* (the second to last letter was also published in *The Evening Advocate*).

A salutation was not always included in the published versions of Barrett's letters. When it was, it was "Dear Sir" or "Sir" (with one exception⁵³), indicating the formal nature of the correspondence. In his closure, which was consistently included in the official letters, there was no reference to his rank.⁵⁴ The more formal closure did not appear in the first two and final four letters, again suggesting that they were personal correspondence to Andrew Barrett.

53 The letter of August 23, 1918, begins with the salutation "Dear Brother." In the published version, it also had no signature. First published in *The Western Star*, it was likely a personal letter to Andrew Barrett. Upon publication in *The Evening Herald*, it was accompanied by a notation indicating it was copied from *The Western Star* to satisfy the interest of *Herald* readers in its contents.

54 They were signed: "Yours respectfully, J.A. Barrett, Newfoundland Forestry Companies."

The majority of Barrett's letters, however, were not written as private correspondence. They were open and public letters directed not to an individual or a family but to a broad collective—Newfoundlanders (initially the residents of St. John's, where the *Herald* was distributed)—and published as official accounts or reports⁵⁵ of the NFC. They did not require, nor did they receive, a response. Liz Stanley (2004) elaborates on this kind of letter:

[O]pen letters are usually didactic, written by someone with a high status if not a pre-eminent position in relation to a particular community, with the community collective being addressed. Open letters trade on values and meanings shared in common; but although having communicative purpose, they are not directly responded to because they are pronouncements to be read but not to be answered by writing back. (p. 207)

In his letters, Barrett assumed, or perhaps hoped to achieve, points of view that would be shared by his reading audience and, as an extension of himself, by the Forestry Companies. The common ground covered many themes, but most especially a love of the homeland, loyalty to the Empire, high regard for the Regiment and Naval Reserve, the importance of the contributions of the NFC, and the responsibility of all who were able to contribute to war service to do so. Barrett's personal voice and a sometimes chatty and humorous tone were effective means to establish a sense of shared purpose and concern with the home audience.

All wartime correspondence was censored, but open letters written in an official capacity were both more purposeful and more limited in what they revealed. Barrett's letters were crafted within the command structure of the NFC and were vetted accordingly. Despite these limitations, the letters offer a sketch of the activities of the Companies and, in so doing, provide a

55 At first, the *Herald* used a headline that indicated the order of the report in the sequence—"Fourth Report," "Fifth Report," etc. This practice was discontinued after the "Eleventh Report" and replaced by a version of "With Our Foresters."

glimpse of service life in Scotland. When complemented by information gleaned from attestation files and other documents of the period, a fuller picture of the unit emerges than has been previously available or recorded.

Scope and Content

Barrett's letters reiterate the unique mission of the small unit of which he was a part. For him, this non-combat mission was both an opportunity for service—to contribute meaningfully to the war effort—and for personal growth. Only a few months after deployment, on September 15, 1917, Barrett wrote about the foresters: "Although not being on the firing line or anywhere near it, yet they are soldiers in every sense of the word. . . . And there is hardly a man who will not return after the war bigger than when he left home." Barrett represented their time in Scotland as a learning opportunity that would also benefit Newfoundland when the foresters returned. Displaying equal measures of affection and respect for his home country, "dear old Terra Nova," and his host country, Barrett saw, from forestry and farming to education and industry, the potential to learn and to adapt what was discovered for the benefit of the homeland.⁵⁶

Overall, Barrett's letters are studied, sometimes eloquent, accounts that provided Newfoundland audiences with a carefully crafted and enticing picture of the NFC. On June 26, 1917, he wrote: "Military discipline is being maintained, and the boys are adapting themselves to it with the aptness noted of Newfoundlanders." Barrett described in detail the work and accomplishments of the Companies, along with the warm reception provided to the foresters by the Scottish people, which included an interest in the NFC's unique approaches to harvesting and milling of timber. On December 2,

56 For example, an editorial in *The Western Star* published shortly after Barrett's return (and possibly written by Barrett himself) was clearly influenced by his knowledge of Scotland. It presented an argument for a forestry policy for Newfoundland such as the one adopted in Scotland in 1919 to advance conservation and afforestation after the war ("A Forestry Policy," 1919).

1917, he proudly announced to readers: “The visitors see the great trimmed logs sliding down the chute to the milldam, and watch them being hauled up the jack-ladder⁵⁷ into the mill. They keenly follow the process of operations until the huge stick is converted into the required sizes of lumber and taken out on rollers to be carted to the piles in the yard. The newness of it all thrills them, and they extend congratulations for the work we are performing.”

The letters also provide a cultural snapshot or “pen picture” of Scotland, an approach Margaretta Jolly (2001) points out was common in wartime letters and that deflected from the more difficult aspects of service. Barrett’s letters are a travelogue of landscapes, landmarks, and local weather, an account of sites visited and history learned. They are a small compendium of local culture, language, and lore. Along with the day-to-day workings of the Companies, readers are given a little of Scotland itself. Barrett regularly included poems, songs, and short excerpts of articles, to share with his readers at home the cultural tenor of the times in the United Kingdom, along with examples of how the Scottish exalted the Ancient Colony in story and song. From Barrett’s letters it is also possible to gather a sense of how enamoured with their new home many of the foresters were.

These ingredients—a beautiful country, welcoming people, and smitten foresters—along with work as meaningful service, all so carefully presented by Barrett, were intended not only to inform and console those at home but also to aid recruitment efforts there. Captain Hugh A. Anderson (1918b) of the Newfoundland Contingent of the Pay and Record Office in London wrote about the need for more men to the editor of *The Evening Herald*, following a convalescence trip to Kenmore with the NFC:

There is an urgent and growing need for more [foresters] and it must be the duty of every Newfoundlander who is, for some reason, unfit to fight, to enlist at once under Major Sullivan’s banner

57 A ladder or belt operated by a chain system and used to transported timber from pond to sawmill.

and help in the vital work. . . . A more interesting and healthy life could not be found, beside which the lucky forester would be given a trip for nothing to a part of the world which in peace times many an American paid hundreds of dollars to see. (p. 3)

Anderson's observations are, again, a reminder of purposeful crafting of war correspondence. In a personal note to editor McGrath, attached to the letter, Anderson wrote (1918a):

On several occasions, the Foresters have extended their hospitality to members of the Pay and Record Office in London who have been run down and wanted a change. They are doing great work in Scotland, and if you can help them by the publication of the enclosed, they (and I) will be grateful. (p. 1)

Along with a cultural snapshot, Barrett offered readers a glimpse of changes in the UK that were prompted by war and that also resonated at home. For example, several times in his writing, Barrett provided observations on the wartime contributions of women, both to the well-being of the foresters and soldiers and to the overall war effort. Shortly after his arrival in Scotland, on June 16, 1917, Barrett wrote about what he had seen from the train window as the NFC travelled from Ayr to Dunkeld: "Owing to the scarcity of men, many women were to be seen working on farms, in factories, and at other vocations, all filling positions that before the war were occupied by men. And success is attending their noble efforts." Later, on September 15, 1917, he turned their work into a lesson to the men at home who had not enlisted: "The women of the Empire have set a good example to our men, by donning khaki and overalls and engaging in work they were at one time looked upon as being incapable of performing. And they are doing it very creditably." His letters gesture to the significance of women's war work and the opportunities it provided to women, which would ultimately contribute to and enhance the struggle for emancipation long after the war.

For the lumberer, Barrett's letters offer familiar references to woods work, but in the context of a military operation. For the lay reader, the letters are an introduction to adaptive lumbering during wartime. They captured the impressive scale, intricacy, and efficiency of the operations developed by the NFC—from harvesting and transporting to milling and shipping. But they also make clear that wartime service in Scotland was not only about work. They offer reading audiences details and delights of life in another context. Barrett shared the novelty of “aeroplanes” and “bikes,” and the pleasures of morale-boosting concerts and sports competitions, not to mention budding romances. Today, through their balanced account of camp work and cultural interchange between the Newfoundlanders and the Scots, set against the ever-present backdrop of the sacrifices and struggles of those on the battle-grounds of the Front, the letters provide a glimpse of life on the Scottish homefront in the early twentieth century.

Barrett sometimes resorted to humour to capture and enliven otherwise more mundane moments and accounts. In early September 1917, describing his efforts to adjust to European plug tobacco, something to which many of the foresters could relate, he hyperbolized:

Being an inveterate smoker, I have been spending some little time with “My Lady Nicotine” before starting to write this; and very vexatious have my efforts been. The kind of plug tobacco generally sold here is of such a nature that it cakes very hard in the pipe, requiring little less than a cord of matches to keep it lighted, and a mustard plaster on the neck to assist in drawing the smoke through the stem of my dudeen.

In another instance, on October 22, 1917, he wryly described the daily battle to conquer the forests of Craigvinean Hill:

There was a cessation of hostilities between our men and the trees from Oct. 8th to 18th, to enable our forces to remove the dead “bodies,” which in their thousands strewed the hillsides.

But now they have again renewed the engagement. Every day the battle rages long and furious, and at eventide the Camp is astir with tales of the thousands of giants slain with axes and saws.

In a similar vein, in his letter of December 29, 1917, he described Christmas dinner away from home: “Turkey was readily overthrown and as quickly divested of its supports by the hearty lads of Newfoundland.”

The Official and the Personal

In both his official and personal letters, Barrett’s perspective is clear, and clearly shaped by his varied experiences prior to enlistment and his position as a non-commissioned officer. While Barrett’s tone differs somewhat in his official and personal writings, being unsurprisingly more casual and intimate in the personal letters, he consistently offers a palatable and reassuring view of the NFC as a professional military unit, marked by equal measures of discipline, order, honour, and productivity—a unit of which Newfoundlanders could be proud. As is common in wartime letters (Jolly, 2001), Barrett’s correspondence focusses on the positive and avoids the controversial. Where problems existed—and the attestation files indicate that there were problems—they are either downplayed or unnamed. While some omissions may be explained by official parameters placed on content, undoubtedly Barrett’s personal tact and sense of diplomacy also shaped content.

This point is reinforced by reference to a personal letter Barrett wrote on Christmas Eve, 1917, to his brother Doyle in Saskatchewan, which was submitted by Doyle Barrett to *The Twillingate Sun* for publication (“Spare Our Blushes,” 1918).⁵⁸ As with the personal letters to Andrew Barrett, included here, that were published in *The Western Star*, many of the topics

58 With the exception of the sections quoted here, this letter duplicates content from other published letters and is, therefore, not included in this volume.

about which Barrett wrote to Doyle—official visits, wartime work of women, rations, concerts, European tobacco—are similar to those that appeared in his official letters. Details, too, are similar, although often rendered in a more casual style. As would be expected, the personal letters contain many more specific references to people—the Ballams, Reverend Allen, etc.—and life in the Bay of Islands area. In his letter to Doyle, for example, Barrett (“Spare Our Blushes,” 1918) mentioned their brothers George and Gilbert, both of whom had immigrated to Sydney, Nova Scotia, and subsequently enrolled in the Canadian forces when the war began. The reference offers some hint of how the Newfoundland foresters experienced their camps and how they may have differed from the camps of the Canadian Forestry Corps:

I hear from George⁵⁹ and Gilbert⁶⁰ quite frequently. Gilbert was up to see me for a couple of days before he went to France, and I was delighted to see him. He was looking fine. I don't think George likes the conditions of things in the Camp where he is; there does not appear to be the same treatment accorded the men he is among as our men get, and our men think their lot pretty severe, although they can get a pass any night or weekend they want one. (p. 2)

Where the attestation papers reveal the constraints of camp life, by recording infractions related to resisting them, Barrett's official letters reveal no such discord—this information could have discouraged enlistment. It was not until he penned his recap, written in 1952 (see Appendix C), that Barrett mentions the “clink”—the NFC prison hut—although he also noted that it was rarely used.

59 Private George W. Barrett, CFC #2330408, Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada. George enlisted with the Nova Scotia Forestry Depot and served in France and Belgium with the CFC.

60 Sergeant Gilbert P. Barrett, CEF #715476, Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada. Gilbert enlisted with the 106th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

The frankness often reserved for personal correspondence was also evident in Barrett's discussion of the Christmas season, his first in Scotland, in the letter to Doyle ("Spare Our Blushes," 1918):

I spent my Christmas in the southern part of Scotland, and it was a "green" one, somewhat different from what I had been accustomed. Yet, I spent a very enjoyable one with friends. . . . Will you credit it that on Christmas Day I saw farmers at work sowing wheat, harrowing, and ploughing their land? It did not look very winterlike here. Christmas Day is never observed by Scotchmen in this country, although in England it is the day. The principal day in Scotland is New Year's Day, "when brither Scots foregather"⁶¹ and taste the barley brew. (pp. 1–2)

Barrett's approach to the NFC fatalities while in Scotland—Privates Taylor, Hogan, and Wyatt—also highlights differences between the official and personal letters. His elaborate account of the death and funeral of Private Taylor, the first fatality, was in an official letter; it emphasizes the solemnity of the military service, reiterates the character of Private Taylor, and includes sympathies to his parents and family. His account of Private Hogan's death and funeral, rendered in a personal letter, offers far fewer details and points of emphasis. Details of the disappearance and subsequent drowning of Private Wyatt in late 1918, after Armistice, and the recovery and interment of his body in spring 1919, are not mentioned in any of Barrett's correspondence.

61 "When brither Scots foregather" is a line from the song "A Wee Deoch-an'-Doris," written and composed by Gerald Grafton and Harry Lauder.

Enforcing the Official Line

In several instances in Barrett's official letters, content was reshaped or removed,⁶² likely at the request of a higher-ranking officer; letters published in newspapers contain the revised content. A glaring example involved Barrett's comments on commissions and separation allowances, sore points among the soldiers and the Newfoundland public. In his original letter of November 18, 1917, Barrett wrote the following about an upcoming round of promotions:

A report is being circulated to the effect that Lieutenant Cole and Lieutenant Crowe are about to be promoted to the rank of Captain, and CSM James is to receive a Second Lieutenancy. Their commissions will likely be issued before this appears in type. This reminds me of a statement made in the Recruiting Notices at home last spring, to the effect that we would be officered by Newfoundlanders. Should the above-mentioned appointments come into effect, we will have five Englishmen as officers. Not with any spirit of prejudice do I say it; but there are native-born Newfoundlanders who are in every respect as well qualified as those of any other country to direct the affairs of the Forestry Companies. (p. 1)

In the same letter, perhaps fearing the effects of these and other inequities on esprit de corps or recruitment possibilities, Barrett added:

When men of other countries are appointed over the heads of Newfoundlanders in this unit; and when by the granting of Separation Allowances to married men, who are working side-by-side with the single men, there is small wonder for the lack of enthusiasm for enlistment on the part of young single men at home.

62 The originals are marked to indicate where content is edited or replaced with rewritten content.

Respecting the Separation Allowance, it may be all very well for the married man; but if the authorities expect to get good results from the single men and a continuation of enlistments from this class, there is need of some radical changes being made. (p. 1)

The revised and published version (see page 150) was considerably less pointed, with editorializing reduced to a minimum. On the matter of the commissions, the revised letter reads:

A report is being circulated to the effect that Lieutenant Cole and Lieutenant Crowe are about to be promoted to the rank of Captain; and Command Sergeant Major James⁶³ is to receive a 2nd Lieutenancy. Their promotions will likely be issued before this appears in print. The men have had practical experience in the work at which they are engaged, and during the time we have been here, both Lieutenants Cole and Crowe have very efficiently performed the work allotted them. To them all are extended the congratulations of the Companies.

The issue of disparities in the effects of the granting of separation allowance⁶⁴ to married members was thus modified:

Now that the Separation Allowance is being granted to married men and those with an aged father or mother dependent on them for support, there should be no reasonable excuse for anyone withholding from enlisting for the Forestry Companies, and we look for a goodly increase in our numbers pretty soon.

63 Command Sergeant Major Noel G. James, RNR #3486 / #0-171, St. John's.

64 The separation allowance was a portion of a soldier's salary plus additional government funds; it was paid to a dependent whose income was negatively affected by his absence. Minister of Militia Bennett announced the allowance in the fall recruitment campaign of 1917 ("An Appeal to the People," 1917).

With the exception of letters that appeared in *The Evening Herald*, Barrett's letters were published with few editorial changes. Sometimes poems he had included were omitted, perhaps for space considerations; in other instances, excerpts only were used, for a more pointed presentation of the material. It is possible that, on at least one occasion, editors may have feared the omitted content would have offended some sensibilities. Barrett opened his letter of March 2, 1918, with a short comic rhyme about the busyness of work, but that was omitted in the published versions in both *The Evening Herald* and *The Twillingate Sun*. The rhyme read: "Last week my work was so congested / And things to write of were not newsy / So down my pen was laid and rested / From scribbling things sober or boozy." In the context of temperance movements and prohibition, editors likely considered it wiser to omit the rhyme.

Generally, *Herald* editor Patrick McGrath took a more hands-on approach to Barrett's writing, regularly deleting or modifying phrases and sentences, re-ordering paragraphs, and, in some cases, editorializing and updating information. For example, when Barrett wrote about plans by Dunkeld locals who were of "the fair sex" to host a social for the foresters, McGrath added an update, likely also intended to encourage enlistment: "It is to be hoped that another Company shall have arrived by that time and be participants of the honours."

• • •

Studying Barrett's letters gave me an opportunity to revisit the formation and service of this small non-combat unit of the Newfoundland Regiment and, through his descriptions of the NFC's work in Scotland, to feel some connection to the men who chose to serve during the war in the only capacity for which they were eligible. The letters were also an opportunity to reconsider the importance of the contribution of the NFC in the larger context of the First World War, during which combat strength was a crucial but not the sole part of the battle. In an age of wood, timber supply played no small part, leading UK Prime Minister David Lloyd George to remark in 1919, as the new Forestry Commission was formed, that the country "came closer to losing the war through lack of timber than want of food" (House, 1917, p. 2).

Without Barrett's letters, there would be no first-hand account of the NFC available to those of us who continue to inquire about its overseas operations. Despite the limitations inherent in any official letters about war and wartime work, for forester families and others—historians, educators, genealogists, and the general public—Barrett's letters bring insight and meaning to the work of the NFC and provide some answers to questions about work and life during those war years in Scotland. They are a useful account of this small but important unit of the Newfoundland Regiment, whose members, like those of other wartime services, also "did their bit" for the Newfoundland contribution to the Allied war effort.

JOHN A. BARRETT: A SHORT BIOGRAPHY⁶⁵

On April 20, 1917, aged 43 and unmarried, John Archelaus Barrett enlisted with the Newfoundland Forestry Companies at St. John's. Barrett was assigned the rank of Corporal and departed for Scotland with the first draft of foresters less than a month later, on May 17. He remained with the NFC for the duration. In the fall of 1917, Barrett refused promotion to Quartermaster Sergeant of B Company in order to remain in his initial assignment with A Company atop Craigvinean ("Spare Our Blushes," 1918). On February 11, 1919, at Kenmore, Barrett was promoted to Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant. After he departed Kenmore in early June of 1919, he was assigned to the Pay and Record Office in London. Barrett was demobilized at St. John's on August 4, 1919.

During the NFC's time in Scotland, Barrett performed many jobs—quartermaster, storekeeper, ration corporal, and orderly. He was also assigned the job of press correspondent by Timber Supply in London. In this latter role, over the approximately two years the NFC operated in Scotland,

65 This biography was gleaned from numerous sources, including the family genealogy (D.G. Barrett, 1989) and conversations with family members.

Barrett wrote letters to Newfoundland newspapers to apprise readers of the work of its foresters overseas.

Barrett's assignment as the foresters' official scribe was most apt. He was born in Freshwater, Carbonear, in 1872, but in 1880 his parents moved to his mother's home of Twillingate, just as Jabez P. Thompson, formerly of *The Harbour Grace Standard* newspaper, was establishing *The Twillingate Sun*. At the age of 12, Barrett became a printer's devil with the *Sun*, where he worked until 1894. By then well-versed in the newspaper business, he moved to Trinity to become editor of *The Trinity Record* ("Some Early Recollections," 1950).

In late 1899, Barrett moved to Birchy Cove (soon to be renamed Curling⁶⁶) to become a member of the founding staff, with editor Walter S. March, of *The Western Star*. The newspaper was published in Birchy Cove, which was at the time the hub of the Bay of Islands. In 1904, following the departure of March, Barrett became editor, a position he held until 1908, when *The Western Star* was sold. His brother Andrew became managing editor in 1911⁶⁷ ("Some Early Recollections," 1950). For a short time before the war, John Barrett also worked at the York Harbour Copper Mine.

In 1920, John Barrett and Ena Constance Culbard were married at Dundeld, Scotland. Their wedding was announced in both the *Dundee Advertiser* and *The Western Star* ("Culbard-Barrett Marriage," 1920). Soon thereafter, they sailed for Newfoundland and settled in Curling. They named the family cabin on the shores of Deer Lake "Kenmore," the Scottish town where the couple had spent their honeymoon.

Ena Constance Barrett was a published poet, and she continued to write and publish after her move to Curling. Her poetry demonstrated a deep love and appreciation for her adopted home and earned her the unofficial moniker of "Newfoundland's poet laureate" ("Ena Constance Barrett," 2018).

After the war, Barrett held various positions, including serving for many years as the first manager of the Board of Liquor Control. He became a Justice

66 Birchy Cove, Bay of Islands, was renamed Curling in 1904 to honour Reverend James John Curling, an Anglican priest who served in the area from 1873 to 1888.

67 Andrew L. Barrett was editor of *The Western Star* from 1912 to 1941.



Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant John Archelaus Barrett and
Ena Constance Culbard on their wedding day, June 17, 1920, Dunkeld.
(Courtesy of the Barrett family)

of the Peace, a notary public, and a Commissioner of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland. He was devout, patriotic, and civic-minded. He attended closely to community affairs in Curling, often writing letters to *The Western Star* to promote ideas for growth and development in the Bay of Islands. He was a member, and eventually president, of the local Board of Trade. He was also an avid fly fisher and outdoor enthusiast and was accomplished at cricket and billiards.

Barrett made one attempt to enter politics. In 1928, he sought the Liberal nomination in Humber District, along with a young Joseph R. Smallwood. When then Liberal Prime Minister Sir Richard Squires decided to run in the district where earlier in the decade he had “put the hum on the Humber,”⁶⁸

68 Squires had used this campaign slogan in the 1923 election. It referred to a plan to build a second pulp and paper mill on the Humber River at Corner Brook, which at the time was a small lumber village. The second mill, initially operated by the Newfoundland Power and Paper Company, opened in Corner Brook in 1925. The history of the Corner Brook mill is recounted in the song “Hum on the Humber,” composed by Brendan Mitchell (Kelly & Forsyth, 2018b, pp. 267–70).

Barrett secured the Tory nomination instead. He lost to Squires in the general election (Smallwood, 1973).

In 1927, Barrett presented a proposal to the Great War Veterans' Association (GWVA) for a war memorial for Bay of Islands. As Honorary Secretary of the Citizens' War Memorial Committee, he ensured the fulfilment of the goal; the memorial was unveiled on July 3, 1932 ("An Outstanding Figure," 1932). For years, the light atop the memorial was operated from a switch at the Barrett home: it was turned on at dusk and off at dawn. The family also maintained the grounds of the memorial.

A writer, historian, and public intellectual, Barrett documented in photographs and essays the emerging stories of his beloved communities and the country of Newfoundland. After the Great War, Barrett continued to write and to publish. His column, "Reminiscent of Bygone Days" published in *The Western Star* between 1945 and 1949, provides an invaluable account of the early history of Bay of Islands. Barrett was well known in the area for his local knowledge and insight. Charles R. Fay, the Cambridge economic historian who met Barrett on his travels around Newfoundland in 1952, called him "Curling's Grand Old Man" (Fay, 1956, p. 213).

John and Ena Barrett had four children: John, Arthur, David, and Rose. Their oldest, Royal Canadian Air Force Pilot Officer John H. Barrett, was killed in 1942: aged 20, he died when the passenger ferry *SS Caribou*, crossing from North Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Port-aux-Basques, Newfoundland, was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat. Second son Arthur, a career broadcaster and retired Flight Lieutenant of the Royal Canadian Air Force Bomber Command, died at St. John's in 2019, at the age of 95. David Barrett lives in Welland, Ontario, and Rose Barrett Gillam lives in Mount Pearl, Newfoundland and Labrador.

John A. Barrett died in Curling on July 10, 1955, at the age of 83. Ena C. Barrett died at Grand Falls in 1967.