



Private Nero Baker (Regimental Number 5014) lies in St-Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen – Grave reference S. IV. F. 6.

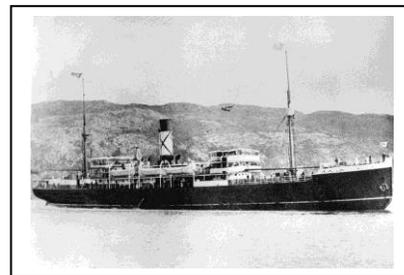
His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Nero Baker enlisted - in St. John's? - on May 15*, 1918, - engaged for the sum of \$1.10 per diem *for the duration of the war* – and attested, both on the same day.

****May of 1918 was the month during which the Newfoundland Military Service Act (conscription) came into effect. From May 11 through to the end of the War, the Department of Militia called a total of 1,470 men into active service.***

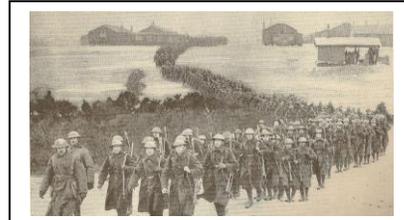
Private Baker did not leave for overseas service until June 11, of 1918, when he boarded a train* in St. John's en route for Halifax, Nova Scotia, via Port aux Basques and North Sydney. From there he sailed on an unspecified troop-ship to the United Kingdom.

(continued)

**Up until the early part of 1918, since the spring of the previous year, the re-enforcements had been sent to Halifax on board the Bowring Brothers vessel Florizel (right). She had been wrecked in February of that year, en route to Halifax, with a large loss of life, and there was no replacement for her.*

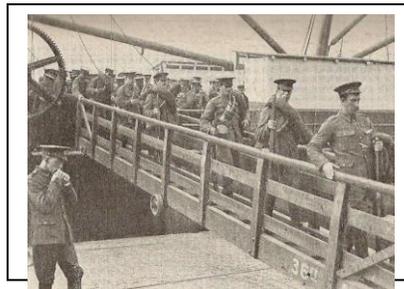


In the New Year of 1918, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had moved quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester. This transfer was finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was to there that Private Baker reported upon arrival in England some six months later; it was also *from* there that he was despatched to join the British Expeditionary Force.



(Right above: *a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918 – from The War Illustrated*)

It was on or about October 26 – the day on which 1st Battalion was in the firing line for the final time - that the 55th Reinforcement Draft – Private Baker one of this contingent - left Hazely Down, and passed through the English-Channel town of Folkestone en route to France where it disembarked on or about the 28th, likely in the port of Le Havre. The Newfoundlanders then proceeded to the British Expeditionary Force Depot near Rouen for final training and organization*.



(Right: *British troops, arriving in France, disembark in Rouen. – from Illustration*)

**Apparently, the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

When he reported on November 3, *to duty in the field*, to the parent unit and to 'B' Company, the 1st Battalion of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment was encamped just to the west of Courtrai (today *Kortrijk*). Two days later, on the 5th, the 9th (Scottish) Division – of which 1st Battalion had been a unit since mid-September – was reviewed by Albert, King of the Belgians.

Then the Armistice came into force on November 11; Private Baker's war had been of short duration.

The Newfoundlanders passed in front of the King and the Belgian Royal Family for a second time on November 22. 1st Battalion had been chosen to represent all Colonial and Dominion troops at the official entry of Albert into the now-liberated Belgian capital, *Bruxelles*.

(continued)



(Above: The caption has it that included in this contingent of British Army troops are English, Scottish and Newfoundlanders. This is the city of Brussels on November 22, 1918. – from Illustration)

On December 4, 1st Battalion traversed the frontier between Belgium and Germany. The Newfoundlanders were to be a unit in the Allied Army of Occupation. On December 8, they reached the Rhine at Cologne, from where they continued their march to their destination, Hilden, in-between the large industrial centres of Mulheim and Dusseldorf.



(Right: the Rhine river flowing through the city of Köln (Cologne) – with the spires of its gothic cathedral showing – in the area where 1st Battalion was stationed in late 1918 and early 1919 - photograph from 2012)

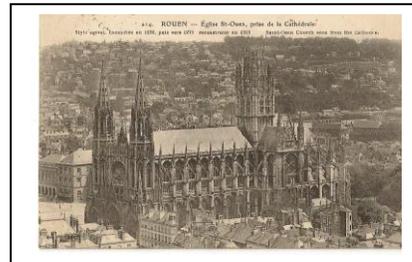
1st Battalion was withdrawn from Germany in February(?)* of 1919 and sent to Rouen. Private Baker, however, seems somehow to have preceded the main body as he is recorded as having been admitted into the 11th Stationary Hospital on February 3, suffering from a **...Bullet wound. Right leg below knee. Shock. Bones of leg extensively shattered...**

**(Sgd) Gilbert Smith Lieut. RAMC
Medical Officer**

**Some Newfoundlanders appear to have already been posted back to Rouen by then.*

(continued)

The son of James Baker, fisherman, and Cecilia Baker – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Heart's Content, he was also brother to James Jr., Nellie, Violet and Louise.



Private Baker was reported as having *died in hospital* in Rouen on the same February 3, 1919, from accidental gunshot wounds.

Nero Baker had enlisted at the age of twenty-six years.

(Above right: *the city centre of Rouen and its venerable gothic cathedral at or about the time of the Newfoundlanders' presence there during the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

At No. 1 Military Prison Guard Hut, No 5213 Private Harold Abbott whilst cleaning his rifle accidentally discharged same, thereby shooting Private N Baker, who was sitting near him, through the leg.

No. 5041 Private N. Baker was shot as stated above at about 04.30 hrs on 3rd February 1919 and died of shock at 13.55 hrs the same day as a result of injuries sustained.

(Sgd) ? G.P.

Private Nero Baker was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

