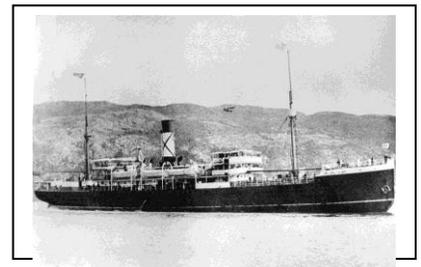




Private Reginald Cheater (Regimental Number 3670) lies in Berlin South-Western Cemetery – Grave reference VII. C. 6.

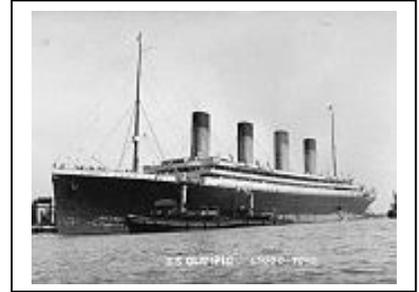
His occupation prior to enlistment recorded as that of a clerk earning an annual \$450.00, Reginald Cheater was a recruit of the Fourteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at Headquarters in St. John's on April 23, 1917, he also enlisted - engaged for the duration of the war and at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and attested on that same day.

Private Cheater was not to depart from Newfoundland for overseas service until May 19, when the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* (right) left en route to Halifax. His contingent of three officers and one-hundred eighty-two *other ranks*, and also ninety-nine recruits of the newly-formed Newfoundland Forestry Unit, then left Nova Scotia for the United Kingdom on board an unspecified* vessel, on May 29.



(continued)

**The ship in question may well have been the White Star liner Olympic (right) – sister ship to Titanic – requisitioned as a troop transport during the war, which sailed on June 2 from Halifax with Canadian military personnel as well – there are no other departures on or about this date. May 29 may have been the date of embarkation by the Newfoundland contingent.*



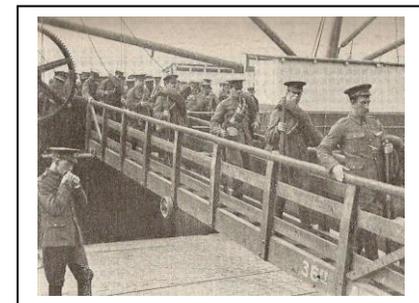
Arriving in the English west-coast port of Liverpool on June 9 the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr* had already been in existence as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some two years. It was from here – since November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were being despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion was transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of Dundee. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.*

It was then not to be until November 6, 1917, that Private Cheater took ship again; on this occasion he was on his way to the Continent, passing through the English south-coast port of Southampton as a soldier among the one-hundred eleven other ranks of the 32nd Draft from Ayr. The Newfoundlanders disembarked in Rouen on the following day and made their way to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot there for a few days of final training and organizing* before making their way to a rendezvous with 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – 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.*

By that time, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had been withdrawn from the Passchendaele campaign, on October 17, in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*.

The unit had been ordered back south from Belgium into northern France to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras.

It was there that, on November 14, four officers and one-hundred forty-one *other ranks* – one of them Private Cheater – reported from Rouen *to duty* with 1st Battalion.

That new offensive, the so-called *Battle of Cambrai*, was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1st Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



(Right above: *The Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai.* – photograph from 2009)

The son of John Cheater, fisherman, and Ann Elizabeth Cheater – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Greenspond, Bonavista Bay – he was the third of three brothers: Eli and James the others. Private Cheater was at first reported as *missing in action* while serving with 'B' Company on December 3, 1917, during the last actions of the *Battle of Cambrai*.

However, subsequent German reports forwarded to London through the offices of the *Geneva Red Cross* record the following: the Germans claimed his capture to have happened on November 30, and that he was imprisoned at first in a camp at Le Quesnay (Limburg Military District) and that a report of him as a prisoner had been forwarded to London as early as December 9 of 1917.

Soon afterwards Private Cheater sent a post-card to the regimental authorities, on which he assured them that he was in good health and had not been wounded. The card was dated *February 3, 1918* (see below).

Private Cheater was at some point transferred to eastern Germany, to the camp at Altdamm. It was there that he died. The Red Cross report of May 25, 1918, documents his passing away of consumption (tuberculosis) in the camp barracks hospital there at nine o'clock in the morning of April 25, 1918, and his subsequent burial in the camp cemetery on the same day. His remains were transferred to where they repose today in early 1925.



(Page preceding: *the entrance to the Commonwealth Cemetery in Berlin South-Western Cemetery – photograph from 2012*)

Born on September 22 of 1896 according to both the census of 1911 and his camp records, Reginald Cheater had enlisted at the age of twenty years and seven months.

(Right: *The sacrifice of Private Cheater (Chaytor is engraved)* is honoured on the War Memorial in Greenspond. – photograph from 2010)



To Major H A Timewell
London

February 3rd 1918

Dear Sir,

I wish to inform you that I am a prisoner of war and am now at this camp (Altdamm). I am getting along quite well and am in good health. I should be much obliged if you have informed my relatives and arranged to have my mail and packets forwarded to this address. Hoping to hear from you soon I am your obedient servant

Reginald Cheater

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

