



**Private William John Dyer (Regimental Number 4605) lies in St-Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen – Grave reference S. IV. G. 23.**

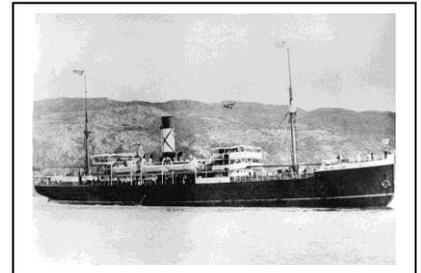
**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a truckman (sic) and farmhand, William John Dyer was earning a monthly fifty dollars working for the *Crosby Company*. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on April 22, 1918, he then enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attested, all on the same day.**

**He was thereupon immediately granted furlough until May 15 when he reported back for duty.**

**Private Dyer 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.***

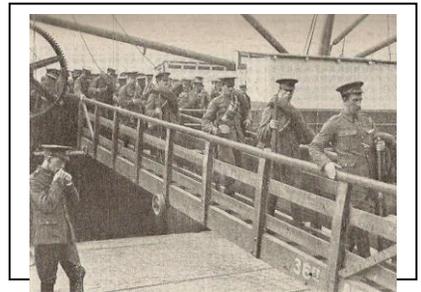


**In the New Year of 1918, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion had moved quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester. This transfer was finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was to there that Private Dyer reported upon arrival in England some six months later, and it was 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 1918 – from The War Illustrated)***

**It was on or about November 23 – twelve days after the Armistice had come into effect - that the 56<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Private Dyer one of this contingent - left Hazely Down, and passed through the English-Channel town of Folkestone en route to France where it disembarked, perhaps in Rouen or possibly in LeHavre, to report to the British Expeditionary Force Base Depot near Rouen on or about the 28<sup>th</sup>.**



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

**By this time the Newfoundlanders had been withdrawn from the Front for several weeks, since October 26, having been relieved on that day at the Belgian village of Inghoyghem, overlooking the Scheldt valley. At the time of Private Dyer's arrival on the Continent, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was in the liberated city of *Bruxelles*, there to parade, as representatives of all Colonial and Dominion troops, in front of the Belgian Royal Family (see below).**



***(Right above: the valley of the Scheldt as seen from Inghoyghem, the Newfoundlanders' furthest point of advance on October 26, 1918 – photograph from 2010)***

**There seems to be no documentation which records Private Dyer's whereabouts for the next two months.**

**(continued on following page)**



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

On December 4, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion traversed the frontier between Belgium and Germany. The Newfoundlanders were to be a unit of the Allied Army of Occupation in the defeated country. 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 above: *the Rhine river flowing through the city of Köln (Cologne) - with the spires of its gothic cathedral showing - where 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was stationed in late 1918 and early 1919 – photograph from 2012*)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was withdrawn from Germany in February of 1919 and sent to Rouen. Whether Private Dyer had been a soldier of the occupying forces seems not to be recorded. But on or about the time of the Newfoundlanders' arrival in France, Private Dyer was admitted into the 6<sup>th</sup> General Hospital suffering from influenza – the date February 13. On the 24<sup>th</sup> he was transferred to the nearby 25<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital, having now been diagnosed as having contracted paratyphoid. As early as March 3, Private Dyer was considered to be *dangerously ill*.

The son of Walter Dyer, deceased 1899, and Ellen Dyer\* of Logy Bay in the District of St. John's East - his own place of residence recorded as 10, York Street in St. John's, he was also brother – or perhaps half-brother - to Catherine (Katie), Bride, Nora, Mary-Ellen – to whom he had allotted a daily fifty cents from his pay - and Walter.

Private Dyer was recorded as having *died of disease* in hospital in Rouen on March 19, 1919, - official cause(s): *'flu, broncho-pneumonia, paratyphoid and military tuberculosis*.



(continued)

William Dyer had enlisted at the age of twenty-two years and eleven months.

*\*Her second husband, Thomas Dowden, had deserted her in 1912. By the time of her son's death, Ellen Dyer was working as a cook in the United States – address 317 Spruce Street, Chelsea, Massachusetts.*

Private William Dyer was entitled to the British War Medal for his overseas service.



Mr. J. R. Bennett

317 Spruce St.  
Chelsea Mass  
March 27, 19

Dear Sir:

I received your telegraph and thank you for your kindness in notifying me and letting me hear of my son's condition and death.

I leave it in your hands whatever you think best as to whether his body be sent home or buried there.

I would like to know if he spoke of his mother or sisters before he died, or made any regrets about anything.

Will you please let me hear any full particulars and if there is any insurance who it is left to.

I have another son Walter in the Army. Is there any way you could find out his address for me?

I am not feeling very well my self and cannot stand much and have to work every day for a living.

I thank you for your kindness and trouble. I replied by letter as I could not afford a telegram.

Yours Sincerely  
Mrs. Ellen Dyer