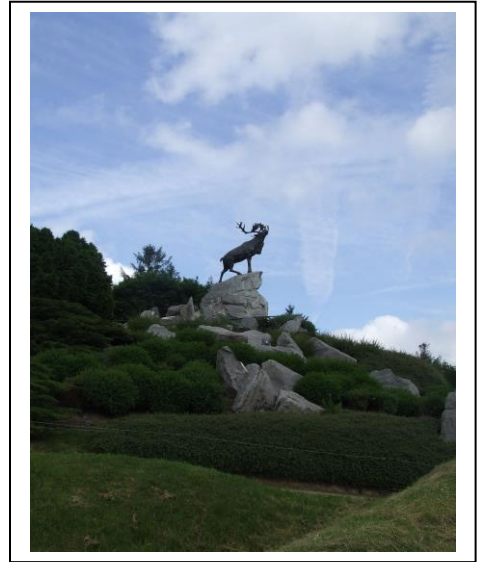


HALFYARD, W

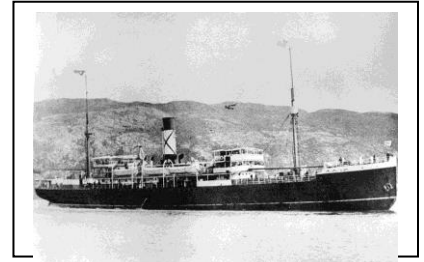
Private Wallace Halfyard (Regimental Number 3793), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Wallace Halfyard was a recruit of the Fifteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at Headquarters at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury on Harvey Road in St. John's on May 18, 1917, he then enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attested on that same day.



From then until the day he embarked, Private Halfyard boarded for much of his time at 198, New Gower Street.

Private Halfyard did not leave St. John's until August 4 of that year. On that day he marched down to St. John's harbour and boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel, *Florizel* (right)*. The destination was Halifax, Nova Scotia, from where the Newfoundland draft now took ship – thus far un-identified: maybe *Missanabie* but this is far from certain - to cross the Atlantic to the United Kingdom.



**Albeit a second source claims that the contingent left St. John's by train.*

Arriving in England the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence to serve as the base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some two years. It was from here – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home had been 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*)

Private Halfyard spent the five months succeeding his arrival in the United Kingdom at the Regimental Depot at Ayr and likely also at Barry*.

(continued)

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been 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.*

In the latter half of January of the New Year, 1918, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion was to move quarters from Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester.

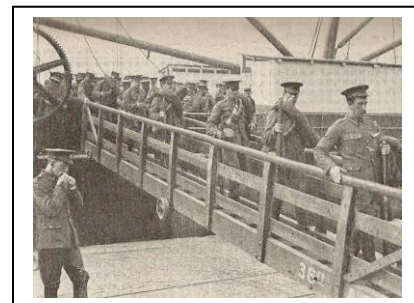
It was there that Private Halfyard would have been stationed at the beginning of February when many of those who had sailed with him from Newfoundland were ordered to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent.



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

For Private Halfyard, however, it was to be a further five months before he would make his way to the Continent: almost immediately upon arrival to Hazely Camp, on January 22, Private Halfyard had been admitted into the *Victorian Isolation Hospital* in Winchester. He remained there until March 6, for some eight weeks, receiving treatment for diphtheria.

On July 2, the 47th or the 48th Re-enforcement Draft, from Hazely Down, with Private Halfyard in its ranks, passed through the English port of Folkestone and, on the 5th, three days later, the French port of Rouen for final training and organization* before finding its way to 1st Battalion.



Only five days afterwards, on July 8 – although *his* file says the 9th - he was surely one of the detachment of one-hundred twenty-eight *other ranks* from Rouen that reported to duty with 1st Battalion at Équihen on the French west coast.

*(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 had at first been ten days – although this was becoming more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas that became known as the Bull Rings.*

Over two months previously, and only days after the crisis of the German spring offensive had passed, on April 24, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had said farewell to their comrades-in-arms of 88th Brigade and 29th Division. On the following day there had been a recessional parade. 1st Battalion was to later be deployed to another unit, but for the summer of 1918 it was to move a world away from Flanders where it had just fought, to be stationed on the west coast of France.

(continued)

On April 29, the Newfoundlanders – 1st Battalion by now reduced to a total strength of just thirty officers and four-hundred sixty-four other ranks – had taken the train in Belgium for the French coastal town of Étaples, where they had arrived at eleven o'clock in the late evening. For now, for them, the fighting was a thing of the past.

The summer of 1918 was to pass peaceably enough for most of the personnel of 1st Battalion. For the months of May, June and until early July, the unit was posted to Écuire, to the Headquarters of Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in Europe.



(Right: *Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force at the time of the Battalion's posting to GHQ – from Illustration*)

The cosmetic honour of this new role, however, masked the reality that the 1st Battalion of the recently-proclaimed *Royal Newfoundland Regiment* was no longer capable of serving in the field.

**Although few at home cared to admit it publicly, the problem was that 1st Battalion had run out of reserves and was unable to continue as a fighting entity. It was to be September before even a battalion of reduced strength could return to active service. At home, mandatory military service was initiated – conscription by another name – but with limited results.*

The posting to Écuire completed, for most of July and all of August the Newfoundlanders were encamped in much the same area, close to the coastal village of Équihen – itself not far removed from the large Channel port of Boulogne – and far to the rear of the fighting, of which there had been plenty elsewhere. And it was to there that Private Halfyard and his detachment reported to duty in early July.



(Right above: *a view of the sparsely-populated coastal community of Équihen at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Re-enforced, the Newfoundlanders returned to the fray on Friday, September 13, as one of the three battalions of the 28th Brigade of 9th Scottish Division. 1st Battalion was once more to serve on the Belgian front where, some six weeks later, having advanced out of the *Ypres Salient*, it would finish its war on October 26 at a place called Inghoyghem (*Ingooigem*).

On September 28, the Belgian Army and the 2nd British Army broke out of their positions, overrunning the enemy lines. It was the start, for them, of the *Hundred Days Offensive**. On the following day, the Newfoundlanders were fighting at the Keiberg Ridge. After almost four years of stalemate, it was once again to be a conflict of movement.



(Right: *British troops and German prisoners in Flanders during the Hundred Days – from Illustration*)

****This offensive would prove to be the final campaign of the Western Front and would terminate with the Armistice of November 11. It had begun further to the south on July 18 on the French front on the River Marne, followed on August 8 by an onslaught by British and Empire troops near Amiens in what would also become known as 3rd Somme.***

By October 3 the advance on the Newfoundlanders' front had stalled temporarily. At a place called Ledeghem the Germans gave notice that they were far from being a spent force. For five days, attempts were made to take the village; on October 6, when 1st Battalion retired to rest, it was still in enemy hands.

The only son of William Halfyard, fisherman, and Eliza Ann Halfyard (deceased about 1909 according to her husband) – to whom he had allotted a daily fifty cents from his pay - of Shoal Brook, Bonne Bay in the District of St. Barbe, he also had two sisters, *gone away* by 1918. A later address of his father, by 1921, was 32, Mullock Street, St. John's.

(Right: *the re-constructed village of Ledeghem, Belgium, almost a century later – photograph from 2010*)



Private Halfyard was reported as *missing in action* on October 3, 1918, near the village of Ledeghem. Some thirty weeks later, on May 1, 1919, he was officially *presumed dead*. However, by then evidence had come to light which had resulted in his file being amended so as to read *killed in action* (see below)*.

Wallace Halfyard had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and five months.

(Right: *The War Memorial in Woody Point honours the sacrifice of Private 'Walstey' Halfyard - a name not recorded elsewhere. This is surely Private Wallace Halfyard. – photograph from 2010*)



Memo from Pay & Record Office, London:

25/3/19

“The above man was killed on the 1st of Oct. near Ledeghem. 4240 Sergt. Kelly reported that Pte. Halfyard was with him as a Brigade Stretcher Bearer and was killed by a shell. He could not be recognized except by his Regtl. Badge and his pay book found near him – this was given to Lieut. MacLean R.S.F. (Royal Scottish Fusiliers) of the 28th Brigade who was in charge of the stretcher bearers at that time*.

Capt. Frost is unable to give any information.

(Sgd) A. E. Bernard, Major

***It was presumably on these grounds that Private Halfyard was recognised on or about April 2, 1919 as having been *killed in action* – this information was of course available a month *before* he was officially *presumed dead*.**

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

