



Private Obadiah Hoyles (Regimental Number 3814), 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, Obadiah Hoyles was a recruit of the Fifteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at Headquarters at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on May 23, 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.

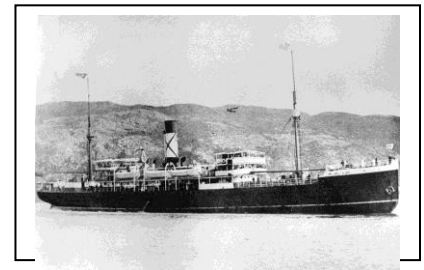
Private Hoyles did not leave St. John's until August 4 of that year. On that day he marched down to St. John's harbour and boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel, *Florizel* (right)*. The destination was Halifax, Nova Scotia, from where the Newfoundland draft now took ship – thus far un-identified: maybe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

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

Arriving in the United Kingdom 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 Hoyles spent the five months succeeding his arrival in the United Kingdom at the Regimental Depot at Ayr and likely also at Barry*. 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 Hoyles would have been stationed at the beginning of February when he was ordered to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent.

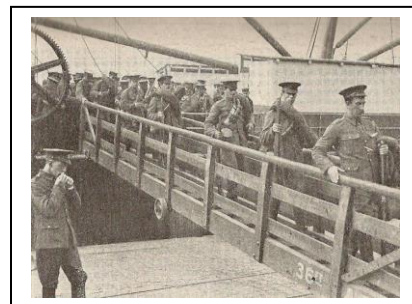
**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of Dundee. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.*

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

On February 4, the 36th Re-enforcement Draft of two hundred *other ranks* from Hazely Down – Private Hoyles among its ranks - passed through the English port of Southampton on its way to the Continent. On the 6th the Newfoundlanders arrived in the French port of Rouen, there to undergo the inevitable final training and organization* at the Base Depot before finding their way to the front.

(Right: *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.*



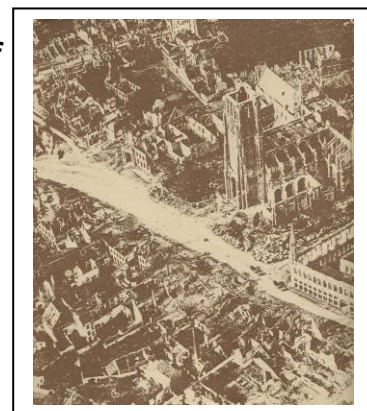
A detachment of one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Rouen – Private Hoyles among that number - reported *to duty* with 1st Battalion at Steenvoorde, on the Franco-Belgian frontier, on the 15th of that February, the day before an inspection by Major-General Beauvoir de Lisle, Officer Commanding 29th Division, a parade complete with presentation of decorations and the announcement that the Newfoundland Regiment was to be designated as *Royal*.

Meanwhile, some ten weeks earlier, at the close of the *Battle of Cambrai* at the beginning of December of 1917, 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment – once again badly under-strength due to the heavy casualties incurred – had been withdrawn from the area of the front lines to re-enforce and to re-organize. The following weeks had been spent at first to the south-west of the city of Arras, at Humbercourt and then at some distance to the north-west, at Fressin.

The weather obliged and even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow, a bit too much at times apparently.

At the beginning of January of 1918, and after that snowy Christmas period spent to the west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had been ordered into Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time.

(continued)



There, as it was with the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences. It was during a period while 1st Battalion was out of the lines that Private Hoyles reported to *active service*.

(Previous page: *an aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916 – from Illustration*)

Meanwhile, while the Allies built their defences, by the beginning of 1918 the Germans were preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking manpower after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them.

It was expected that the Germans would launch a spring offensive. While they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders continued to dig.

(Right: *countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were stationed from March 26 up until April 2 of 1918 – photograph from 2011*)



On March 30, the Newfoundlanders were manning the front-line and support trenches just beyond Zonnebeke and Passchendaele, to the north-east of Ypres, having been posted there in the evening of March 26.

The Regimental War Diary of that period makes no particular note of events on any one of those days, only making the entry on March 31 of *Total casualties to-date:- Killed in Action = 5 Other Ranks. Missing b. Killed 2 do. Wounded = 1 Officer, 11 Other Ranks*

The son of Charles Hoyles, fisherman, and Mary Jane Hoyles (née Noble) – to whom he had allotted a daily fifty cents from his pay - of Pool's Island, Bonavista Bay, he was brother to at least older sister Emma-Frances.

Private Hoyles was reported as having been *killed in action* on March 30, 1918, while serving with 'A' Company in the front-line trenches.

Obadiah Hoyles had enlisted at the age of twenty-one years and four months

(Right above: *countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele in the area where the Newfoundlanders were stationed from March 26 until April 2, 1918 – photograph from 2010*)

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

