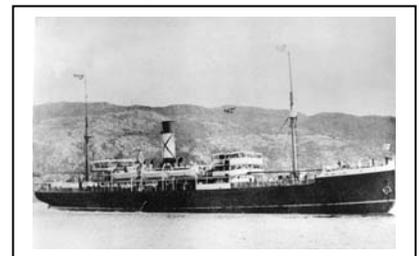




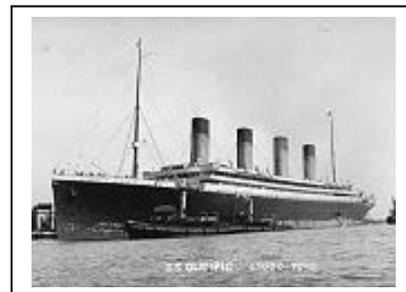
**Company Sergeant Major Wilfred Hedley Barbour (Regimental Number 3705) is interred in Dadizeele New British Cemetery – Grave reference I. D. 31.**

**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a clerk earning a monthly \$35.00, Wilfred Hedley Barbour was a recruit of the Fourteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at Headquarters at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on April 30, 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 the same April 30.**

**Private Barbour was not to depart from Newfoundland 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.**



***\*The ship in question may well have been the White Star liner Olympic – sister ship to Titanic – requisitioned as a troop transport during the war, which sailed on June 2 from Halifax with Canadian infantry and forestry 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.***



***(Right above: The photograph of Olympic is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries Web-site.)***

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 2<sup>nd</sup> (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 1<sup>st</sup> 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)***

It was while he was stationed at Ayr and Barry\* that Private Barbour was promoted - on three occasions and within a perhaps unusually short period. On July 13 he received his first stripe and with it the five-cent per diem raise that accompanied the rank of lance-corporal. Some two months later, on September 20, he was further elevated to the rank of corporal – a further five cents. (Acting)-sergeant status followed on or about October 24 – ‘acting’ at times was apparently not reflected by a pay-raise.

***\*During the summer months of 1917, 2<sup>nd</sup> (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.***

Early in the New Year, the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion moved quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the venerable cathedral city of Winchester. This transfer was finalized during the latter part of January, 1918, and it was from there that Sergeant Barbour 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)***

**(continued)**

On February 4, the 36<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft of two hundred *other ranks*, from Hazely Down – Sergeant Barbour one of its non-commissioned officers - passed through the English port of Southampton and the French port of Rouen, there to spend the inevitable days of final training and organization\* before finding its way to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



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

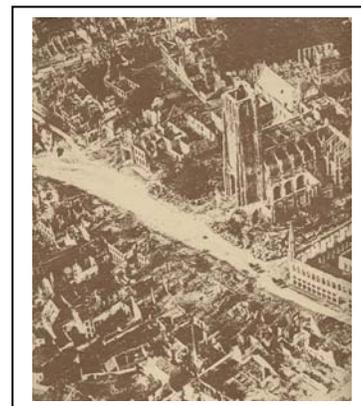
*\*Apparently, the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

A detachment of one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Rouen – Sergeant Barbour one of its number - reported to duty with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at Steenvoorde, near the Franco-Belgian border, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month of March, the day before an inspection by Major-General Beauvoir de Lisle, Officer Commanding 29<sup>th</sup> Division, a parade which was to be complete with presentation of decorations and the announcement that the Newfoundland Regiment was to be designated as *Royal*.

Some nine weeks previously, at the beginning of January of 1918, and after a snowy Christmas period spent to the west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been ordered into Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time.

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.

(Right: *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 man-power after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied – and the Americans were as yet few in number. The Germans, on the other hand, had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East the previous year now allowed them.



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

**(Preceding page: countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were to be stationed in March and early April of 1918 – photograph from 2011)**

Then the Germans did as was expected of them. Ludendorff's armies had already launched a powerful thrust – Operation *Michael* - on March 21, striking at first in the area of *the Somme*, overrunning the battlefields of 1916 and beyond; for a while the advance seemed unstoppable and the fall of Amiens almost inevitable.

Then a second offensive, *Georgette*, was launched in the northern sector of the front, in Flanders, where the Newfoundlanders were stationed: the date was April 9.

Within two days the situation of the Allies was desperate.

**(Right above: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918 – from Illustration*)**



On the day after the first heavy bombardments, April 10, as the Germans approached the towns of Armentières and Nieppe, troops were deployed to meet them. The Newfoundlanders, due to come out of the line and move back to the Somme, boarded buses at three o'clock in the afternoon and were suddenly directed southward, towards Nieppe.



They were in action, attempting to stem this latest offensive, three hours later.

**(Right above: *the area of La Crêche - the buildings in the background - where the Newfoundlanders de-bussed on April 10 to meet the Germans in the area of Steenwerck and its railway station – photograph from 2010.*)**

The British were pushed back to the frontier area of France and Belgium. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, fighting in companies rather than as a single entity, was making a series of stands.

On April 13, during the defensive action near the De Seule crossroads on the Franco-Belgian border, one platoon of 'C' Company was obliterated while trying to check the German advance. The remainder of 'C' Company took up defensive positions along a light railway line and, with 'A' Company, stopped a later enemy attack. 'B' and 'D' Companies – in a failed counter-attack on that evening - were equally heavily involved.



**(Right above: *Ground just to the east of Bailleul where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion fought during the period April 12 to 21 – photograph from 2013*)**

(continued)

What exact role Sergeant Barbour played during this frantic period is not known, apart from the Diary entry (see immediately below) - it is recorded only that he was a non-commissioned officer of 'C' Company - but from April 10 to 21 was to be a difficult eleven days for all of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's personnel. Nevertheless, somehow, the German breakthrough never materialised and the front finally stabilised.



The Regimental War Diary entry of April 10 records *...the remainder of 'C' Coy. under Capt. Paterson, M.C. and Hqrs. took up a position along a light railway line and prepared to fight to a finish. ...there can be no doubt that it was Hqrs., 'A' & 'C' Coys. that by their resistance saved what would have been at least a very serious position for the whole 34<sup>th</sup> Division\**.

*\*88<sup>th</sup> Brigade – therefore 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion – was seconded from the 29<sup>th</sup> Division to the 34<sup>th</sup> Division during this critical period.*

*(Right above: These are the De Seule crossroads, lying astride the Franco-Belgian frontier, and also the scene of fierce fighting involving 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on April 12 -13, 1918. Today there are several houses and a convenience store. – photograph from 2009(?))*

Only days after the crisis of the German spring offensive had passed, on April 24, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion said farewell to their comrades-in-arms of the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade and 29<sup>th</sup> Division. On the following day there was a recessional parade. The 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

On April 29, the Newfoundlanders – 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion by now reduced to a total strength of just thirty officers and four-hundred sixty-four other ranks - took train in Belgium for the French coastal town of Étaples, where they 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion - including Sergeant Barbour whose rank of sergeant was confirmed on May 27. 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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the recently-proclaimed *Royal Newfoundland Regiment* was no longer capable of serving in the field.

(continued)

***\*Although few at home cared to admit it publicly, the problem was that the Royal Newfoundland Regiment 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 Équihe – 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.



On September 10 there came one final promotion: to the rank of (acting) company sergeant-major.

***(Right above: a view of the sparsely-populated coastal community of Équihe 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 28<sup>th</sup> Brigade of 9<sup>th</sup> Scottish Division. The 1<sup>st</sup> 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 (*Ingoogem*).

On September 28, the Belgian Army and the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 a battle that would become known as 3<sup>rd</sup> Somme.***



On the northern front, one of the places where the German resistance was at its most stubborn was in the vicinity of the village of Ledeghem. The Newfoundlanders were still endeavouring to take it on October 6, after days of heavy fighting; when they retired that night, the remnants of the community remained in enemy hands. When they returned to the fight on October 14, Ledeghem had fallen, but the confrontation was ongoing still, just to the north-east.

(continued)

The son of George Barbour, master mariner, and Lucretia Jane Barbour (née *Oakley*) of Newtown, Bonavista Bay – the entire family later moving to Trinity – he was also brother to Annie-Gladys, to Stanley-George and to Percival-Gordon to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay.



Sergeant Barbour was reported as having been *killed in action* on October 14, 1918, while serving with 'D' Company in fighting in the Ledeghem-Drie Masten sector.

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

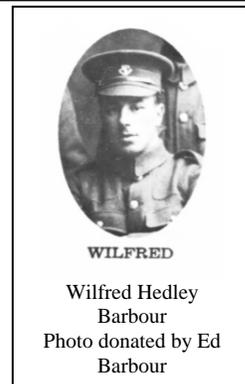
He was buried at a point to the north-east of Ledeghem, his remains later being disinterred and then transferred from there to where they repose today.

Wilfred Hedley Barbour had enlisted at the declared age of twenty-seven years and six months: date of birth, October 3, 1889.



(Right: *The sacrifice of Sergeant Major Barbour is honoured on the War Memorial in Trinity... Far right: ...and also on the one representing the three towns of Newtown, Valleyfield and Wesleyville.* – photograph from 2010)

(Right: *The photograph of Private(?) Barbour is by courtesy of the Grand Banks Genealogy site.)*



Sergeant-Major Wilfred Hedley Barbour was eligible for the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

