



Second Lieutenant George Hayward Taylor (Regimental Number 28*), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

**Officers who were eventually promoted from the ranks may be identified from their Regimental Number. Other officers who were not from the ranks received the King's Commission, or in the case of those in the Newfoundland Regiment, an Imperial Commission, and were not considered as enlisted. These officers thus had no Regimental Number allotted to them.*

And since officers did not enlist, they were not then required to re-enlist 'for the duration', even though, at the beginning, as a private, each had volunteered his services for only a limited time – twelve months.

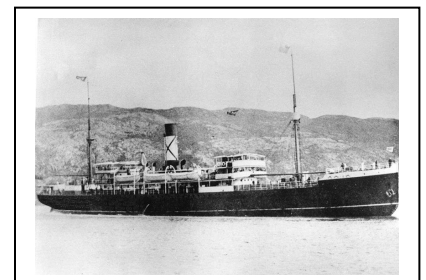
His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a draper working for *Ayre & Sons Co.* of Water Street, and earning an annual six-hundred dollars, George Hayward Taylor was a recruit of the First Draft.

On August 26, 1914, little more than three weeks after the *Declaration of War*, he presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for foreign service.*

A week later, on September 2, George Hayward Taylor then enlisted – engaged at the daily rate of one dollar plus a ten cent per diem Field Allowance. Less than three weeks were now to pass before, on September 21, he received a first promotion, directly to the rank of sergeant before on October 3 being appointed as Colour Sergeant.

That month of September, even as recruitment continued apace, was also to be a period of training as the volunteers would be put through their paces on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's. The first two days of October would apparently be spent in a mass attestation of the Newfoundland contingent, one of those to swear his oath of allegiance having been Sergeant Taylor.

Sergeant Taylor was to embark on October 3, only two days after attestation, as a non-commissioned officer of the *First Five Hundred* – also to become known as the *Blue Puttees* - onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting the contingent in St. John's Harbour.



The ship would sail for the United Kingdom on the following day, October 4, via its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island.

(Preceding page: *The image of Florizel at anchor in the harbour at St. John's is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

(Right: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

In the United Kingdom Sergeant Taylor trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh Castle – where it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh where, on July 15, he became Company Sergeant Major Taylor.

(Right: *Edinburgh Castle dominates the city from its position on the summit of Castle Hill. – photograph from 2011*)

(Right below: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

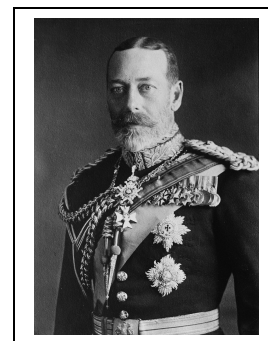
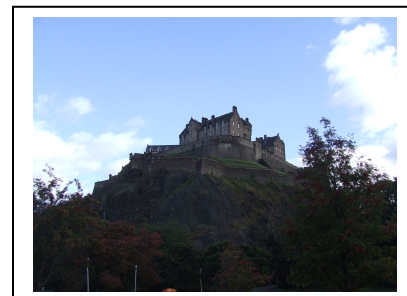
At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at Aldershot.

Meanwhile, the two junior Companies, the later-arrived 'E' and 'F*', as well as Company Sergeant Major Taylor, were sent to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion*.

(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – photograph from Bain News Services via Wikipedia*)

**On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service.*

(continued)



(Right: *An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were quartered the 'other ranks', is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right.* – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr)



Following this summer of 1916, the once-Royal Borough of Ayr on Scotland's west coast was now to serve as the overseas base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment from where – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 - re-enforcement drafts from home were to be despatched to bolster the 1st Battalion's numbers, at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.



(Right: *The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower – it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo)

On October 9 there was to be yet another promotion when CSM Taylor was granted an Imperial Commission and an accompanying appointment to the rank of second lieutenant. Still stationed at Ayr at the time, it would be still another month before Second Lieutenant Taylor was to depart on *active service* to the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

When he did, it was onto His Majesty's Transport *Olympic* – sister ship of *Britannic* and of the ill-starred *Titanic* – on November 14, 1915. The vessel was to sail from the English south-coast naval facility of Devonport where he had disembarked from *Florizel* some thirteen months previously.



(Right above: *Olympic on the right and Aquitania – serving as a hospital ship - in the centre of the image, lie at anchor in Mudros Bay in the autumn of 1915.* – from an old photograph originally from the *Imperial War Museum*)

Olympic reached *Mudros Harbour* on the Greek island of Lemnos at the end of the month. From there the Newfoundland re-enforcements travelled the remaining seventy kilometres or so on a smaller vessel, to be landed at *Suvla Bay* on December 1. The newcomers were to serve at *Suvla* for less than three weeks.



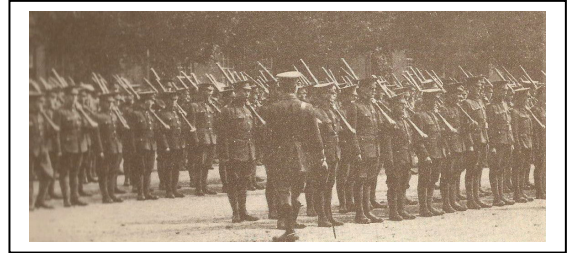
(Right above: *A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Second Lieutenant Taylor served with the 1st Battalion during the late fall of 1915* – photograph from 2011)

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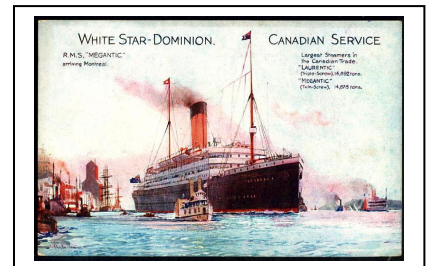
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At this time, during those few months of Sergeant (later Second Lieutenant) Taylor's posting to Ayr, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had travelled to active service, having been attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

(Right: Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, just prior to transfer to active service – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)



On August 20, 1915, the Newfoundland Battalion had embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks. There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1st Battalion had landed at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right above: The image of *Megantic*, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the *Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site*.)



(Right: *Kangaroo Beach*, where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of *Suvla Bay*. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph taken in 2011)



(Right: Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at *Mudros*: either *Megantic* on August 29, *Ausonia* on September 18, or *Prince Abbas* on September 19 – Whichever the case, they were yet to land on *Gallipoli*. – from Provincial Archives)

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion would serve but, even since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, had proved to be little more than a debacle:

Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course the casualties inflicted by an enemy which was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and those of the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

(continued)

(Right below: *An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives*)

**Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

November 25 would see the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at *Gallipoli*; there was to be a freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm which had struck the *Suvla Bay* area and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival rather than the enemy was to be the priority.



There were to be many casualties on both sides, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, had been those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

It was just as the Newfoundland Battalion was putting this experience behind it that, five days later, Second Lieutenant Taylor and his 1st Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr would set foot on the rock and sand of *Suvla Bay*. Less than three weeks later again, the Newfoundlanders – and the British – would be leaving it behind.

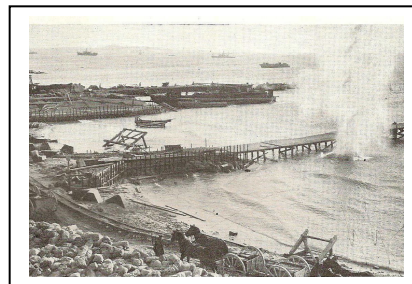
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On the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the area of *Suvla Bay* – the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, to form a part of the rear-guard. Some of the Battalion personnel had been evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case was the respite to be of a long duration; the 1st Battalion would be transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right above: *Cape Helles as seen from the Turkish positions on the misnamed Achi Baba, positions which were never breached: The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side of the picture. – photograph from 2011*)

The British and the *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at *Gallipoli* – were now to be only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* could be undertaken.



This final operation would take place on the night of January 8-9, the Newfoundland Battalion to furnish part of the British rear-guard on this second occasion also.

(Right above: *'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was only days before the final British evacuation – from Illustration*)

****Lieutenant Owen Steele of St. John's, Newfoundland, is cited as having been the last soldier of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to step into the final small boat – with General Maude - to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.***



(Right: 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in that January of 1916 and by the Newfoundlanders who were to be the last soldiers off the beach: Vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011)

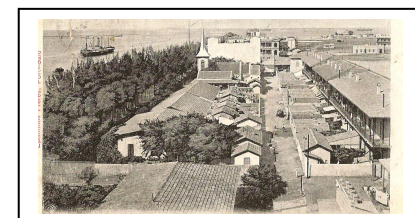
Immediately after the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to the vicinity of Suez, a port at the southern end of the Canal which bears the same name, there to await further orders since, at the time, the subsequent destination of the British 29th Division had yet to be decided*.

****Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.***

(Right: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)



After a two-month interim spent in the vicinity of Port Suez, the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* of the 1st Battalion were to board His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq, on March 14 to begin the voyage through the *Suez Canal* en route to France. The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles, on March 22.



(Right above: Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal as it was just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card)

(Right: British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage post-card)

Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having inexcusably travelled unused in a separate wagon.



Having de-trained at the local station at two o'clock in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were now still to endure the long, dark march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they had then marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* would become a part of their history.

(Right below: *A languid River Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)

On April 13, the 1st Battalion had subsequently marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where it would be billeted, would receive reinforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

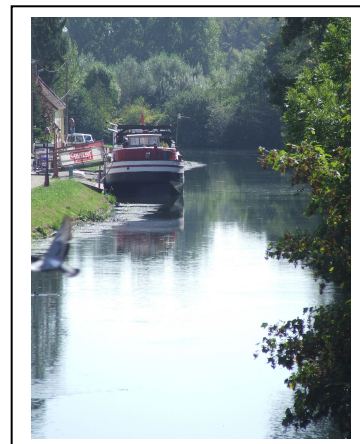
Just days following the Newfoundland Battalion's arrival on the *Western Front*, two of the four Companies – 'A', and 'B' – were to take over several support positions from a British unit* before the entire Newfoundland unit was to then be ordered to move further up for the first time into forward positions on April 22.

**It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment Battalion, were then the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles - true also on the day of the attack on July 1.*

(Right: *A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?)*)

Having then been withdrawn, at the end of that April after the completion of their first tour in the trenches, to the areas of Mailly-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders were soon to be preparing for the now-impending British campaign of that summer, this to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, flowing sedately – and still does so today – through the region.

If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of Beaumont-Hamel on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered, they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later*.



(Preceding page: *Beaumont-Hamel: Looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences: The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009)*

(Right: *A view of Hawthorn Ridge Cemetery Number 2 in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2009(?)*)

**Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion’s casualties was to be incurred during the advance from the third line of British trenches to the first line from where the attack proper was to be made, and while struggling through British wire laid to protect the British positions from any German attack.*



There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds.*

It was to be the largest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the butchery of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.



(Right above: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village. – photographs from 2010 and 2015)*

In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man’s-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.

(Right: *A grim, grainy image purporting to be Newfoundland - dead awaiting burial after Beaumont-Hamel – from...?)*



Informant states that on the First July (Saturday)... the Regiment went over the trenches at 9a.m., to attack 3rd Line system of German trenches. The Germans immediately opened a violent machine gun fire and our men began to fall. Informant states that practically the whole Regiment was mown down and that Lieut. Mellor, Reid and Taylor were most possibly killed...Extract from Casualty Report received from Pay & Record Office, London, dated August 18, 1916...from report of Second Lieut. William Valence Warren,

**1st Newfoundland Regiment,
3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth**

The son of Eugene Frederick Taylor, with *His Majesty's Customs*, and of Mary Taylor (née *Hall*, deceased January 1 of 1919)* of 5, Maxse Street, St. John's, he was also brother to Richard, to Eugene-Frederick Jr., Bessie, Isabella, Susie, Mary and to Florence – one of whom, likely Florence, was to receive the continuation of a daily allotment of fifty cents from his pay until the age of seventeen.

**The couple married on January 8, 1888, in Harbour Grace, later to move to St. John's circa 1900, before the birth of their youngest child, Florence.*

Lieutenant Taylor was at first reported as *missing in action* on July 1, 1916, during the fighting at Beaumont-Hamel on the first day of *the Somme*. Some six months later, on December 31, 1916, he was officially *presumed dead*.

However, his death in action at *the outset of the attack* was reported, and a subsequent letter from the Officer Commanding Third Army Mobile Grave Registration Unit, dated June 15 of the following year, 1917, recorded the identification and burial* of his remains on or about that date. His record was thus amended so as to read *killed in action*.

George Taylor had enlisted at a declared twenty-four years of age: date of birth in Harbour Grace, Newfoundland, May 22, 1892 (from *Ancestry.ca*).

Both his brother Richard (Private, Regimental Number 1973) and his brother Fred (Lance Corporal, Regimental Number 2525) would later die at Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917. Neither has any known last resting-place and both are commemorated with Second Lieutenant George Taylor on the bronze beneath the Caribou.

**It may therefore be that the grave-site of Lieutenant Taylor was destroyed in the later fighting in the area, particularly in the battles of 1918.*

(Right above: *This family memorial to the memory of the three Taylor brothers 'killed in action' during the Great War stands in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's. – photograph from 2010*)

(*The photograph of Lieutenant Taylor is from the Provincial Archives.*)

Second Lieutenant George Hayward Taylor was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – February 10, 2023.