



Private Hedley Taylor (Regimental Number 1129), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.



His occupation previous to military service recorded as that of a cooper working for \$50.00 monthly, Hedley Taylor presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on February 11 of 1915. He then enlisted – engaged at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – four days later, on February 15, 1915, before attesting on February 24.



Private Taylor of 'E' Company embarked in St. John's on board the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* (right above – from the *Provincial Archives*) some two months later again, on April 22, 1915.

The ship sailed to Halifax where his contingent took ship on His Majesty's Transport *Missanabie* (right) – likely with Canadian troops - for the crossing to Liverpool – the ship departed Halifax on April 25. From Liverpool they travelled by train to Edinburgh where the Newfoundlanders arrived on May 2. 'E' Company was to have but a few days to savor the charms of the Scottish capital.



Only nine days later, on May 11, the entire Battalion was posted for training from Edinburgh to a tented Stobs Camp near the Scottish town of Hawick.

(Right: *the Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp on June 10, the day it received its Colours* – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)



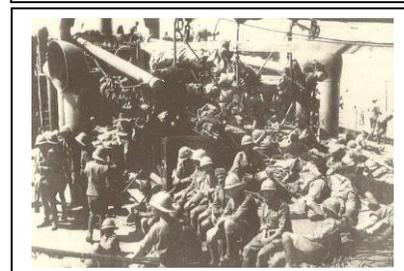
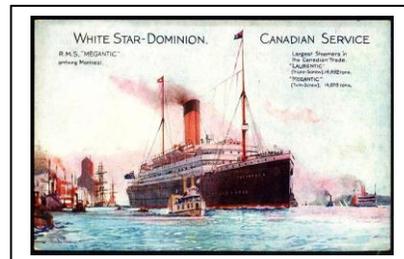
From Stobs, some thirteen weeks later again, in early August, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the senior Companies now become 1st Battalion, the Newfoundland Regiment, were transferred to Aldershot in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before departing on active service to the Middle East and to the fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

'E' and 'F' Companies – the latter having arrived at Stobs Camp on July 10 - were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were to form the nucleus of the newly-formed 2nd (Reserve) Battalion.

When he was apprised of his transfer seems not to be recorded, but Private Taylor was one of the few from 'E' Company who were to swell the ranks of the units posted to Aldershot - thus he became a soldier of 'A' Company. It was during the period while he was at Aldershot, and as was the case with the great majority of the Newfoundland troops, that Private Taylor was prevailed upon to re-enlist *for the duration of the war*. This he did on August 14*.

**At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.*

On August 20, 1915, Private Taylor took ship on board the requisitioned passenger liner *Megantic* (right above) for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting in Gallipoli where, a month later – of which two weeks had been spent billeted at the British barracks at Abbassia, near the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, 1st Battalion landed on the beach at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula.



(Right adjacent black & white: *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)*

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



(Right: *almost a century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where Private Taylor served during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*



(Right below: *Cape Helles (see following paragraphs) 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)*



On the night of December 19-20, the British abandoned their positions and withdrew from Suvla Bay, the Newfoundlanders, the only non-British unit to serve there, forming a part of the rear-guard on that occasion.

1st Battalion was transferred two days later to Cape Helles on the western tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders were soon, on the night of January 8-9, to be abandoning Cape Helles as well.

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

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

When the British evacuated the entire Gallipoli Peninsula in January of 1916, 1st Battalion was sent to Alexandria, arriving there on the 15th of that month. From there the Newfoundlanders were transferred, almost immediately, south to Suez where they were to await further orders. To that point it seems that the theatre of the future posting of 29th Division was still uncertain.

(Right: *The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Newfoundlanders, employed as the rear-guard, were among the last to leave on two occasions.* – photograph taken from the battleship *Cornwallis* from *Illustration*)

(Right: *Port Tewfiq (see paragraph below) at some time just before the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

On March 14, the officers and men of 1st Battalion embarked through Port Tewfiq at the southern end of the Suez Canal onto His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* (right) for the voyage to the French Mediterranean port of Marseilles, en route to the *Western Front*.

(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 Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy.

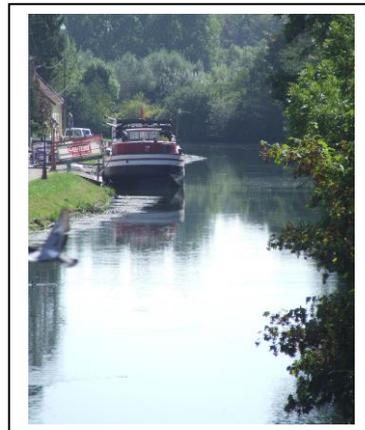
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It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for them travelling unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the station at two in the morning the Newfoundlanders still had a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.

(Right: *the Somme seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy as it flows through the community – photograph from 2010*)

It is doubtful that any of those tired soldiers paid much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge that they passed on their way from the station. Some three months later *the Somme* would be a part of their history.



On April 13, 1st Battalion marched into the village of Englebelmer – three kilometres behind the lines and perhaps some fifty kilometres in all distant from Pont-Rémy – where it was billeted, welcomed re-enforcements from Rouen on the 15th and, on that same day, was introduced into the British lines where the Newfoundlanders were then put to work making improvements to the communication trenches.

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for that same meandering river which flowed through the region, *the Somme*.

(Right: *a part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)



Private Taylor was wounded at Beaumont-Hamel (right) on July 1, 1916, during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. On the following day he was evacuated to the 8th Casualty Clearing Station at Bailleul then subsequently being transferred to the 29th Casualty Clearing Station at Gezaincourt – having incurred injuries inflicted by gun-fire to the right arm and leg.



(Right above: *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*)

Private Taylor's next stop was at the 3rd Canadian Stationary Hospital in the French coastal town of Boulogne on the 4th. From there he was invalided on July 5 to England on the Belgian Hospital Ship *Jan Breydel* (right) and admitted on the same day into the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.



(Right: *The main building of what became 3rd London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1st, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)



(Above far right: *Newfoundland patients, unfortunately unidentified, convalescing at 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth – courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

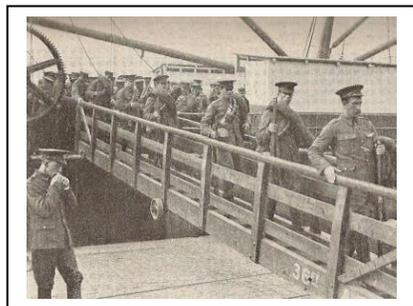
Following treatment and convalescence Private Taylor was granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital – in his case from August 16 to 25 - before there followed the almost inevitable posting to the Regimental Depot. Private Taylor reported *to duty* there on August 29. While at the Depot he received promotion to the rank of lance corporal on October 27 but, a month later, at his own request, returned to the ranks.

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland to serve as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were sent 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*)

December 12 of 1916 saw the 15th Re-enforcement Draft - Private Taylor among its ranks - pass through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the morrow it disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot where the new arrivals spent time for final training and re-organization*.



(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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

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Private Taylor reported to duty with 1st Battalion on Christmas Day of 1916. The Newfoundlanders were two weeks into a six-week posting to *Corps Reserve* at Camps en Amienois at the time and maybe half-way through their Christmas dinner - apparently washed down with *real ale*. There seems to be no report as to whether Private Taylor's unit of 50 returned wounded made it there in time to participate or not.



(Right above: a *British camp, in not particularly clement conditions, somewhere on the Continent during a winter of the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

After that welcome six-week respite, the Newfoundlanders *officially* returned to *active service* on January 23, 1917, although they had been back in the trenches already by that date and had incurred the first casualties of 1917.

The only infantry activity directly involving 1st Battalion during that entire period – from the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and beginning of March, an action which brought this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.

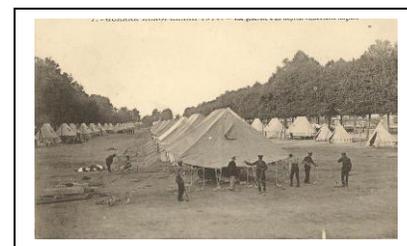


(Right above: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time.* - photograph from 2009(?))

After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March was a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events. They even had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris (right), the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



Private Taylor was admitted just days before Sir Edward's visit, on March 14, into 38th Casualty Clearing Station, diagnosed as suffering from diphtheria. This malady develops in the throat so maybe the diagnosis was incorrect as, only three days later, Private Taylor was reported to be in the 10th General Hospital in Rouen, being treated for tonsillitis, still serious, nonetheless, in those days before antibiotics.



(Right above: a *British casualty clearing station being established, this one, like many, under canvas, allowing for mobility if and when necessary* – from a vintage post-card)

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Discharged to duty at Base Depot on April 7, Private Taylor re-joined 1st Battalion on the fifth day of May. At the time the Newfoundlanders had just arrived in Berneville, having marched the approximately eleven kilometres from Arras. Four days later they were on the way back to Arras – again on foot – to do another tour of the trenches.



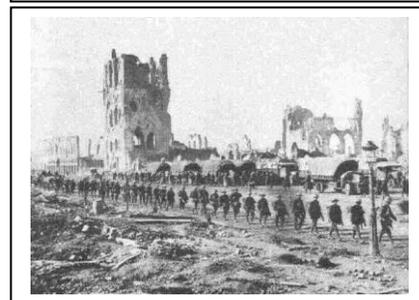
(Right above: *the remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War – from Illustration*)

At the beginning of June, 1st Battalion retired from the line to Bonneville and spent its time re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, the autumn as well.



(Right: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville in early May – perhaps the 7th - of 1917 – from The War Illustrated*)

The Newfoundlanders once again moved north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of Ypres. This had been selected as the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, borrowing that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

1st Battalion was to remain in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army which floundered its way across the sodden countryside of Flanders. Notably it fought in two major engagements, already at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and then at the *Broembeek* on October 9. Private Taylor was to play his role at only the former.



(Above right: *an unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

The son of David Taylor, labourer with *Baine Johnson & Co.*, and Susanna Taylor – to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay - of 61, the Southside, St. John's, he was also brother to David Jr. and William.

Private Taylor was reported as having been *killed in action* on August 16, 1917, while serving with 'A' Company during the fighting at the *Steenbeek*.

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Hedley Taylor had enlisted at the age of nineteen years.

(Right: *This is the area of the Steenbeek – the stream runs close to the trees - and also close to where 1st Battalion fought the engagement of August 16, 1917. It is some eight kilometres distant from a village called Passchendaele. – photograph from 2009*)



Private Hedley Taylor was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



Miss Maggie Cloy
55, Elba Street, Ayr

May 27, 1917

Dear Sir or Madam,

This is a small note to ask you if you would be so kind as to write to France and find out this address for me please, his name is Harry Hedley Taylor 1129, 1st Newfoundland Regt., B.E.F. France. I was up in the racecourse finding out about him. So they told me to write to you and you might do something for me to let me know if he is living or what he is doing, please oblige me by trying to send me a answer to this letter so that I will know what to do it is about 3 weeks since I have heard anything about him, so it upsets you a lot when they don't write, I think this is all I have got to say at present hope you will do as much as you can to find out about him for me, answer this as soon as you can, please oblige

Miss Maggie Cloy
55 Elba Street
Ayr

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Newfoundland Contingent

Pay & Record Office
58 Victoria Street
London SW1
29th May, 1917

Madam.

Records here show that No. 1129, Pte. Hedley Taylor, has recently been in hospital in France, slightly sick, but he is now presumed to be again serving with his Unit, 1/1 Newfoundland Regiment, BEF.

xxxxx*
for Paymaster & Officer i/c Records

Miss Maggie Cloy
55, Elba Street
Ayr

**The above being from a copy in the original records, no signature has been appended.*

(Right: The second house from the right is Number 55, Elba St., Ayr – photograph from 2014)

