



Private Adolphus Wiseman (Regimental Number 2050), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to enlistment recorded as that of a fisherman, Adolphus Wiseman was a recruit of the Eighth Draft. He presented himself for medical examination and also enlisted in St. John's - at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 - on December 30, 1915, and then attested on New Year's Eve, the following day.



**Another source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

It was to be almost a further three months before Private Wiseman was to embark for overseas service to the United Kingdom. It was as a soldier of the second contingent of 'H' Company that he took ship for overseas service on board His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian** (right) in St. John's Harbour on March 23-24. The ship did not sail from Newfoundland until the 25th and likely crossed the Atlantic in convoy.



This would explain what was apparently a slow voyage**: Private Wiseman did not disembark in the United Kingdom until April 9, at which time the contingent was transported to the Regimental Depot in Scotland.

**Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched - the vessel, originally built for the Allan Line, had been requisitioned as a troop-ship and transport carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

***Convoys often altered course and obviously had to travel at the speed of the slowest ship. Sicilian would also have had to sail to a rendezvous point to meet the accompanying vessels - a convoy left Halifax on March 31-April 1 to arrive in Liverpool on April 9.*

It could also be that she embarked some Canadian troops before crossing the Atlantic as she could carry well over one-thousand passengers with ease.

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as a base for the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there - as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 - that the new-comers arriving from home were despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



(Preceding page: *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*)

During the winter of 1915-1916 the men of the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been lodged in several venues, at a nearby military camp at Gales, but also as far afield as Paisley Barracks, some sixty-five kilometres distant. However, by the spring of 1916 the difficulty had been overcome by housing the men in a requisitioned school, in a tented community and in the Ayr Racecourse Grandstand, all in the district of Newton-upon-Ayr.

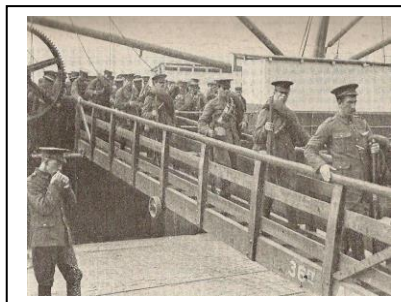


(Right above: *the new race-course at Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photo from 2012*)

It was at *the Racecourse* at Newton-on-Ayr that Private Wiseman re-enlisted on June 30, 1916, only nine days before his departure for the Continent.

**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.*

July 9 saw the 8th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Norman among its ranks - pass through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to France. On the day following, the 10th, it disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and made its way to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, there to undergo final training and organization* before moving to a rendezvous with the parent unit.



(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way 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.*

There must have been a sense of urgency at the time: 1st Battalion had suffered terribly at a place called Beaumont-Hamel on the morning of July 1, and on July 6 its depleted strength, as reported by the Regimental War Diarist, still numbered no more than one-hundred sixty-eight *other ranks*, less than twenty per cent of the regulation strength of a British battalion.

(continued)

Yet, whereas the majority of that draft from Ayr were to report to duty with the 1st battalion, the Newfoundland Regiment, before the end of July and before its posting to Belgium, Private Wiseman apparently did not depart the confines of the Base Depot until early August. The reason for this delay is not apparent in his documentation, only the date on which he joined the parent unit: August 4 – although his return, or that of any other re-enforcements, is not noted in the Regimental War Diary.

It was among the remnants of the medieval city of Ypres where the full complement of 1st Battalion was stationed on that August 4, and although not considered as a part of *the Front*, it was a dangerous place at any time: five other ranks wounded – some fatally – by shell-fire on that day alone.

Only a week previously, on July 27-28, 1st Battalion - still at only half-battalion strength, numbering only five-hundred fifty-four strong even after re-enforcement – had moved north and entered into Belgium for the first time. It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel.



(Right above: *the entrance to 'A' Company's quarters in the ramparts of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

The Salient was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatalities. *Somme*.



(Right: *the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card*)

The Salient was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatalities. On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, 1st Battalion moved south back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

Four days after its return to *the Somme*, on October 12, 1st Battalion went again to the offensive at a place called Gueudecourt, some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. It proved to be another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.



(Right: *This is the ground over which 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007*)

The son of Job Wiseman, fisherman, and Jane Wiseman – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay - of Little Bay Islands, Twillingate, he was also brother to Annie, Baxter, Bessie and Walter.

Private Wiseman was reported as *missing in action* on that October 12, while serving with 'C' Company in the fighting at Gueudecourt. Some thirty weeks later, on or about May 3 of 1917, he was officially *presumed dead*.

Adolphus Wiseman had enlisted at the age of twenty-two years and two months.

(Right above: *the Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of 1st Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916* – photograph from 2012)

(Right: *a monument to the memory and sacrifice of Private Adolphus Wiseman which stands in the United Church Cemetery on Little Bay Islands* – photograph from 2014)

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

