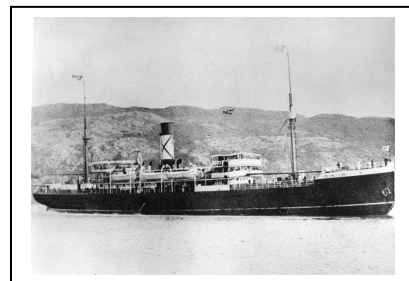




**Private Charles Frederick Taylor (Regimental Number 293) lies in Y Ravine Cemetery – Grave reference C. 3.**

**His occupation prior to enlistment recorded as that a *cooper* working for six dollars a week at the South Side premises of *Job Brothers & Co.*, Charles Frederick Taylor presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on September 1, 1914, four weeks less a day after the *Declaration of War*. It was a procedure which would pronounce him as...*fit for foreign service*.**

Eight days later he enlisted at the same *CLB Armoury* on September 9, 1914 – engaged at the daily private soldier’s rate of \$1.10 (this including a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance). Private Taylor was a recruit of the First Draft.



Some three weeks later again, Private Taylor attested on October 2 before embarking on October 3 with the others of the *First Five Hundred* onto the Bowring Brothers’ vessel *Florizel* awaiting them in St. John’s Harbour.

(Right above: *The image of Florizel at anchor in the harbour at St. John’s is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

The ship sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island where she was to join the convoy transporting the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division across the Atlantic.



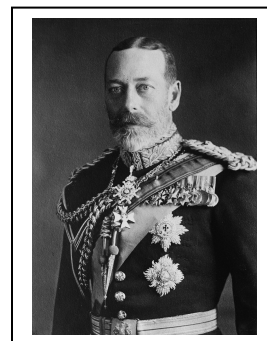
(Right: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

In the United Kingdom Private 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 provided 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.



(Right above: *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 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’\*, were sent to Scotland’s west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2<sup>nd</sup> (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.*

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, was thereupon attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.**

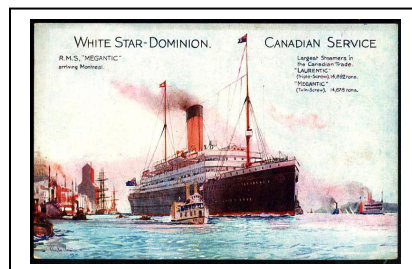
**It had then been during the period spent at Aldershot that Private Taylor of ‘B’ Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 13, to re-enlist for the duration of the war\*.**

**\*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.**



**(Right above: Some of the men of ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’ Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915 – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)**

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



**On August 20, 1915, Private Taylor and his comrades-in-arms 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 where, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he disembarked with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.**



**(Right above: Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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)**

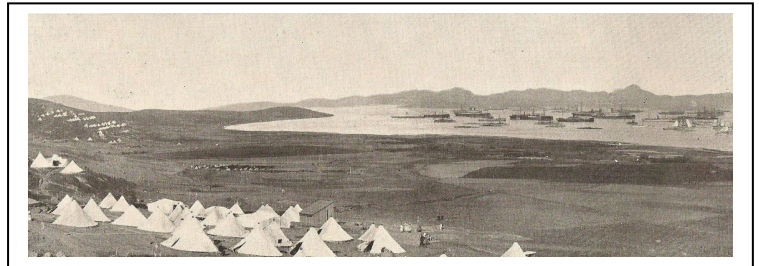


**(Right: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)**

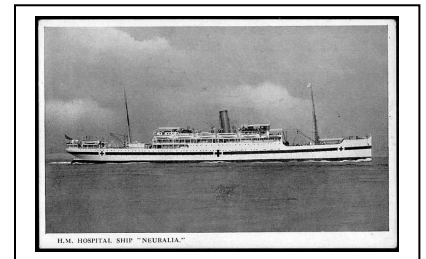
\* \* \* \* \*

Private Taylor was likely not, however, to have disembarked at *Suvla Bay* with the Newfoundland unit. While en route to the *Gallipoli Peninsula* from Alexandria and on that same day of September 20, he was admitted into the 1<sup>st</sup> Stationary Hospital at *Mudros Bay*, on the Greek island of Lemnos, suffering from chronic diarrhoea. It was likely a relatively mild case as he was in care for a bare two weeks.

(Right: A crowded *Mudros Bay* and its non-existent harbour on the island of Lemnos, in the autumn of 1915, with one of the many Allied medical units to be established there – most of them under canvas – in the foreground with another to the rear left on a hill-side – from Illustration)



Discharged to duty on October 4 with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion – presumably back at *Suvla Bay* - a bare four weeks were to pass before Private Taylor was once again evacuated to hospital – possibly having first been ferried to *Mudros Bay* - on this second occasion on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Neuralia* which transported him to the British-held Mediterranean island of Malta where he was admitted, diagnosed as suffering from dysentery, on October 30, into St. Patrick's Military Hospital.



(Right above: The image of HM Hospital Ship *Neuralia* in her war-time apparel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website. Requisitioned during the Great War, she served as a hospital ship from June of 1915 until July 1919. She also served in the same capacity during the war of 1939 to 1945 until May 1, 1945, when she hit a mine and was sunk.)



(Right above: A British Royal Naval Hospital, now disused, on the island of Malta: Since 1964 an independent nation, Malta, at the time of the Great War, and also during the Second World War, was a British possession. – photograph from 2011)

From St. Patrick's Hospital, on December 15, he was transferred to All Saints' Convalescent Camp, also on Malta, where he would remain for a further two months. From there, eventually, Private Taylor was to board His Majesty's Transport *Bornu* for Egypt on February 11, 1916. He had been posted to *general active duty* at the large British Base Depot at Sidi Bishr, Alexandria, to remain there for almost a further four weeks.



(continued)

(Preceding page: *One of the main thoroughfares in the Egyptian city of Alexandria at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Private Taylor later reported *to duty* with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in the vicinity of Suez at the southern end of the Canal on March 7, only a week before the planned transfer of the Newfoundland unit back to continental Europe.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion had served, 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 afore-mentioned floods – and the casualties inflicted by an enemy who 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.



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

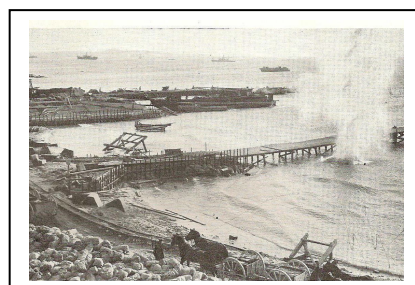
*\*Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

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 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to 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 were also to serve at *Gallipoli* – were now only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the *Peninsula* was undertaken.



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

(continued)

(Preceding page: *'W' Beach at Cape Helles as it was 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 to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.*



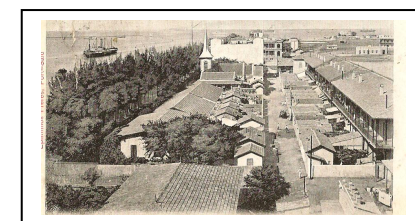
(Right: *'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces in that January of 1916 and by the Newfoundlanders who were to be the last soldiers off the beach: Vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011*)

When the British had evacuated the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the Newfoundland Battalion was to be ordered to the Egyptian port-city Alexandria, having arrived there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month. The Newfoundlanders were then to be immediately transferred southward to 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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.*

Having arrived at Suez (see further above) only a week before his unit's departure from there, Private Taylor was among the almost six-hundred officers and *other ranks* who boarded His Majesty's Transport *Alaunia* at Port Tewfiq on March 14 to sail up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France. The Newfoundlanders disembarked in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseilles on March 22.



(Right above: *Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal 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*)



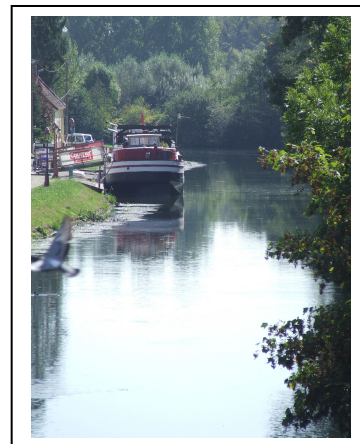
Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train arrived at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having travelled unused in a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

(continued)

Having de-trained at the local station at two in the morning, the Newfoundlanders were still to face a long 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 marched on their way from the station. But some three months later *the Somme* was to become a part of their history.

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



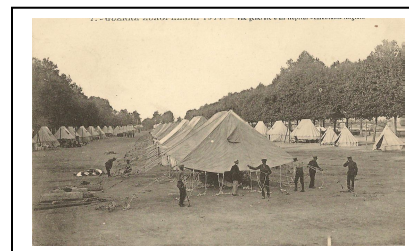
On April 13, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had marched into the village of Englebelmer – perhaps some fifty kilometres in all from Pont-Rémy - where they would be billeted, would receive reinforcements and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the trenches of the *Western Front*.

The Newfoundlanders were also soon to be preparing for the British campaign of that summer, to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river, *the Somme*, that flowed – and still does so today – through the region.

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

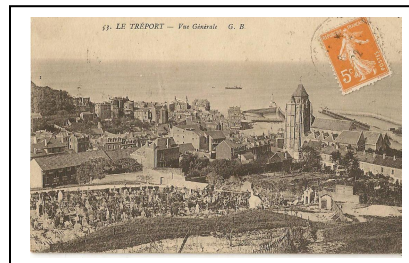


During this period, on May 2, while the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was busy – according to the Regimental War Diary entry of the day – avoiding enemy shell-fire in the trenches, Private Taylor was to be admitted into the 4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Beauval for treatment to a painful condition caused by a deformed toe-joint on his left foot, a complaint commonly known as *hammer toe*.



(Right: A casualty clearing station being established somewhere in France, this one, like many, under canvas – from a vintage post-card)

Four days later, on May 6, Private Taylor was transferred for further medical attention to the 16<sup>th</sup> General Hospital established at Le Tréport and, from there, on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the month, would then be released to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Convalescent Depot. When some three weeks later again he reported *to duty* with his unit on June 9, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had just withdrawn from the front to the community of Louvencourt for final training in preparation for the impending British offensive.



(Right above: The French coastal resort community of Le Tréport became an important medical complex during the time of the Great War. – from a vintage post-card)

(continued)

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\*.

*\*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.*

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



There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand were 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 killing of *the Somme* was to continue for the next four and a half months.

(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village. – photographs from 2010 & 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.*



The son of Leonard J. Taylor, *wharfinger* then later *mechanic* with *Job Brothers & Co.* of Water Street, St. John's, and of Susan Maria Taylor (née *Snow*) – to whom he had apparently allotted a daily eighty cents from his pay, later reduced to fifty cents - of the South Side in St. John's, he was also brother to Ada, to Laura-Gertrude, to Ronald-George, Victoria-Eugenie and Mary-S.\*.

*\*There appear to be discrepancies among the siblings in that Laura-Gertrude and Ronald-George are documented as having been born five months apart in 1890.*



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



Private Taylor was at first reported as *missing in action* at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916, while serving with ‘B’ Company during the fighting of the first day of *the Somme*. Some six months later, on December 31, 1916, Private Taylor was officially *presumed dead*.

However, a subsequent report dated April 23 of 1917, and submitted by the Office of the Officer Commanding 5<sup>th</sup> Corps confirmed that the remains of Private Taylor had, on or about that date, been identified and then interred in No-Man’s-Land just to the west of the *Y Ravine* and thus close to where he lies today. His record was thus amended so as to read *killed in action 1/7/16*.



(Right above: A family memorial in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John’s commemorates the sacrifice of Private Taylor. – photograph from 2015)

Private Taylor shares his grave marker with an unknown soldier of the Great War.



Charles Frederick Taylor had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-one years: date of birth in St. John’s, Newfoundland, September 15, 1893 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

*The above photograph of Private Taylor is from the Provincial Archives.*

Private Charles Frederick Taylor was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 12, 2023.