



Private Richard Hall Taylor (Regimental Number 1973), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of an *accountant* with *R. Prowse & Sons*, Richard Hall Taylor was a volunteer of the Seventh Recruitment Draft. He presented himself at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on November 2 of 1915 in order to enlist and was thereupon engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar, to which was to be added a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.



Six days following his enlistment, on November 8, Richard Hall Taylor was to return to the same venue, the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, where he was now to undergo a medical examination. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as being...*fit for Foreign Service*.

It was then to be only some forty-eight hours later again, after that medical assessment, that there then came about the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On November 10 he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, at which moment Richard Hall Taylor became...*a soldier of the King*.

A long waiting-period was now in store for the recruits of this draft, designated as 'H' Company*, before they were to depart from Newfoundland for...*overseas service*.

**In fact, 'H' Company was to depart from Newfoundland in two detachments: the first one-hundred recruits, Private Taylor among that number, would be the first to leave in that December of 1915. The second part of 'H' Company would not follow until the fourth week of the upcoming month of March. It was to make the journey on board the SS Sicilian and report to Ayr on April 9.*

Until as late as that spring of 1916 it had been the intention to form a 2nd Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment to fight on the Continent. In fact it would seem that the one-hundred sixty-three recruits of the second contingent, 'H' Company, were to form a part of the nucleus of that unit, while the personnel already at the Depot by this time would form a reserve battalion to serve as a re-enforcement pool for both the Regiment's fighting units.

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It could not have been long before a change of plan came about as, very soon, men of the second half of 'H' Company were being sent to strengthen the 1st Battalion already on the Continent – maybe Beaumont-Hamel had something to do with it.

Private Taylor, Regimental Number 1973, would be one of the one-hundred men who comprised the first detachment of 'H' Company to travel for...overseas service. He was now to wait five weeks and three days after attestation before being called, but where he was to spend this time is not certain: he may have temporarily returned to work and almost surely was to spend time with family and friends at his home on Maxse Street in St. John's – all of which of course is only speculation*.

**It is certain that some of the recruits, those whose home was not in St. John's or close to the city, or those who had no friends or family to offer board and lodging, were quartered in the curling rink at Fort William in St. John's, a building which was to serve as a barracks.*

On December 15, while preparations were likely ongoing for departure three days hence, Private Taylor was to receive promotion to the rank of lance corporal. Thus he was now a non-commissioned officer of 'H' Company.

This first detachment of 'H' Company left St. John's by train to cross the island to Port aux Basques on December 18, 1915. After the short sea-voyage to traverse the Gulf of St. Lawrence the detachment entrained once again, in North Sydney, for Saint John, New Brunswick.

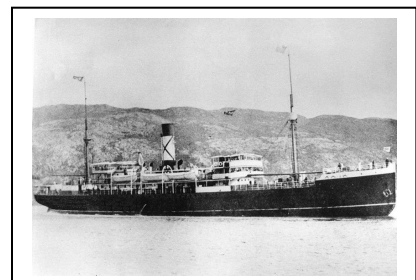


The Atlantic crossing was to be effected from there on board the Royal Mail Ship *Corinthian* and the draft reported to the Regimental Depot at Ayr on January 4 of the New Year, 1916.

(Right above: The Allan Line Ship 'Corinthian' was built in 1899 and was to serve mainly on trans-Atlantic routes between Great Britain and Canada. At the beginning of the Great War she formed a part of the convoy carrying the Canadian Expeditionary Force to the United Kingdom although after that it appears that she resumed her commercial work, transporting troops only if and when it suited her schedule. In December of 1918 she was driven ashore in the Bay of Fundy and although there was no loss of life, the ship was wrecked.)

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Some sixteen months prior to that January 4 of 1916, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914, the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's and elsewhere in the city, and were formed into 'A' and 'B' Companies.



During that same period the various authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

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

This first Newfoundland contingent was to embark on October 3, in some cases only days after a recruit's enlistment and/ or attestation. To become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees*, on that day they had boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John's Harbour.

The ship had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island.

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

Once having disembarked* in the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915: firstly in southern England on the *Salisbury Plain*; then in Scotland at *Fort George* – on the *Moray Firth* close to Inverness; and lastly at *Edinburgh Castle* – where it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

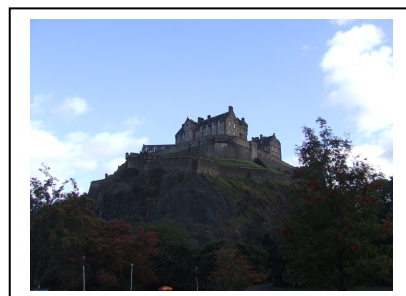


**It was to do so at Devonport through which 'G' Company was to pass eleven months later.*

Only days after 'A' and 'B' Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 of 1915, 'C' Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent - would arrive directly – through Liverpool of course - from Newfoundland. On the final day of the month of March it had been the turn of 'D' Company to arrive – they via Halifax as well as Liverpool – to report...to duty...at Edinburgh, and then 'E' Company five weeks less a day later again, on May 4*.

**These five Companies, while a contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.*

(Right: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011*)



Seven days after the arrival of 'E' Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent had been ordered elsewhere. On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit had been dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.



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(Preceding page: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches past on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and of Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

Two months less a day later, on July 10, 'F' Company would march into *Stobs Camp*.

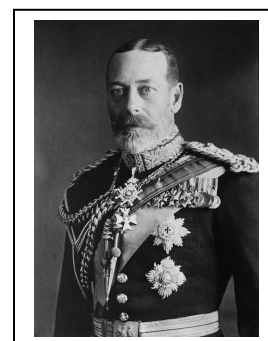
This had been an important moment: the Company's arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment's numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength* of a battalion which could be posted on...*active service*.



**A number sufficient for four 'fighting' companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(Right above: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – original photograph from the Provincial Archives*)

From *Stobs Camp*, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the four senior Companies, having now become the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, had been transferred to *Aldershot Camp* in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before the Battalion's departure to the Middle East and to the fighting on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



The later arrivals to the United Kingdom, 'E' and 'F' Companies, were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were eventually to form the nucleus of the soon to be formed 2nd (*Reserve*) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.

(Right above: *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 – the photograph is from Bain News Services via the Wikipedia web-site.*)



(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. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

(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.*



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The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer and the early autumn of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as a base for the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 – that the new-comers were sent in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and then subsequently to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion*.

**The first such re-enforcement draft was, in fact, to depart from Ayr for service on the Gallipoli Peninsula on November 15, some seven weeks before the arrival in Scotland of Lance Corporal Taylor's 'H' Company.*

That November 15 of 1915 (see immediately above) was to see not only the departure of the 1st Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr to the Middle East and to the fighting of the *Gallipoli Campaign* but also, only five days prior, the arrival from Newfoundland of 'G' Company which would be obliged to take up quarters at *Gailes Camp*, some sixteen kilometres up the coast from Ayr itself – but just over sixty if one went by road.

A further seven weeks plus a day were now to pass before Lance Corporal Taylor and the first one-hundred of 'H' Company were to present themselves at the Regimental Depot.

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Transferred upon their arrival in Scotland on January 4 to serve with 'G' Company, the new-comers of 'H' (now 'G') Company were to be quartered in the barracks of the Royal Scots Fusiliers; they, however, had not yet vacated the aforesaid premises, due to an epidemic of measles at the time. It was not long before the disease had also taken its toll on the Newfoundlanders amongst whom there would be fatalities.

However, it was not to be a bout of measles which was to land Lance Corporal Taylor in hospital.

Eleven weeks less a day after his arrival in Scotland, on March 20 he was admitted into the 4th Scottish General Hospital in Glasgow for a single day. Having there been diagnosed as with a venereal complaint, Lance Corporal Taylor was thereupon transferred to England, to the *Workhouse Hospital* at Newcastle-on-Tyne, an institution which specialized in such things. He was there to remain for a month, until April 22, when he was discharged back to Scotland.

His problems, however, appear not to have been over as on June 17, after a series of three absences from his duties, he was not only to be deprived of three days' pay, but of his lance-corporal's stripe as well. He thus reverted to the ranks.

It was only two days subsequent to the aforementioned demotion and a mere six days before his departure to France on *active service*, that on June 19 Private Taylor was prevailed upon 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.*

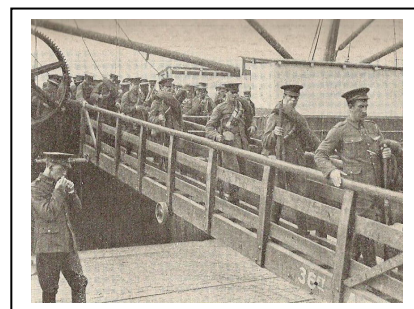
By the time that he, Private Taylor, was eventually to sail from the United Kingdom to...*active service*...the Regimental Depot had witnessed the departure of six re-enforcement drafts from Ayr: In mid-November of the previous autumn the First – already cited in an earlier paragraph - had sailed for the Middle East to serve at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*; the Second had been a convoluted adventure – the draft had taken ship in mid-March for Egypt but upon arrival there had been obliged to turn around for a return voyage as far as the French Mediterranean port-city of Marseille.

From that time on, however, the drafts were all to proceed directly across the English Channel to France.

Private Taylor – perhaps understandably - had not been selected to serve in any of the first six drafts; he was to have been posted in Scotland – and elsewhere, of course - for some twenty-five weeks before his turn would come. When it *did* come, his draft would be dispatched directly to France.

(Right below: *British troops disembark at an earlier time of the Great War at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

On June 25 the 7th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent, Private Taylor among its ranks. On the morrow, the 26th, the detachment disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot. There the draft was to spend several days undergoing final training and organization* before proceeding to its rendezvous with the Newfoundland Battalion, it just having experienced the maelstrom of a place called Beaumont-Hamel.



**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.*

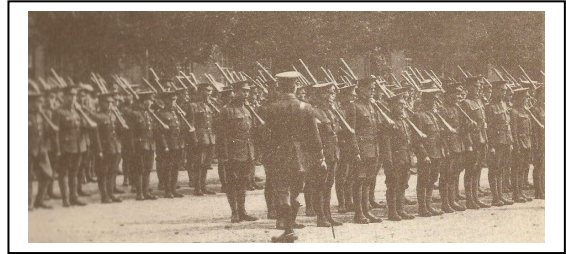
Private Taylor would join the Newfoundland unit...*in the field*...on July 11-12.

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A year prior to this juncture taking place, in the early summer of 1915, the Regimental Depot in Scotland had only just been beginning to evolve: both 'E' and 'F' Companies had only then been beginning their period of training there at Ayr; as for Richard Hall Taylor, he was as yet still at home awaiting enlistment and attestation after which he still had those afore-mentioned thirty-eight days to wait before the call was to come to sail overseas to the United Kingdom.

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The aforementioned four senior companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', of the Newfoundland Regiment, having now become the 1st Battalion had at this same time been attached to the 88th Infantry Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force and had been dispatched from *Camp Aldershot* to...active service.



(Right above: *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, prior to its departure to active service on the Gallipoli Peninsula – from The Fighting Newfoundlander by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)*

(Right: *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.)*



On August 20 of 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 was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right: *'Kangaroo Beach', where the officers and men of the 1st Battalion of the 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 1st Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*

When the Newfoundlanders had landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* they were to disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.

Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion would now serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, had been proving 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 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 their allies, the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

(Right: *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.*

(Right: *This is Anzac Bay in the fore-ground with the Salt Lake in the centre further away. The bottom of Suvla Bay is just to be seen on the left and adjacent to the Salt Lake, and further away again. The hills in the distance and the ones from which this photograph was taken were held by the Turks and formed a horse-shoe around the plain surrounding the Salt Lake - which was where the British and Newfoundlanders were stationed. – photograph from 2011*)



(Right: *No-Man's-Land at Suvla Bay as seen from the Newfoundland positions – from Provincial Archives*)

November 26 would see what perhaps was to be the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes at *Gallipoli*; there was to be a freak rain, snow and ice-storm strike 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.

By this time the situation there had daily been becoming more and more untenable, thus on the night of December 19-20, the British had abandoned the entire 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 thereupon 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*.

(Preceding page: *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, Indian and Anzac forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was also to serve at *Gallipoli* – had by now simply been 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: *‘W’ Beach at Cape Helles under shell-fire 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 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 evacuation of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*, the Newfoundland unit had been ordered to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria and beyond.

On January 14, the Australian Expeditionary Force Transport *Nestor* had arrived there with the 1st Battalion on board. The vessel was to sail just after mid-day on the 16th, on its way southwards down the Suez Canal to Port Suez where she had docked early on the morrow and where the Newfoundlanders had landed and marched to their encampment.

(Right: *The image of the Blue Funnel Line vessel Nestor is from the Shipspotting.com web-site. The vessel was launched and fitted in 1912-1913 and was to serve much of her commercial life until 1950 plying the routes between Britain and Australia. During the Great War she served mainly in the transport of Australian troops and was requisitioned once again in 1940 for government service in the Second World War. In 1950 she was broken up.*)

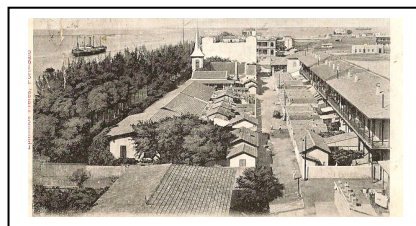


***Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, and Salonika was already becoming a theatre of war.**

(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 back up through the *Suez Canal* en route to France.



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

The Newfoundlanders would disembark eight days afterwards in the Mediterranean port-city of Marseille, on March 22.

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

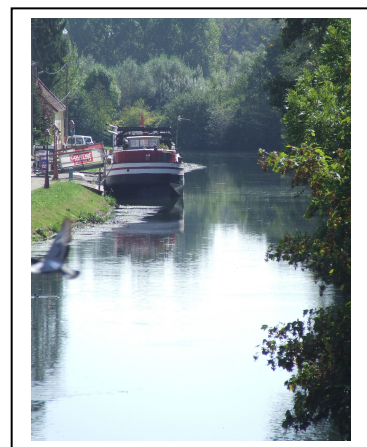


Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train was to find its way to the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseille.

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.

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



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

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On April 13, the entire 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 re-enforcements from Scotland via Rouen and, in two days' time, would be introduced into the communication trenches of the *Western Front*.

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



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 had then been 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: 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)

Having then been withdrawn at the end of that April to the areas of Mailly-Maillet and Louvencourt where they would be based for the next two months, the Newfoundlanders had soon been preparing for the upcoming 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.

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*.

(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 were recorded as having been...*killed in action...or...died of wounds.*

It was to be the greatest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps just as depressing, the carnage of the...*First Battle of the Somme...was to continue for 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...?*)

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it had been feared that any German counter-assault might well annihilate what had managed to survive of the British Expeditionary Force on *the Somme.*

The few remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion – and of the other depleted British units – had thus remained in the trenches perhaps fearing the worst, and at night searching for the wounded and burying the dead. It was to be July 6 before the Newfoundlanders were to be relieved from the forward area and to be ordered withdrawn to Englebelmer.



There were then a further two days before the unit had marched again to the rear and to billets in the village of Mailly-Maillet.

(Right above: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John’s East.* – photograph from 2009)

There on July 11-12, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven re-enforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – had reported *to duty.* They had been the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1916, the 1st Battalion was still to

number only...*11 officers and 260 rifles*...after the holocaust of Beaumont-Hamel, just one-quarter of establishment battalion strength.

And, as seen in an earlier paragraph, Private Taylor had been one of that first draft to arrive from Rouen.

(Right: *Canadian trenches in Sanctuary Wood, not far removed from 1st Battalion's positions of that September of 1916* – photograph from 2010)



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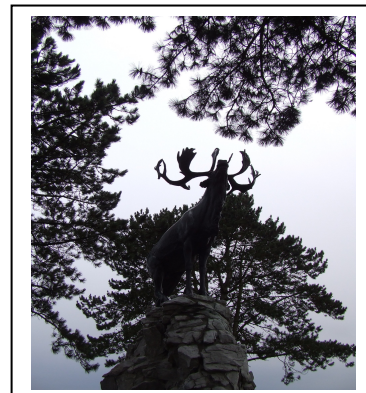
On October 8, after having served in Belgium since the end of that July, the Newfoundland Battalion had been ordered to return south and was to be transported back into France, and back into the area of the...*First Battle of the Somme*.

Just four days after the unit's return to France from Belgium, on October 12 of 1916, the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had again been ordered to the offensive; it was at a place called Gueudecourt, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel.



The action was to prove to be another ill-conceived and costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.

(Right above: *This is the ground over which the 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)



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

The Newfoundland Battalion had not then been directly involved in any further concerted infantry action in the immediate area of Gueudecourt although, on October 18, it furnished two-hundred fifty men to act as stretcher-bearers in an attack undertaken by troops of two British regiments, the Hampshires and the Worcestershires, of the 88th Infantry Brigade of which the Newfoundland unit was a battalion.



(Right above: *Stretcher-bearers not only shared the dangers of the battle-field with their arms-bearing comrades, but they often spent a longer period of time exposed to those same perils. This photograph was likely taken during First Somme.* – from *Illustration*)

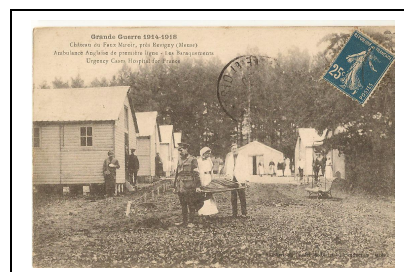
(continued)

On October 30, the Newfoundland unit eventually retired to rear positions from the Gueudecourt area. It had been serving continuously in front-line and support positions for three weeks less a day.

The Newfoundlanders were now to spend two weeks retired to the area of Ville-sous-Corbie, re-enforcing and reorganizing. It was not to be until November 15 that the Battalion would begin to wend its way back to the front lines.

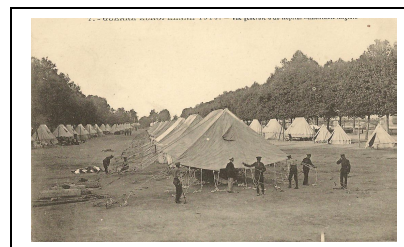
* * * * *

It was during this period, on November 3, that Private Taylor was admitted into the 88th Field Ambulance with the same medical complaint – a venereal problem – for which he had been treated in the previous spring. On the following day he was transferred to the 36th Casualty Clearing Station at Heilly for further care.



(Right: a *British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some* – from a vintage post-card)

No records apparently remain of any further developments, and although he may have re-joined the 1st Battalion in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period, he is only documented as being once again...*with Battalion*...on January 23 of the New Year, 1917, at the conclusion of that period of non-active service*.

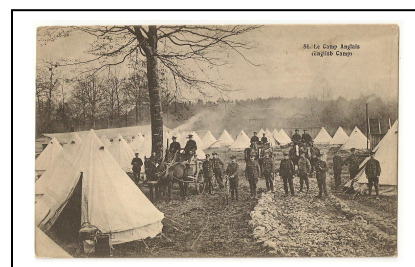


**This would not have been the date of his return to the Newfoundland Battalion. He was surely in one of the drafts to report during that Christmas period – perhaps the one which arrived on December 25, and just maybe in time for the Christmas dinner.*

(Right above: A *British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War* – from a vintage post-card)

* * * * *

As recorded in a previous paragraph, after Private Taylor's departure to the 88th Field Ambulance, it was during the third week of that November that the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had returned to the forward area. There it had continued its watch in and out of the trenches of the *Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period broken only by another several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the above-cited Christmas period, encamped well behind the lines and in close proximity to the city of Amiens.



(Right above: A *typical British Army Camp during rather inclement winter conditions somewhere on the Continent* – from a vintage post-card)

Those Christmas festivities having been completed – turkey dinner washed down with...*real ale*...apparently – it was not to be until a further sixteen days had passed, January 11, that the Newfoundland Battalion would be ordered out of *Corps Reserve* and from its lodgings at *Camps en Amienois* to make its way on foot to the town of Airaines.

From the railway station there it had entrained for the small town of Corbie where it thereupon had taken over billets which it had already occupied for a short period only two months before. Days later again the unit had continued its progress back up to the forward area and to...*active service*. That recent six-week Christmas respite spent far to the rear, by now a thing of the past, the Newfoundlanders were to *officially* return to...*active service*...on January 23, although they apparently had already returned to the trenches by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

And, as is related in a not-distant preceding paragraph, by this time, Private Taylor was once more serving in the Newfoundland unit's ranks.

* * * * *

It was now the beginning of the winter period. As had been and as was to be the case of all the winter periods of the *Great War* – that of 1916-1917 would be a time of relative calm, although cold and uncomfortable – there was a shortage of fuel and many other things, particularly in 1917 - for most of the combatants of both sides. It would also be a time of sickness, and the medical facilities were kept busy, particularly, so it seems - at least according to Canadian medical documents and records - with thousands of cases of dental work.

This period also provided the opportunity to undergo training and familiarization with the new practices and the recent weaponry of war; in the case of the Newfoundland Battalion these exercises were to be at least partially undertaken in the vicinity of the communities of Carnoy and Coisy.

On February 18 the 1st Battalion started a five-day trek back from Coisy to the forward area where it went back into the firing-line on February 23, relieving a unit of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers.



This relief was at a place called Sailly-Saillisel and the reception offered by the Germans was to be both warm and lively: after only two days the Battalion had incurred four dead, nine wounded and three gassed without there having been any infantry action. The Newfoundlanders would be withdrawn on February 25...to return three days later.

They were now to be carrying with them orders for a...*bombing raid*...on the enemy positions at Sailly-Saillisel...to be carried out on March 1.

(Right above: A soldier of the Lancashire Fusiliers, his unit to be relieved by the Newfoundlanders on March 1, enjoys his cigarette in the cold of the trenches at Sailly-Saillisel during the winter of 1916-1917. – from *Illustration*)

(continued)

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



(Right above: *The fighting during the period 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(?)*)

* * * * *

Private Taylor was not, however, to figure in the action at Sailly-Saillisel. He had been sent on to the 14th Camp Rest Station on February 28, suffering from chronic diarrhoea; a week later he was back with the Battalion, on March 7, just a single day after the Newfoundlanders had arrived at an encampment at Meaulté, having been withdrawn from the line for a period of three weeks.

* * * * *

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

(Right: *The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, encamped at Meaulté – from The War Illustrated*)



(Right below: *The remnants of the Grande Place in Arras at the time of the Great War, in early 1916 – from Illustration*)

On March 29, the Newfoundlanders commenced to make their way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond, the march to finish amid the rubble of the village of Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right below: *The Canadian National Memorial which has stood atop Vimy Ridge since 1936 – photograph from 2010*)

(continued)

On April 9 the British Army launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was to be the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a major French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties – just over four thousand - this attack was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, its only positive episode to be the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday, 1917.



And while the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

(Right below: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen in 1917, from the western, British, side of the community: The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

The 1st Battalion was to play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at the place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After *Beaumont-Hamel*, the ineptly-planned action at Monchy-le-Preux would prove to be the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war: four-hundred eighty-seven casualties all told on April 14 alone*.



**It was also an action in which a DSO, an MC and eight MMs were won by a small group of nine personnel of the Battalion – the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) awarded to the unit's Commanding officer. An MM for the same action was also presented to a private from the Essex Regiment .*

The son of Eugene Frederick Taylor, clerk at *His Majesty's Customs*, and of Mary Taylor (née *Hall**, deceased on New Year's Day, 1919) – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of fifty cents from his pay - of 5, Maxse Street, St. John's, he was brother to George-Hayward, to Eugene-Frederick Jr., Bessie, Isabella, Susie, Mary and to Florence.

**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.*

Private Taylor was recorded as...*missing in action*...on April 14, 1917, while serving with 'D' Company in the fighting at Monchy-le-Preux during the *Battle of Arras*. Some thirty weeks later, on November 17, 1917, he was officially...*presumed dead*.



Richard Hall Taylor had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-one years and ten months: date of birth in Harbour Grace, Newfoundland, January 9, 1894 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

(Preceding page: *The Caribou at Monchy-le-Preux stands atop the remains of a German strongpoint in the centre of the reconstructed village. – photograph from 2009(?)*)

His brother Lieutenant George Hayward Taylor (Regimental Number 28) had died on July 1, 1916,...*killed in action*...on the first day of *the Somme*, and another brother, Lance Corporal Eugene Frederick Taylor Jr. (Regimental Number 2525), was to die, alongside Richard, at Monchy-le-Preux*.

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



* *None of the three has a last known resting-place. Richard and Fred never did have one, and that of George was surely either forgotten or destroyed in later fighting. All three brothers are commemorated on the bronze beneath the Caribou at Beaumont-Hamel.*

Private Richard Hall Taylor was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



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 4, 2023.