



Private John Thomas Tobin (Regimental Number 1800) is buried in Ayr Cemetery, Ayrshire – Grave reference G.3.2.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman*, John Thomas Tobin was a recruit of the Sixth Draft. He presented himself at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on August 31 of 1915 for a medical examination. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as being...*fit for Foreign Service*.

On the same day as that medical assessment, August 31, and at the same venue, the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, he was next to enlist. John Thomas Tobin was thereupon to be 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.

And it was then to be only hours afterwards again that there then came the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. Again on the same August 31, he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, at which moment John Thomas Tobin thereupon became...*a soldier of the King*.

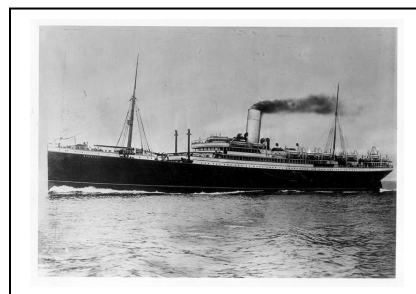
A further, and lengthier, waiting-period was now in store for the recruits of this draft, designated as 'G' Company, before they were to depart from Newfoundland for...*overseas service*.

Private Tobin, Regimental Number 1800, was not to be called upon until October 27, after a period of eight weeks plus a day. Where he was to spend this intervening time appears not to have been recorded although he may possibly have returned to work, and perhaps even travelled back to visit his mother and friends at his home in the community of Long Cove on the Burin Peninsula – all of which is, however, only speculation.

On the above-mentioned October 27, 'G' Company left St. John's by train to cross the island to Port aux Basques, the other passengers on board reportedly having included several naval reservists and also some German prisoners-of-war. The contingent then traversed the Gulf of St. Lawrence by ferry – documented as having been the *Kyle* - and afterwards proceeded again by train from North Sydney as far as Québec City.

There the Newfoundlanders joined His Majesty's Transport *Corsican* for the trans-Atlantic voyage to the English south-coast naval establishment of Devonport where they arrived on November 9. The vessel had departed Montreal on October 30 with Canadian troops on board before stopping at Québec: the 55th Canadian Infantry Battalion and the Second Draft of the (1st?) Divisional Signals Company.

(Right: *The image of Corsican is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Launched in 1907 for the Allan Line, one of the largest private shipping companies of the time, she spent much of her early career chartered to the Canadian Pacific Line which in 1917 was to purchase the entire Allan Line business. She was employed as a troop-ship during much of the Great War which she survived – only to be wrecked near Cape Race on May 21, 1923.*)



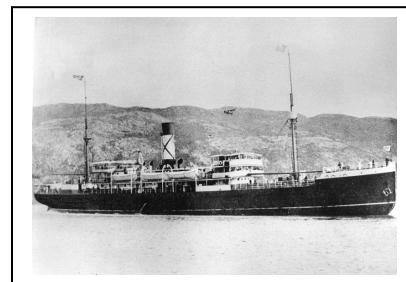
By the morning of November 10, Private Tobin's 'G' Company had again travelled by train, to Scotland where it had been billeted in huts in a military camp at Gales, not far removed from the evolving Newfoundland Regimental Depot at Ayr where accommodation for the new arrivals was as yet not available.

(continued)

(Preceding page: *The once-busy Royal Navy facility and harbour of Devonport almost a century after the Great War – photograph from 2012(?)*)

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More than a year prior to that November 10 of 1915, 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.

(Right above: *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.

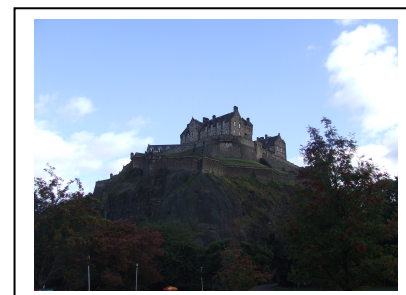
(Right below: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

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*.



(continued)

**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.*

(Preceding page: 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.



(Right above: 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*.

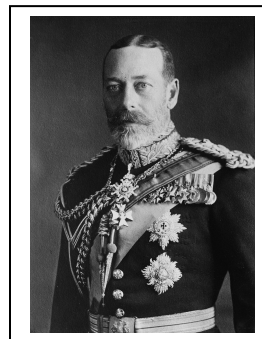
This had been an important moment: the Company's arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment's numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength* of a battalion which could be posted on...active service.



**A number sufficient to furnish 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*.



(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.)

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.



(Preceding page: *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 below: *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.

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 draft was, in fact, to depart from Ayr for service on the Gallipoli Peninsula, only days after the arrival in Scotland of Private Tobin's 'G' Company, on November 15.*

This then had been the situation at the time of Private Tobin's arrival there: the new Regimental Depot had still been in the throes of its establishment when he and his comrades-in-arms of 'G' Company were to finish their journey to Scotland on November 10 of 1915; thus, as related in a preceding paragraph, the new-comers were required to be quartered at Gales, some sixteen kilometres further up the coast – but apparently more than sixty kilometres distant by road.

It was into the *Gales Camp Hospital* that Private Tobin was to be admitted on January 8, 1916. He had been diagnosed as suffering from measles, bronchitis and pneumonia, one of the several victims among Regimental personnel of the epidemic of the time.

The son of John Tobin and of Hannah (also addressed as *Annie* and *Anna*) Tobin (née *Brushet*) – she later re-marrying Charles Brake* (and widowed by the time of her son's enlistment) of Long Cove – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay, and also to whom he had willed his everything*, he was brother to John, Maria, Anna-Mary and to Thomas.

**Found as Drake in the copied 1921 Census.*

Private Tobin was reported as having...*died of sickness*...– bronchial pneumonia - in hospital on February 1, 1916. At home it was Father Ryan who was requested to bear the news to his family.

John Thomas Tobin had enlisted at a *declared* nineteen years of age: date of birth in Long Cove, Burin North, Newfoundland, June 12, 1895 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register which records his name as *John Joseph Tobin*).



**An auction of his effects realised the sum of £2/12/6 (2 pounds, 12 shillings and sixpence).*

(Preceding page: A further view of the Newfoundland Plot in Ayr Cemetery – photograph from 2012)

Private John Thomas Tobin was eligible for the British War Medal for his...overseas service.



Mrs Char Brake
Burin North
Sandy Point
NFLD

5/4/1921

Sir-

I now take the opportunity to answer and thank you for the photograph of my poor boy's grave Pte. T.J. Tobin NO. 1800 2nd Royal Nfld Regiment who was Buried in Ayr Cemetery in Scotland which you posted to me 21/2/1921. I don't know how to thank you but trust that this will find you I remain truly

Mrs Brake

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.