

Captain Charles Wighton lies in Azmak Cemetery at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli – Grave reference Special Memorial 28.

****Officers who were eventually promoted from the ranks may be identified from their Regimental Number. Other officers who were not from the ranks received the King's Commission, or in the case of those in the Newfoundland Regiment, an Imperial Commission, and were not considered as enlisted. These officers thus had no Regimental Number allotted to them.***

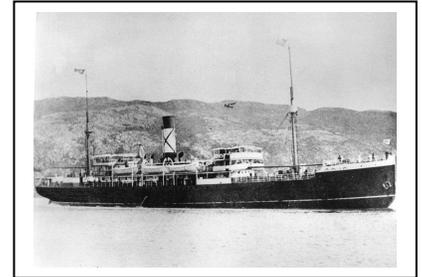
And since officers did not enlist, they were not then required to re-enlist 'for the duration', even though, at the beginning, as a private, they had volunteered their services for only a limited time – twelve months.

Charles Wighton*, Esquire, applied by letter for an Imperial Commission – and therefore for officer rank – to the office of Governor Davidson of the Dominion of Newfoundland on or about August 31 of 1914. Having received this appointment – and the rank of lieutenant – on September 24, he embarked on October 3 onto the Bowring Brothers vessel *Florizel* awaiting the first Newfoundland contingent – to become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees* - in St. John's Harbour.

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****One single source cites Lieutenant Wighton as already having seen military service during the South African War, fifteen or so years before, at the turn of the century.***

The ship would not sail for the United Kingdom until the following day, October 4, as, off the southern coast of the Island, it was to join the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas.



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

(Right below: 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 the Newfoundland contingent was to train in several venues: firstly in southern England on the Salisbury Plain; then in Scotland firstly at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh and where 'E' Company and Lance Corporal Manuel arrived from Newfoundland; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.



However, Lieutenant Wighton was not to serve with the Newfoundland unit for the entirety of this period.

At some time during the first part of March of 1915 he took ship in the port of Liverpool in the company of... *Lts. Alderdice Wighton & Nunns having arrived from Contingent on active service for the purpose of assisting in the training of "E" Company and are taken on the strength of the Regiment from the 23rd instant on which date they have reported themselves for duty...back in Newfoundland.* But already on March 19, Lieutenant Wighton, presumably by then in St. John's, had claimed a *special allowance* for services rendered and expenses incurred.

****Maybe on 'Corsican' which sailed from Liverpool on March 6 to arrive in Halifax on March 16 - From there it would have been either 'Florizel' or 'Stephano' or a combination of train and ferry which would have transported him to St. John's.***

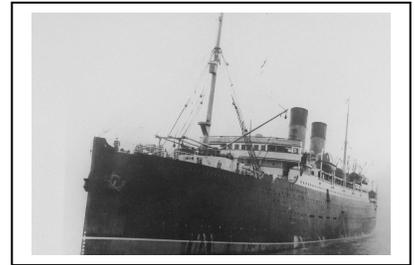
On April 22, Lieutenant Wighton embarked a second time for overseas service, on this occasion as one of the some two-hundred fifty officers and other men of 'E' Company onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* en route for Halifax. Days later, on April 24 at eleven-thirty in the evening, the detachment began the trans-Atlantic passage on board His Majesty's Transport *Missanabie* from Nova Scotia to Liverpool, arriving in that English west-coast port-city on May 2 or 3 – the two dates are recorded.



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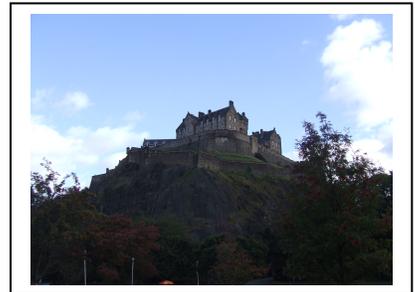
(Preceding page: *The image of Stephano passing through the Narrows of S. John's Harbour is shown by courtesy of the Provincial Archives.*)

(Right: *The image of Missanabie is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website. The vessel was of the Canadian Pacific Line and, although transporting troops during the Great War, did so on her commercial services which continued in the time of the conflict. On September 9, 1918, she was torpedoed and sunk off the south coast of Ireland with the loss of forty-five lives.*)



From Liverpool the contingent travelled northwards by train to the Scottish capital, Edinburgh where, on May 4, 'E' Company joined 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies which had already taken up station as the garrison at the historic Castle, the first troops from outside the British Isles ever to do so.

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



Only one week later the entire Newfoundland contingent was posted to *Stobs Camp* near the Scottish town of Hawick where it was now to remain under canvas to undergo further training until the end of July.

(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment on parade at Stobs Camp and about to be presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915 – 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 from *Stobs Camp* 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' – accompanied from Newfoundland by Lieutenant Wighton - and then 'F'* , were ordered stationed to Scotland's west coast, to Ayr, where they were to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2nd (Reserve) Battalion*.

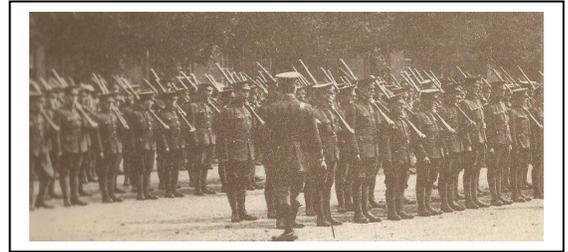
Lieutenant Wighton, albeit of 'E' Company which was to be posted to the new Regimental Depot at Ayr, was now to be one of those chosen to supplement the four senior Companies. He was thereupon attached to 'A' Company.

(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*)



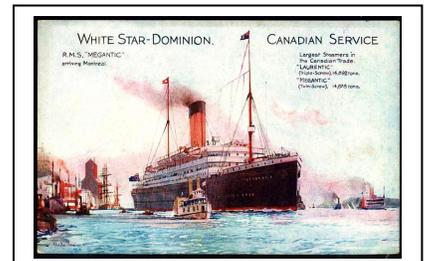
**On July 10, 1915, 'F' Company had arrived at Stobs Camp from Newfoundland, its personnel raising the numbers of the unit to battalion establishment strength, and thus permitting it to be ordered to active service.*

Having thus trained at Aldershot for that two-week period in early August, the by-now 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment - comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', and already attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force – was ordered onto *active service*.



(Right above: *Some of the men of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1st 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, 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 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment 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 the night of September 19-20, the Newfoundland force landed at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Preceding page: *Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the 1st 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 below: *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)*



Some four weeks after the Newfoundland Battalion's disembarkation at *Suvla Bay*, on October 17, Lieutenant Wighton received promotion to the rank of captain.

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

(Right below: *An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from the 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 Bay, apparently had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*



November 26 had seen the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion's fortunes during the *Gallipoli Campaign*. A freak rain-, snow- and ice-storm had struck the *Suvla Bay* area on that day and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival from the wrath of Nature rather than from that of the enemy was to be the priority.

There were to be many casualties in both camps, 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 were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite but the end of the *Gallipoli Campaign* was already in sight. After the storm, the Newfoundlanders were to remain stationed at *Suvla Bay* for only a further twenty-four days.

The youngest son of the late Colonel Edward Wighton (Royal Field Artillery) and Anna Rose Wighton of Calcutta, India, he apparently had a sister, Ethel, residing in Australia; his declared *next of kin* was a second sister, Miss Margaret Wighton of Earls' Court, London; there was also a brother, Edward, serving in the Royal Garrison Artillery – who was to rise to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.



Captain Charles Wighton's own place of residence was simply cited in his personal file as being St. John's, Newfoundland.

Captain Wighton was reported as having been *killed in action*, falling to a sniper's bullet to the head while visiting a listening patrol on November 25, 1915.

(Right above: *Looking towards the Turkish positions at Suvla from the Newfoundland front lines – photograph from the Provincial Archives*)

Captain Charles Wighton was thirty-five years of age at the time of his death.

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(Right: *The entrance to Azmak Cemetery at Suvla, seen from the interior – photograph from 2011*)

He was originally interred in Borderers' Gully Cemetery, lying alongside Private John Dunphy (Regimental Number 44). All of those buried there were later moved to Azmak Cemetery.



(*The photograph of Lieutenant(?) Wighton is from the Provincial Archives.*)

(First page above: *This is the area of some of the British positions at Suvla Bay, including those of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment. In the surrounding hills were positioned the Turkish forces which thus dominated the plain below. In the very centre of the image may just be discerned a white horizontal mark: this is Azmak Cemetery. – photograph from 2011*)

Captain Charles Wighton 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. Last updated – February 11, 2023.