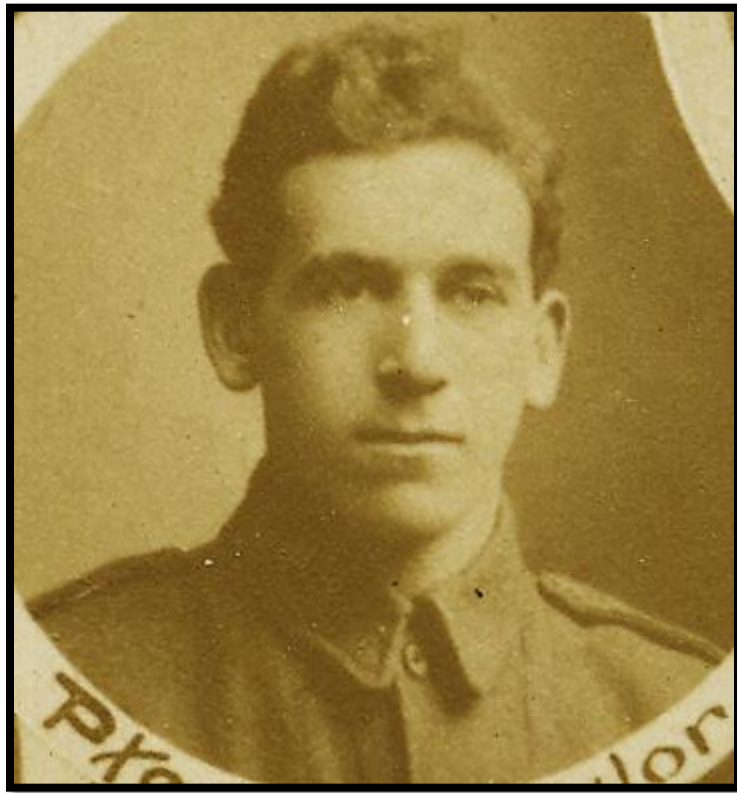


GOWER REMEMBERS

C.S.M. James Arthur Taylor

(1892-1962)



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Newfoundlanders pectorally amorphyte posy partridges transonisi
silvergod palavered from Taylor and Temptress” (Cablegram from
Colonial Secretary, Newfoundland, to Regiment’s Pay and Records
Office, London, date stamped September 04, 1917)*

James Arthur Taylor was born in Carbonear on July 01, 1892, the oldest of six children of Dorcas Guy and George Hedley Taylor. His siblings were Ernest William (b. 1894), Alfred Penney (b. 1895), Elsie (Elsa) Wilhelmina (b. 1897), Marjorie Cameron (b. 1899) and Kathleen (b. 1902). All were born in Carbonear, except Kathleen who was born in St. John's. Ernest and Marjorie both appear to have died as children.

The Taylor family relocated to St. John's sometime around the turn of the century. Once settled, Hedley found work as a draper with Ayre & Sons. James attended the Methodist College, where he appears to have been an average student who received a solid grade-school education. By 1908, at which time he was 16 years old, he had entered the workforce as an apprentice at Ayre & Sons, a position that may have resulted, to a degree, from parental influence.

It is unclear if Taylor was still employed at Ayre & Sons when he decided to enlist in the Newfoundland Regiment in the last days of 1914. His name does not appear in the 1913 city directory and on his Attestation Paper, which is dated December 28, 1914, he listed his occupation as clerk, earning a weekly salary of \$21.00, but does not state where he was employed.

Taylor's Attestation Paper further informs that he was 22 years old at the time of his enlistment. He measured 5 feet, 9 inches tall, and weighed 154 pounds, with a dark complexion, dark brown hair and brown eyes. He was assigned Regimental number 821.

One week after Taylor enlisted, his brother Alfred did so, too. That week, given that it included New Year's Day, must have been a very busy one at the recruiting station in St. John's: Alfred's allocated Regimental number was 897, which meant that there were 66 men who

enlisted or attempted to enlist in the week between the two brothers signing up.

James and Alfred were assigned to C Company, albeit to different platoons: James was part of No. 4 Platoon under the command of Lieutenant Cyril B. Carter, while Alfred was part of No. 3 Platoon, under the command of Lieutenant James J. Donnelley.

The Taylor brothers travelled overseas together on board the SS *Dominion*, which left St. John's on February 05 and arrived in Liverpool, England, on the 16th. Taylor did not spend long in Liverpool. C Company was entrained immediately for Scotland, where it was assigned to guard duty at Edinburgh Castle, the first colonial force to be assigned to duty there. They were eventually joined by the members of A and B companies and they stayed there until May 11 when they were relocated to Stobs Camp, some 55 miles to the south, near Hawick. They would remain there in training until the end of July.

As the summer of 1915 rolled around, quite a few members of the Regiment had been in uniform for almost a year without seeing action on the fields of battle. All that was about to change. In early August some 1,000 plus members of the Regiment were sent south to the English city of Aldershot. On the 20th they were taken to the nearby town of Devonport, where they boarded HMT *Megantic*. Less than two weeks later, on August 31-September 01, they arrived and disembarked at Alexandria, Egypt, where they were put on trains and taken to the Egyptian capital of Cairo. Here they were given two weeks additional training and were able to experience first-hand the hot, dry climate of the area. Then it was back to Alexandria, where they travelled north by sea on board the *Ausonia* to Mudros on the Greek island of Lemnos. They arrived there on September 18; the following night (September 19-20) they crossed the narrow waterway between Lemnos and Suvla Bay on

the Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula. Their arrival was not a pleasant one, as they were welcomed by a constant barrage of shell fire and bullets from their Turkish hosts.

The Newfoundland Regiment spent the rest of September, October, November, December and early January at Gallipoli. They were under frequent attack from the Turks, which, when coupled with the horrific weather that inundated the area during that time, resulted in large numbers of Taylor's comrades being evacuated for medical reasons. These ranged from pulmonary and gastric ailments to severe trench foot and frostbite. Taylor and his brother were incredibly lucky, in that they both came through their time at Gallipoli in relatively good health. Both were finally evacuated from Suvla Bay, along with the bulk of the Regiment, on January 08, 1916. They were taken first to nearby Cape Helles, at the southern tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula, and then back to Alexandria, where they docked on the 15th.

The Newfoundland Regiment spent another two months in Egypt before they were taken back across the Mediterranean aboard the HMT *Alaunia*, a 13,000-ton Cunard liner. It left Port Twefik, at the southern end of the Suez Canal where it enters the Red Sea, on March 14, 1916 and arrived at Marseilles, France, some eight days later. From there it was north by train to the French village of Pont Remy on the Western Front. There they spent the next three plus months getting ready for what was being referred to as the Big Push, a massive attack on the German front line along the Somme River. Before that attack materialized, however, Taylor, on May 18, was given a Lance Corporal's stripe.

For the Newfoundlanders, the big attack finally came on the morning of July 01 near the French enclave of Beaumont Hamel. When the time came, the brothers went over the top together. A short time later, James was injured and eventually made his way back to the British

side; Alfred was recorded as missing and later declared to have been killed in action, one of the many young Newfoundlanders who died that day.

Taylor's injury proved to be a gunshot wound to his left arm. On July 04, he was invalided to England, where he was admitted to number 3 London General Hospital at Wandsworth, where he remained for several weeks. A short furlough followed his release, after which he was attached to the Depot on August 11. He was made an acting Corporal on September 12.

Taylor rejoined his Battalion in the Field on Christmas Day 1916. He saw action throughout the winter, spring and summer of 1917, and was promoted to Sergeant on April 16. He was wounded a second time at Broembeek, Belgium, on October 09, again a gunshot wound to his left arm, this one classified as severe. The following week he was back in hospital, this time number 4 London General at Denmark Hill, but he was soon transferred to Mile End Military Hospital, Bancroft Road, where he spent several weeks. On November 12, 1917 he was attached to the Depot at Ayr, Scotland.

After several months at Ayr, on May 10, 1918, Taylor was ordered to report to the Officer Commanding the Officer Cadet Battalion. Roughly twelve weeks later, on July 29, he rejoined the Regiment at Winchester. Shortly thereafter he was made acting Company Sergeant Major, a rank that was subsequently confirmed on December 26.

Taylor spent the remainder of the war after his release from hospital in late 1917 away from the front lines. He was repatriated to Newfoundland on board the SS *Corsican*, leaving England on January 30, 1919, and arriving in St. John's on February 07. He was demobilized from the Regiment on March 22.

While most soldiers' personnel files from their time in the Regiment contain fairly standard types of documents, often there is one that stands out as unique. There is such a document, or series of documents, in Taylor's file: one of these is quoted under his picture on the front page. It is the coded version of a message sent from Newfoundland's Colonial Secretary, John R. Bennett, to Major Henry A. Timewell at the Regiment's Pay and Records Office in London, in early September 1917. Fortunately, there is a translation of that telegram, which explains what the message says: "*821 Taylor writes that a friend in Scotland has received [a] private letter from a Prisoner of War [in]Germany stating that there are 95 Newfoundlanders in the place where he is who have not been permitted to write full stop endeavour to ascertain particulars from Taylor and enquire into truth of statement.*" This telegram confirms the use of encoding by the Newfoundland Government in at least one form of its communication with Regimental Headquarters in England; however, there is no indication if anything was done about the information that Taylor had made available.

Shortly after leaving the Regiment, Taylor made a request that the Department of Militia seeking paid passage for his fiancée, Mary McKendrick, from Edinburgh to Newfoundland. That request was subsequently approved by the Regiment and she arrived in St. John's quite soon thereafter. Taylor and McKendrick were married at his father's house, 2 Cabot Street, by Rev. Mark Fenwick of Gower Street Methodist Church on July 16, 1919.

The Newfoundland Government's Civil Re-establishment Committee was formed to help members of the Regiment re-enter the workforce. Taylor, in his interview with the Committee, indicated that he wanted to return to his former occupation as a salesman. This

evidently happened, as Taylor is listed in city directories throughout the decades that followed as a travelling salesman: in 1928 he was employed by S. Elliott & Company, a wholesale imports business operated by a former colleague of Taylor's when he worked at Ayre & Sons. He is listed as a commercial traveler the last of the city directories, which appeared in 1936.

James Taylor died the St. John's General Hospital on March 19, 1962. His funeral took place from his sister Kathleen Frew's house at 17 Garrison Hill and he was interred in the General Protestant Cemetery on Topsail Road. His wife had returned to Scotland some years previous. She died at her home town of Uphall, West Lothian, where she died on October 23, 1947. They do not appear to have had any children.

On Sunday, November 16, 2014, Gower Street United Church initiated a program of commemoration that will last for approximately the next four years. On roughly every second Sunday through to the end of 2018, a brief write-up on one of the members of Gower Street Methodist Church who took part in World War I will appear as an insert in the Bulletin and there will be a reference to that person in the service. In this way, we hope to recognize their contribution to the war effort, the many sacrifices they made, some with their very lives, and the debt of gratitude we owe to each of them.

We also hope to learn more about them from their descendants or other relatives, thereby fostering a link between our past and our present as we begin our 202nd year as a faith community.

If you know of any relatives of these servicemen and women please contact Bert Riggs at briggs@mun.ca or at 726-6169.