



Private John (known as *Jack*) Fielding Chaplin (Regimental Number 584) is interred in Ardesier Parish Churchyard, just to the east of the Scottish city of Inverness and close to Fort George – Grave reference 13. 46.

Still a student prior to his military service, Jack Chaplin presented himself at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* on Harvey Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on August 28 of 1914 – three weeks and three days after the *Declaration of War* on August 4 – for a medical examination. It was an exercise which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

(continued)

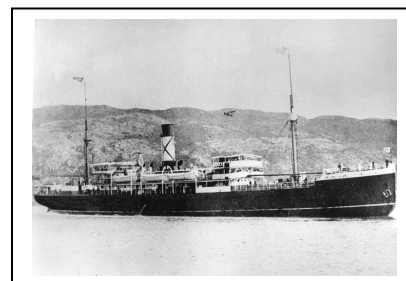
Four weeks less three days later, on September 22, Jack Chaplin returned to the *C.L.B. Armoury*, on this second occasion for enlistment, whereupon he was engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar plus a ten-cent per diem *Field Allowance*. A recruit of the First Draft, he was likely now ordered to the tented area by that time established on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the East End of St. John's where a four-five week course of training was already under way.

The regimental authorities were *also* busy by now, preparing for the transport of this, the first body of volunteers, to *overseas* - and later to *active – service*.

At the beginning of the month of October a large number of the new recruits underwent attestation; Private Chaplin was one of that number, taking his oath of allegiance on the third day of October.

Two days later, after the Newfoundland contingent – it was not as yet a battalion – of 'A' and 'B' Companies had paraded through the city, it embarked onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* which was awaiting in St. John's Harbour.

Private Chaplin and his comrades-in-arms of the *First Five Hundred* – also to be known to history as the *Blue Puttees* – were now to sit on board ship for the best part of a day as it was not to be until the morrow that *Florizel* would sail to the south coast of the Island and to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the Canadian Division to the United Kingdom.



(Right above: *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 Private Chaplin began training with the Battalion and with 'B' Company: firstly in southern England on the Salisbury Plain; then in Scotland at Fort George on the Firth of Moray, and close to the Scottish town of Inverness. There he was struck by an unspecified *abdominal disease* thought to be associated to the liver – a second source cites *pneumonia*.



(Right: *A view of the parade ground and some of the ramparts at Fort George – photograph from 2011*)

The son of Mark Chaplin, of *Mark Chaplin, Merchant Tailor* – the business at 175a Water Street, residence on Circular Road - and of Amelia Jane Chaplin (née *Bowden*) of Water Street in St. John's, he was also brother to Herbert L., to Harold Garrett*, and to Marian-Morton, Eliza, Nellie, Claude and Doris, these last three all deceased as children.



Private Chaplin was reported as having...*died of sickness*...in hospital in Fort George on January 1, New Year's Day, 1915. His effects were auctioned but fetched only eighteen shillings and one penny, about twice the price charged for his gravesite in the local cemetery at Ardesier, the neighbouring village.



The first overseas fatality of the Newfoundland Regiment during the *Great War*, Jack Fielding Chaplin had enlisted at a *declared* nineteen years of age: date of birth in St. John's Newfoundland, April 6, 1897 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



(Right above: *Private Chaplin's grave in Ardesier Parish Churchyard. In the centre foreground* – photograph from 2011)

(The photograph of a youthful John Fielding Chaplin is from the Provincial Archives.)

**Harold Garret Chaplin served as Lieutenant-Surgeon Chaplin in the Royal Navy during the Great War. He died on June 5, 1916, on board the cruiser HMS Hampshire (right) which at the time was carrying Lord Kitchener to Russia.*



The ship likely struck a mine en route and was lost with all on board – some six-hundred fifty lives – all except for twelve crewmen who survived on Carley floats.

Private John Fielding Chaplin was entitled to the British War Medal for his...*overseas service*.

(Far right: A family memorial which stands today in the General Protestant Cemetery in St. John's commemorates the sacrifice of both Private John Fielding Chaplin and of his brother Lieutenant-Surgeon Harold Garret Chaplin. – photograph from 2015)



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 10, 2023.