

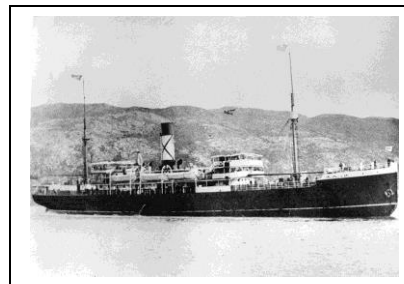


Private George Blandford (elsewhere Blanford) (Regimental Number 3237), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman earning an annual \$200.00, George Blandford was a recruit of the Twelfth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on November 13, 1916, he then both enlisted – *for the duration of the war* and at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and attested on that same November 13.



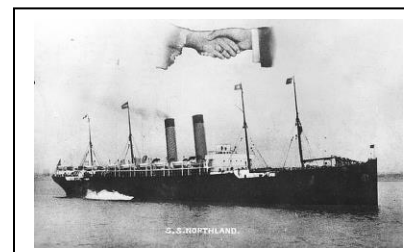
Private Blandford was one of the approximately three hundred twenty *all ranks* to leave St. John's for *overseas service* on the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* (right), bound for Halifax, on January 31, 1917, from there to take ship to the United Kingdom.



Immediately upon its arrival in Nova Scotia, however, this detachment was forwarded to accommodation in the town of Windsor where it was soon to be quarantined because of an epidemic of measles and mumps.

It was not before a lapse of some two-and-a-half months after its arrival that transport could be arranged for the trans-Atlantic crossing to the United Kingdom for the so-called *Windsor Draft* – minus the twenty-five or so personnel still unable to travel.

On April 17, Private Blandford embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Northland* – originally the *Zeeland* - (right), one of three ships carrying the Newfoundlanders to sail on the next day in a convoy from Halifax, carrying Canadian reinforcements to the English west-coast port of Liverpool, where the ships docked on April 29.



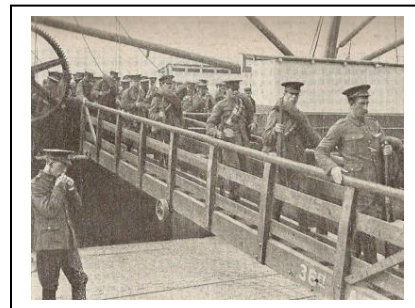
Arriving in England the contingent entrained for the west coast of Scotland. By this time, the Regimental Depot at Ayr had already been in existence to serve as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for two years. It was from here – since November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from Newfoundland were to be despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the Western Front, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



By the time that the Windsor Draft arrived at the Regimental Depot, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion was becoming critically short of personnel.

(Page preceding: *the new race-course at Ayr – opened in 1907 – where men of the Regiment were billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photo from 2012*)

On June 11, 1917, the 25<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft – Private Blandford in its ranks - passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to France. On the following day, June 12, the contingent disembarked in the Norman capital, Rouen, where time was spent at the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, to be organized and to undergo final training\* before moving onward to its eventual rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

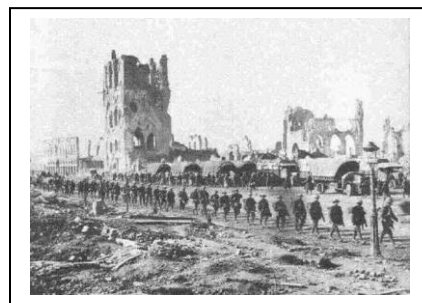


(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

\*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.

The records show that it was on July 2 – the *Regimental War Diary* says, in fact, on the day before - that Private Blandford's contingent of two-hundred fifty *other ranks* reported to *duty* at Caribou Camp, behind the lines near Woesten in Belgium. For the next few days – and nights – 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion supplied working parties for road-mending and for the construction of infantry tracks. For that purpose, several of the Newfoundlanders were attached temporarily – until July 20 - to the 173<sup>rd</sup> Company of the Royal Engineers.

Only days before, at the end of June, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had once again moved north into Belgium and once again to the area of Ypres. This had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917. Officially named the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign came to be known to history as *Passchendaele*, taking that name from a small village on a ridge that was one of the British Army's objectives.



(Right above: *Troops file through the rubble of the medieval city of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer of 1917. – from Illustration*)

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion remained in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army which floundered its way across the sodden countryside of Flanders. Notably it fought in two major engagements, at the *Steenbeek* on August 16, and at the *Broembeek* on October 9.



(Page preceding: *an unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

The only son of Eli Blandford, fisherman, and Selina Blandford (née *Philpott*, this her third marriage, likely deceased 1903) of Herring Neck (formerly *Little Beaver Cove*), his own address recorded as 87 Long's Hill in St. John's – perhaps only at the time of his enlistment and/ or while waiting to travel overseas – he was husband of the former Emma Mercer\* – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - also of Herring Neck, and father to Ambrose-Mark (born June 29, 1915) and Alida (born July, 1917), a daughter whom he would never see.

*\*She later re-married, to Walter King of Port Albert.*

Private Blandford was reported as having been *killed in action* on August 16, 1917, while serving with 'C' Company during the fighting at the *Steenbeek*. He was buried in the proximity of Danain Farm near Langemarck, his grave presumably either later forgotten or destroyed in subsequent fighting.

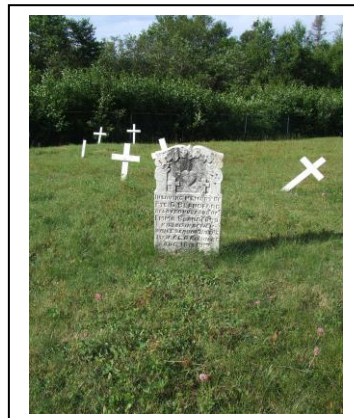


At home, it was the Reverend L. Godden of Herring Neck who was requested to bear the news to his family.

George Blandford had enlisted at the age of twenty-three years and three months: date of birth, August 21, 1893.

(Right above: *This is the area of the Steenbeek – the stream runs close to the trees - and also close to where 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion fought the engagement of August 16, 1917. It is some eight kilometres distant from a village called Passchendaele. – photograph from 2010*)

(Right: *This memorial stone, placed by his wife Emma in Port Albert (formerly Beaver Cove) United Church Cemetery, commemorates the sacrifice of Private Blandford. – photograph from 2013*)



Private George Blandford was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

