



Private Michael John Blyde (Regimental Number 280) lies in Hill 10* Cemetery at Suvla Bay: Grave reference IV. A. 9.

**Named thus for its maximum elevation, in metres, above sea level*

His occupation previous to enlistment recorded as that of a *shoe-cutter* with *Parker and Monroe* of Water Street, St. John's, for a weekly wage of twelve dollars, Michael John Blyde presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury*, also in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on August 28, 1914. It was a procedure which was to find him...*fit for foreign service*.

Eight days later, on September 5, he then enlisted, once again at the *CLB Armoury* – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (this was to include a ten-cent Field Allowance). Michael John Blyde was a recruit of the First Draft.

(continued)

Following a waiting-period of more than four weeks less two days – although training was to be ongoing – Private Blyde was to attest on October 1 and then, following two further days, was to embark on October 3 with the others of the *First Five Hundred* onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting the contingent in St. John's Harbour.



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

The ship sailed on the morrow to its rendezvous off the south coast of the Island where she was to join the convoy transporting the 1st Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

In the United Kingdom Private Blyde trained with the Newfoundland contingent: firstly in southern England; then in Scotland at Fort George – on the Moray Firth close to Inverness; at Edinburgh Castle – where it provided the first garrison from outside the British Isles; and later again at the tented *Stobs Camp* near the town of Hawick to the south-east of Edinburgh.



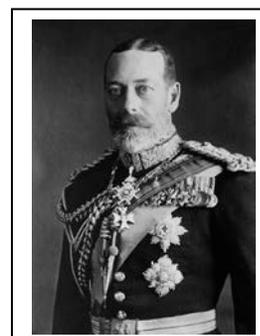
(Right: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)

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



(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. The 1st Battalion, Newfoundland Regiment, comprising those four Companies, 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', was thereupon attached to the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.*

It had then been during that period spent at Aldershot that Private Blyde of 'B' Company* – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on or about August 13, to re-enlist *for the duration of the war***.

****At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist.**



(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, in peace-time a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)*

On August 20, 1915, Private Blyde and his comrades-in-arms 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.



There, a month later – having spent two weeks billeted in British barracks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, he and the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment disembarked at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(Right: *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)*



Private Blyde, however, would hardly place his foot upon the sands of *Suvla Bay* before he was to become one of the first casualties of the Newfoundland Battalion's war.

(Right: *A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla Bay, and where the 1st Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)*



Private Blyde's 'B' Company was to go up into the forward trenches on the night of September 20-22, but for how long it was to remain there is a detail not to be found among his papers. Nor has the action of those first days been documented other than to report the routine artillery fire and sniping – to which may be added that on September 25 the four Companies were to spend the day at the beach.

There appear to be no records of the time when, or of the date on which Private Blyde was wounded.

The son of Michael John Blyde, labourer and carman with the *Sanitary Department*, and Mary Blyde (spelled *Bloyd* in parish records* and also *Blide* elsewhere, née *Grisshey* (or variation thereof) – might it have been *Gruchy?*)** – to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of 49 (although 47 is also recorded), Fleming Street in St. John's, he was a former member of the Catholic Cadet Corps, and also brother to Mary-Elizabeth, Patrick, Margaret-Ann, Catherine-Joseph, George-Joseph, Elizabeth-Ann, Philip-Edward(?), Margaret-Rose, Beatrice-Mary, Thomas, Mary-Josephine, Maria and Eileen.

*These same records document Blyde and Bloyd as being the same family (see *George Joseph Bloyd*).

**The couple was married on September 12, 1895.

Private Blyde was reported to have *died of wounds* – likely inflicted by enemy artillery fire - at the 88th Field Ambulance, Suvla, on September 26, 1915.



Michael John Blyde had enlisted at nineteen years of age – although a further source suggests seventeen: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, February 19, 1895 (from Newfoundland Birth Register and Roman Catholic Parish Records).

He was to be the second fatal casualty incurred *in action* of the Newfoundland Regiment's war.

(Right above: *The gravestones of Privates Blyde and Roberts who lie side by side in Hill 10 Cemetery, Suvla Bay – photograph from 2011*)

(*The photograph of Private Blyde is from the Provincial Archives.*)



(Right above: *A venerable Turkish artillery piece which still stands on guard at Suvla Bay – photograph from September, 2011*)

Private Michael John Blyde 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).

