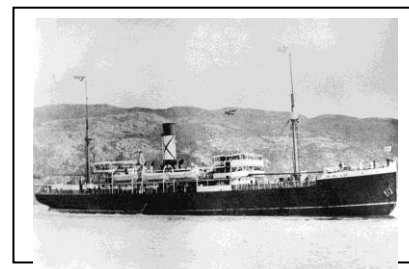




Private Marcus Randell (born *Butler*) (Regimental Number 3772) is buried in Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille – Grave reference VI. A. 4.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Marcus Randell was a recruit of the Fifteenth Draft. He enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on May 14 of 1917 - engaged *for the duration of the war* and at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and also attested on that same day.

Private Randell did not leave St. John's until August 4 of that year. On that day he marched down to St. John's harbour and boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel, *Florizel* (right)*. The destination was Halifax, Nova Scotia, from where the Newfoundland draft was to take ship – thus far un-identified: maybe *Missanabie* but this is far from certain - to cross the Atlantic to the United Kingdom.



**Albeit a second source claims that he... embarked St. John's train for Halifax N.S. 4/8/17: Both of these sources are in Private Randell's personal documents.*

Private Randell was not to embark with his draft, however. He was admitted into hospital at Halifax on August 13 and was to be treated for a complaint classified as NYD (*Not Yet Determined*). His contingent – 'R' Draft - sailed without him for the United Kingdom some days later while he remained back in Nova Scotia for further medical attention.

His papers record him arriving in the United Kingdom on or about October 4 at which time he made his way to 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 2nd (*Reserve*) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for more than two years. It was from here – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home had been despatched in drafts, at first to Gallipoli and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

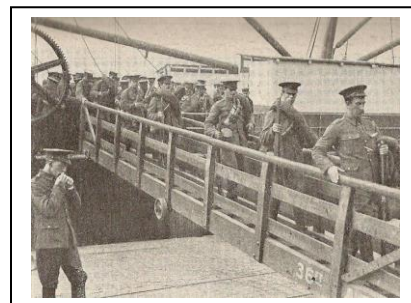
Private Randell spent the five months succeeding his arrival in the United Kingdom at the Regimental Depot at Ayr. In the latter half of January of the New Year, 1918, 2nd (*Reserve*) Battalion was to move quarters from Scotland to southern England, to Hazely Down, Hampshire, not far distant from the historic cathedral city of Winchester.



It was there that he would have been at the beginning of February when he was ordered to join the British Expeditionary Force on the Continent.

(Right above: *a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp at some time during the winter of 1918 – from The War Illustrated*)

On February 4, the 36th Re-enforcement Draft of two hundred *other ranks* from Hazely Down – Private Randell among its ranks - passed through the English port of Southampton on its way to the Continent. On the 6th the Newfoundlanders landed in the French port of Rouen for the inevitable final training and organization* at the Base Depot before finding their way to the front.



(Right: *British troops disembark at Rouen en route to the Western Front. – from Illustration*)

(continued)

**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, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

A detachment of one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Rouen – Private Randell among that number - reported to *duty* with 1st Battalion at Steenvoorde, just on the Franco-Belgian frontier, on the 15th of that February, the day before an inspection by Major-General Beauvoir de Lisle, Officer Commanding 29th Division, a parade complete with presentation of decorations and the announcement that the Newfoundland Regiment was to be designated as *Royal*.

Meanwhile, at the close of the *Battle of Cambrai* at the beginning of December of 1917, 1st Battalion – once again badly under-strength due to the heavy casualties incurred – had been withdrawn from the area of the front lines to re-enforce and to re-organize. The following weeks had been spent at first to the south-west of the city of Arras, at Humbercourt and then at some distance to the north-west, at Fressin.

The weather obliged and even allowed the Newfoundlanders some snow, a bit too much at times apparently.

At the beginning of January of 1918, and after that snowy Christmas period spent to the west of Arras and withdrawn from the front, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion had been ordered into Belgium, to the *Ypres Salient*, for a third time.

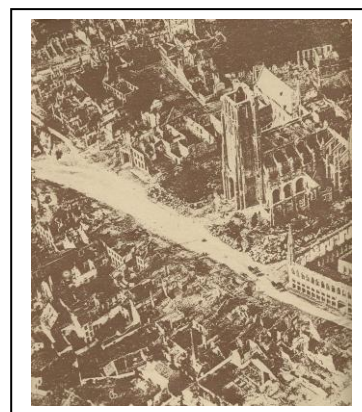
There, like the other British and Empire troops in the area, they were to spend much of their time building and strengthening defences. It was during a period while 1st Battalion was out of the lines that Private Randell reported to *active service*.

(Above right: *an aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916 – from Illustration*)

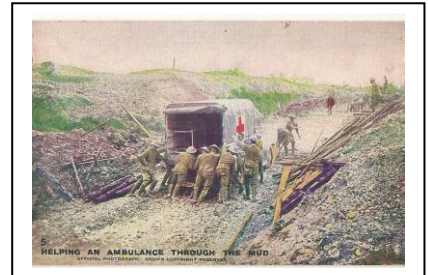
Meanwhile, while the Allies built their defences, by the beginning of 1918 the Germans were preparing for a final effort to win the War: the Allies were exhausted and lacking man-power after their exertions of 1917 - the British had fought three campaigns and some units of the French Army had mutinied - and the Germans had available the extra divisions that their victory over the Russians in the East now allowed them.

It was expected that the Germans would launch a spring offensive. While they were waiting, the Newfoundlanders continued to dig.

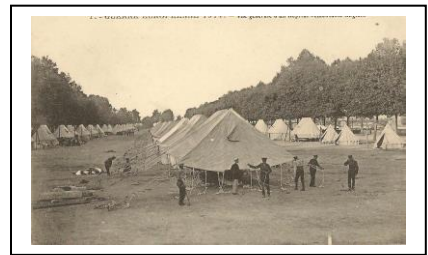
(Right above: *countryside in-between Zonnebeke and Passchendaele (today Passendale) in the vicinity of where the Newfoundlanders were stationed in March and early April of 1918 – photograph from 2011*)



Private Randell dug until March 7 on which day he was admitted into the 87th Field Ambulance suffering from a further complaint, this one also diagnosed at the time as NYD. From there he was then transferred to the 3rd Australian Casualty Clearing Station at the Rémy Siding just south of the Belgian town of Poperinghe, on that same day.



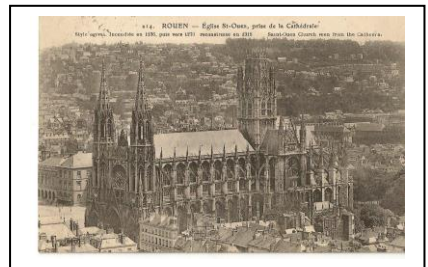
Four days afterwards, on March 11, he was forwarded to the 54th (London) General Hospital at Aubenque, near the French port of Boulogne, for further treatment. He was reported as still experiencing *acute abdominal pains*.



(Right top: *transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

(Right above: *a British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and when the necessity arose – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War – from a vintage post-card*)

A further eleven days having passed, Private Randell was released from hospital to the 12th Convalescent Depot, also at Aubenque. Then on April 8 he was forwarded to the 5th Convalescent Depot at Rouen before finally being discharged to *duty* to the Base Depot at Rouen. There he was to remain for a further three weeks until the last day of the month, April 30, when he was despatched to report back to 1st Battalion on the next day.



The medical record in his files leaves us still to speculate as to what exactly was Private Randell's complaint.

(Right above: *the centre of the French city of Rouen – at or about the time of the Great War - dominated by its venerable gothic cathedral which must have been a sight familiar to many serving Newfoundlanders – from a vintage post-card*)

Only days after the crisis of the German spring offensive had passed, on April 24, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion said farewell to their comrades-in-arms of 88th Brigade and 29th Division. On the following day there was a recessional parade. 1st Battalion was to later be deployed to another unit, but for the summer of 1918 it was to move a world away from Flanders where it had just fought, to be stationed on the west coast of France.

On April 29, the Newfoundlanders – 1st Battalion by now reduced to a total strength of just thirty officers and four-hundred sixty-four other ranks - took train in Belgium for the French coastal town of Étapes, where they arrived at eleven o'clock in the late evening. For now, for them, the fighting was a thing of the past.

(continued)

It was, of course, on only the day following, May 1, that Private Randell reported back *to duty* with the parent unit, one of a draft of twenty-nine other ranks to report from Rouen. (Then again, a second date has been recorded, that of June 13, which may make him one of the seven *other ranks* to report *to duty* on or about June 11 at Écuire.)

The summer of 1918 was to pass peaceably enough for most of the personnel of 1st Battalion. For the months of May, June and until early July, the unit was posted to Écuire, to the Headquarters of Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in Europe.



(Right: *Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force at the time of the Battalion's posting to GHQ – from Illustration*)

The cosmetic honour of this new role, however, masked the reality that the 1st Battalion of the recently-proclaimed *Royal Newfoundland Regiment* was no longer capable of serving in the field.

**Although few at home cared to admit it publicly, the problem was that 1st Battalion had run out of reserves and was unable to continue as a fighting entity. It was to be September before even a battalion of reduced strength could return to active service. At home, mandatory military service was initiated – conscription by another name – but with limited results.*

The posting to Écuire completed, for most of July and all of August the Newfoundlanders were encamped in much the same area, close to the coastal village of Équihen – itself not far removed from the large Channel port of Boulogne – and far to the rear of the fighting, of which there had been plenty elsewhere.



(Right above: *a view of the sparsely-populated coastal community of Équihen at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Re-enforced, the Newfoundlanders returned to the fray on Friday, September 13, as one of the three battalions of the 28th Brigade of 9th Scottish Division. 1st Battalion was once more to serve on the Belgian front where, some six weeks later, having advanced out of the *Ypres Salient*, it would finish its war on October 26 at a place called Inghoyghem (*Ingooigem*).

On September 28, the Belgian Army and the 2nd British Army broke out of their positions, overrunning the enemy lines. It was the start, for them, of the *Hundred Days Offensive**. On the following day, the Newfoundlanders were fighting at the Keiberg Ridge. After almost four years of stalemate, it was once again to be a conflict of movement.



(Right: *British troops and German prisoners in Flanders during the Hundred Days – from Illustration*)

(continued)

****This offensive would prove to be the final campaign of the Western Front and would terminate with the Armistice of November 11. It had begun further to the south on July 18 on the French front on the River Marne, followed on August 8 by an onslaught by British and Empire troops near Amiens in what would also become known as 3rd Somme.***

It was most likely on October 15 that Private Randell, while serving with 'A' Company, was wounded; 1st Battalion reached the Lys Canal on that day and, there being no means of traversing it, the Newfoundlanders were pulled out of the line to rest until such time as a crossing could be made.



On the following day, October 16, Private Randell was admitted into the 13th (Harvard USA) General Hospital at Boulogne for treatment to gun-shot injuries to the head. Where he had been taken for interim treatment appears not to have been documented.

(Right above: *the Lys – here both canal and river – at a point not far from the crossing-place – right to left - of October 19-20, 1918 – and where 1st Battalion had halted on the 15th. The Harlebeke Caribou stands about one hundred metres behind the camera. – photograph from 2010*



(Right: *the French port of Boulogne at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*

The son of Walter Randell and of Angelina Randell (née *Butler*) – to whom he had allotted a daily seventy cents from his pay - of Port Rexton, Trinity Bay, he was also older brother to Edward-Charles, to Mary-Olive, to Joseph-Butler, to Ida-Janet, and to Whitfield (this last born in 1919, after Private Randell's death).



Private Randell was reported as having *died of wounds* on October 17, 1918, in the same 13th General Hospital.

Marcus Randell (born *Butler*) had enlisted at the age of eighteen years and seven months: date of birth, September 29, 1899.

(Right above: *The Caribou at Harlebeke – commemorates the crossing of the Lys Canal and the sacrifices of the last campaign of the War. – photograph from 2012*

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

