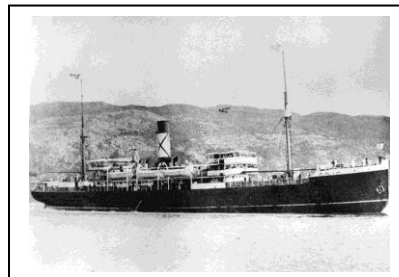


Private Edwin Pierce Rideout (the name also found as *Ridout*) (Regimental Number 228) lies in Ayr Cemetery, Ayrshire, Scotland – Grave reference G. 1. 4.

His occupations prior to enlistment recorded as those of a sailor (perhaps *tailor*) working for forty dollars a month, and of a two-dollar per day employee of the *Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company* in Grand Falls, Edwin Pierce Rideout presented himself for medical examination in that community on August 26, 1914, barely more than three weeks after the *Declaration of War*. It was a procedure which pronounced him...*fit for Overseas Service*.

There was then to be a train journey from Grand Falls to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, where Edwin Pierce Rideout enlisted at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 (this included a ten-cent Field Allowance) - on September 2. He was a recruit of the First Draft.

There was now to be a four-week wait – although training was to be ongoing - before Private Rideout would attest on October 1 and then a further two days before he 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.



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 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division across the Atlantic.

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

In the United Kingdom Private Rideout 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.

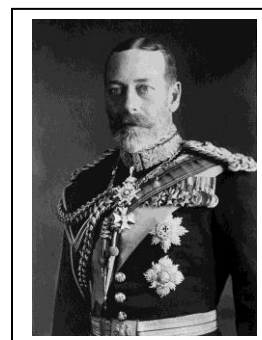


(Right above: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011)*



(Right above: *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 sent 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 2<sup>nd</sup> (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)*

(continued)

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

**It had then been during that period spent at Aldershot that Private Rideout of either 'A' or 'B' Company – he was not alone in doing so - had been prevailed upon, he on August 14, 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Rideout 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, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment dis-embarked at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.**



**(Right: *Kangaroo Beach*, where the officers and men of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Rideout, however, was not to be among their number.**

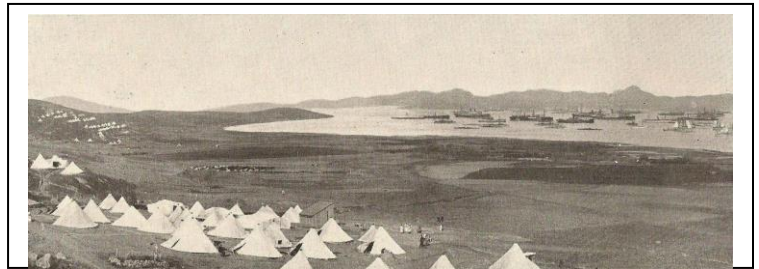
\* \* \* \* \*

The Newfoundland Battalion had not sailed directly to *Suvla Bay* but rather via the Franco-British Base at *Mudros Bay* on the Greek island of Lemnos. Having taken ship on HMT *Ausonia* at Alexandria, on September 18 the vessel had deposited the unit at *Mudros Bay* for it to board a smaller vessel, the *Prince Abbas*, on which it was to complete the voyage to the landing beaches of *Suvla Bay*.



(Right above: *Portianos Military Cemetery on the Greek island of Lemnos wherein lie three Newfoundlanders, two soldiers and a sailor who died in service during the Great War. – photograph from 2011*)

(Right: *By the end of the year 1915, the bay and the small and inadequate harbour area at Mudros was almost entirely surrounded by French and British – including Canadian and Australian - medical facilities, the majority of them under canvas. – image from Illustration*)



By the time that the *Prince Abbas* was to sail, Private Rideout had reported ill, suffering from diarrhoea. Having by this time been diagnosed as ill with dysentery, he was now remain at *Mudros Bay* to be admitted into the No. 1 Stationary Hospital.

One month later, on or about October 20, he was evacuated from Lemnos by hospital ship – its identity not recorded among his files - to the United Kingdom. Having arrived back in England on the 27<sup>th</sup> of that same month, he was admitted on the same day into the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.



(Right: *The main building of what was to become the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital during the Great War was opened, on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)

(Right: *A group of Newfoundland patients, most of them unfortunately unidentified, with some of the staff at Wandsworth: There is a Joseph, apparently the fourth from the right in the second row. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)



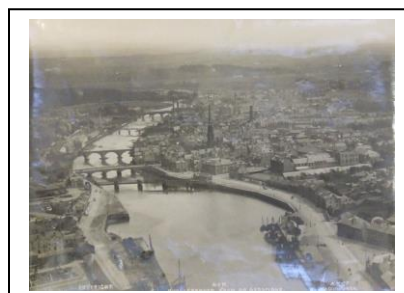
After convalescence, from January 7 to 16 of the New Year, 1916, Private Rideout was granted the customary ten-day furlough allowed military personnel upon release from hospital.

Having spent this period in Edinburgh at 53, Bread Street – in the shadow of the Castle where he had served some eleven months before - he was then posted to ‘E’ Company of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion at the Regimental Depot. He reported to duty on January 19.

(Right: *Edinburgh Castle perched on the crags which dominate the Scottish capital city – photograph from 2012*)



The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, to serve as a base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment. It was from there – as of November of 1915 until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were to be despatched in drafts, at first to *Gallipoli* and later to the *Western Front*, to bolster the four fighting companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

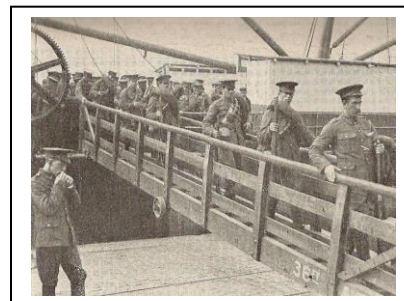


(Right: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

On March 28 Private Rideout embarked with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reinforcement Draft from Ayr through the English south-coast port of Southampton onto His Majesty’s Transport *Archangel* en route to Rouen, joining the British Expeditionary Force for service on the *Western Front*. The detachment landed in the Norman capital of Rouen on March 30, and proceeded to the nearby British Expeditionary Force Base Depot for some days of final training and organization\* before leaving to seek out its parent unit.



(Right above: *The image of a troop-laden Archangel is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)



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

*\*Apparently the standard length of time for this final training was 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 to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

It was almost certainly on April 15 that Private Rideout re-joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion *in the field*. A detachment of two officers and two-hundred eleven *other ranks* from Rouen reported to duty on that day in the small *Somme* village of Englebelmer just behind the lines. That night the men were already at work in the nearby communication trenches.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the early days of the period of Private Rideout's absence due to his medical problems, the Newfoundland Battalion, having landed at *Suvla Bay*, was to endure a miserable four months serving in the *Gallipoli Campaign*. They were not alone; serving with the British and Newfoundlanders on the *Gallipoli Peninsula* were also forces from Australia, New Zealand, India and Nepal\*.

*\*Not to forget the French contingents.*

And wherever they fought, at *Cape Helles*, *Anzac Cove* or at *Suvla Bay*, the *Gallipoli Campaign* was to be a debacle: Flies, dust, disease, frost-bite, floods – and the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command\* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and it would be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.



*\*Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*

(Right above: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at *Suvla*, and where *Private Rendell* was to serve in the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)

On the night of December 19-20, 1915, the British were to abandon *Suvla Bay* – the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, the only non-British unit to serve there, would form a part of the rear-guard.

Some of the Battalion personnel were to be evacuated to the nearby island of *Imbros*, and some to *Lemnos*, further away, but in neither case would the respite be of a long duration; the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been transferred only two days later to the area of *Cape Helles*, on the western tip of the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right: *Cape Helles* as seen from the Turkish positions on the apparently misnamed *Achi Baba*, positions which were never breached. The Newfoundland positions were to the right-hand side in the picture. – photograph from 2011)

The British and the *Anzac* forces – the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps were also still serving at *Gallipoli* – had now been only marking time until a complete withdrawal of the Peninsula would be undertaken. This operation had taken place on the night of January 8-9, and the Newfoundland Battalion was to provide some of the rear-guard for this second withdrawal as well\*.



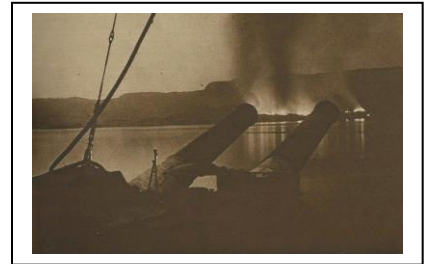
(Right above: 'W' Beach at *Cape Helles* as it was days before the final British evacuation – from *Illustration*)

***\*Lieutenant Owen Steele of St. John's, Newfoundland, is cited as having been the last soldier of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to step into the final small boat to sail from the Gallipoli Peninsula.***



***(Right: The same 'W' Beach almost a century after its abandonment by British forces and by the Newfoundlanders who were the last soldiers off the beach: vestiges of the wharves in the black-and-white picture are still to be seen. – photograph from 2011)***

***(Right: The British destroy their supplies during the final evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. The men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment were among the last to leave on two occasions, at both Suvla Bay and Cape Helles. – photograph taken from the battleship Cornwallis from Illustration)***



**After the British evacuation of the entire *Gallipoli Peninsula* in January of 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been sent to the Egyptian port-city of Alexandria, having arrived there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of that month. The Newfoundlanders were thence to be immediately transferred southward to Suez, one of the ports at the southern end of the canal which bears the same name, there to await orders as, at the time, the future destination of the British 29<sup>th</sup> Division had not yet been decided\*.**



***\*Bulgaria had entered the conflict on the side of the Central Powers and Salonika was soon to become a theatre of war.***

***(Right above: Port Tewfiq at the south end of the Suez Canal just prior to the Great War – from a vintage post-card)***

***(Right: British troops march through the port area of the French city of Marseilles. – from a vintage post-card)***

**On March 14, the Newfoundlanders had taken ship through Port Tewfiq, also at the southern end of the *Suez Canal*, for the French port of Marseilles, and had disembarked there on March 22, en route to the *Western Front*.**

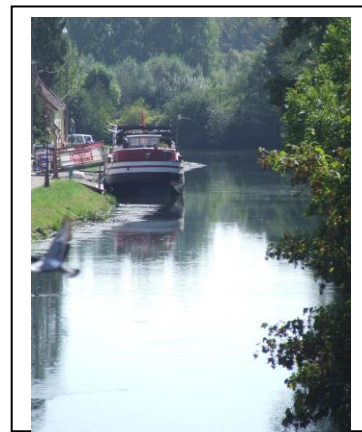


**Some three days after the unit's disembarkation on March 22, the Newfoundland Battalion's train would arrive at the small provincial town of Pont-Rémy, a thousand kilometres to the north of Marseilles. It had been a cold, miserable journey, the blankets provided for the troops having travelled unused in a separate wagon. De-training at the local station at two in the morning, the Newfoundlanders still were to have a long march ahead of them before they would reach their billets at Buigny l'Abbé.**

(Right: *The River Somme as seen from the bridge at Pont-Rémy – photograph from 2010*)

It is doubtful if many of those tired soldiers were to pay much attention to the slow-moving stream flowing under the bridge over which they had marched on their way from the station. But some three months later, *the Somme* would have become a part of their history.

It was to be there, in the French *Département de la Somme*, on April 15, 1916 – only two days after the arrival there on April 13 of the parent unit - that Private Rideout and his re-enforcement draft from Rouen were to report *to duty* with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment in the village of Englebelmer.



\* \* \* \* \*

The days following Private Rideout's return to his battalion had been taken up with work in the nearby communication trenches. Only days later again, two Companies – 'A' and 'B', and thus Private Rideout – had taken over some support positions from a British unit\* before the entire Newfoundland unit moved into forward positions on April 22.

*\*It should be said that the Newfoundland Battalion and two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles who were serving at the time in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lincolnshire Regiment Battalion, were the only units at the Somme from outside the British Isles. This was also true on the day of the attack on July 1.*

As of this time, for the remainder of the spring of 1916, the Newfoundlanders were to be preparing for the British campaign of that upcoming summer, the battles to be fought on the ground named for the languid, meandering river flowing through the region, and over which the parent unit of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had marched only some few weeks previously at Pont-Rémy: *the Somme*.



(Right above: *A part of the re-constructed trench system to be found in the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel – photograph from 2007(?)*)

If there is one name and date in Newfoundland history which is etched in the collective once-national memory, it is that of *Beaumont-Hamel* on July 1 of 1916; and if any numbers are remembered they are those of the eight-hundred who went *over the top* in the third wave of the attack on that morning, and of the sixty-eight unwounded present at muster some twenty-four hours later\*.



(Right above: *Looking from the British lines down the hill to Y Ravine Cemetery which today stands atop part of the German front-line defences - The Danger Tree is to the right in the photograph. – photograph taken in 2009*)



*\*Perhaps ironically, the majority of the Battalion's casualties was sustained while advancing from the third line of British trenches to the first line from where the attack proper was to be made, and while struggling through British wire laid to protect the British positions from any German attack.*

(Right: *Beaumont-Hamel is a commune, not a village (see below). – photographs from 2010 & 2015)*

*In fact, Beaumont-Hamel was a commune – it still exists today – at the time comprising two communities: Beaumont, a village on the German side of the lines, and Hamel which was behind those of the British. No-Man's-Land, on which the Newfoundland Memorial Park lies partially today, was on land that separated Beaumont from Hamel.*



There are other numbers of course: the fifty-seven thousand British casualties incurred in four hours on that same morning of which nineteen-thousand were recorded as having been *killed in action or died of wounds*.

It would prove to be the biggest disaster ever in the annals of the British Army...and, perhaps worse, it was to continue for the next four and a half months.

Although on the nominal roll of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on July 1, the first day of *the Somme*, Private Rideout did not figure in the fighting at Beaumont-Hamel, being ill from influenza. He was admitted to the 89<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance on the next day.

There appearing to be no further medical documentation of this episode, he was probably soon back with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

After the events of the morning of July 1, 1916, such had then been the dire condition of the attacking British forces that it was feared that a German counter-assault might well annihilate what had managed to survive of the British Expeditionary Force on *the Somme*.

The few remnants of the Newfoundland Battalion – and of the other depleted British units - had thus remained in the trenches perhaps fearing the worst, and at night searching for the wounded and burying the dead. It was to be July 6 before the Newfoundlanders were to be relieved from the forward area and to be ordered withdrawn to Englebelmer. It had then been a further two days before the unit had marched to Maily-Maillet.



(Right above: *The re-constructed village of Maily-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John's East. – photograph from 2009)*

There on July 11, a draft of one-hundred twenty-seven re-enforcements – a second source cites one-hundred thirty – had reported *to duty*. They had been the first to arrive following the events at Beaumont-Hamel but even with this additional man-power having arrived, the Regimental War Diary entry for July 14 reads as follows: *Took over about 450 yards of trenches on both sides of 1<sup>st</sup> AVENUE relieving the 4<sup>th</sup> Worcesters. Strength 11 officers, 260 rifles.*

And also...*During this time in the trenches we were shelled heavily by enemy's 5.9 howitzers and a good deal of damage was done to the trenches.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Whether as a result of the German bombardment cited in the War Diary extract of above, or due to shelling on another occasion, Private Rideout was once more admitted into hospital on that July 14. The facility was the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian General Hospital, one of many hospitals by that time established in the area of the French coastal town of Étaples to which he had been transported on that same day by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ambulance Train.



(Right above: *The Military Cemetery at Étaples is the largest such British burial ground in France, some eleven-thousand five-hundred dead lying within its boundaries. The majority of those buried were to die in the nearby medical complex. – photograph from 2010*)

Private Rideout was thereupon diagnosed as suffering from an only recently-recognized phenomenon: shell-shock. One week later, he was to be discharged from treatment and forwarded to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Convalescent Depot at Le Tréport before being finally discharged *to duty* with Base Details at the Divisional Base Depot at Rouen on August 8.



On September 1, according to his personal file, Private Rideout re-joined his 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion *in the field* in Belgium, in the *Ypres Salient*, at a time when the fighting companies were in front trenches near Railway Wood.

(Right above: *Canadian trenches in the Ypres Salient almost a century later, about a kilometre away from Railway Wood – photograph from 2010*)

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, on July 27-28 of 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion - still well under battalion strength\* at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after further re-enforcement – had moved north and entered into the *Kingdom of Belgium* for the first time. It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel.



**\*Establishment battalion strength of a British unit was a ‘trench strength’ of one-thousand – four companies of two-hundred fifty – plus headquarters staff.**

**(Preceding page: The entrance to ‘A’ Company’s quarters – obviously renovated since that time - in the ramparts of the city of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010)**

**(Right: An aerial view of Ypres, taken towards the end of 1916: it is described as the ‘Ville morte’. – from Illustration)**

**The Salient – close to the front lines for almost the entire conflict - was to be relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders’ posting there; yet they nonetheless would incur casualties, a number – fifteen? - of them fatal.**

**It had been here in the eastern environs of Ypres that Private Rideout was to re-join his unit. It is maybe not of any great importance, but whereas his own papers, as seen above, cite September 1 as the date of his return, the only reinforcements to report at that time – as recorded by the Battalion War Diary – were the ten *other ranks* of August 31, and the draft of thirty-nine *other ranks* which arrived to duty on September 3.**

**(Right above: Railway Wood shown here a century after the Newfoundland Battalion was stationed on the western edge – the far side in the photo – during the first days of September, 1916 – photograph from 2015)**

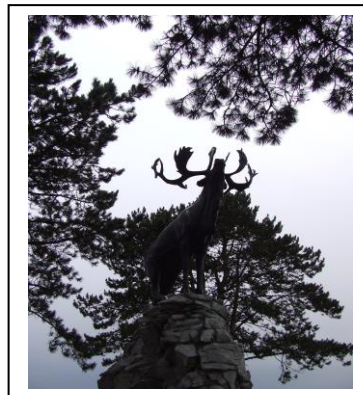
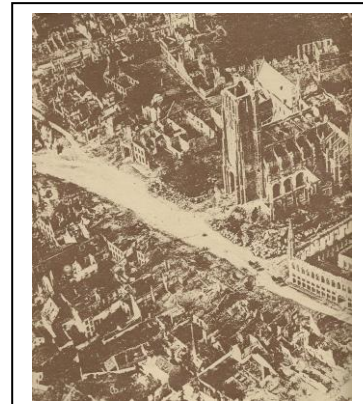
**Then on October 8, after having served in Belgium for some ten weeks, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to be ordered to return south, back into France and back into the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.**

**Four days after its return to France, on October 12, 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment would again be ordered to the offensive at a place called Gueudecourt, the vestiges of a village some dozen or so kilometres to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel.**

**(Right above: This is the ground over which the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some few managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007)**

**The encounter was to prove another costly affair – two hundred and thirty-nine casualties all told - for little gain.**

**(continued)**



(Preceding page: *The Caribou at Gueudecourt stands at the furthest point of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916.* – photograph from 2012)

Nine days after the action at Gueudecourt, on October 21 Private Rideout was admitted into the 87<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance suffering from a PUO (*Pain/ Pyrexia of Unknown Origin*). He was thereupon transferred, most likely on that same day, to a Corps Rest Station for convalescence.

(Right above: *A British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some* – from a vintage post-card)

(Right: *the railway station at Dannes-Camiers through which thousands of sick, wounded and convalescent military personnel passed during the Great War* – from a vintage post-card)

Then, only ten days later again, he was recorded as having been sent to the 18<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Dannes-Camiers on the French Atlantic coast. The complaint remained the same: PUO, later to be amended to influenza. On November 15, Private Rideout was evacuated on board His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Newhaven*, back across the English Channel and to the United Kingdom.

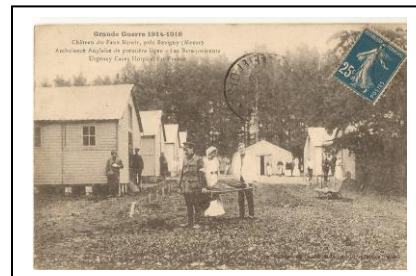
(Right: *The picture of a peace-time 'Newhaven', a cross-Channel ferry-boat soon to be requisitioned, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

Once more he found himself a patient at the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital at Wandsworth where he was admitted on November 15. His treatment and convalescence finished on or about January 6 of the New Year, 1917, Private Rideout was granted those ten days of 'sick' furlough and was posted back to Ayr, reporting there *to duty* with 'E' Company on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

(Right above: *The Newfoundland Military Plot in the Magdalen Road (Earlsfield) Cemetery, Wandsworth, wherein lie sixteen Newfoundlanders, one a nurse of a Voluntary Aid Detachment* – photograph from 2010(?))

Private Rideout would yet again return to the Continent and to the B.E.F. - in August of 1917. In the interim, however, he had met and married Elizabeth Dickson of 44 High Street, Ayr, on March 30, 1917 – apparently without having had permission from his CO. A daughter, Catherine Rendell Rideout, was to be born on January 2 of the following year (see below).

(continued)



(Preceding page: *High Street in Ayr almost a century later: With its dominant Wallace Tower it still resembles the street known to the Newfoundland troops who were stationed there. – photograph from 2012*)

More than six months later, having sailed from Folkestone on August 5 of 1917 before disembarking in Rouen two days later, Private Rideout returned to the Continent as a soldier of the 28<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr - and to the British Expeditionary Force Base Depot for those days of final training with which he was already familiar.



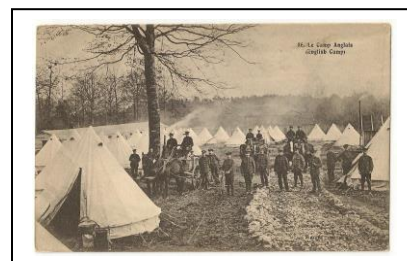
(Right above: *A view of the coastal town of Folkestone almost a century later as seen from the top of the white cliffs of nearby Dover – photograph from 2009*)

Two detachments of re-enforcements are reported in the Regimental War Diary as having arrived at *Penton Camp* – in the proximity of Poperinghe, Belgium – on August 28, Private Rideout being one of the total of one-hundred sixty-five *other ranks* accompanied by two officers to report *to duty* with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on that day.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the fighting of October 11 and 12 at Gueudecourt, the Newfoundland Battalion was to continue its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period to be broken only by the several weeks spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period. It had been a time during which the Regimental personnel was to be encamped well behind the lines and in close proximity to the city of Amiens.

(Right: *A typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere on the Continent – from a vintage post-card*)



After that welcome six-week Christmas respite spent in *Corps Reserve* well to the rear, the Newfoundlanders were to *officially* return to *active service* on January 23, although they had apparently already returned to the trenches by that date and had incurred their first casualties – and fatality – of 1917.

The only infantry activity directly involving the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion during that entire period – from the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October of 1916, until Monchy-le-Preux in April of 1917 – was to be the sharp engagement at Sailly-Saillisel at the end of February and beginning of March, an action which would bring this episode in the Newfoundlanders' War – in the area of *the Somme* - to a close.



(Right above: *The fighting during the time of the Battalion's posting to Sailly-Saillisel took place on the far side of the village which was no more than a heap of rubble at the time. - photograph from 2009(?)*)

(Right below: *The Prime Minister of Newfoundland visiting the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion encamped in huts at Meaulté – from The War Illustrated*)

After Sailly-Saillisel the month of March was to be a quiet time for the Newfoundlanders; having departed from the trenches, they had now spent their time near the communities of Meaulté and Camps-en-Amienois re-enforcing, re-organizing, and training for upcoming events. They even had had the pleasure of a visit from the Regimental Band, and also one from the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Edward Morris, the latter on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.



On March 29, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had begun to make its way – on foot – from Camps-en-Amienois to the north-east, towards the venerable medieval city of Arras and eventually beyond. The march was to finish amid the rubble of a village called Monchy-le-Preux.



(Right above: *The remnants of the Grande Place of the city of Arras in early 1916 after some eighteen months of bombardment – from Illustration*)

On April 9 the British Army had launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was the so-called *Battle of Arras*, intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the daily count of casualties this attack was to be the most expensive operation of the *Great War* for the British, its only positive episode having been the Canadian assault of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the battle, Easter Monday, 1917.



(Right above: *The Canadian National Memorial which has stood on Vimy Ridge since 1936 – photograph from 2010*)

While the British campaign would prove an overall disappointment, the French *Bataille du Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.



The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to play its part during the *Battle of Arras*, a role that would begin at a place called Monchy-le-Preux on April 14 and which would finish ten days later, on April 23, perhaps a kilometre distant, at *Les Fosses Farm*. After *Beaumont-Hamel*, the ineptly-planned action at Monchy-le-Preux would prove to be the most costly day of the Newfoundlanders' war, four-hundred eighty-seven casualties all told on April 14 alone\*.

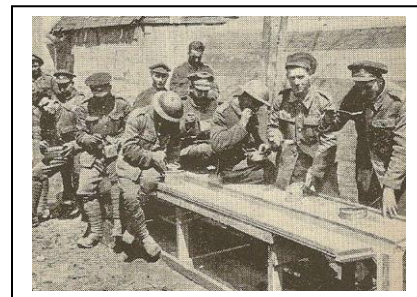
*\*It was also an action in which a DSO, an MC and eight MMs were won by a small group of nine men of the Battalion and one from the Essex Regiment .*

(continued)

(Right above: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the western – in 1917, the British – side of the community: The Newfoundlanders advanced, out of the ruins of the place, to the east, away from the camera. – photograph from 2013*)

(Right below: *Newfoundland troops at ease just after the time of Monchy-le-Preux – from *The War Illustrated**)

The final action in which the Newfoundland Battalion was to be involved during the *Battle of Arras* would be the already-noted confrontation of April 23 at *Les Fosses Farm*. The engagement had in fact been an element of a larger offensive undertaken at the time by units of the British 5<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Armies. It apparently was not to be a particularly successful venture, at least not in the area of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, several of the adjacent units reporting having been driven back by German counter-attacks and accompanied by heavy losses.



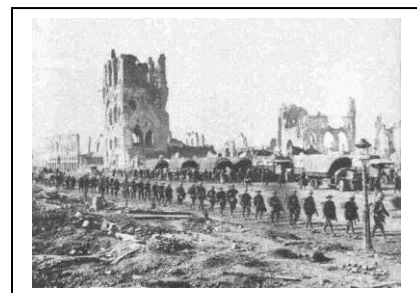
Late on that same evening the Newfoundlanders had retired to the relative calm of Arras.

May of 1917 had then been a period when the Newfoundland unit was to be ordered hither and thither on the *Arras Front*, in and out of the trenches. Apart from the ever-present artillery duelling, there appears to have been little infantry activity undertaken by the unit – apart from the marching. At the beginning of June, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had retired from the forward area to Bonneville and was to spend its time re-enforcing, re-organizing and training for the upcoming British offensive of the summer – and as it transpired, of the autumn as well.



(Right above: *Newfoundland troops on the march in the community of Berneville – not Bonneville - in early May, perhaps the 7<sup>th</sup>, of 1917 – from *The War Illustrated**)

The Newfoundlanders had then soon once again been moving north into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again into the area of Ypres – *the Salient*. This low-lying ground had been selected by the High Command to be the theatre of the British summer offensive of 1917.



(Right: *Troops arriving from the railway station in single file, march past the vestiges of the historic Cloth Hall and through the rubble of the medieval city centre of Ypres on their way to the front in the late summer or early autumn of 1917. – from *Illustration**)

Officially designated as the *Third Battle of Ypres*, the campaign was to come to be better known to history simply as *Passchendaele*, having adopted that name from a small village on a not-very high ridge to the north-east that later was to be cited as having been – *ostensibly* - one of the British Army's objectives.

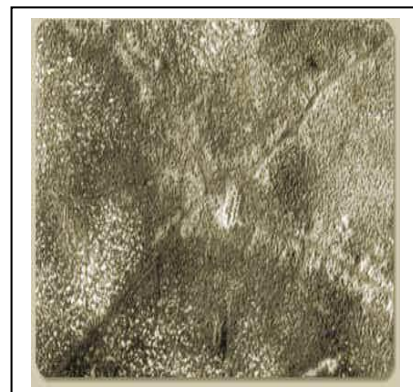
(Right: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1916, after two years of war – from Illustration*)



The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was to remain in Belgium until October 17, a small cog in the machinery of the British Army – as were to be by then the Australians, the New Zealanders and the Canadians – all of whom had floundered their way across the sodden and shell-torn countryside of Flanders\*.

*\*The Canadians were to do so during the last week of October and the first eleven days of November, after the departure of the Newfoundlanders.*

Notably the Newfoundland Battalion at *Passchendaele* was to fight in two major engagements: at the *Steenbeek* on August 16; and at the *Broembeek* on October 9. At the former it had incurred nine *killed in action*, ninety-three *wounded*, and one *missing in action*; at the *Broembeek* the cost had been higher: forty-eight *killed or died of wounds*, one-hundred thirty-two *wounded* and fifteen *missing in action*.



(Right: *The village of Passchendaele as seen from the air in 1917, after the battle of that name – from Illustration*)

\* \* \* \* \*

At the end of that August of 1917, the time of Private Rideout's return to his unit, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had just withdrawn from the area of the front since the British Army was about to take a month's respite to re-enforce and re-organize before continuing a battle which had not lived up to the expectations of the High Command. After a four-week period of fine weather, on September 23, the Newfoundlanders began their return to the forward area and to the fighting.

On the day on which *Passchendaele* officially recommenced, the rains returned.

The engagement at the *Steenbeek* was by then already a part of the Regiment's history, and the Newfoundlanders were now busy preparing for the next phase of the *Passchendaele* offensive, an effort which was to include the infantry action at the *Broembeek*. There being no evidence to the contrary, it must be supposed that there, Private Rideout – likewise many others – once more played his unsung role.



(Right above: *An unidentified – perhaps unidentifiable – part of the Passchendaele battlefield in the autumn of 1917 – from Illustration*)

(continued)



(Right: *An innocuous stream at most times, in the autumn of 1917 the Broembeek had overflowed its banks and transformed its surrounds into a morass. – photograph from 2010*)

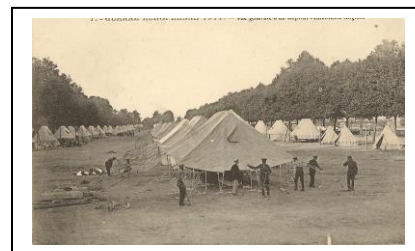


A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn definitively from the *Passchendaele* campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming campaign. They moved back south from Belgium on October 17 into northern France to re-enforce, organize and train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small commune to the southwest of Arras.

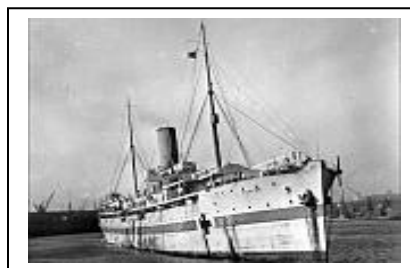
In a month's time the Newfoundland Battalion would be fighting in yet a further campaign: the *Battle of Cambrai*.

But not so Private Rideout.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was still withdrawn at Berles-au-Bois on October 31 when Private Rideout once more was found to need medical attention: on this occasion he reported to the 88<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance with another *Pain/ Pyrexia of Unknown Origin*. He is next recorded as having been admitted into the 20<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station at Boisieux-au-Mont on November 10, thence to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Stationary Hospital in Rouen on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and again in transit by hospital ship, HMHS *Panama*, to England on November 15.



(Right above: *A British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and whenever the necessity were to arise – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War: Other such medical establishments were often of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card*)



(Right: *The picture of HM Hospital Ship Panama is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

He was transferred upon arrival to the now-familiar 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital, Wandsworth, where he was admitted on November 18 and diagnosed as suffering from dysentery. There he was to remain until January 26 of the New Year, 1918, when he was transferred to the Dysentery Convalescent Hospital at Barton-on-Sea in the southern county of Hampshire.

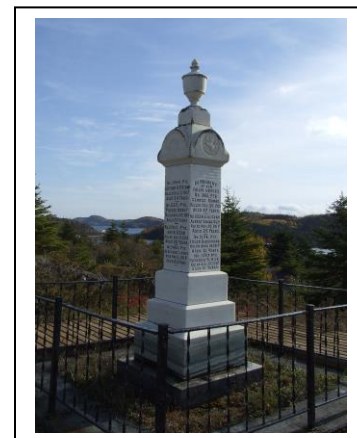
Eleven days were to pass at Barton-on-Sea before Private Rideout began to exhibit the symptoms of pleurisy. Thus he was transferred on February 2 to the University War Hospital in the nearby port-city of Southampton.

(continued)

The treatment there lasted for another thirteen days whereupon he was returned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> London General Hospital, Wandsworth on March 19.

The news was not good: the University War Hospital had found tuberculosis and within days, by March 22, his condition was deemed to be *serious*. A month later, on April 24, he was listed as *dangerously ill*.

Private Rideout was reported as having died of tubercular peritonitis/ meningitis in hospital at Wandsworth at five minutes past eight on the morning of Saturday, April 27, 1918. His condition had apparently been complicated by the re-appearance of that dysentery in the month of February. Private Rideout was buried with military honours in Ayr Cemetery at three o'clock on the afternoon of Thursday, May 2.



(Right above: *The War Memorial on Pilley's Island honours the sacrifice of Private Rideout.* – photograph from 2016)

The son of William James Rideout, miner, and of Louisa Rideout (née *Rendall*)\* – to whom until the time of his marriage he had allocated the sum of seventy cents a day from his pay - of Pilley's Island\*\* - his own place of residence at the time of his enlistment was recorded as Grand Falls - he was also brother to at Frederick-George, Alfred William, Mary-Ann, Arthur-Stanley, Pearl and to adopted sister Una.



*\*The couple was married on May 13, 1885.*

*\*\*The older children were born on Little Bay Islands, the younger – including Edwin Pierce – on Pilley's Island.*

Edwin Pierce Rideout had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty years: date of birth at Pilley's Island, District of Twillingate, Newfoundland, September 7, 1895 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).



(Right above: *The Grand Falls War Memorial also honours the sacrifice of Private Rideout.* – photograph from 2012)

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

*Private Rideout apparently fathered another child with Elizabeth while he was at Ayr – William Murray Hamilton Rideout was born earlier than Caroline and seemingly out of wedlock. The mother was at first denied a pension after her husband's death, it being intimated that she was either a prostitute or a married woman whose child was not her husband's. The fallacy of these claims having been pointed out by her lawyers to the Newfoundland High Commissioner and to the Pensions' Board, the money was finally allowed her.*

(continued)

***In or about 1923 Mrs. Rideout and her young daughter emigrated to Australia where her sister was already living. A further documents suggests that the boy had been put up for adoption.***

**Private Edwin Pierce Rideout 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).**



**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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – February 12, 2023.**