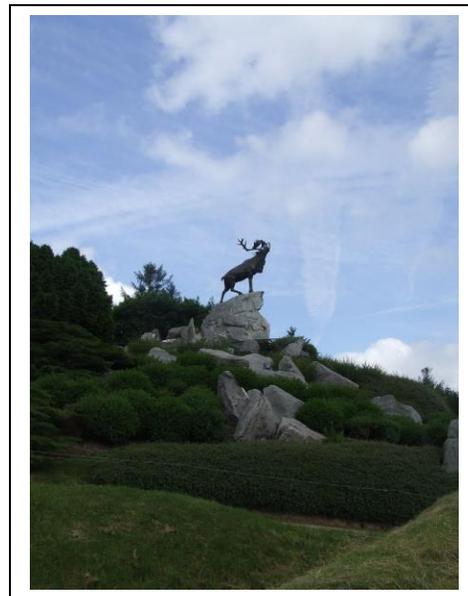


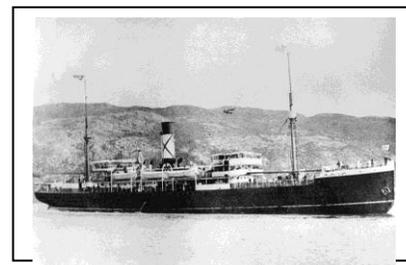


Private Ford Rideout (Regimental Number 3736), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a lumberman, Ford Rideout was a recruit of the Fifteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on May 7, 1917, he then enlisted - engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem - and also attested on the same day.



Private Rideout 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 now took ship - thus far un-identified: maybe *Missanabie* but this is far from certain - to cross the Atlantic to the United Kingdom.



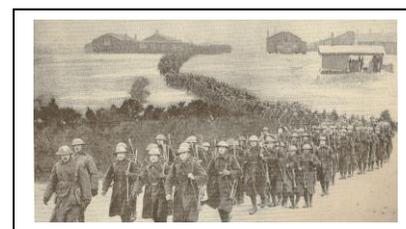
**Albeit a second source claims that he... embarked St. John's train for Halifax N.S. 4/8/17: Both of these sources are in Private Rideout's personal documents.*

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 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment for some 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 Rideout spent the five months succeeding his arrival in the United Kingdom at the Regimental Depot at Ayr and likely also at Barry*. 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.

**During the summer months of 1917, 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry in the region of Dundee. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was so great that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the third week of September.*

(Previous page: 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 Rideout 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*)



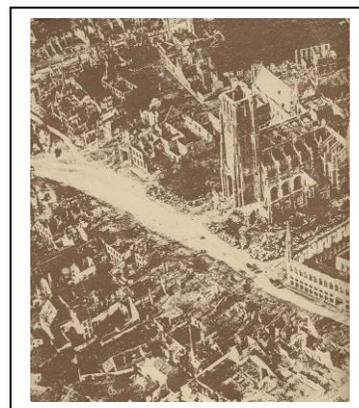
**Apparently, the standard length of time for this final training at the outset of the war had been ten days – although this was to become more and more flexible as the War progressed - in areas near Rouen, Étaples, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

A detachment of one-hundred seventy-three *other ranks* from Rouen – Private Rideout among that number - reported *to duty* with 1st Battalion at Steenvoorde, just on the French side of the 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.



(continued)

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 Rideout reported to *active service*.

(Previous page: *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*)

Then the Germans did as was expected of them. Ludendorff's armies had already launched a powerful thrust on March 21, striking at first in the area of *the Somme*, overrunning the battlefields of 1916 and beyond; for a while the advance seemed unstoppable.

Then a second offensive, *Georgette*, was launched in the northern sector of the front, in Flanders, where the Newfoundlanders were stationed: the date was April 9.



Within two days the situation of the Allies was desperate.

(Right above: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders in April of 1918 – from Illustration*)

On the day after the first heavy bombardments, April 10, as the Germans approached the towns of Armentières and Nieppe, troops were deployed to meet them. The Newfoundlanders, due to come out of the line and move back to the Somme, boarded buses at three o'clock in the afternoon and were suddenly directed southward, towards Nieppe.



They were in action, attempting to stem this latest offensive, three hours later.

(Right above: *the area of La Crèche - the buildings in the background - where the Newfoundlanders de-bussed on April 10 to meet the Germans in the area of Steenwerck and its railway station – photograph from 2010.*)

(continued)

The British were pushed back to the frontier area of France and Belgium. On the 12th of April 1st Battalion, fighting in companies rather than as a single entity, was making a series of stands.

On April 13, during the defensive action near the De Seule crossroads on the Franco-Belgian border, one platoon of 'C' Company was obliterated while trying to check the German advance. The remainder of 'C' Company took up defensive positions along a light railway line and, with 'A' Company, stopped a later enemy attack. 'B' and 'D' Companies – in a failed counter-attack on that evening - were equally heavily involved.



(Right above: *ground just to the east of Bailleul where 1st Battalion fought during the period April 12 to 21 – photograph from 2013*)

What exact role Private Rideout played during this frantic time is not known, the *Regimental War Diary* excepted (see immediately below) - it is recorded only that he was a soldier of 'A' Company - but from April 10 to 21 was to be a difficult eleven days for all of 1st Battalion's personnel. Nevertheless, somehow, the German breakthrough never materialised and the front finally stabilised.



The *Regimental War Diary* cites ...*the remainder of 'C' Coy. under Capt. Paterson, M.C. and Hqrs. took up a position along a light railway line and prepared to fight to a finish. ...there can be no doubt that it was Hqrs., 'A' & 'C' Coys. that by their resistance saved what would have been at least a very serious position for the whole 34th Division**.

**88th Brigade – therefore 1st Battalion – was seconded from 29th Division to the 34th Division during this critical period.*

(Right above: *These are the De Seule crossroads almost one-hundred years later, lying astride the Franco-Belgian frontier, and also the scene of fierce fighting involving 1st Battalion on April 12 -13, 1918. Today there are several houses and a convenience store. – photograph from 2009(?)*)

The son of Samuel Rideout, fisherman, and Maria Rideout (née Jones?) – to whom he had allotted a daily fifty cents from his pay - of Cottle's Island, Moreton's Harbour - and one of nine(?) children: Sylvia(?) Hedley, Elihu-George, Alwin, Daisy, Pearl, Anne and Kenneth the others - he himself is recorded as born in Whale's Gulch (today *Valleypond*).

Private Rideout was reported as having been *killed in action** on April 12, 1918, while serving with 'A' Company during fighting to the south of the Belgian border town of Neuve-Église.



(continued)

Ford Rideout had enlisted at the age of twenty-seven years and five months.

**It may well have been on the 13th, the dates – even in the Regimental War Diary – being at times confused during this hectic period.*

(Previous page: *The Cottle's Island War Memorial honours the sacrifice of Private Rideout.* – photograph from 2013)

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

(continued)



The Officer
i/c Records
3736 Pte Ford Rideout

121 High Street
Ayr
29th April 18

Would you kindly inform me if any casualty to above soldier has been reported since 5th April 1918.

Yours faithfully
(Miss) L. Walker

Note: No report of this man becoming a casualty has yet reached this office and it is assumed he is serving with his unit with the BEF in France.

(continued)

The Officer
i/c Records

3736 Pte Ford Rideout

121 High Street
Ayr
25th May 18

With reference to your communication attached, regarding above mentioned soldier, I have since received a letter from a comrade stating that he was killed in action in France on the 13th April 1918. Would you kindly inform me if a report to that effect has been received in your office and if Cottle's Island, Morton's Harbour, N. D. B., Newfoundland, is sufficient and correct address of soldier's parents. Trusting this will not cause you any inconvenience

Yours faithfully
(Miss) L. Walker

Note: Killed in action 12/4/18 – (this reply sent on 28th May)

(Right: This is Ayr High Street, the building numbers rarely visible. 121, High Street - the original may no longer exist - is on the left, a little further away from the camera than is the Wallace Tower. – photograph from 2011)

