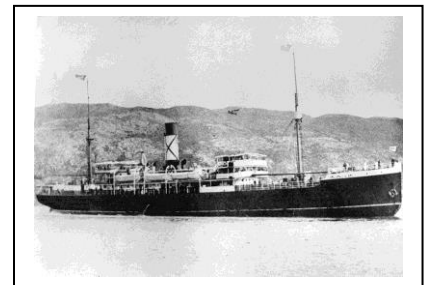




**Private Keywood Rideout (Regimental Number 3320) lies in Marcoing British Cemetery – Grave reference II. G. 12.**

**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a sailor earning an annual four-hundred dollars, Keywood Rideout was a recruit of the Thirteenth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury on December 11, 1916, he also enlisted – engaged *for the duration of the war* at the private soldier's rate of \$1.10 per diem – and attested in St. John's on that same day.**

**It was on April 7 of 1917, that Private Rideout boarded either the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* (right) for Halifax, or a train\* in St. John's for the cross-island journey to Port aux Basques from where a ferry and another train would have transported Private Rideout and his co-travellers to Halifax – the files are contradictory.**



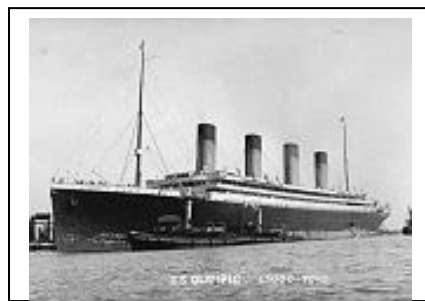
**(continued)**

Apparently it had been hoped that the fifty personnel of this draft would be joining the *Windsor Draft*\*\* on April 16 or 17 when it was to board one of the three transports awaiting in Halifax harbour and sail.

*\*The records of Private Rideout and other personnel cite... ‘Embarked St. John’s S.S. Train to Halifax 7/4/17’ ...while other sources hint that the passage to Nova Scotia may have been by ship: nevertheless, a personal memo of a Private Yetman mentions the Florizel.*

*\*\*This was the name given to the draft of about three-hundred twenty all ranks which had left St. John’s on January 31, 1917, en route to Halifax from where they were to sail to the United Kingdom. This contingent would eventually make that voyage, but about thirteen weeks later than envisaged. They were quarantined at Windsor as the result of a measles and mumps epidemic that claimed two of their number – and maybe a later third. In the meantime, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion at Ayr was running low on man-power.*

This plan, however, was not to be, for whatever the reason – perhaps lack of space as the ships were carrying Canadian reinforcements overseas - and it was not until the final day\* of the month that this small contingent – Private Rideout still one of its number - finally sailed from Halifax. They may, in fact, have embarked onto His Majesty’s Transport *Olympic* (right) – sister-ship of *Titanic* – which sailed at that time from Halifax with Canadian troops to the United Kingdom.



*\*If it was on Olympic that the contingent embarked – she appears to have been the only ship sailing on or about that time - then the Newfoundlanders sailed from Halifax on April 29 to arrive in Liverpool on May 7.*

Having arrived 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 some two years. It was from here – since November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers from home were being 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.



(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)

At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to accommodate the new arrivals – plus men from other regiments who were still being billeted in the area – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in Ayr itself, and the other ranks had been billeted at Newton Park School and either in the grandstand or in a tented camp at the racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr.

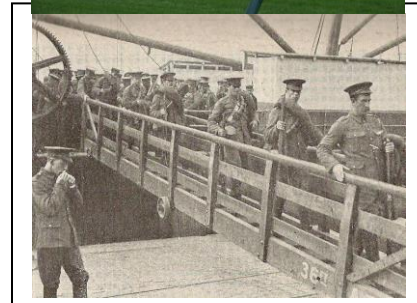
(continued)



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



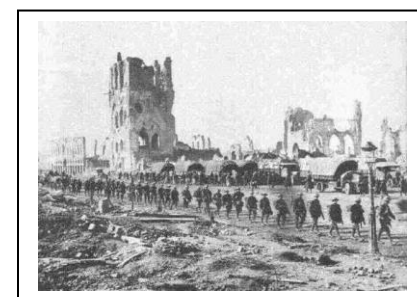
On September 22, 1917, the 30<sup>th</sup> Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr – Private Rideout among its fifty *other ranks* – was on its way to France through the English south-coast port of Southampton. On the next day, the 23<sup>rd</sup>, it disembarked in the Norman capital, Rouen, where time was spent at the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot for final organization\* and training before moving onward to its eventual rendezvous with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.



(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 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.*

Just more than three months previously, the Newfoundlanders of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had moved north for a second time into Belgium – at the end of June - and once again to the area of *the Ypres Salient*. 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*, borrowing 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.



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

(continued)

Private Rideout reported *to duty in the field* at Swindon Camp to where 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had been withdrawn two days before after its efforts – and losses – at the *Broembeek*. He and his re-enforcement draft of ninety-four *other ranks* from Rouen were not to know the horrors of *Passchendaele*. The detachment had arrived just in time, in fact, to be transferred elsewhere.

A week after the encounter of October 9 at the *Broembeek*, the Newfoundlanders were withdrawn from the *Passchendaele* campaign in order to prepare for yet another upcoming offensive: *Cambrai*. They were ordered back south from Belgium into northern France on October 17 to re-enforce, to organize and to train in the vicinity of Berles-au-Bois, a small rural community a dozen or so kilometres to the south-west of Arras – some personnel even having been granted at the time a ten-day furlough back to the United Kingdom.

The so-called *Battle of Cambrai* was to officially last for just two weeks and a day, from November 20 until December 4, the Newfoundlanders directly involved at all times during that period.

The battle began well for the British who used tanks on a large scale for the first time; but opportunities were squandered and by its close the British had relinquished as much territory as they had gained. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was again dealt with severely, at Marcoing and at Masnières - where a Caribou stands today: of the total of five-hundred fifty-eight officers and men who went into battle, two-hundred forty-eight had become casualties by the end of the second day.



(Right above: *The Canal St-Quentin at Masnières, the crossing of which and the establishment of a bridgehead being the first objectives for the Newfoundlanders on November 20, the first day of the Battle of Cambrai.* – photograph from 2009)

The son of Robert Rideout and Eliza Rideout (née *Roberts*) - to whom he had allotted a daily sixty cents from his pay - of Bluff Head Cove, Twillingate, he was also younger brother to John-Harris, Mark-Bennett (died aged four years), Stewart, to Susannah-Goddison, to Alfreda and to Daisy-Matilda.



(Right above: *The Caribou at Masnières stands on the high ground to the north of the community. The seizure of this terrain was the final objective of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on November 20; however, whether this was ever achieved is at best controversial.* – photograph from 2012)

Private Rideout was reported as having been *killed in action* while serving with ‘C’ Company on November 20, 1917, the first day of the fighting near the French villages of Marcoing and Masnières.

(continued)

At home, it was the Reverend E. Hunt of Twillingate who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Keywood Rideout had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-three years and four months (born August, 1893).

(Right: *This plaque, affixed to the wall of the United Church in Twillingate, honours the sacrifice of Private Rideout.* – photograph from 2013)

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

