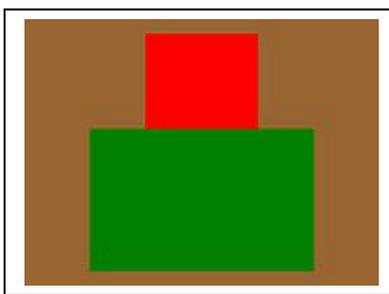




Private Stewart (also found as *Stuart*) Sheppard (also found as *Shepherd*), Number 703728, of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (*Central Ontario*\*) Regiment, Canadian Expeditionary Force, is buried in Reninghelst New Military Cemetery: Grave reference II.E.10.

(Right: *The image of the shoulder-patch of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)

(continued)



***\*Until August of 1917 the unit was designated as the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Northern British Columbia).***

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Stewart Sheppard appears to have left behind him no history of his movement from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of British Columbia. All that may be said with any certainty is that he was resident in, or not far distant from, the community of Prince Rupert in February of 1916, for that is where and when he enlisted.

His papers show that it was on the sixteenth day of that month that he presented himself in that community for a medical examination – a procedure which pronounced him as...*fit for the Canadian Over Seas Expeditionary Force*. On the following day, February 17, he both enlisted and attested, at which time he was taken on strength by the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Northern British Columbia) - which was initially also designated the *Comox-Atlin* Battalion.

Seventeen days afterwards, on March 3, the formalities of his enlistment were brought to a close by a Major Huntington on behalf of the officer commanding the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel J.W. Warden, when he declared – on paper – that...*Stewart Sheppard...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

By this time, although the Battalion Headquarters and most of the administrative offices were to be found in the capital city of Victoria, the training camp, such as it was, was being established on Goose Spit, Comox, on the north-eastern side of Vancouver Island.

Apparently there was little available at the site and not much more was to be forthcoming: the recruits were cold and hungry despite the best efforts of the quarter-masters and their staffs. Equipment proved to be lacking, almost as scarce as water – the latter problem almost provoking a change in the camp's location. For the new recruits it was not to be a happy experience although it would seem that not many complained.

On Saturday, June 10, the personnel of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion posted at Comox embarked onto the SS *Princess Charlotte* for the journey down the straits to Vancouver. At ten o'clock on that same evening a crowd gathered at the railway station in the city to bid farewell to the unit and, at mid-night, the two trains which were to carry the Battalion over the breadth of the country, began the eight-day journey.



(Right above: *The Princess Charlotte carrying the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Northern British Columbia) pulls away from the dock at Comox.* – from *The Story of the 102nd Canadian Infantry Battalion from BC to Baisieux* by Sgt Leonard McLeod Gould, HQ, 102nd Canadians WW1: the photograph donated by Rob Piggott)

On June 18 the two-train convoy reached the east-coast port of Halifax. On the way the Battalion had stopped twice per day for exercise – often in the guise of a march through the local community – and in Ottawa had paraded in front of HRH the Duke of Connaught the Governor-General and the Canadian Minister of Militia, General Sir Sam Hughes before proceeding on its way eastwards.

Once in Halifax the Battalion embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Empress of Britain*. Private Sheppard's unit was not to travel alone: also taking passage on the *Empress* were the 65<sup>th</sup>, the 84<sup>th</sup> and the 106<sup>th</sup> Battalions of Canadian Infantry as well as the 1<sup>st</sup> Draft of the CFA Depot, 67<sup>th</sup> Battery. The vessel sailed on June 20, carrying some four-thousand military passengers overseas to the United Kingdom.

The voyage was to be a poor one: A history of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion documents that...*there was literally not sufficient accommodation for all below and that, if the weather had been bad, so that men could not have slept on deck, there would have been no place for them to have slept at all.*

As for the food, it apparently was...*atrocious. ...every article of food was permeated with some disgusting preservative which caused all dished to taste alike, all being equally objectionable.*

The *Empress* arrived in front of Liverpool on June 28. However, she then anchored in the River Mersey before the troops disembarked on the morrow morn, to wait until the morrow afternoon to board a train for *Camp Borden* in the county of Wiltshire. Within days Private Sheppard's 102<sup>nd</sup> had become designated as one of the four Battalions of the 11<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade which, in its turn, was to be one of the three under the command of the newly-forming 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division.

Some six weeks of intensive training was now to follow during which period, the date not having been recorded in Private Sheppard's file, the Battalion was transferred to *Camp Bramshott* in the neighbouring county of Hampshire. On or about August 11 the unit was transported from there to the English south-coast port of Southampton; thence it sailed on board HMT *Connaught* to the Continent and to *active service*.



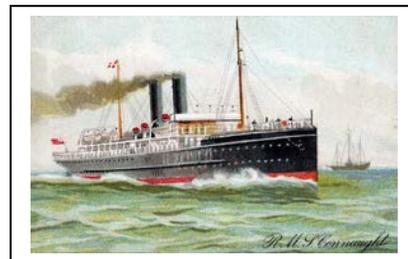
(Right above: *Royal Canadian Legion flags amongst others adorn the interior of St. Mary's Church in the English village of Bramshott. – photograph from 2016*)

The 4<sup>th</sup> Division was the last such Canadian formation to arrive to serve on the Continent, and landed in France in August of 1916. The 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion itself disembarked at Le Havre on August 12, to be immediately ordered north into the *Kingdom of Belgium* and to that part of the forward area southward of Ypres and towards the part of the line after which the *Western Front* traversed the Franco-Belgian frontier.



(Right above: *The French port-city of Le Havre at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

(Right: *The image of the Royal Mail Ship Connaught, on which the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion traversed the English Channel en route to active service, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site. Connaught, only months later returning from Le Havre to Southampton on March 3, 1917, was torpedoed and sunk.*)



By August 15, 1916, the unit had, for the first time, taken its place in the forward area of the front in Belgium, near to St-Éloi and by the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month had already incurred its first thirty-one casualties, of which six had been fatalities.

The Battalion was to remain in the St-Éloi sub-Sector until October 17 when it withdrew to a *tented camp*. The 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion - and the entire Canadian 4<sup>th</sup> Division, following the lead of the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisions - was about to migrate southwards into France, there to play a role in the ongoing British offensive of that summer and autumn of 1916, at *the Somme*.



(Right above: *A typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card*)

However, Private Sheppard was not to serve with the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion during *First Somme* as, on September 8, while his Battalion was still serving in the *St-Éloi sub-Sector*, he lost his personal battle with the German Army.

On the night of September 6-7 the Battalion had been relieved after a tour in the forward area and had withdrawn to *MicMac Camp*. Among its duties there had been to provide working-parties, one of which, provided by Number 2 Company, had proceeded to... *Scottish Wood where unfortunately they suffered severely, a H.E. shell wrecked a dugout & men were killed and wounded...* (Excerpt from 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion War Diary entry for September 8, 1916)

In fact, eight men had been killed outright by the explosion and a further nine had been wounded of whom two were later to be reported as having succumbed to their wounds\*.

*\*These are the only casualties documented during the period of September 7 to 11 (inclusive) in the 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion War Diary.*

The son of John Sheppard (also found as *Shepperd*), fisherman – to whom, on August 2, 1916, he had willed his all - and of Elizabeth Sheppard of Harbour Grace South, Newfoundland, he was also brother to at least George, to Caroline and to Susanna.

Private Sheppard was reported as having been *killed in action* on September 8 of 1916.

Stewart (also *Stuart*) Sheppard had enlisted at the *apparent* age of thirty-five years and eleven months: date of birth in Harbour Grace South, Newfoundland – from attestation papers – March 8, 1880. However, the Church of England Parish Records for Harbour Grace South cite March 8, 1876, as the date.

Private Stewart Sheppard was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

