

THOMAS LESLIE BIRKETT-VIPONT also known as LESLIE GRIERSON

KILLED IN ACTION.

BIRKETT-VIPONT. - Killed in action, France, on the 11th July, Private T. (Leslie), dearly loved second son of Annie and the late Wm. R. Vipont, of Apollo Bay. loved brother of Will (on active service), Charlie, Archie, Lizzie, Evelyn, and George, and great-grandson of the late Sgt. John Grierson, of 73rd Highlanders, aged 36 years, late H.M.A.S. Australia and of the 8th Seaforth Highlanders.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

—(Inserted by his sorrowing mother, sisters, and brothers, Rosebank, Apollo Bay.)

- Argus 7 October 1916

KILLED WHILE DOING HIS DUTY.

Following we publish several letters handed on by Mr Walter Thomas, Mernda, (cousin of Mrs Vipont), which explain themselves. Leslie A. Vipont, who was killed under the name of Grierson, was a native of the Mernda district, and an old scholar of State School 468. His mother is a sister of Mr George Cockerell, Mrs Hicks, and Mrs Smith, all of Mernda. Mrs. Vipont has two other sons in the army:-

Rosebank, Apollo Bay.

Sept. 21st, 1916.

My Dear Cousin, - Thank you for your sympathy in my sad hour. I am trying to brave and to remember I am a mother of soldier sons, and that the Seaforth's badge reads "Guidich'n Rich," which means God and the Right. Still you understand how my heart is grieving for Leslie, who was a dearly loved son and always good to his mother. Leslie left us three years ago last June to join the Navy, and was for some time in the Naval Depot, Williamstown. Then he was placed on the "Encounter," and when H.M.A.S. "Australia" arrived he was transferred to her, and took a keen interest in everything in his new life and received many kindnesses, which were greatly appreciated by a lad new to the life. Then, while the "Australia" was away on a trip round Thursday Island and the Queensland coast, they received a wireless that war had broken out, and in almost incredible time they were back in Sydney and fitted out for active service. I received a letter from Leslie before the "Australia" sailed telling me not to worry, that he had joined the Navy, to do for his King and Country whatever he was asked to do, and saying he wanted to be in it. Busy days were in store for all hands, and my boy, being a stoker, felt he was playing his part in helping to get things moving. How the lads felt it when their rounding up sent the German squadron into Admiral Sturdee's squadron and the honour of capture was denied them. After eight months he was given four days' leave, and spent it in London and attended service at Westminster Abbey and saw all the historical sights and enjoyed it so much. Then came the weary time of waiting in North Sea, and how it tried the men and officials, and alike our newspapers. In one letter he said, "I cannot tell where our Flagship is, Mother, but when I say it's near where your mother was born you'll understand"; and I did. While waiting day by day expecting to take his share in some great naval victory, my boy had the misfortune to break his leg, he was sent to Chatham Naval Hospital, on recovering, came back to his ship, but the Staff Surgeon, noticing his leg was still healing, got him a month's leave, and he was sent to Hopetoun House as a convalescent. I must add that Lord and Lady Hopetoun in remembrance of happy days spent in Vic., had placed portion of the castle for the use of sick soldiers and sailors off the flagship. Leslie spent such happy days there, visited Edinburgh often, especially the Castle, and there saw the Seaforth Highlanders, the regiment which his great grandfather, Sgt. Grierson, engaged to, they being quartered there at that time. In a letter written to me about that time he said, "I wish I could get on land, dear; the waiting is awful, and I feel it's not half over yet." Well, cousin, ten days after writing my letter, my boy, instead of rejoining his ship, joined the Seaforths and took the name of Leslie Grierson. I enclose the copy of the letters received from his officers. They will

say more to you than I can. Will you kindly allow any of my people who wish to see these letters, as my heart will not let me write to everyone: and tell Mr Glass I would be proud to have my boys' names on the Roll of Honour where they first attended school. With regards to my new cousin and yourself,

I am,

Your affectionate cousin,

ANNIE BIRKETT VIPONT.

"D " Coy. 8th Seaforth H'rs,

British Exped Forces,

France.

12th July, 1916.

Dear Mrs Grierson, - I very much regret to have to write and inform you of the death of your son in action yesterday. We all feel his loss very keenly, as your son was a most efficient soldier; his loss is also very keenly felt by his comrades. You have the consolation of knowing that your son was held in high esteem by all of us, and his loss is one which cannot be replaced. Hoping that you will accept the sympathy of his comrades and myself in your sad loss,

I remain,

Dear Madam,

Yours very sincerely,

D. GUNN, 2nd Lt. for "D." Coy.

8th Seaforths,

B.E.F.

20/7/ 16.

Dear Mrs Grierson, - I deeply regret to tell you that your son, Pte. L. Grierson, 8th Seaforths, has been killed in action. The Seaforths organised a raid on the German trenches in the Hohenzollern redoubt on the 11th last, and the operation, while carried through with the utmost bravery, was attendant with many casualties. Your son was killed instantly near the German trenches, and on their way back, his comrades carried his body, which was later buried in the British cemetery of Vermelles, behind the lines. It is so little that one can write at such a time beside the sad fact. Your son behaved with the utmost gallantry, and in his living and dying has left another example of a fine British soldier. His Battalion deplore his loss, but your personal loss will be the greater. We feel deeply with you in your sorrow and desire to express our sympathy with you in the loss of such a gallant son. I am led to understand that his effects have been forwarded through the Base.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Chaplain) WILLIAM CRAWFORD.

12/7/16, France. Dear Mrs Grierson, - It is my sad duty to inform you of your son Leslie, who was killed through a piece of shrapnel striking him on the head on the night of the 11/7/16. I assure you he suffered no pain, as death was instantaneous. I was his commanding Sgt., and he was one of my best hands when I had anything special on, and he was on special duty that night, and he had just completed it when the unlucky thing happened. He was well liked by all his chums and we will sadly miss him, and we all unite in sending you our sympathy. He was buried in the British cemetery behind our lines and his grave has been marked by a nice little cross. I will close now, hoping you will excuse the writing, as I am still in the trenches; and if there is anything I can do for you in regards to information concerning him, just write and I will be too pleased to oblige. I will close now again tendering you my earnest sympathy in your sad bereavement.

From your friend,

SGT. P. RUSSEL,
8th Sea. H'rs, B.E.F., France.
- Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record 3 November 1916

VERMELLES BRITISH CEMETERY

Vermelles
Pas de Calais
France

General Directions: Vermelles is a village 10 kilometres north-west of Lens. From Lens take the N43, towards Bethune, to its junction with the D75 in Mazingarbe. Turn right at this junction and continue for approximately 900 metres when Vermelles British Cemetery will be found on the left hand side of the road.

Vermelles was in German hands from the middle of October 1914 to the beginning of December 1914, when it was recaptured by the French. The cemetery was begun in August 1915 (though a few graves are slightly earlier), and during the Battle of Loos, when the Chateau was used as a dressing station, Plot I was completed. It was laid out and fenced by the Pioneers of the 1st Gloucesters, and known for a long time as "Gloucester Graveyard". The remaining Plots were made by the Divisions (from the Dismounted Cavalry Division onwards) holding the line 1.6 kilometres East of the cemetery until April 1917, and they incorporated a few isolated French graves of October 1914. From April 1917, to the Armistice, the cemetery was closed; but after the Armistice graves were brought in (to Plots II, IV and VI) from the battlefields to the East. Casualty Details: UK 2122, Canada 7, India 1, Germany 4, France 7, Total Burials: 2141

Medal card of Grierson, Leslie

Corps Regiment No Rank
Seaforth Highlanders S/9868 Private
Date 1914-1920

Catalogue reference WO 372/8

Dept Records created or inherited by the War Office, Armed Forces, Judge Advocate General, and related bodies

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