



**Private George Brown (Regimental Number 5931) is interred in Bodelwyddan (St. Margaret's) Churchyard: Grave reference, 462, Canadian Plot.**

**His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *teacher*, George Brown was a recruit of the 15<sup>th</sup>(?) Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury\**, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on August 8, 1918. It was a procedure which found him...*Fit for Foreign Service*.**

***\*The building was to serve as the Regimental Headquarters in Newfoundland for the duration of the conflict.***

It was to be on the day of that medical assessment, August 8, and at the same venue, that George Brown was now to be enlisted. He was engaged...*for the duration of the war*\*...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

*\*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. Later recruits – as of or about May of 1916 - signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.*

Only a further few hours were then to go by before there came to pass, while still at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On that same eighth day of that August\* he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, George Brown became...*a soldier of the King*.

*\*It had been two months prior to this that the Newfoundland Military Service Act (conscriptioin had come into effect. From May 11 through to the end of the Great War, the Department of Militia was to call a total of 1,470 men into active service. No evidence found among his documents suggests that George Brown was or was not one of those to be conscripted.*

Many of the recruits during this period are recorded as having been granted several days of a final furlough before departure for *overseas service*. Private Brown, Number 5931, was to be one of those to receive these several days of leave, his records showing that following some initial training he was granted home leave to the Placentia Bay community of Tacks Beach from August 17 to 26 before returning to St. John's and accordingly reporting...*to duty*...with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, but not, however, until the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the month of September – no reason appears for this among his papers and he was apparently to suffer no consequences because of the delay.

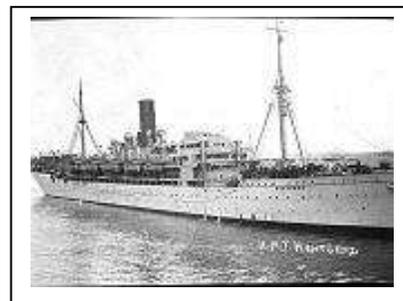
Following his enlistment it is likely that Private Brown reported...*to duty*...to be quartered in the temporary barracks apparently established since 1915 in the St. John's curling rink and the Prince's Skating Rink in the eastern end of the city. He also surely returned to there following the aforesaid period of leave.

*(Right: This photograph of the Prince's Rink in St. John's with military personnel, apparently attired in uniforms of Great War vintage, on parade is from the Ice Hockey Wiki web-site. There appears to be no further information a propos.)*



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Some two weeks after his return to the capital, on September 22 Private Brown was one of the 24<sup>th</sup> Draft to leave Newfoundland. It was to take the train from St. John's to Québec (his files say Halifax but – if the date of September 22 is correct - other information makes Québec almost certain – he likely travelled *via* Halifax). There the troops embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Huntsend* and sailed for the United Kingdom on the 28<sup>th</sup>.



The three troopships in the convoy, *Victoria* and *City of Cairo* the two others, were infected with influenza: about one hundred men in all would die at sea and more were to expire after having arrived in England.

(Right above: *The former German ship Lützow, seized by the British in 1914 and re-named Huntsend.* – from *Old Ship Photos*)

The sick having been transferred to hospital the day before, the still-valid personnel of the 24<sup>th</sup> Draft – Private Brown among that number - disembarked from *Huntsend* on or about October 12 to be transported to *Hazely Down Camp*, there to serve with the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some four years prior to that autumn of 1918 when Private Brown was to find himself in southern England, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's and elsewhere in the city, and were formed into 'A' and 'B' Companies.



During that same period the various authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.

(Right above: *The image of 'Florizel' at anchor in the harbour at St. John's in October of 1914 is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

This first Newfoundland contingent was to embark on October 3, in some cases only days after a recruit's enlistment and/ or attestation. To become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees*, on that day they had boarded the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John's Harbour.

The ship had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island. Once having disembarked in the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915: firstly in southern England on the *Salisbury Plain*; then in

Scotland at *Fort George* – on the *Moray Firth* close to *Inverness*; and lastly at *Edinburgh Castle* – where it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

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

Only days after ‘A’ and ‘B’ Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 of 1915, ‘C’ Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent - would arrive directly – through Liverpool of course - from Newfoundland. On the final day of the month of March it had been the turn of ‘D’ Company to arrive – they via Halifax as well as Liverpool – to report...*to duty...*at Edinburgh, and then ‘E’ Company five weeks less a day later again, on May 4\*.



*\*These five Companies, while a contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.*

(Right: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city.* – photograph from 2011)

Seven days after the arrival of ‘E’ Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent had been ordered elsewhere. On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit had been dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.



(Right: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches past on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915.* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and of Mrs. Lillian Tibbo)

Two months less a day later, on July 10, ‘F’ Company would march into *Stobs Camp*.



This had been an all-important moment: the Company’s arrival was to bring the Newfoundland Regiment’s numbers up to some fifteen hundred, establishment strength\* of a battalion which could be posted on...*active service.*



*\*A number sufficient for four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(Right above: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles.* – original photograph from the *Provincial Archives*)

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From *Stobs Camp*, some three weeks after the arrival of 'F' Company, in early August 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D', the four senior Companies, having by that time become the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, had been transferred to *Aldershot Camp* in southern England.

There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before the Battalion's departure to the Middle East and to the fighting on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.

(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* – the photograph is taken from the *Bain News Services* as presented by the *Wikipedia* web-site.)



The later arrivals to the United Kingdom, 'E' and 'F' Companies, were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were eventually to form the nucleus of the first reinforcements to be dispatched to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

(Right: *An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were quartered the 'other ranks', is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right.* – by courtesy of the *Carnegie Library at Ayr*)



*Ayr was a small town on the west coast of Scotland whose history precedes the year 1205 when it was established as a Royal Burgh (Borough) by the crown of Scotland, an appointment which emphasized the importance of the town as a harbour, market and, later, administrative centre.*

*By the time of the Great War centuries later it was expanding and the River Ayr which had once marked the northern boundary of the place was now flowing through its centre; a new town to the north (Newton-on-Ayr), its population fast-increasing, perhaps encouraged by the coming of the railway, was soon to be housing the majority of the personnel of the Newfoundland Regimental Depot.*



(Right above: *The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower – it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene* – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo.

Since that summer of 1915, recruits from Newfoundland had passed through The Regimental Depot at Ayr, there to undergo the mandatory fourteen weeks of training, and had then been sent on their way to *active service*, a practice which was to continue for the subsequent twenty-nine months.



In all, Ayr had seen the coming and going of eleven drafts from home\*.

*\*The last to do so would be the Seventeenth Draft. The first six – ‘A’ to ‘F’ Companies – had already been stationed in the United Kingdom – as seen above - before the establishment of the Regimental facilities at Ayr.*

(Preceding page: *Wellington Square seen here almost a century after it hosted the officers of the Newfoundland Regiment – 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, and was to eventually serve as the base for the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion. It was from there – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 – that the new-comers arriving from home were 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 above: *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 – photograph from 2012*)

At the outset there had been problems at Ayr to be able to accommodate the number of new arrivals – plus men from other British regiments which were still being billeted in the area...and a measles epidemic which was to claim the life of several Regiment personnel – but by the spring of 1916, things had been satisfactorily settled: the officers were in Wellington Square in the town-centre of Ayr itself, and the *other ranks* had been billeted at Newton Park School and if not, in the grandstand or a tented camp at the newly-built racecourse in the suburb of Newton-upon-Ayr.

During the summer months of 1917, as of early July the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment and the Regimental Depot had been transferred from Ayr to not-so-distant Barry. Initially intended to be a permanent move, the protest from several quarters was such that the Newfoundlanders were back in Ayr by the end of September.

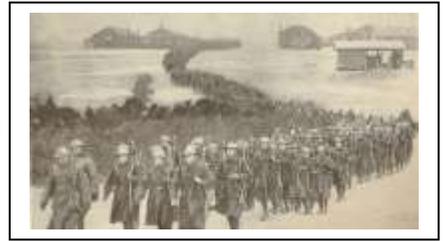
In the New Year of 1918, the Regimental Depot and the Headquarters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the soon-Royal Newfoundland Regiment had moved quarters from the Royal Borough of Ayr in Scotland to southern England, to *Hazely Down Camp* in the southern English county of Hampshire, not far distant from the venerable cathedral city of Winchester.

And it had been to *Hazely Down Camp*, some nine months after its establishment to accommodate the (Royal) Newfoundland Regiment , that Private Brown and his 24<sup>th</sup> Draft had reported...*to duty*...in that mid-October of 1918.

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As recorded further above Private Brown had not been one of those who had died or become sick while travelling on *Huntsend* but, however, it was to be only a few days after having been attached to 'C' Company at *Hazely Down Camp* that he must have fallen sick as, while still at *Hazely*, it was recommended by the...*Medical Officer in charge of case*...that he be repatriated.



On October 21, that he was evacuated to the *Kinmell Park\* Military Hospital* in Flintshire, North Wales, suffering from influenza and pneumonia.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> his condition was considered as...*dangerous*; on November 1 as...*grave*.

(Right above: *Troops on the march through a bleak-looking Hazely Down Camp several months before Private Brown's arrival, at some time during the winter of 1917-1918 – from The War Illustrated*)

*\*Kimmel Park was a repatriation camp which would become notorious for a mutiny in 1919 of Canadian troops whose return home was continually being ignored or incessantly postponed.*

The son of William Henry Brown (deceased of tuberculosis on April 30 of 1912) and of Hannah (also found as *Anna*) Maria Brown (née *Senior*)– to whom he had allotted a daily fifty cents from his pay - of Tack's Beach, Placentia Bay, he was also brother to Ephraim-Harold, Charles-Henry, James-William, Chesley, Sarah-Anne, Ralph, Liliias, Adelaide, Violet and to John-Fletcher.

Private Brown was reported to have...*died of sickness...of pneumonia and cardiac failure*...- in the *Kinmell Park Military Hospital* on November 2, 1918. He was buried four days afterwards, on November 6.



George Brown had enlisted at the *declared* age of nineteen years. Thus far the exact date of his birth has proved to be elusive.

Private George Brown was entitled to the British War Medal for his *overseas service*.