

Private Henry (Harry) Brown (Regimental Number 2101) is interred in Menin Road South Cemetery – Menin Road North Memorial 13.

His occupation prior to military service recorded that of a fisherman working for *R. S. Munn & Co.* of Harbour Grace, and earning on occasion three hundred dollars in a four-month period, Harry Brown was a recruit of the Eighth Draft. He enlisted at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – on February 15 of 1916, before presenting himself for medical examination two days later, on the 17th, and attesting four days later again, on February 21.

It was to be almost five weeks before Private Brown was to embark for overseas service to the United Kingdom. It was as a soldier of the second contingent of 'H' Company that he took ship for overseas service on board His Majesty's Transport *Sicilian** (right) in St. John's Harbour on March 23-24. The ship did not sail from Newfoundland until the 25th and likely crossed the Atlantic in convoy.



This would explain what was apparently a slow voyage^{**}: Private Brown did not disembark in the United Kingdom until April 9, at which time the contingent was transported to the Regimental Depot in Scotland.

**Some sixteen years previously - as of 1899 when she was launched – the vessel, originally built for the Allan Line, had been requisitioned as a troop-ship and transport carrying men, animals and equipment to South Africa for use during the Second Boer War.*

***Convoys often altered course and obviously had to travel at the speed of the slowest ship. Sicilian would also have had to sail to a rendezvous point to meet the accompanying vessels – a convoy left Halifax on March 31-April 1 to arrive in Liverpool on April 9.*

It could also be that she embarked some Canadian troops before crossing the Atlantic as she could carry well over one-thousand passengers with ease.

The Regimental Depot had been established during the summer of 1915 in the Royal Borough of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland, there to serve as a base for the 2nd (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 1st Battalion.



(Right above: *an aerial view of Ayr – probably from the period between the Wars: Newton-upon-Ayr is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough is to the right. – courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

During the winter of 1915-1916 the men of the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion had been lodged in several venues, at a nearby military camp at Gailies, but also as far afield as Paisley Barracks, some sixty-five kilometres distant. However, by the spring of 1916 the difficulty had been overcome by housing the men in a requisitioned school, in a tented community and in the Ayr Racecourse Grandstand, all in the district of Newton-upon-Ayr.

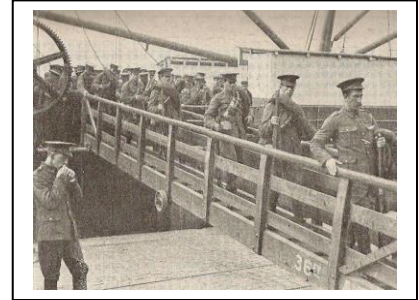


(Right above: *the new race-course at Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden; part of the present grandstand is original – photo from 2012*)

It was at *the Racecourse* at Newton-on-Ayr that Private Brown re-enlisted* on June 30 and only nine days before his departure for the Continent.

**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.*

July 9 saw the 8th Re-enforcement Draft – Private Brown among its ranks - pass through the English south-coast port of Southampton on its way to France. On the day following, the 10th, it disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and made its way to the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot, there to undergo final training and organization* before moving to a rendezvous with the parent unit.



(Right above: *British troops disembark at Rouen on their way 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.*

There must have been a sense of urgency at the time: 1st Battalion had suffered terribly at a place called Beaumont-Hamel on the morning of July 1, and on July 6 its depleted strength, as reported by the Regimental War Diarist, still numbered no more than one-hundred sixty-eight *other ranks*, less than twenty per cent of the regulation strength of a British battalion.

Private Brown was one of the contingent of one-hundred twenty-six *other ranks* from Rouen to report to *duty* with 1st Battalion on July 21 in the small community of Acheux. 1st Battalion had marched to there from the trenches in front of Mailly-Maillet four days prior, and would continue this march as far as Beauval on the 23rd where they were to be billeted for only forty-eight hours before covering – still on foot – a further twenty kilometres to Candas on the 26th to board a train.

On July 27-28 of 1916, 1st Battalion - still under battalion strength at only five-hundred fifty-four strong, even after re-enforcement - moved north and entered into Belgium for the first time. It had been ordered to the *Ypres Salient*, one of the most dangerous pieces of real estate on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel.



(Right adjacent: *the entrance to 'A' Company's quarters in the ramparts of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

The Salient was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatalities



(Right: *the city of Ypres towards the end of 1915 – and eight months before the Newfoundlanders were posted there for the first time – from a vintage post-card*)

On August 12, the Newfoundlanders of 1st Battalion were into the third day of a ten-day tour in the trenches. The Regimental Diary entry of the day records that *...at 0900 our lines were heavily shelled. Casualties 3 killed, 6 wounded. Troops on our right very heavily bombarded for two hours.*

The son of William Henry Brown, fisherman, and Emma Brown – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of sixty-five cents from his pay - of Bay Roberts, he was also brother to Samuel* (23 years), Emmie (22), Alfreda (19), Norman (18) and Charles (4) – ages as of 1921.

**Seaman(?) Samuel Brown, 624x, of the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, survived the conflict.*

(Right above: *Canadian trenches in Sanctuary Wood, likely not very far removed from the Newfoundland positions (see Railway Wood below) where Private Brown was killed on August 12 of 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

Private Brown was reported as having been *killed in action* while serving with ‘C’ Company on August 12, 1916, during that bombardment of the Newfoundland trenches just to the east of the Belgian city of Ypres.

At home it was Captain Roberts of The Salvation Army who was requested to bear the news to his family.

Harry Brown had enlisted at the *declared* age of eighteen years and six months (verified by *Vital Statistics*) – but at *seventeen* years according to his mother.

Menin Road North Cemetery in which Private Brown was originally buried was destroyed in subsequent fighting. The few remains that were found and that were unidentifiable were buried together where they lie today.

(Above right: *This is Railway Wood – to the east of Ieper (Ypres) – a century later, where the Newfoundlanders were deployed in early September – although the Diarist on August 12 merely records ‘trenches’. The Memorial to twelve Royal Engineers buried alive while tunnelling may just be perceived. – photograph from 2014*)

(Right above: *The Bay Roberts War Memorial honours the sacrifice of Private Brown. – photograph from 2010*)

(continued)



Private Henry (*Harry*) Brown was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

