



Lance Corporal James G. Brown (Regimental Number 1984) lies in Brookwood Military Cemetery – Grave reference X. B. 5.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, James Brown was a recruit of the Seventh Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on November 16, 1915, before then enlisting – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – and also attesting on the next day, the 17th.

Private Brown was one of the one hundred *other ranks* who comprised the first contingent of 'H' Company to travel for service overseas. The draft left St. John's by train for Port aux Basques on December 18, crossing the island and then the Gulf of St. Lawrence en route to Saint John, New Brunswick. The Atlantic voyage was effected from there on His Majesty's Transport *Corinthian* (right) and the draft reached the Regimental Depot at Ayr on January 4 of the New Year, 1916.



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Transferred to 'G' Company, the new arrivals were quartered in the barracks of the Royal Scots Fusiliers who had not yet vacated the premises, due to an epidemic of measles at the time. It was not long before the disease had also taken its toll on the Newfoundlanders – one of whom was destined to be Private Brown.

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-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*)

While at Ayr Private Brown caught the measles. He was at first sent for treatment to the *Bladda Infectious Disease Hospital* in Paisley from February 2, 1916, until the 18th, and from that date to recover in *St. Mary's Convalescent Home* in Lanark until March 4. It was also while he was serving at the Regimental Depot that, on June 19, only a mere six days before his departure to France on *active service*, Private Brown was prevailed upon to re-enlist *for the duration of the War**.

**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.*

On June 25, the 7th Re-enforcement Draft from Ayr, Private Brown among its ranks, passed through the English south-coast port of Southampton en route to the Continent. On the morrow, the 26th, the detachment disembarked in Rouen, capital city of Normandy, and site of the large British Expeditionary Force Base Depot which had been established there. There the draft spent time in final training and organization* before proceeding on to its rendezvous with 1st Battalion.



(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, Étapes, LeHavre and Harfleur that became known notoriously to the troops as the Bull Rings.*

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This meeting was effected on July 11 (recorded elsewhere as the 12th) while the parent unit was just behind the line, being quartered in huts in the remnants of the village of Mailly-Maillet. It was here that Private Brown and another one-hundred twenty-six *other ranks* of a re-enforcement contingent from Rouen reported to duty.

Even with this additional man-power, the Regimental War Diary records that on the 14th of July, 1st Battalion still numbered only *11 officers and 260 rifles* after the disaster of Beaumont-Hamel, a bare quarter of the regulation strength of a British battalion.



(Right above: *The re-constructed village of Mailly-Maillet – the French Monument aux Morts in the foreground - is twinned with the community of Torbay, St. John's East. – photograph from 2009*)

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 at Beaumont-Hamel on the morning of July 1.



The Salient was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatalities. On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, 1st Battalion was to move south back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

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

(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*)



Only four days after its return to France, 1st Battalion was ordered to pass to the offensive, on this occasion on the outskirts of the ruined village of Gueudecourt perhaps a dozen kilometres or so to the south-east of Beaumont-Hamel. Here, on October 12 – and during a heavy enemy bombardment of the previous evening – the Newfoundlanders lost heavily and achieved little for their sacrifice.

(Right: *the fields across which the Battalion advanced towards the trees on the far right horizon; they are where the Gueudecourt Caribou stands - photograph from 2009.*)



After the action at Gueudecourt in mid-October, 1st Battalion had continued its watch in and out of the trenches of *the Somme* – not without casualties – during the late fall and early winter, a period to be broken only by the several weeks – as of December 11-12 - spent in *Corps Reserve* during the Christmas period. The Newfoundlanders were withdrawn well behind the lines and close to the city of Amiens.



It had also been during the autumn of 1916 that, on November 7, Private Brown had received a promotion, to the rank of lance corporal – with the accompanying five-cents-per-day pay raise.

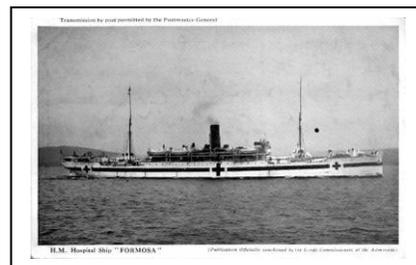
(Right above: *a typical British Army Camp during a winter period somewhere in France – from a vintage post-card*)

However, Lance Corporal Brown was not to enjoy a great amount of any festive activity: on December 16, was sent to the 88th Field Ambulance with a PUO (*Pain of Unknown Origin*) and immediately transferred (perhaps via a Divisional Rest Station) to the 29th Casualty Clearing Station at Gezaincourt. On the following day he was forwarded to the New Zealand Stationary Hospital at Amiens where he was diagnosed as being dangerously ill with broncho-pneumonia.



(Right above: *transferring sick and wounded from a field ambulance to the rear through the mud by motorized ambulance and man-power – from a vintage post-card*)

Number 1 Ambulance Train carried Lance Corporal Brown from there to the 6th General Hospital in Rouen where he was admitted on December 26, Boxing Day. Eight days later, on January 3 of the New Year, 1917, His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Formosa* (right) conveyed him back across the English Channel to the United Kingdom. There on the next day, January 4, he was taken for further attention to the 3rd London General Hospital in the Borough of Wandsworth.



Lance Corporal Brown – a non-commissioned officer of 'B' Company - apparently remained in Wandsworth undergoing treatment for the best part of a year, until the following December. Having been deemed *seriously ill* on May 10, 1917, by December 5 he was now considered to be *dangerously ill*.*

The son of Charles Brown, (former fisherman, deceased March, 1898) and Cecilia Brown of Rock Harbour in the District of Burin, he was also younger brother to Henry - to whom he left the accrual of fifty cents per day from his pay, and also to whom he had willed his all.



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(Preceding page bottom: *The principal building of what became the 3rd London General Hospital during the Great War was opened on July 1st, 1859, as a home for the orphaned daughters of British soldiers, sailors and marines. – photograph from 2010*)

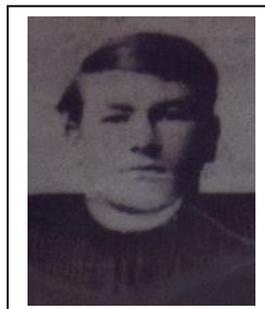
Private Brown was reported as having *died from sickness*, from empyema and a cerebral abscess in the 3rd London Hospital, Wandsworth, on December 9, 1917.

He was buried on December 13 by the Reverend E. G. M. Roberts with full military honours. At home it was the Reverend A.T. Tulk of Burin who was requested to bear the news to his family.

James Brown had enlisted at twenty-one years of age.

**Dangerously ill in January of 1917, he was taken off the danger list at the end of the month only for his condition to begin its long decline soon afterwards.*

(Far right: *The sacrifice of Private James G. Brown is honoured on the War Memorial in the community of Marystown. – photograph from 2015, with thanks to Cyril Bennett*)



The photograph of James G. Brown is from St. Gabriel's Hall, Marystown – with thanks.

Lance Corporal James G. Brown was entitled to the British War Medal (on left) and also the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

