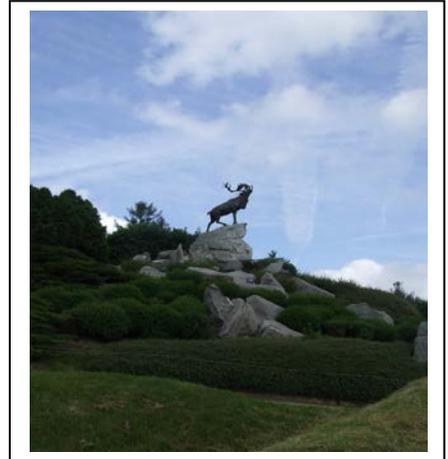




Private Louis Brown (elsewhere *Lewis*) (Regimental Number 2044), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

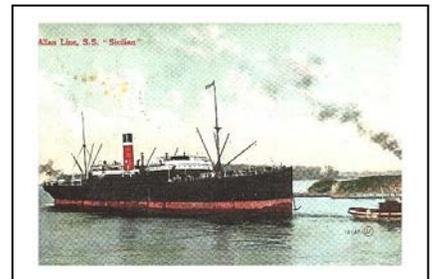
His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a fisherman, Louis Brown was a recruit of the Eighth Draft. Having presented himself for medical examination at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on December 19, 1915, he then enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10* – on the following day, December 20. He attested nine days later again, on December 29**.



**The private soldier was paid at the daily rate of one dollar on top of which there was a ten-cent field allowance.*

***A second source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

It was to be a further three months 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 on board the Anchor Line steamship *Sicilian** 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**.



**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.*

***Apparently Sicilian was not a requisitioned troop-carrier: she ran the commercial routes from Great Britain to Canada, only occasionally accommodating military units.*

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.

***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.*

(Right above: The image of the SS Sicilian in Anchor Line colours – this picture apparently from 1919 – is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)

(continued)

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 the 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*)

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 Gailes, 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.

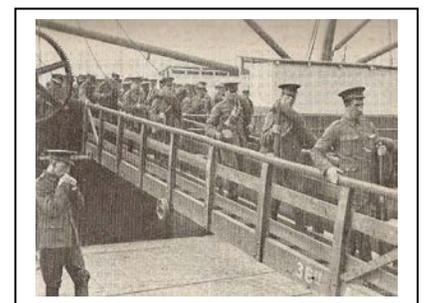


(Right above: *The new race-course at Ayr - opened in 1907 – where the men of the Regiment were sometimes billeted and where they replaced some of the turf with a vegetable garden: A part of the present grandstand is original. – photo from 2012*)

It was at *the Racecourse* at Newton-on-Ayr that Private Brown re-enlisted on June 30, 1916, 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, July 10, it disembarked in Rouen, the 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*)

(continued)

**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.*

There must have been a sense of urgency at the time: the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment had suffered terribly at a place called Beaumont-Hamel on the morning of July 1, 1916, and on July 6 its depleted strength, as reported by the Battalion 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 the Base Depot at Rouen to report *to duty* with the 1st Battalion on July 21 in the small community of Acheux.

The Newfoundland unit had marched to there from the trenches in front of Mailly-Maillet four days prior, and was to continue this march as far as Beauval on the 23rd where the personnel was to be billeted for another forty-eight hours. It would then cover – still on foot – a further twenty kilometres to Candas on the 26th to board a train.

On July 27-28 of 1916, the 1st Battalion - still well 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 lethal theatres of war on the entire *Western Front*, there to continue to re-enforce and to re-organize after the ordeal of Beaumont-Hamel.

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

(Right: *The same re-constructed ramparts as on the previous page, viewed from outside the city and from the far side the moat which partially surrounds it – 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. On October 8, after ten weeks in Belgium, 1st Battalion moved south back to France and back to the area of – and the battle of – *the Somme*.

(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*)



(continued)

Only four days after that return to France, 1st Battalion was ordered once again 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 above: *This is the ground over which 1st Battalion advanced and then mostly conceded at Gueudecourt on October 12. Some managed to reach the area where today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon.* – photograph from 2007)

Louis Brown was the son of Henry (*Harry*) Brown, fisherman, and of Hannah Brown (née *Dyke*) – to whom he had allocated a daily allowance of sixty cents from his pay - of Bishop's Harbour (a second source has Back Harbour), Salvage, Bonavista Bay.

He was also brother to Mary-Ellen, Dorcas, Ann-Elizabeth, Chesley, Joshua, Georgina and to Phœbe-Jane.

(Right above: *The Gueudecourt Caribou stands at the furthest point of the Battalion's advance of October 12, 1916* – photograph from 2012)

Private Brown was reported as having been *killed in action* - in fact, during the recorded intense German bombardment - on the evening of October 11, 1916, while serving with 'C' Company on the day prior to the attack at Gueudecourt.

(Right: *The War Memorial in the community of Eastport honours the sacrifice of Private Louis (Lewis) Brown.* – photograph from 2013)

Louis Brown had enlisted at a *declared* eighteen years of age: birth date at Bishop's Harbour, Newfoundland, December 31, 1898.

(Right above: *The photograph of Private Brown is from the Royal Canadian Legion publication 'Lest We Forget'.*)

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

