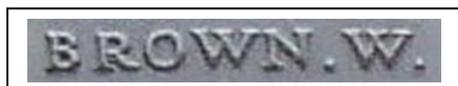


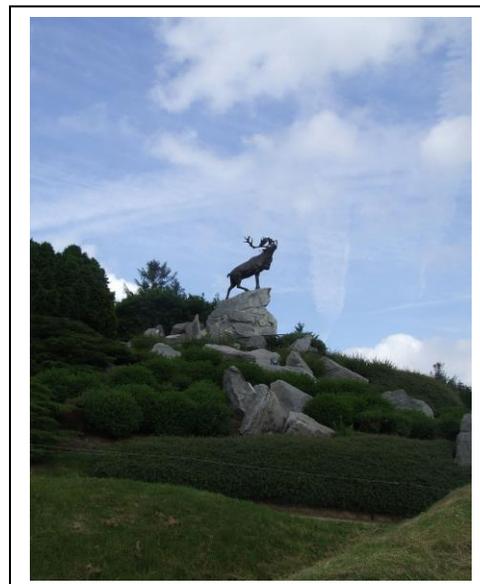
Since no military records for Private Brown appear to exist in the Provincial Archives, the following document in some cases is speculation based upon the information available and upon the files of other soldiers who were part of Private Brown's draft.



Private William Brown (Regimental Number 2183), having no known last resting-place, is commemorated beneath the Caribou in Beaumont-Hamel Memorial Park.

Enlisting enlisted – engaged at the daily private soldier's rate of \$1.10 – at the Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's on February 29, 1916, William Brown was a recruit of the Eighth Draft

It was to be just some three 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.**



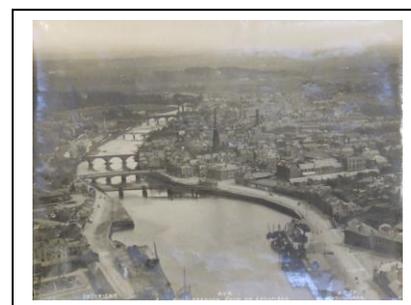
This would explain what was apparently a slow voyage^{}: Private Brown did not disembark in the United Kingdom until April 9, at which time the contingent was transported to the Regimental Depot in Scotland.**

****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-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 Gales, 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)

Those personnel of ‘H’ Company which had travelled on Sicilian with Private Brown did not leave Ayr for passage to the Continent as a single entity. Several drafts including these men made their way across the English Channel – one only two weeks before July 1, the first day of the Somme; others followed to swell the ranks in time for the engagement at Gueudecourt.

That of July 9 cited immediately below was one of the most numerous: if Private Brown was not among its ranks, at least the details are representative of what he in his turn would have undergone.

July 9 saw the 8th Re-enforcement Draft 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, 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: 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment 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.

A re-enforcement 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 Maily-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.

Two smaller contingents from Rouen, of sixty and twelve other ranks, joined on July 25 and 29 respectively, the latter group reporting to 1st Battalion in Belgium. More then continued to arrive on August 13 and 31, on September 3 and 7, and certainly on other unrecorded dates.

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.

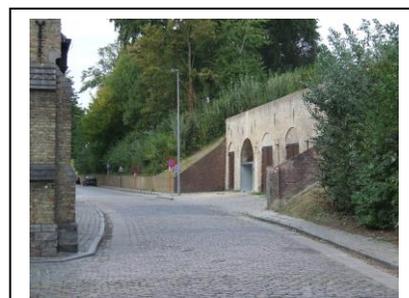
(Right above: *the entrance to 'A' Company's quarters in the ramparts of Ypres when it was posted there in 1916 – photograph from 2010*)

The Salient was relatively quiet during the time of the Newfoundlanders' posting there, yet they nonetheless incurred casualties, a number of them fatalities. 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 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 – two-hundred thirty-nine on the 12th alone - and again 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 few managed to reach the area where*



today stand the copse of trees and the Gueudecourt Caribou, on the far right horizon. – photograph from 2007)

(continued)

Son of the late John Brown of Twillingate, and recorded as being the brother of Mrs. Eliza Keefe of Little Harbour, he was reported as having been *killed in action* on October 12, 1916, in the fighting at Guedecourt during *First Somme*.



William Brown is recorded as having enlisted at or about the age of twenty-five years.

The photograph of Private Brown is from the *Provincial Archives*.

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

