



Private Joseph Thorne (Regimental Number 3149) is interred in the Salvation Army Cemetery in the community of Grand Bank.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman* earning twenty-two dollars per month, Joseph Thorne presented himself to undergo medical examination* on October 11 of 1916 in the community of Port aux Basques. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as being...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

Joseph Thorne apparently thereupon boarded the overnight train to cross the island as, on the morrow, he was documented as having been at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, there to enlist. He was thus**

engaged...for the duration of the war**...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which would be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

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

***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.*

On the day following his enlistment there then came the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On that November 2 he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Joseph Thorne entered into the service of the King.

During the two-month period which followed attestation and while awaiting orders to depart on overseas service, it appears that Private Thorne, Number 3149, was to be granted a furlough to return home to the Burin Peninsula, a journey he was to make by ship.

It was to be during his return...to duty...after furlough that he began to develop medical problems. The following is an excerpt from a medical report issued on September 7, 1917, some nine months later, which covers the interim period:

He developed measles on steamer on his way back to Headquarters from Burin - on arrival was admitted into Military Infectious Diseases Hospital where he was under treatment for 25 days. About a week after being discharged from this Hosp. he developed Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis and was sent to General Hospital for treatment** he was there for 150 days and was allowed to go home from there to attend funeral of his mother. While at home he became sick again and was under treatment and was unable to report himself to Headquarters till Sept. 6. 1917.*

Complains of pains in his back and hips and states his legs are weak. He has lost 30lbs. weight he sometimes has pain in head...

**From January 10 of 1917 until February 5*

***From February 11 until June 21 on which date his condition was deemed to have improved*

Private Thorne entered the *Naval & Military Convalescent Hospital* on Waterford Bridge Road on September 18. Already, on the 8th of that month, a Medical Board had recommended that he be discharged as being *medically unfit*.

That advice was taken and Private Thorne was discharged from military service on October 23 of 1917. He was released from the afore-mentioned *Convalescent Hospital* on the day afterwards.

Joseph Thorne signalled an intention to return to the Burin Peninsula, to reside in Grand Bank. That he ever made the journey seems to be unlikely – or if it be so, then he remained there for only a very short time – as he was again soon to be admitted into the General Hospital in St. John’s – there appears to be no date recorded.

The son of Joseph Thorne and of Jane (also found as June) Thorne (deceased of erysipalis – a skin infection –on June 19 of that 1917) of Burin Bay Arm, he was brother to George-Robert, Elsie-Maud, Archibald, Alma and Lily.

Private Thorne was reported as having...*died in hospital*...in St. John’s on December 18, 1917, of cerebro-spinal meningitis.

At home it was the Reverend William Grimes of Grand Bank who was requested to inform the family and to enquire as to the disposal of Private Thorne’s remains and if a military funeral was desired.

It appears not to have been so; however, a Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone was allocated – although it did not reach Grand Bank on the SS *Portia* until November of 1925.



(Right above: *The sacrifice of Private Joseph Thorne is honoured on the Memorial which stands in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, St. John’s... – photograph from 2011(?)*)

Joseph Thorne had enlisted at the *declared* age of eighteen years and six months – although the date of birth recorded on his discharge papers is that of May 14, 1897*.

**This may be incorrect as his sister Elsie-Maud is recorded as having been born in January of that same year – unless, of course, this is not his family.*



(Right adjacent: *...and is also commemorated on the War Memorial which stands in the community of Grand Bank. – photograph from 2015*)

The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to *criceadam@yahoo.ca*. Last updated – January 30, 2023.