



Private Rowland (also found as *Roland*) Winters, Number 3355406, of the 15<sup>th</sup> Canadian (*Reserve*) Battalion (*Saskatchewan*), is buried in Bodelwyddan (*St. Margaret*) Churchyard: Grave reference 451.

His previous occupation recorded as having been that of a *fisherman*, Rowland Winters appears to have left little if any information behind him either *a propos* his early years in the community of Winterton, Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland, or of his travels from the Dominion of Newfoundland to the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. All that may be said with any certainty is that he was present there during the summer of 1918, for that was where and when he was drafted.

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Roland Winters was a draftee called up under the *Military Service Act*\*, but whether this signifies that he had taken out Canadian citizenship by this time is not clear. His postal address in July of 1918 was a post-office box in Elbow, Saskatchewan, but his residence there was surely relatively recent as his name is not to be found documented on the 1916 Census for Saskatchewan\*.

*\*The Canadian 'Military Service Act' – conscription by another name – came into force of August 29 of 1917. It was a divisive policy and, according to some sources, was of more political importance than military. Some four-hundred thousand young men were registered after that date, of which a quarter of that number was eventually drafted; again, of that number just under twenty-five thousand ever found their way to a battlefield of the Western Front.*

*Some four-hundred twenty-five thousand had volunteered in the three years before the coming into being of the Military Service Act.*

It was on July 16, 1918, that Rowland Winters presented himself for medical examination in Regina, capital city of Saskatchewan, where he was found to be fit for general service overseas: *Category A2*. On the same day he was *taken on strength* by the 1<sup>st</sup> Depot Battalion of the Saskatchewan Regiment, the unit based in Regina.

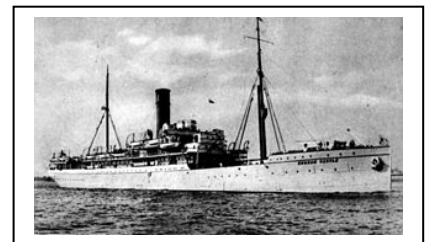
The Depot Battalions, created during the latter years of the *Great War* and after the departure for *overseas service* of the original Overseas Battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, were created to provide the reserves necessary to keep the some fifty infantry battalions and units of other services stationed there, operational on the Western Front. They provided basic training and discipline in as short a time as possible before despatching their charges to the United Kingdom where the Canadian Reserve Battalions, also newly-created, were to conclude the job of training.

This task having been completed, the new arrivals were thereupon sent overseas for a second time, on this occasion to a Canadian unit serving on the Continent, in 1917 in France or Belgium or, by 1918, only in France.

Thus Private Winters was to train in the area of Regina before subsequently travelling to *Camp Petawawa* where he along with the two officers and the other forty-nine *other ranks* of the 1<sup>st</sup> Depot Battalion (*Saskatchewan*) were to be posted at the beginning of the month of that September, there to be readied for passage across the Atlantic.

He was struck off strength by his Depot Battalion on September 7 to bureaucratically become a soldier of the 136<sup>th</sup> Draft which then embarked onto the *SS Durham Castle* in the harbour at Montreal on the following day, September 8.

(Right: *The SS Durham Castle was a vessel of the Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company which continued to ply its commercial routes during the Great War, also carrying troops when necessary and if space was available. She was sunk in 1940 having struck a mine, while serving as a troop transport during that later war. – photograph from Wikipedia*)



The 136<sup>th</sup> Draft with Private Winters one of its soldiers, was not alone to board *Durham Castle*. Detachments from the Depot Battalions of the Western Ontario, Ontario and British Columbia Regiments as well as two drafts of the Canadian Army Service Corps were to travel as well. Having sailed from Montreal on September 10, the ship was then to stop on the way at Québec City where a draft of the Central Ontario Regiment was to embark on September 13. The vessel departed later that same day.

It was to be twelve days later, after an apparently uneventful voyage, that *Durham Castle* docked in the Port of London on September 25. From there Private Winters and his draft were transported to the large Canadian military complex established in the county of Hampshire and in the vicinity of the villages of Liphook and Bramshott, the latter having lent its name to the Canadian camp.



(Right above: *That part of the now non-existent Port of London known as the Pool of London and, in the background, the Tower Bridge which Private Winters was likely to have seen upon his arrival there – photograph from 2011(?)*)

Upon its arrival at *Camp Bramshott*, the detachment from the Saskatchewan Regiment was absorbed and *taken on strength* by the 15<sup>th</sup> Canadian (Reserve) Battalion (Saskatchewan).



(Right: *Royal Canadian Legion flags amongst others adorn the interior of St. Mary's Church in the English village of Bramshott. – photograph from 2016*)

When exactly it was that Private Winters reported ill appears not to have been recorded. Nor is to be found the date on which he was transferred to Kimmel Park Hospital in the vicinity of the community of Rhyl in North Wales. However, on October 22 he was reported by the medical staff there as *dangerously ill*.

The son of William Winters, fisherman, and of Susanna Winters (née *House*) – to whom he had willed his all – of Wesleyville, Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland, he was brother to Henry (*Harry*), Job, Greta and likely also George.

(Right: *The sacrifice of Roland (sic) Winters is honoured on the war memorial in the community of New-Wes-Valley, Bonavista Bay – photograph from 2010(?)*)



Private Winters was reported as having *died of sickness* in Kimmel Park Hospital on October 25, 1918, exactly one month after his arrival in the United Kingdom. The cause of his death was diagnosed as influenza.

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**Roland Winters had been drafted at the age of twenty-one years and four months: date of birth at Wesleyville, Newfoundland, March 21, 1897 (from attestation papers); however, parish records cite the date as having been ten days earlier: March 11, 1897.**

**Private Rowland Winters was entitled to the British War Medal for his overseas service. (He was eligible for it once he left Canada.)**



**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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 23, 2023.**