



Private Lewis Brinson (Regimental Number 5389), is interred in the Church of England Cemetery on the Change Islands, District of Fogo, Newfoundland.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman*, Lewis Brinson presented himself for medical examination on May 23 of 1916 at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. It was a procedure which would pronounce him as being...*Fit for Foreign Service*.**

(continued)

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

It was on the day of that medical assessment, May 23, and at the same venue, that Lewis Brinson was now to be enlisted. He was engaged...*for the duration of the war**...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

****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.***

A further several hours were then to go by before there came to pass, again at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On that same twenty-third day of May* he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Lewis Brinson became...*a soldier of the King.*

****This was the month during which the Newfoundland Military Service Act (conscription) came into effect. From May 11 through to the end of the War, the Department of Militia called a total of 1,470 men into active service. However, nothing amongst his papers appears to suggest under which circumstances – as a volunteer or a conscripted man – Lewis Brinson was to be taken into service.***

It would appear that Private Brinson, Number 5389 was to be granted a nine or ten-day period of leave – as many were - before being required to report*...*to duty...back in St. John's* when ordered to do so at a later date.

****The dates in his file are from June 16 until June 24 (inclusive) although a ten-day period was most frequently the norm. It appears not to have been documented as to where he had spent this time.***

When he did so it is likely that Private Brinson reported...*to duty...to be quartered in the temporary barracks* apparently established since 1815 in the St. John's curling club and the Prince's Skating Rink in the eastern end of the city.

(Right: This photograph of the Prince's Rink in St. John's with military personnel, apparently attired in uniforms of Great War vintage, on parade is from the Ice Hockey Wiki web-site. There appears to be no further information a propos.)



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On July 18, some four weeks after return to unit, Private Brinson was admitted into the *Barracks Hospital* in St. John's, being transferred six days later, on the 24th, to the General Hospital where, on July 30, he was deemed by the medical staff to be...*dangerously ill*.

His family was apprised on several occasions as to the status of Private Brinson, latterly to expect perhaps the worst. A return telegraph from the Change Islands to Lieutenant Colonel W.F. Rendell at the Regimental Headquarters in St. John's is ominous: *...IS NO 5389 Pte Lewis Brinson better if dies please have body sent home. George Brinson*

The son of George Brinson, fisherman, and of Dorcas Brinson (née *Parsons**) - to whom he had allotted a daily fifty cents from his pay – of Granpher's Cove, Change Islands, he was also brother to Leah-Charlotte, Joseph, John, Dora-Lucy, Edlam (sic), Stewart, Elizabeth, Dorman and to Rhona.

**The couple was to marry on the Change Islands on November 2 of 1877.*

Private Brinson was reported as having...*died of sickness*...– meningitis – in hospital at seven o'clock in the evening of the same July 30, 1918.

Medical report from hospital: *Has been dangerously ill since admission, did not respond to treatment getting gradually worse never regaining consciousness. Died 7 p.m. July 30th.*

His remains were embalmed and placed in a coffin by Mr. Oke, undertaker, and, on the morning of August 1, a funeral cortege escorted Private Brinson to the railway station in St. John's. His body left on the day's express train to begin the journey to Lewisporte, thence home.

Lewis Brinson had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-two years: date of birth in Beaver Cove, Newfoundland, January 1, 1896 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register).

W F Rendell
St. John's

Change Islands
Jan 13th 1919

Dear Sir

Your letter came to my hand which was dated January 3rd saying you wanted to no the particulars of my sons grave. Will he was a Church of England member therefore we had him buried in the Church of England Cemetery at Change Islands. There is no headstone put there not yet if you want to no more particulars please write again

Yrs truly
George Brinson

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 31, 2023.