



Private Ernest Brown (Regimental Number 1493) is buried in Forest Road Anglican Cemetery in St. John's, in the Naval and Military Plot.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman* earning a monthly forty dollars, Ernest Brown presented himself for enlistment at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on April 23 of 1915. There he was to be engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar to which would be added a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

Three days later, on April 26, he returned to the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, on this second occasion for a medical examination. It was a procedure which was to pronounce Ernest Brown as being...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

There was now to pass only one final day before, on April 27, he would undergo his attestation, to swear his *Oath of Allegiance*, the concluding official formality. At that moment Ernest Brown became...*a soldier of the King*.

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

Thereupon followed a lengthy waiting period of eight weeks less two days before Private Brown, Regimental Number 1493, was to embark onto His Majesty's Transport *Calgarian* on June 20 in St. John's Harbour and sail (*almost**) directly to the United Kingdom. He was one of the two-hundred forty-two men of 'F' Company and eighty-five naval reservists to take passage on that day.

(Right above: *Naval reservists from Newfoundland, during the early days of the Great War, before their departure for the United Kingdom - from The War Illustrated*)

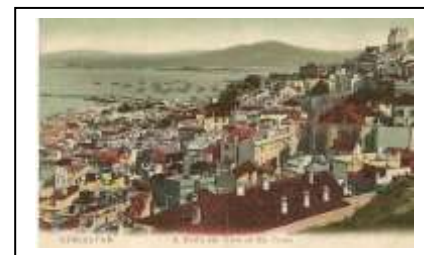
Where Private Brown was to spend the interim between his attestation and his departure on...*overseas service*...is not clear – and is not documented among his papers.

It may be that he returned temporarily to work and possibly that he was to spend some time at his home in the Placentia Bay community of Tack's Beach on King Island - but this of course is only speculation.

(Right above: *The photograph of Newfoundland military personnel in tenders on their way to board 'Calgarian' is from the Provincial Archives. 'Calgarian' was not a requisitioned troop transport but in September of 1914 had been taken over by the British government to serve as an armed merchant-cruiser. She did, however, as on this occasion, at times carry troops and civilian passengers across the Atlantic. She was later torpedoed and sunk by U-19 off the north of Ireland on March 1, 1918.*)

**Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the journey of about a week. Not only was Calgarian escorting three submarines, but she sailed by way of the Portuguese Azores and then Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders apparently even having the time to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. She reached Liverpool on July 9.*

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(Preceding page: *The British Crown Colony of Gibraltar in pre-Great War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background beyond the harbour and Royal Navy dockyard. – from a vintage postcard*)

On the day after its arrival in the United Kingdom, ‘F’ Company travelled from Liverpool by train to Hawick from where the detachment marched and then reported...*to duty...at Stobs Camp* on the evening of July 10. It was an important moment: the Newfoundland Regiment, as of that day counting fifteen hundred personnel*, was now at establishment strength and could be posted on...*active service*.



**A number sufficient to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

(Right above: *The men of the Regiment await their new Lee-Enfield rifles. – original photograph from the Provincial Archives*)

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Almost nine months before that June 20 of 1915, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914, the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment’s first recruits had undergone a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John’s and elsewhere in the city, they to become ‘A’ and ‘B’ Companies.



During that same period the various authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment’s transfer overseas.

(Right above: *The image of ‘Florizel’ at anchor in the harbour at St. John’s is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum.*)

This first Newfoundland contingent was to embark on October 3, in some cases only days after a recruit’s enlistment and/ or attestation. To become known to history as the *First Five Hundred* and also as the *Blue Puttees*, on that day they had boarded the Bowring Brothers’ vessel *Florizel* awaiting in St. John’s Harbour.

The ship had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1st Canadian Division overseas, off the south coast of the Island.

(Right: *Fort George, constructed in the latter half of the eighteenth century, still serves the British Army to this day. – photograph from 2011*)



Once having disembarked in the United Kingdom this first Newfoundland contingent was to train in three venues during the late autumn of 1914 and then the winter of 1914-1915:

firstly in southern England on the *Salisbury Plain*; then in Scotland at *Fort George* – on the *Moray Firth* close to Inverness; and lastly at *Edinburgh Castle* – where, as recorded beforehand, it was to provide the first garrison from outside the British Isles.

Only days after ‘A’ and ‘B’ Companies had taken up their posting there, on February 16 of 1915, ‘C’ Company – the first re-enforcements for the original contingent - would arrive directly – through Liverpool of course - from Newfoundland. On the final day of the month of March it had been the turn of ‘D’ Company to arrive – they via Halifax as well as Liverpool – to report...*to duty...*at Edinburgh, and then ‘E’ Company five weeks less a day later again, on May 4*.



**These five Companies, while a contingent of the Newfoundland Regiment, was not yet a battalion and would not be so for a further five months – as will be seen below.*

(Right above: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011*)

Seven days after the arrival of ‘E’ Company in the Scottish capital, on May 11 the entire Newfoundland contingent was ordered elsewhere. On that day, seven weeks into spring – although in Scotland there was apparently still snow - the unit was dispatched to *Stobs Camp*, all under canvas and south-eastwards of Edinburgh, close to the town of Hawick.



(Right above: *The Newfoundland Regiment marches past on the training ground at Stobs Camp and is presented with its Colours on June 10, 1915. – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs. Lillian Tibbo*)

Two months less a day later, on July 10, ‘F’ Company marched into *Stobs Camp*.

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From *Stobs Camp*, some three weeks after the arrival of ‘F’ Company, in early August, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, the four senior Companies, having now become the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, were transferred to *Aldershot Camp* in southern England. There they were to undergo final preparations – and a royal inspection – before departing to the Middle East and to the fighting on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.



(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India – the photograph is from Bain News Services via the Wikipedia web-site.*)

The later arrivals to the United Kingdom, ‘E’ and ‘F’ Companies, were to be posted to the new Regimental Depot and were eventually to form the nucleus of the soon to be formed 2nd (*Reserve*) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment.

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The Depot was, unfortunately, to be Private Brown`s home for longer than he might ever have imagined.

At the end of the summer of 1915, the once-Royal Borough of Ayr on Scotland`s west coast was to begin to serve as the overseas base for what was to become the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment from where – as of November of 1915 and up until January of 1918 - reinforcement drafts from home were to be despatched to bolster the 1st Battalion`s numbers, at first to the Middle East and then later to the *Western Front*.



(Right above: *An aerial view of Ayr, likely from the period between the Wars: Newton-on Ayr, where were quartered the `other ranks`, is to the left of the River Ayr and the Royal Borough, where were housed the officers, is to the right. – by courtesy of the Carnegie Library at Ayr*)

(Right above: *The High Street in Ayr as shown on a postcard of the time, the imposing Wallace Tower – it stands to this day (2017) - dominating the scene – by courtesy of Reverend Wilson Tibbo and Mrs Lillian Tibbo.*

It was while at Ayr that Private Brown became ill, being admitted into Carrick House Hospital in Ayr on December 12 of 1916. There he underwent, on that same day, an empyema operation to drain pus from the pleural cavity – probably the manifestation of a serious lung infection. His condition still deemed to be *serious*, Private Brown was now to remain in medical care at Ayr until the following August.



(Right above: *Carrick House on Carrick Road in Ayr is, a century later, a private hotel and restaurant – photograph from 2013*)

Having been considered by the medical and regimental authorities as...*medically unfit for active duty...*, Private Brown was re-assigned back to Newfoundland, embarking at Liverpool for the trans-Atlantic voyage to Québec on board His Majesty`s Transport *Scotian* (right) on August 10, 1917. From Québec he likely travelled back to St. John`s for the most part by train.



On the day of his return to Newfoundland – August 25 - Private Brown was attached to the strength of the Headquarters Staff. Four days later, August 29, he was admitted into the General Hospital in St. John`s where, excepting the time when he sent a letter to the Department of Militia on September 14, 1917, requesting money, and again when he did the same thing, from the same place, in May of 1918 and then also on October 6 – monies which he received - there appear to be no other reports of him.

The son of James Brown (deceased August 8, 1912) and of Elizabeth Brown (deceased January 19, 1910) of Tacks Beach, Placentia Bay, he was also brother of Malcolm, named as his next of kin - to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of seventy cents from his pay.

Private Brown was reported at first as...*dangerously ill*...and subsequently as having...*died of sickness*..., of influenza, at the General Hospital in St. John's on October 12, 1918.

A Mr. Oke, undertaker, was requested to perform the necessary preparations for his burial. His brother Malcolm asked that Private Brown be interred in St. John's.

(Right above: *The image is of the family memorial to Private Brown which stands in the Anglican cemetery near to the church at Tack's Beach, and is from the Newfoundland Grand Banks Genealogy web-site. The stone was erected by Private Brown's brother, Malcolm.*)

Ernest Brown had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-one years and two months (other sources imply at twenty years).

Private Ernest Brown was entitled to the British War Medal for his *overseas service*.

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 – February 5, 2023.

