



Private James Michael Brown (Regimental Number 1328) is...*believed to be buried...*in Azmak Cemetery at *Suvla Bay* – Grave reference: Special Memorial 34.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fireman* (whether he who fought fires or he who worked on a steam engine is not documented) and earning five-hundred thirty dollars per annum, James Brown enlisted at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on March 18, 1915. He was engaged at the private soldier's daily rate of a single dollar to which was to be added a ten-cent per diem *Field Allowance* and was a recruit of the Fifth Draft.

Contrary to most recruits who underwent medical appraisal before enlistment, James Michael Brown apparently did not present himself to be examined medically until two days afterwards, returning to the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the month. It was to be a procedure which would pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*\*.

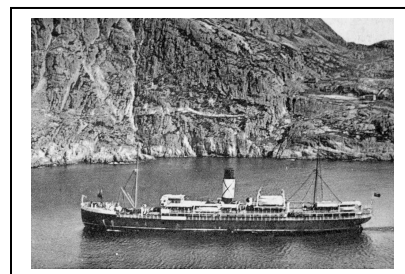
*\*A second source has him attesting on the day of his enlistment.*

It was now to be a further eleven days, the date March 31, before he was to undertake his attestation, to swear his *Oath of Allegiance*, the concluding official formality. At that moment James Michael Brown became...*a soldier of the King*.

A period of three weeks plus another day then went by before, on April 22 of 1915, Private Brown, Number 1328, embarked in the harbour of St. John's for...*overseas service*...with the two-hundred forty-nine officers and...*other ranks*...of 'E' Company onto the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* en route for Halifax.

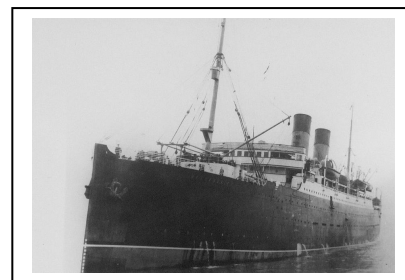
There appear to be no details of how or where he may have spent that final three-week waiting-period before taking ship for...*overseas service*; Private Brown may have returned temporarily to work, or even perhaps to his home in Curling, Bay of Islands, Newfoundland – but this is mere speculation.

Having arrived in Halifax, on April 24 at eleven-thirty in the evening the detachment began its trans-Atlantic passage on board the trans-Atlantic liner *SS Missanabie* from Nova Scotia to Liverpool. The vessel arrived in that English west-coast port-city on May 2 or 3 – the two dates are recorded although the second may well have been the date of disembarkation.



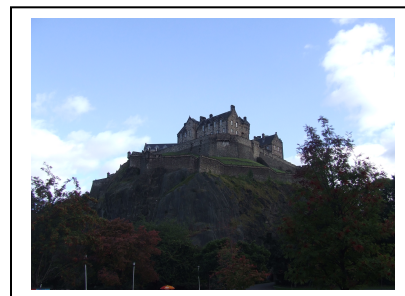
The Newfoundlanders on this occasion had sailed from Halifax in the company of the Canadian Army Service Corps *Railway Supply Depot*.

(Right above: *The image of 'Stephano' passing through the Narrows of St. John's Harbour is shown by courtesy of the Provincial Archives.*)



(Right: *The image of 'Missanabie' is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries website. The vessel was of the Canadian Pacific Line and, although transporting troops during the Great War, did so as part of her commercial services which continued during the conflict. On September 9, 1918, she was torpedoed and sunk off the south coast of Ireland with the loss of forty-five lives.*)

From Liverpool the contingent travelled northwards by train to the Scottish capital, Edinburgh where, on May 4, 'E' Company joined 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies which had already taken up station as the garrison at the historic Castle, the first troops from outside the British Isles ever to do so.

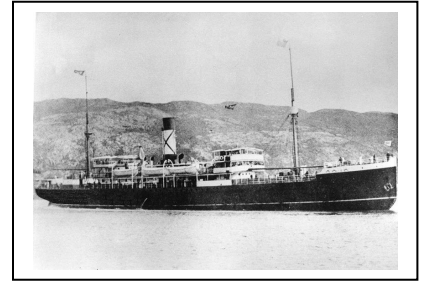


(Right above: *The venerable bastion of Edinburgh Castle dominates the Scottish capital from its hill in the centre of the city. – photograph from 2011*)

Private Brown's 'E' Company, however, was to have but a few days to savour the charms of the Scottish capital.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some seven months before that May 4, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914 there had been a period of training of five weeks on the shores of *Quidi Vidi Lake* in the east end of St. John's for the newly-formed Newfoundland Regiment's first recruits – these to become 'A' and 'B' Companies - during which time the authorities had also been preparing for the Regiment's transfer overseas.



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.

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

The ship had sailed for the United Kingdom on the morrow, October 4, 1914, to its rendezvous with the convoy carrying the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

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

\* \* \* \* \*

Seven days after the arrival of Private Brown's '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, in the vicinity of the town of Hawick.

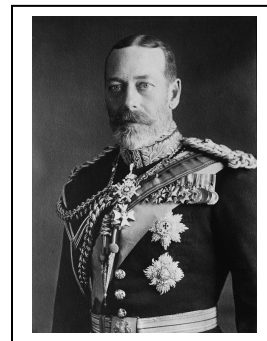
It was to be at *Stobs Camp* that the Newfoundland contingent would eventually receive the re-enforcements from home – ‘F’ Company which arrived on July 10, 1915 - that would bring its numbers up to that of British Army establishment battalion strength\*. On that date the newly-formed 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was thereupon available to be ordered on...*active service*.



(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*)

*\*This was approximately fifteen hundred, sufficient to furnish four ‘fighting’ companies, two re-enforcement companies and a headquarters staff.*

At the beginning of that August of 1915, the four senior Companies, ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’, were then sent south from *Stobs Camp* to undergo a final two weeks of training, as well as an inspection by the King, at *Camp Aldershot*. This force, now the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment, was thereupon attached to the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division of the (British) Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.



(Right above: *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.*)

Meanwhile the two junior Companies, ‘E’ – as seen, the last arrived at Edinburgh - and the aforementioned ‘F’, were ordered transferred to Scotland’s west coast, to Ayr, there to provide the nucleus of the newly-forming 2<sup>nd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion.

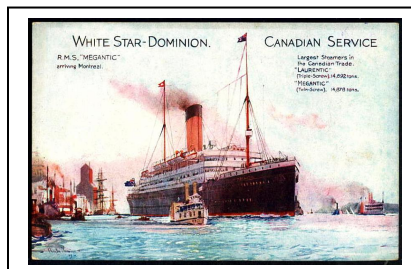
Private Brown, however, although having left Newfoundland as a soldier of ‘E’ Company, was not to be posted to the Regimental Depot but to southern England.

When he had been apprised of this change in plans seems not to be recorded – nor why he was selected - but Private Brown was one of the few from ‘E’ Company who were to swell the ranks of the units posted to *Aldershot* - thus he became a soldier of ‘D’ Company. And it was during the period while he was at *Camp Aldershot*, and as was the case with the great majority of the Newfoundland troops there, that Private Brown was prevailed upon to re-enlist...*for the duration of the war*. This he did on August 16\*.

*\*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 a limited period of a single year. As the War progressed, however, this would likely cause problems and they were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits signed on for the ‘Duration’ at the time of their original enlistment.*



**(Preceding page: Some of the personnel of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment at Aldershot in August of 1915, prior to its departure to 'active service' on the Gallipoli Peninsula – from *The Fighting Newfoundlander* by Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, C.D.)**

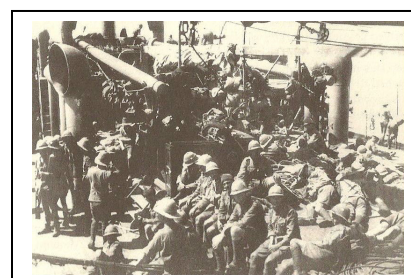


**(Right above: The image of Megantic, here in her peace-time colours of a 'White Star Line' vessel, is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.)**

**On August 20, 1915, Private Brown and his 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion embarked in the Royal Navy Harbour of Devonport onto the requisitioned passenger-liner *Megantic* for passage to the Middle East and to the fighting against the Turks. There, a month later – having spent some two weeks billeted in British barracks in the vicinity of the Egyptian capital, Cairo - on September 20, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to land at *Suvla Bay* on the *Gallipoli Peninsula*.**



**(Right above: Kangaroo Beach, where the officers and men of the Newfoundland Battalion landed on the night of September 19-20, 1915, is to be seen in the distance at the far end of Suvla Bay. The remains of a landing-craft are still clearly visible in the foreground on 'A' Beach. – photograph taken in 2011)**



**(Right above: Newfoundland troops on board a troop-ship anchored at Mudros: either *Megantic* on August 29, *Ausonia* on September 18, or *Prince Abbas* on September 19 – *Whichever the case, they were yet to land on Gallipoli.* – from Provincial Archives)**



**(Right: A century later, the area, little changed from those far-off days, of the Newfoundland positions at Suvla, and where the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was to serve during the fall of 1915 – photograph from 2011)**

**When the Newfoundlanders had landed from their transport ship at *Suvla Bay* on that September night of 1915 they were to disembark into a campaign that was already on the threshold of collapse.**

**Not only in the area where the Newfoundland Battalion was to serve but, even ever since the very first days of the operation in April of 1915, the entire *Gallipoli Campaign*, including the operation at *Suvla Bay*, had been proving to be little more than a debacle:**



**(Right above: An un-identified Newfoundland soldier in the trenches at Suvla Bay – from Provincial Archives)**

Flies, dust, disease, the frost-bite and the floods – and of course the casualties inflicted by an enemy who was to fight a great deal better than the British High Command\* had ever anticipated – were eventually to overwhelm the British-led forces and those of their allies, the French, and it would finally be decided to abandon not only *Suvla Bay* but the entire *Gallipoli* venture.

(Right: *No-Man’s-Land* at *Suvla Bay* as seen from the *Newfoundland* positions – from *Provincial Archives*)

*\*Many of the commanders chosen were second-rate, had been brought out of retirement, and had little idea of how to fight – let alone of how to win. One of the generals at Suvla, apparently, had handed in his resignation during the Campaign and had just gone home.*



(Right: *This is Anzac Bay in the fore-ground with the Salt Lake in the centre further away. The bottom of Suvla Bay is just to be seen on the left and adjacent to the Salt Lake, and further away again. The hills in the distance and the ones from which this photograph was taken were held by the Turks and formed a horse-shoe around the plain surrounding the Salt Lake - which was where the British and Newfoundlanders were stationed. – photograph from 2011*)



November 26 would see the nadir of the Newfoundland Battalion’s fortunes at *Gallipoli*; there was to be a freak rain, snow and ice-storm strike the *Suvla Bay* area and the subsequent floods had wreaked havoc amongst the forces of both sides. For several days, survival rather than the enemy was to be the priority.

There were to be many casualties on both sides, some of them, surprised by the sudden inundation of their positions, fatalities who had drowned in their trenches – although no Newfoundlanders were to be among that number. Numerous, however, were those afflicted by trench-foot and by frost-bite.

A week later, on the evening of December 3, all the signs were that another rain-storm was to be expected, so dark had become the sky. All personnel had thereupon been ordered to prepare for the worst – in fact it never came to pass. Neither did, it would appear, any infantry activity although, it would equally appear, there was the habitual shower of shells from the Turkish artillery.

The son of William J. Brown and of Mary Anne Brown - to whom he had allotted a daily allowance of fifty cents per day from his pay - of Curling, Bay of Islands, he himself was also recorded as being native to Toronto in the *Dominion of Canada*. He had at least one sibling, almost certainly a brother.



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

(continued)

Private Brown was reported as having been...*killed in action*...on December 3, 1915, at *Suvla Bay* while serving with the machine-gun section. At home it was the Very Reverend Dean O'Rourke who was requested to bear the news to his family.

James Michael Brown had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-three years.

Private James Michael Brown was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



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 – February 6, 2023.