

(A photograph of the grave of Private Smith is not as yet available.)

Private Edward Smith (Regimental Number 5710) is interred in the Battle Harbour Church of England Cemetery, Labrador.

On June 4 of 1910 the following message was sent by the *Newfoundland Postal Telegraphs* network from Battle Harbour* via Fogo to...*Militia StJohns: Edward Smith unmarried age twenty four requests pass StJohns Join regiment please advise – J W Brazil Censor*

****Given the distance that Edward Smith had to travel to reach St. John's, the Officer Commanding the 3rd Battalion in St. John's was then to request that Edward Smith be considered fit by a reliable person before leaving Battle Harbour since no doctor was available.***

The reply of the same day from Battle Harbour to the Officer Commanding reads as follows: *Yes consider Smith OK for army no doctor here – J W Brazil*

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman*, Edward Smith from Battle Harbour, having been granted the requested pass, presented himself at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland on June 21, 1918. It was a procedure which was to find him...*Fit for Foreign Service.***

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****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, June 21, and at the same venue, that Edward Smith 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.

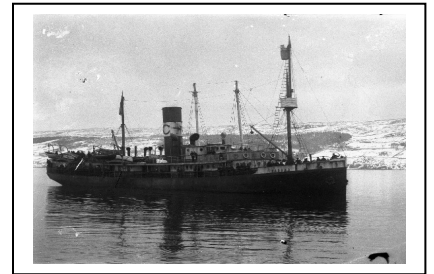
****At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits – 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-first day of June* he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Edward Smith officially entered the service of the King.

****By this time a month had passed since 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 – Edward Smith was to be taken into service.***

Edward Smith had apparently travelled from Battle Harbour to St. John's in the company of a second young man from that community, Albert Ash (see further below), and both had enlisted on that 21st day of June, 1918.

It would also appear that both had then been granted leave to travel to home, from July 16 until July 30, before having been required to report back to the 3rd Battalion in St. John's. There they both were to be quartered* until their expected departure for overseas. Their return to St. John's, however, was to be delayed until August 9 because of the late arrival...***from the north...***of the vessel 'Sagona' in Battle Harbour.



(Right above: ***The image of ...'Sagona' likely at Harbour Grace...is from the Memorial University of Newfoundland Archives web-site.)***

****Likely in the temporary barracks which had been established in the Prince's Skating Rink at the eastern end of the city.***



(Preceding page: *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.*)

Having been considered to be *fit* before leaving home* in Battle Harbour in early June those many weeks before, Edward Smith apparently had been suffering from bad eyesight which was not responding to treatment.

He was thus not to leave St. John's, as did his fellow recruit Private Ash (see**further below) on September 22, but was scheduled to be presented before a medical board – although whether it was for the aforementioned reason is not clear – in October, from which issued the following report: *This man was before the Standing Medical Board of 9/10/ 18 and was 'Recommended Discharge...Permanently Unfit' and was taken ill in the Board Room and admitted to Hospital...*

Private Smith (Number 5710) was admitted into the St. John's General Hospital on the day that the Medical Board had sat, and was there immediately diagnosed as suffering from influenza and from bronchial pneumonia.

On October 10 Private Smith was considered...seriously ill...; by October 13 he was deemed by the medical staff to be...*very dangerously ill*.

The son of Mrs. Abram (Mary Jane) Cumby* of Battle Harbour, Labrador – to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay – he had been brought up by his grand-father, Miss Smith's father, until that gentleman had died. He was thereupon to become step-son of Abram Cumby and thus step-brother to George, Isaac, Cecily-Susannah, Frederick-Jordan and to Benjamin. – This last information from both *My Heritage* and *Ancestry.ca* web-sites.

**A hand-written note on a letter written by Mrs. Abram Cumby reads as follows: Pte. Ed. Cumby deceased son of Miss Mary Jane Smith now Mrs. A. Cumby*

Private Smith was reported as having...*died of sickness...– of influenza following pneumonia...in hospital in St, John's on October 14, 1918.*

His remains having been embalmed and placed in a coffin by Mr. J. C. Oke, undertaker, he left St. John's for Battle Harbour 5710 Pte. Ed. Smith two days later, at half-past eight on the morning of October 16. Now, for a further occasion, he was to travel on board the SS *Sagona*.

Edward Smith had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-five years. Thus far the exact date of his birth has proved to be elusive.

The Commonwealth War Graves headstone for Private Smith was forwarded to Battle Harbour, first by rail and subsequently on the SS *Home* in 1923.



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(Preceding page: *The sacrifice of Private Smith is honoured on the Screen Wall in the Military Plot, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, St. John's. – photograph from 2011*)

*****Albert Ash was to survive the Great War. In that late September he had travelled overseas to the United Kingdom via Québec, sailing from there on HMT Huntsend on board which – as were to do many others, he was to fall ill. Upon arrival in England he was hospitalized for seven weeks less a day in the Devonport Military Hospital and convalescent facility, there to be treated for influenza and the accompanying pneumonia.***

Once discharged he reported...to duty...with the 2nd Battalion of the by-then Royal Newfoundland Regiment established at Hazely Down Camp in the southern English county of Hampshire. There he remained for a period of months – returning to hospital for medical attention to a case of myalgia – before, since the War was over, being prepared for the return journey to Newfoundland.

Thus Private Ash was never to serve on the Western Front. He and many other Newfoundland service personnel took passage on June 24, 1919, on the SS Cassandra to travel directly back to Newfoundland and sailed into St. John's Harbour on July 1, a week after having departed from the Scottish port-city of Glasgow.

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.