

Brown, William Howard
Lieutenant
The Calgary Highlanders
Royal Canadian Infantry Corps

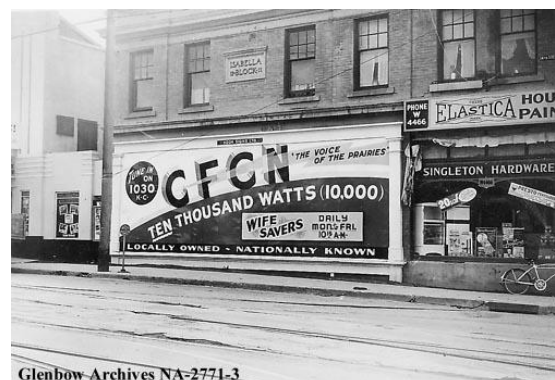


William Howard 'Brownie' Brown was born in Weyburn, Saskatchewan on November 22, 1917. He was the son of John Ezra Brown and Mabel Florence Jacques. John and Mabel got married in Winnipeg, Manitoba on August 28, 1899. Besides William, they had four more children: one daughter, named Minnie Olivia, and three sons, Henry Nelson, James Albert Edgar and Victor. William was the youngest of the family. The family members were Baptists.

William attended school in Weyburn. Up to and including Grade 6, Dutch primary school, he attended Souris School. After that, at the age of seventeen, he obtained his High School diploma in 1933. William did not go on to university but, after obtaining his diploma, he moved to Calgary, Alberta, with this mother whereas his father started working and living on James' farm in Balzac, Alberta. In the following years William worked at Jaques' Clothing Store and as a telegraph operator and an announcer for C.F.C.N. radio station.



Souris School - Weyburn



Advertising for C.F.C.N. in Calgary - 1937

From 1934 onwards William volunteered in the Canadian military. For three years he served with the Weyburn infantry and for two years in the 23rd Battery in Calgary. In 1940 the National Resources Mobilization Act was passed. All available men were called up to register in order to join the military, initially to defend homeland Canada. Later these men were also deployed in service overseas. William signed up in Calgary on August 5, 1940. He was given army number M – 417118. He was then twenty-one years old and lived in 1206, 5th Avenue N.W. in Calgary with his mother. Within a month after his registration he was promoted to Acting Sergeant in the 91st Battery. Almost two years later he was again promoted and became Sergeant Major of an Anti-Tank Battery after having passed his Non-Commissioned Officer exam.

On June 2, 1942 twenty-four-year old William signed up for active service in the Canadian military.

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION

I, William Howard BROWN, do solemnly declare that the above particulars are true, and I hereby engage to serve in any Active Formation or Unit of The Canadian Army so long as an emergency, i.e., war, invasion, riot or insurrection, real or apprehended, exists, and for the period of demobilization after said emergency ceases to exist, and in any event for a period of not less than one year, provided His Majesty should so require my services.

Date. 2nd June 1942 W H Brown
(Signature of recruit)

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION

I, William Howard BROWN do sincerely promise and swear (or solemnly declare) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty.

W H Brown (Signature of Recruit)

His medical records showed that at that moment he was a healthy young man. The only remarks made by the medical officer were that William wore glasses because he was nearsighted, had a scar on his left temple and a birthmark on his lower back. His teeth were in need of repair. He had brown hair and blue eyes. He was 5 feet 11.5 inches tall and weighed 172 pounds.

William started his basic training in Camp Shilo, Manitoba, in the 24th Field Regiment. In April 1943 he was transferred to Victoria on Vancouver Island, B.C. where he was promoted to Lieutenant in the 21st Field Regiment. This regiment defended the Canadian west coast against a possible Japanese raid. He only stayed here for a short while. The same month still he was transferred with his regiment to Petawawa, Ontario, for further artillery training. During the last two weeks of July 1943 he was allowed leave to say goodbye to his family. At the end of August he was shipped to the United Kingdom.

In England the 21st Field Regiment became part of the Canadian Army Reinforcement Unit. William stayed in England for more than a year, took various trainings and studies. He obtained his motorcycle license and took a masterclass in automotive technology and officer trainings. In May 1944 he was admitted to hospital with broken ribs and stayed there for two weeks.

On November 2, 1944 he made the crossing to mainland Europe. Six days later he joined the Calgary Highlanders Regiment.

At that moment the Calgary Highlanders were located in Lierre, Belgium. The regiment were there for a few days of rest after having had to fight heavily in the Battle of the Sloedam in the Netherlands on October 31 and November 1. One hundred and seven Calgary Highlanders were killed on the dam and the reinforcement units that William was part of were much needed. On November 10 the whole regiment left for Nijmegen, the Netherlands in trucks.

The Calgary Highlanders were billeted in Malden in houses along the Rijksweg. They were deployed in guarding bridges across the river Maas near Malden and Grave. There were days of rest and they were trained in using a new weapon, the WASP flamethrower. During the entire winter the regiment was also deployed in guarding the Groesbeek border. Two weeks on, one week off.

With Christmas approaching, it began to snow. The men did not yet have winter uniforms and because their dark uniforms stood out against the white landscape, on patrol they wore their underwear over their uniforms and white towels over their helmets. On Christmas Eve, when the Calgary Highlanders were on patrol along the Groesbeek border, German soldiers on the other side serenaded. The Canadians responded by shooting back with guns, grenades and mortars. The next day the Canadians brought two bagpipers to play for the Germans.

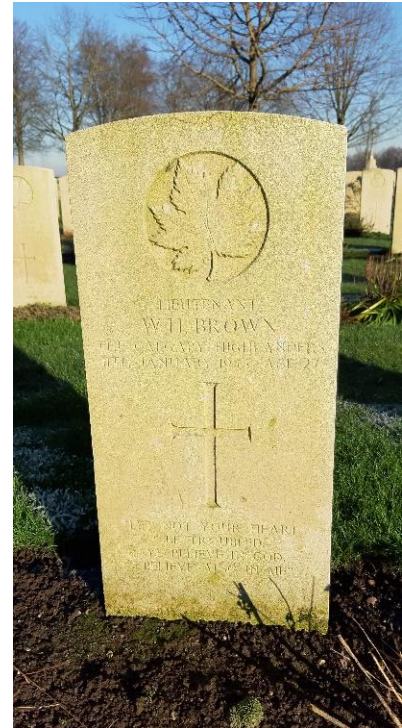
Exactly at midnight on New Year's Eve the Germans starting shooting. According to eyewitnesses, you were able to read a newspaper under the light of all this artillery. After five minutes the Germans called out: 'Happy New Year, Canada'.

A week later, on January 8, William got wounded, probably during a reconnaissance mission along the German border near Groesbeek. He was transferred to a field hospital where doctors did all they could to keep William alive. Unfortunately, Lieutenant William Howard Brown died on January 11, 1945, at the age of twenty-seven.

William was buried at Jonkerbosch military cemetery in Nijmegen. On July 30, 1945 he was reburied at the Canadian War Cemetery in Groesbeek, grave reference **III. C. 9.**

On his headstone is inscribed the words:

“LET NOT YOUR HEART
BE TROUBLED:
YE BELIEVE IN GOD
BELIEVE ALSO IN ME”



Groesbeek – 21 December 2021

William was awarded the following medals:

- 1939 – 1945 Star
- France & Germany Star
- Defence Medal
- War Medal 1939 – 1945
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp



Life story by Sigrid Norde: Research Team Faces To Graves.

* Do you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact info@facestograves.nl

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Library and Archives Canada

David J. Bercuson, Battalion of Heroes – The Calgary Highlanders in World War II, The Calgary Highlanders Regimental Foundation, 1994

<https://billiongraves.nl/grave/John-Ezra-Brown/14063053>

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