

Brown, Walter Edward

Private

The Calgary Highlanders, R.C.I.C.

M – 1401

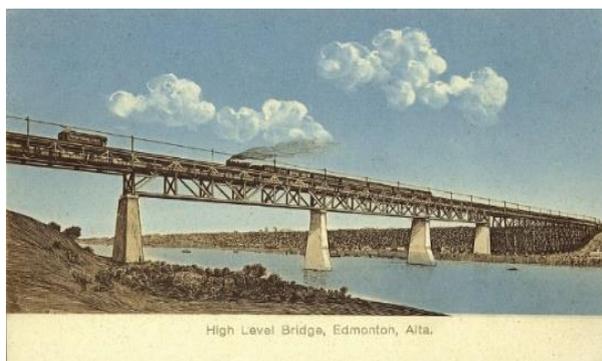


Walter Edward Brown known as Bud to his friends, was born 9 January, 1925 on a farm in Lashburn, Saskatchewan, Canada. The village Lashburne was established in 1905 after a railway line had been built. When WWI ended, it became popular with immigrants from Great Britain and other countries in Europe.

His parents, William George and Emma Beatrice had seven children after their marriage in 1910. Walter Edward had three brothers, James (Jim), George and John (Jack). His three sisters were Beatrice Ruth, Emma Bernice and Sarah Gene. The family attended the United church.

Walter Edward went to school in Regina, reached grade 6 and left school at the age of 13.

Before he joined the army, he worked for two years with the Canadian National Railways, bridge and building, in Edmonton, Alberta as an assistant construction engineer.



On Tuesday, 21 March, 1944, at the age of 19, he enlisted in the Canadian army in Calgary, Alberta, At that point he had been living on his own in Edmonton. His employer, (CNR), had indicated that he could return to his old job after the war ended.

ITEMS 17, 18 AND 19 WILL NOT BE COMPLETED UNLESS A MAN ENLISTS FOR GENERAL SERVICE ANYWHERE.

17. DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION

I, Walter Edward BROWN, 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 21st March, 1944. W.E. Brown
(Signature of Recruit)

During his medical examination, Walter Edward was described as a healthy, blond man with blue eyes, 1.95m. tall and weighing 90 kilos. A man of imposing appearance. He had broken his collarbone three times. In 1941, he had been told that he had a weak heart but no evidence was found of this in the present examination. He received the necessary inoculations and was placed with the general reinforcement unit in Calgary as a private.

Before his transfer to Europe, he followed various training courses in Camrose and Calgary. His lieutenant in Camrose reported that he was a big strong man with good sense and potential leadership qualities, keen to learn and good at following instructions.

However, on 14 April, 1944, two days after his first examination, Walter Edward was admitted to the Belcher military hospital in Calgary. It was not clear what the problem was but on 9 May he was transferred to a sanatorium in Harrison Hot Springs. He resumed his army training 7 July in the Prince of Wales Armoury in Edmonton, staying there for a month. He was then transferred on 12 August to a training centre in Calgary.. His daily pay was increased by ten cents, 21 September, making his pay \$1.50 a day.

On 10 October Walter Edward was given leave like all the other soldiers about to be sent to Europe. This was a time for visiting family and friends. After two more months of training in Debert, Nova Scotia, he spent the Christmas days of 1944 on board the ship that was to bring him to England. He disembarked 1 January, 1945 and was given another short training and also celebrated his twentieth birthday. He flew to the European mainland 15 February and on 3 March joined the Calgary Highlanders regiment.

The regiment was at this time involved in the Battle of the Reichswald in Germany, part of Operation Veritable which had begun 8 February, 1945. In the cold, muddy and flooded trenches of the forest Walter Edward was facing a German army unit for the first time in his life.

After heavy fighting, it was finally possible at the end of March to cross the Rhine and enormous forces could begin to liberate the eastern and northern part of the Netherlands. The Canadians moved via Ulft, Terborg and Gaanderen in the direction of Doetinchem.

On Easter Sunday, 1 April the Canadian troops reached Doetinchem via the Terborgseweg. Members of the resistance were waiting for them on the eastern side of the town. After a short discussion, they continued towards the centre while at the same time other troops surrounded the town. There was heavy fighting going on in and around the centre. The



Canadian troops at the Terborgseweg, 1 April 1945 (Photo: Hans Hendriksen ©)

Germans had blocked the roads with trams filled with concrete. The Canadians used flame throwers among other things to disable the enemy. Dozens of Germans were killed and many buildings burned out. Nine Canadians were also killed. Not until the following afternoon, Easter Monday, 2 April, was Doetinchem liberated.

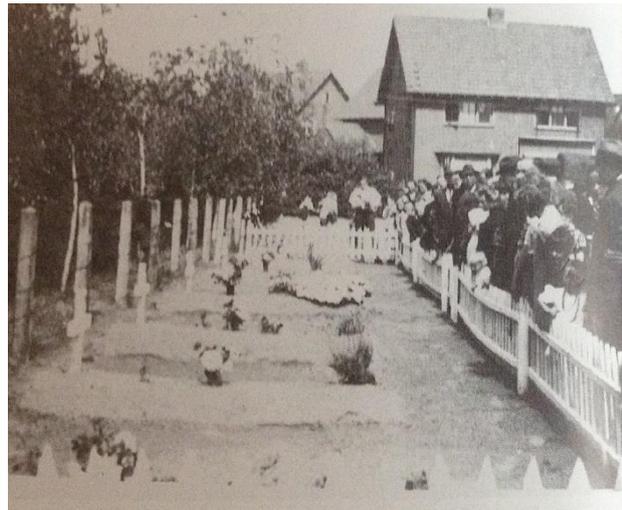
One of the nine men killed was Walter Edward Brown. Not a month after his arrival at the front, at the age of twenty, he died in the streets of Doetinchem. In the book "Battalion of Heroes" (David J. Bercuson, 1994) it was probably the circumstances of his death in Doetinchem that was described. In the text, the name Walter B. Brown was used, but since Walter Edward Brown was temporarily buried in Doetinchem and no Walter B. Brown was registered as killed in WWII, it is plausible to suppose that Walter Edward is referred to here. The story was told by his platoon leader, H.J.E. MacDonald.

"H.J.E. MacDonald was standing in front of a house telling a joke when German shells began to range in:

"We were still laughing when the first burst a few yards away.... I stood up just as 'Blackie' Rubel and another lad and two (Dutch) girls came dashing through the door and down the basement stairs to safety. As they started down, another shell burst right outside one of the basement windows, flinging fragments of gravel and concrete, along with blast, through the window. This panicked the girls and they tried to struggle

back upstairs. Before we good force them back again, a devil's tattoo of shell crashes rocked the building, filling the place with dust and fumes. I felt a hot numbing burn in my left hip and upper leg and in a trice was flung down the stairs... (Joe) Segal, who had been manning one of the basement windows was trying to cram a mattress into it to stop the blast and fragments. Boquist jumped to help him and they got it blocked off. Salvo after salvo rocked the house. Then, suddenly as it began, it quit. I was a bit numb but could stand and walk. Everyone else in the basement seemed to be OK. So I crawled up the stairs and there was my friend 'Brownie' (Private Walter B. Brown) flat on his back, dead."

Walter Edward was temporarily buried next to the Oosseld school at the Dennenweg in Doetinchem.

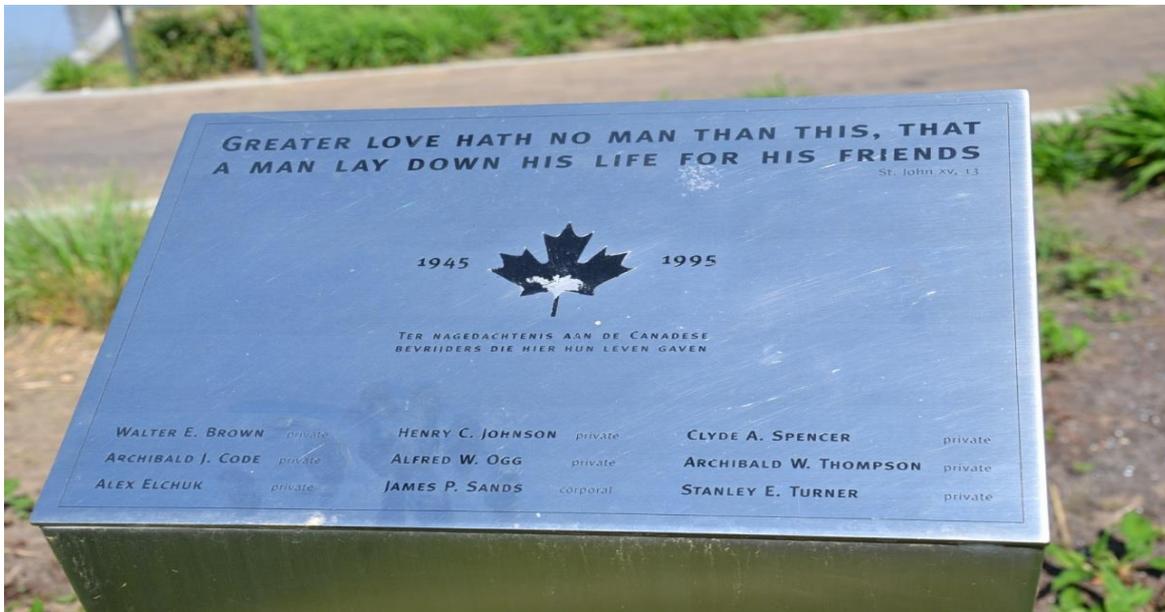


GNR. W. E. BROWN
20-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Brown of Lloydminster, was killed in action recently while serving with the R.C.A. overseas. Walter Edward Brown was born in Lashburn, Sask., January 9, 1925, and lived with his parents in various places in Saskatchewan and Alberta.
As his father has been an employee of the C.N.R. for a number of years, Walter, known to his many friends as "Bud", also worked for the C.N.R. prior to enlisting in the army in March, 1944. He trained in Camrose, Calgary, and Debart, N.S., and went overseas in the latter part of December, 1944.
He leaves his parents; three brothers, Jim at Marsden, George at Maidstone, and Jack serving overseas with the R.C.A.F.; three sisters, Mrs. H. McLachlan (Ruth) of Gainford, Alta., Mrs. Hugh McGladdery (Bernice) of Marsden, and Gene of Saskatoon.

He was later reburied in the Canadian Military Cemetery, Groesbeek, Plot **XIX. D. 3**. He had served a total of 378 days in the Canadian Army.

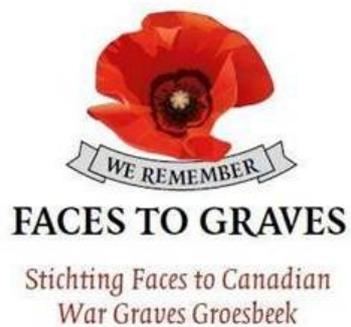
He received the following awards for his service:

- 1939 – 45 Star
- France & Germany Star
- War Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp



Monument at the Mark Tennantplantsoen, Doetinchem

OUR BUD



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

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

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