

Private Albert Brown©

Regimental number: 426296

13th Canadian Battalion, Royal Highlanders of Canada

born: 3 January 1891 – died: 21 October 1918

Albert Brown was born in London, England, on 3 January 1891.¹

Albert Brown (5' 4", fair complexion, blue eyes and brown hair) enlisted from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, in January 1915. At that time, his next of kin, George Brown, likely his father, is listed as living at 9 Montague Road, Dalton, London, England. Private Brown left Halifax, Nova Scotia, for Devonport, England, in late October 1915.²

In an early version of his military will dated 29 February 1916, Albert left his money and real estate to B Smeal of 40 Artillery Street, Quebec [City].³ It is likely that this individual became his wife and widow: Isabella Edina (Smeal) Brown.

The birth of Isabella Edina Smeal was registered early in the new year of 1880 in St Olave Southwark, London, England.⁴ In the 1911 Census, Isabella Edina Smeal (age 31) is listed as one of four domestic servants in the home at 23 Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead, England.⁵

In April 1916, Albert was sent to Bramshott military hospital in England, eventually diagnosed with a varicocele. He headed to France with the 13th Battalion on 22 June 1916, but was injured on 7 October 1916—a gunshot wound to the abdomen—and was treated at the Canadian Casualty Clearing Station in Courcellette. Albert ended up back in England, at the Folkestone hospital, where a splintered rib bone was removed.⁶

During the many months of convalescence, a marriage took place, one day after the wound was finally closed. Albert Brown (Private, soldier, son of William George Brown, deceased) married Isabella Edina Smeal (spinster, age 29) in St Ethelburga, London, on 1 April 1917.⁷

Private Brown caught up with the 13th Battalion in the field in April 1918, having missed the taking of Vimy Ridge and then Hill 70. Following the battalion through the war diaries, it is likely that Private Brown died near the French village of Arenberg.

The battalion's war diary records "Our total casualties [killed] for a very successful tour were . . ." one officer and four other ranks.⁸ The mention of Albert's death is brief. According to the war graves register, "this soldier whilst in an advanced machine gun post, was hit in the chest, by an enemy machine gun bullet. He was evacuated to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, but succumbed to his wounds the same day."⁹ Greater attention was given to the regimental goat, which died on the 23rd.¹⁰

As the armies moved through France, correspondingly, the 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station was on the move. When Private Brown arrived at the clearing station, it was well established in Agnez-lès-Duisans. Despite the "great difficulty in getting transport to move necessities forward," the clearing station was relocated 45 kilometres to Auberchicourt by 29 October 1918. In addition to the move, the clearing station treated many wounded soldiers. In the month of October 1918, 48 Canadian deaths were recorded at the clearing station; 33 Imperial soldiers and two others also died there.¹¹

Albert's remains were buried in the Duisans Military Cemetery in Etrun, France. Duisans Cemetery takes its name from the nearby village of Duisans in the Department of Pas-de-Calais. According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, there are now 3,207 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated at the cemetery.

According to the army's medal and decoration card, Albert's widow, Mrs Isabella E Brown, had moved from Paddington, London, England, to 1367 Lorne Street, Regina, Saskatchewan.¹²

The 1921 Census records that Mrs Brown's home at 1367 Lorne Street included three lodgers and a little boy, son Albert Brown, age 2.¹³ Private Brown would never learn of the birth of his son Albert, registered in early 1919 in Paddington, London, England.¹⁴

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¹ "Canada, Soldiers of the First World War, 1914–1918," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 July 2016), entry for Albert Brown

² "Service Files of the First World War, 1914–1918 - CEF," Library and Archives Canada (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/list.aspx>: accessed 15 July 2016) entry for Albert Brown: RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1119-42, Item number: 426296, Digitized service file - PDF format: B1119-S042

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 July 2016), entry for Isabella Edina Smeal, Registration district: St Olave Southwark, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1d, Page: 243

⁵ "1911 England Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 5 January 2016), entry for Bruno Whittle, Registration district: Bolton, Registration district number: 461, Sub-registration district: Farnworth, Enumeration district, institution, or vessel: 9, Household schedule number: 78, Piece: 23260

⁶ "Service Files of the First World War, 1914–1918 - CEF," Library and Archives Canada (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/list.aspx>: accessed 15 July 2016) entry for Albert Brown

⁷ "London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754–1921," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 July 2016), entry for Albert Brown, Parish: St Ethelburga, Register type: Parish register

⁸ "War diaries - 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion," Library and Archives Canada (<http://data2.archives.ca/e/e044/e001089373.jpg>: accessed 11 July 2016), Reference: RG9, Militia and Defence, Series III-D-3, Volume/box number: 4922, File number: 385, Copied container number: T-10716

⁹ "Canada, War Graves Registers (Circumstances of Casualty), 1914–1948," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 18 July 2016), entry for Albert Brown, Service number: 426296

¹⁰ "War diaries - 1st Canadian Infantry Battalion," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://data2.archives.ca/e/e044/e001089374.jpg>: accessed 11 July 2016), Reference: RG9, Militia and Defence, Series III-D-3, Volume/box number: 4922, File number: 385, Copied container number: T-10716

¹¹ "War diaries - 1st Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," Library and Archives Canada (<http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/e/e061/e001509500.jpg>: accessed 11 July 2016), Reference: RG9, Militia and Defence, Series III-D-3, Volume/box number: 5032, File number: 838, Copied container number: T-10921

¹² "Service Files of the First World War, 1914–1918 - CEF," *Library and Archives Canada* (<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/first-world-war-1914-1918-cef/Pages/list.aspx>: accessed 15 July 2016) entry for Albert Brown

¹³ "1921 Census of Canada," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 July 2016), entry for Isabella Emma Brown, Province or territory: Saskatchewan, District number: 225, Sub-district: Regina City, Sub-district number: 32

¹⁴ "England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837–1915," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.co.uk: accessed 15 July 2016), entry for Albert Brown, Registration district: Paddington, Inferred county: London, Volume: 1a, Page: 9