



William John Brown

Royal Naval Reserve Newfoundland

Service No. 1043X

World War I

Born: 06 Feb 1897

Died: 04 Feb 1960

Place of Birth: Bay Roberts, Conception Bay, Newfoundland

Parents: Thomas William and Elizabeth (nee Badcock) Brown

William John Brown was born in Bay Roberts on the 6th. of February 1897 to parents William and Elizabeth Brown of Bay Roberts.

As a young boy, grandfather enlisted in the Royal Naval Reserve of Newfoundland as a seaman. He was very much in fact a boy upon his enlistment at the port of St. John's on the 7 October 1913. His enlistment

papers note his birthdate as 1897 but the seven is crossed out and 5 written in. This change from 1897 to 1895, made it look like he was 18 when in reality he was only 16 years old. My conclusion is that he lied about his age in order to enlist.

On that enlistment paper, where the applicant normally signs, I notice that grandfather did not sign but simply made a mark. An indication that he could not write perhaps, or he didn't wish to put his name to the lie he had just told, who knows for sure?

Either assumption is entirely possible since I was just 7 when he passed, and I do not remember very much about him at all, but I do know that when he worked away as a carpenter in Toronto particularly, he would write Nan faithfully.

From his picture and the ship name written on the tally of his hat, it appears he served on "The Duchess of Devonshire", a paddle steamer class ship requisitioned into the war effort. See the picture and notation on this ship on the next page.

Grandfather's service record provides the following information as to ships/ base by date:

1. **HMS Calypso** (training vessel): 30 Oct 1914 – 05 Nov 1914
2. **HMS Pembroke** (naval base facility in England): 06 Nov 1914 – 17 Nov 1914
3. **Duchess of Devonshire**: 18 Nov 1914 – 02 dec 1916
4. **HMS Pembroke**: 03 Dec 1916 – 24 May 1917
5. **HMS Briton**: 25 May 1917 – 14 Jun 1917
6. **HMS Ceasar**: 15 Jun 1917 – 21 Nov 1917

7. **HMS Vivid:** 22 Nov 1917 – 11 Apr 1918
8. **HMS President 111:** 12 Apr 1918 – 18 Jan 1919
9. **HMS Briton:** 19 Jan 1919 – 15 Apr 1919. Demobilized

Grandfather returned home after his service and married Elsie May (Mercer). Together they would have a family of 8. Four girls, Lorraine, Ruth, Olive, and Elaine and four boys William John (jr), Paul, Walter, and Dennis. Two of the eight, William and Paul, would subsequently follow in their father's footsteps by enlisting for service in WW II, my father being one. William (Dad) in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and Paul in the Royal Naval Rescue Tug Service.

Interestingly, Grandfather, left Newfoundland in 1921 and is found in the United States in Maine and then on to Massachusetts. In fact, several of his children, namely Lorraine, Paul, Ruth, and Olive were born in Boston, Chelsea, and Everett Mass, respectively.

The 1930 United States Federal census has the family as living in Everett, Mass. William is 32, Elsie 28, Lorraine 6, William jr, 5 (born in Newfoundland), Paul 3 and 7

months, Ruth 11 months old. William is working as a carpenter.

By 1935, the family is back in Newfoundland, living in Bay Roberts, where Walter, Elaine and Dennis are born. Olive was born in the United States (Everett, Mass) in 1931 prior to the move back home.

Grandfather passed away suddenly while ice fishing with grandmother on the second pond in Shearstown on 4 Feb 1960. He was sixty-three. He is buried in the Central United Church Cemetery in Bay Roberts.

Grandfather's Medals



L – R

- a) 1914 – 1915 Star
- b) British War Medal (1914 – 1920)
- c) Victory Medal (1914 – 1919)

Ships that have been requisitioned as auxiliaries

Requisitioned Auxiliary - Duchess of Devonshire



Official Number:	99941
Laid down:	
Builder:	Naval Construction & Armaments Co., Barrow
Launched:	21 January 1897
Pennant No:	M.09 / M 1.03 / M 1.02
Into Service:	30 October 1914
Out of service:	6 November 1919
Fate:	1949 Broken up



R. V. 1.
N.
SEAMAN.

Port of *St. Johns N.F.*

To be filled in by Registrar-General

Number Letters

1843 **X**



ISSUED BY THE ADMIRALTY.

APPLICATION TO BE ENROLLED
IN THE
**ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE (Newfoundland),
AS SEAMAN.**

(A.)

DESCRIPTION, &c., OF APPLICANT.

Names of Applicant in full		Where born	Day, Month, and Year of Birth	Age next Birthday	Usual Place of Abode when Ashore
Surname	Christian Names				
<i>Robert</i>	<i>Young John</i>	<i>Bay Roberts</i>	<i>6th 1892</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Bay Roberts</i>

Height* Feet and Inches	Girth of Chest in Inches	Complexion	Colour of		Personal Marks or Peculiarities (if any)	Married, Single, or Widower	Christian Names of Father and Mother (to be given, whether living or dead)
			Hair	Eyes			
<i>5 4 1/2</i>	<i>32 1/2</i>	<i>Fresh</i>	<i>Dark Brown</i>	<i>Blue</i>	<i>—</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Father William Robert Mother Elizabeth Robert</i>

(B.)

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY APPLICANT.

I hereby declare as follows:—

1. That I thoroughly understand the Conditions under which Seamen are at present enrolled in the Newfoundland R.N.R., and the services they are required to perform;
2. That I am a British subject and desirous of being enrolled as a Seaman in the Royal Naval Reserve, in accordance with those Regulations, and I hereby make application for the purpose of being enrolled;
3. That I have no disease or infirmity that will incapacitate me from serving in the Royal Naval Reserve;
4. That (a) *I have never served, and am not serving, nor am I bound or required to serve in the Navy, Army, Marines, Special Reserve or Militia, or in any Territorial Regiment, Yeomanry or Volunteer Corps, or in any Reserve Force;
(b) That I have never been rejected for any of H.M. Forces on account of unfitness;
(c) *Having served in one of H.M. Forces, I now produce my Certificate of Discharge therefrom;
5. That I am not in receipt of any pension, or allowance from, or in respect of services in the Navy or the Army;
6. That I have not already been rejected as ineligible for the Royal Naval Reserve;
7. That it is my intention to follow the sea service for a period of at least five years from the present time;
8. That the particulars contained above are correct and true, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

And, if approved, I undertake to undergo 28 days' drill immediately on board H.M.S. *Albatross*.

Dated this *7th* day of *October* 191*3*.

[Signature]

Signature of Applicant.

06 November 1914.

Our Naval Reservists

The following Naval Reservists belonging to Bay Roberts and vicinity have gone to St. John's to join the Calypso:

Ralph Mercer, Mercer's Cove, son of William and the late Rachel Mercer.

Esau Mercer, Beachy Cove, son of Esau and Fanny Mercer

Ralph Barrett, French's Cove, son of Rebecca and the late George Barrett.

John Mercer, Bay Roberts West, son of Elizabeth and the late Thomas George Mercer.

William John Brown, Bay Roberts West, son of Wm. and Elizabeth Brown.

Samuel Brown, Bay Roberts West, son of Harry and Emma Brown.

Herbert and Walter Russell, Country Road, sons of John and Annie Russell.

Lorenzo Roberts, Country Road, son of Abram and Grace Roberts.

They are going to fight for their King and Country, and we hope they will uphold the best traditions of the seamen and fishermen of Newfoundland. We also pray that they will be protected from harm and danger while engaged in the discharge of their duties.

There are several others gone to St. John's from this locality whose names we have not secured. Will their friends please forward us their names for publication.

13 February 1960

MR. WILLIAM JOHN BROWN

The whole community was shocked on Thursday afternoon, February 4th, to learn of the sudden passing of one of its highly respected citizens, Mr. William John Brown, Sr., at the age of 63 years.

The late Mr. Brown, born at Bay Roberts where he received his early education, was a veteran of World War I, where he seen navy action. Following which he spent 16 years in the U.S.A., then returned to his native home, where he since resided with his family, being a carpenter by trade, he continued work up to a few months ago, when on the advice of his doctor he retired from his trade. However, feeling in good health he continued to enjoy life in the outdoors and on Thursday was enjoying the sport he loved most, fishing, passed suddenly away at the pond side.

Left to mourn are his wife, the former Elsie Mercer of Bay Roberts, four sons, Paul, employed with the R.C.M.P. at St. John's, Walter, employed with the Dept. of Health, St. John's; William and Dennis at home. Four daughters, Ruth, Mrs. Ray Tilley, residing at Toronto; Olive, Mrs. Hubert Stokes, residing at St. John's; Elaine, United Church teacher at Bonavista Bay; Loraine, Mrs. Max Mercer at Bay Roberts; also fourteen grandchildren, to whom the sympathy of a large circle of friends is extended.

The funeral which was attended by the Canadian Legion, all the members of the family, his daughter, Ruth, and a large number of friends from St. John's and neighbouring towns, took place by motor hearse, on Saturday afternoon to Central United Church. Interment was in the U.C. cemetery. Rev. J. B. Reynolds officiated.