

By: Bill Stevens; originally published in September 2006 Newsletter

Each Remembrance Day veterans and citizens gather in front of the cenotaph at the corner of Ann and Main streets in Port Dalhousie to pay their respects to those brave souls who made the supreme sacrifice. Their names are inscribed on the cenotaph so that we may never forget them. William Brown's name appears under those who lost their lives in World War One. William was born on March 25, 1896 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Sometime prior to the outset of the war, his family moved to a house on Main Street in Port Dalhousie. William worked as a shoemaker. He signed up for service in Niagara on August 4, 1915 and was assigned the service number of 141631. He was sent overseas and served with the Canadian Infantry, Central Ontario Regiment, 58th Battalion.

At 10:30 p.m. on October 8, 1916 Private William Brown was on his way into the front line just north of Courcellette. As he marched forward, a line of tired soldiers were heading back from the front through the muddy terrain. Unbelievably, his older brother Charles was one of those soldiers and he and William paused briefly to greet each other, Charles wishing his brother well at the front. They had not seen each other since the start of the war and it would also be the last time they were to see each other, as by midnight William would be killed in action. William was 20 years old.

William left behind his family, including his mother, Mrs. Charlotte Brown, who had moved to Toronto, an aunt, Mrs. Mary McKey of Merritton, and his brother Charles. His belongings were sent home and the Silver Cross was sent to his mother in 1920, but the family was never able to find out where his remains had been buried. Twenty years later a group of researchers doing excavation near the battlefield in Courcellette found a single grave containing badges, buttons and the identification disc along with the remains of Private William Brown. The Department of National Defence in Canada informed his family here in Canada and

William's remains were removed and reburied in Grave 2.A.12 of the London Cemetery Extension, High Road, Longueval, about two miles south east of Courcellette. Because the location of his remains had not previously been known, William's name had already been inscribed in the Vimy Memorial, but a suitably inscribed headstone was placed on the grave. The family finally was to receive his remaining belongings, his identification disc, eighteen years after the war ended.

When William's brother Charles returned to Canada after the war, he settled in Toronto and started a family. He named his eldest child in memory of his brother. Charles' son William knew about his namesake. He had a newspaper clipping from 1936 describing how his uncle's remains were found. He knew that his uncle's name is inscribed on the cenotaph in Port Dalhousie and also on page 60 in the Book of Remembrance displayed in the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill each year on February 16th. Although his children have never been to Port Dalhousie, they now have photos of the cenotaph and William's inscription through the kindness of a stranger. Private William Brown has not been forgotten.