



PRIVATE HENRY GEORGE BRACKNELL

SERVICE NO.602384

3RD BATTALION, CANADIAN INFANTRY

(CENTRAL ONTARIO REGIMENT)

DIED 13TH JUNE 1916 AGED 20

Henry was born in North Warnborough on 7 November 1895¹. He was the son of Frank, a groom and gardener², and Jane (nee Constant) Bracknell. Frank died at the young age of 34 in the last quarter of 1896 when Henry was one year old and his older sister, Emily, was two³.

It appears that he may have had a difficult childhood, for he was sent to Canada through the National Children's Homes. He sailed from Liverpool on the SS Dominion on 12 March 1908, bound for Canada via the port of Maine, USA. His record on the Passenger List for the voyage states that he was 12 years old and a farm hand⁴.

When Henry enlisted to the Canadian Infantry (Central Ontario Regiment) on 19 March 1915 his attestation form for the Canadian Over-seas Expeditionary Force form indicates that he had become a Canadian citizen and his 'trade or calling' was 'farmer'⁵. In late spring/early summer 1916 Canadian Divisions were involved in action around the Ypres Salient where they held the southern part. The battle of Mount Sorrel began on 2 June, when forward positions on the Mount in the south were devastated in a German bombardment, which killed the 3rd Division Commander and hundreds of others. The German infantry continued their attack, taking further positions at Observatory Ridge in the centre and Hooze in the north despite an unsuccessful, hastily organised counterattack on 3 June. Sir Julian Byng, the Canadian Corps Commander set his sights at regaining the positions lost and with careful planning of a heavy artillery bombardment, this aim was achieved on 13 June 1916. Over 8000 Canadians had been killed in action during this battle⁶. Henry Bracknell was one of those casualties.

¹ Source – Information from family member.

² 1891 Census, Odiham, Hampshire, Ref: Class RG12; Piece: 953; Folio: 22; Page: 5 www.ancestry.co.uk

³ Free BMD Death Index, 1837-1915, www.ancestry.co.uk

⁴ Information from family member and Passenger Lists leaving UK 1890-1960, www.findmypast.co.uk

⁵ Copy of form kindly provided by family member

⁶ Source – History, Mount Sorrel, Canadian War Museum – www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar



Henry is commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial and on the Canadian Virtual War Memorial. As a Canadian, he would have been awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal 1914-20 and the Victory Medal 1914-19.

