

Private William Ronald BROWN

Service number 7360859
Royal Army Medical Corps
176 (Highland) Field Ambulance
Died on 20 May 1941, aged 22

Born in Wells, William worked at the Wiltshire United Dairies and was in the Wells St John Ambulance. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and was posted to the 176 (Highland) Field Ambulance. On 20 May 1941, aged 22, he died of meningitis in a hospital in the north of England.



Members of the Wells St John Ambulance
Photograph by Phillips City Studio, © Wells & Mendip Museum

William was born in Wells on 15 February 1919 to William Henry Brown and Anne née Gardner. His father was a carpenter and undertaker. He had two sisters, Winifred and Kathleen, and one brother, Lionel. In September 1939, William was living with his family at 37, Southover. He was working as a 'packet cheese worker' at the Wiltshire United Dairies and was in the Wells St John Ambulance.

William enlisted into the Royal Army Medical Corps and was posted to the 176 (Highland) Field Ambulance. The 176 was part of the 28th Brigade, 9th (Highland) Infantry Division, which was created in 1939 as a Territorial Army duplicate of the 51st (Highland) Infantry Division. The 51st went to France and the 9th Division remained in Scotland protecting naval bases and never went to France.

To all intents and purposes the 51st Division was lost in France, and so in August 1940, the 9th Division was renamed the 51st. The 176 Field Ambulance was then brigaded with the 1st and 7th Black Watch, and the 7th Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders. For the next two years the division spent its time in training and home defence.

We do not know when William joined the 176 Field Ambulance, but it seems that he spent his time on training and coastal defence either on the south coast of England or on the northeast coast of Scotland. On 20 May 1941 he died of meningitis in a hospital in the north of England.

His funeral took place at Wells Cemetery on 24 May 1941 and he is buried in Section H. Row K. Grave 3. Following the committal, three volleys were fired over the grave and a bugler played the Last Post. William is also remembered on the rolls of honour at Wells Town Hall and Wells Cemetery.