

John William Thurnham – A Hertfordshire Lad in the Canadian Army
By Paul Johnson



John William Thurnham was born on the 3rd June 1890 the son of Louisa Thurnham, who lived at 7 Piccotts End, Hemel Hempstead.

After leaving school he became a Tinsmith by trade and later, like many young men at that time, sought a new life in Canada. He boarded the *SS Corinthian* on the 23 June 1910, heading for Colloden, Ontario.

With the outbreak of the Great War, John attested for service with the Canadian Army on the 21st December 1915 in Toronto, being given the Regimental number 140632 and drafted to the 75th Battalion, Canadian Infantry.

He sailed from Halifax on the 29 March 1916 aboard the *S.S. Empress of Britain* arriving in the UK on the 9 April 1916.

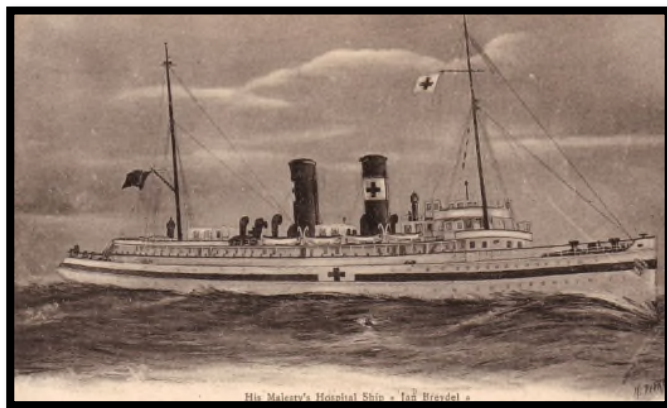
He proceeded to France on the 16 June 1916 as part of the 60th Battalion, Canadian Infantry. On arrival was drafted to the 3rd Pioneer Battalion, Canadian Infantry and joined his unit in the field on the 20 June 1916.

John received a shell wound on 17 September 1916 at Usna Hill on the Somme, whilst digging

communication trenches at a location named Rennie Street. One man was killed, four reported missing and 13 wounded, including John Thurnham who was suffering from shrapnel wounds to his Back, Right Leg and Jaw.

Initially, he was evacuated to No.8 Stationary Hospital, Wimereux, and from there was transferred to the UK aboard the *Hospital Ship Jan Breydel* (Right) on the 19 September 1916.

His treatment and recovery saw him moved from several hospitals and convalescent homes in the UK throughout the remainder of 1916. In early 1917, John was transferred back to Toronto to continue his recovery, until his eventual discharge on the 23 August 1918. He never returned to France.



John married Florrie Oswald, an English girl from Bromley, Kent, who was living in Toronto, on Christmas Eve 1918.

He died at Sunnybrooke Hospital, Toronto, on the 17th June 1963. Two weeks after his 73rd birthday.

Sources:

Anita Brewer (Family Photographs)