

### **Joseph Matthew Clouston (1877-????)**

Joseph Matthew was born in North Shields in 1877. By the age of 13 both his parents were dead, this led to his disappearance from Tyneside and it would be many years before he would reappear.

It was during research into Clouston deaths in World War I that he reappeared. In 1915 he crossed the border from the Juna Creek, PA, United States (where he was staying with his sister, Sarah Emma Van Dixon nee Clouston, who is named as his next of kin) into Canada and enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. His attestation papers showed that he had served in the Royal Navy. The 1901 Census showed that he was aboard H.M.S. Vulcan in Malta. His period of service showed that he had joined the service before 1891.

His Canadian service record was obtained and this confirmed that he had 'adjusted' his age in order to enlist. His record shows that out of the line he wasn't a very good soldier. A succession of entries show field punishments for being late, absent or drunk and this continued after his battalion left for Europe.

On Christmas Day 1915 he was again in trouble, 'absent from church parade and drunk on the highway' again he was charged and fined 3 days pay and given 25 days field punishment number 1 - this I suspect he never served, because the battalion moved into the line at Messines in Belgium.

The next entry in his record shows that on New Years Day 1916 he received a gunshot wound to the right shoulder. The next 5 months would be a succession of operations to remove the bullet and associated shrapnel. The medical papers show that this left him with impaired movement in his right shoulder and numbness in the hand. In April he was classified as fit for light duties.

By May he was starting to push for a return to his unit and this was subsequently granted, although his doctors thought him unfit for service. He spent 2 months trying to serve in the line but in August was returned to hospital and although he returned to his unit he served as Billet Warden until December 1918.

He returned to Winipeg in 1919 and was discharged from the Army - and promptly disappeared again.

The mystery is associated with another document included in his service record - his will, made in September 1915. Despite the fact that Joseph had brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces he left his pay to a Mrs Leonard Lowe of North Shields.

Joseph's great uncle [John Thomas Clouston](#) had a son Henry George Clouston who was some 11 years older than Joseph. In 1892 Henry married a widow, Jane Ann Lake (nee Dowson). Henry and Jane had no children of their own but Jane had two daughters, Sarah and Florence, from her first marriage.

Henry always thought of the girls as 'his' daughters. In 1901 at the census Sarah, her new husband (Leonard Lowe) and their new son Leonard were described as Daughter, Son-In-Law and Grandson were living with Henry and Jane.

We will never know why, but it is Sarah who would have been Joseph's beneficiary had he been killed during the war.