

## Robert Hugh Brown (1889 – 1954)

Robert Brown was the fifth child of a Farnhill family. Employed as a piece folder in a silk and cotton mill, Robert became a gunner in the Royal Field Artillery.

Whilst serving in France he contracted trench fever and later, in 1917, was hospitalised, in Glasgow, with shell shock.

He must have been deemed fit to return to active service as, in 1918, the local press reported that he had been seriously wounded and was in St Luke's Hospital, Bradford.

Returning to Farnhill after the war, Robert never married. He lived with his surviving siblings and died in 1954. He is buried in St Andrew's new graveyard.



Photograph by kind permission of Keighley News

### Pre-war life

Robert Hugh Brown was the son Henry Brown and Ann Elizabeth (nee Stephenson). Henry was a native of Farnhill, and a warp dresser by trade; Ann was originally from Rodley, Leeds.

Robert's parents married at St. Andrew's Kildwick on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1868. Their first child, a son called Dick, was born before the end of the year but died when he was just three months old. Three further children followed (Christopher, b. 7/9/1872; Ethel Mary, b. 10/1/1882; and Annie, b. 27/5/1886) before their fifth and final child, Robert, was born in Farnhill, on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1889. He was baptised in St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick, at the end of March that year.

The family lived in Starkey Lane before moving to 27 Newby Road some time before the 1901 census.

The 1911 census recorded all the family working at a silk and cotton mill. Robert was employed as a piece folder.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.									
Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.									
The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions than the preparation of Statistical Tables.									
NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE					PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards.	BIRTHPLACE of every person.
1 Henry Brown	Head	64	Married	42	5	4	1	Warpdinner Silk Cotton	Farnhill Yorks
2 Ann Elizabeth Brown	Wife	63	Married	42	5	4	1	"	Rodley Yorks 086
3 Christopher Brown	Son	34	Single					Wearp Silk Cotton 947	Farnhill "
4 Ethel May Brown	Daughter	29	Single					Wearp do do	Farnhill "
5 Annie Brown	Daughter	26	Single					Piece Mender " 878	Farnhill "
6 Robert Hugh Brown	Son	22	Single					Piece Mender " 488	Farnhill "
7									

Extract from the 1911 Brown family's 1911 census return  
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**Note:** The "Particulars of Marriage" section records that Henry and Ann had been married for 42 years, and had had five children. One of these children (Dick) had died; the other 4 were living.

## WW1 service

Robert Hugh Brown's WW1 service records do not appear to have survived (over 70% of these records were destroyed in a fire during the WW2 London blitz). However a fragmentary account of his WW1 service can be constructed from other sources.

His inclusion on the Farnhill Parish Council Roll of Honour, drawn up early in 1916, suggests that he had already attested his willingness to serve when called upon to do so, but subsequent newspaper reports indicate that his service period did not start until at least March 1916.

**Note:** Some news reports say March 1916, others September. The difference can be accounted for by a six month training period in the UK before Robert was transferred to France.

Robert joined the Royal Field Artillery (RFA) as a Gunner.

In September 1916 he was transferred to France but by December he had been invalided back home, suffering from trench fever.

**Note:** On 4<sup>th</sup> January 1917, William Benjamin Whitham, who was living in Farnhill, recorded in his diary "Robert Brown in hospital at Glasgow, Shell Shock".

In November 1918 news appeared in the local press that he had been seriously wounded and was in hospital in Bradford.

**Wounded Farnhill Soldiers.**  
Gunner Robert H. Brown, R.F.A., younger son of Mr. Harry Brown, of Newby Road, Farnhill, is in St. Luke's Hospital, Bradford, suffering from shrapnel wounds in the left shoulder, right hand, and also in the face. Gunner Brown joined the army in March, 1916, and proceeded to France in September of that year. He was invalided home suffering from trench fever in December, 1916, and returned to France last year.

From the West Yorkshire Pioneer 1/11/1918  
By kind permission of Craven Herald


There were no further news reports and these wounds may have marked the end of Robert's military career.

## Post-war life

After the war Robert resumed his life in Farnhill, returning to live at 27 Newby Road with his father and siblings (his mother had died in March 1918) and to his work at Junction Mill.

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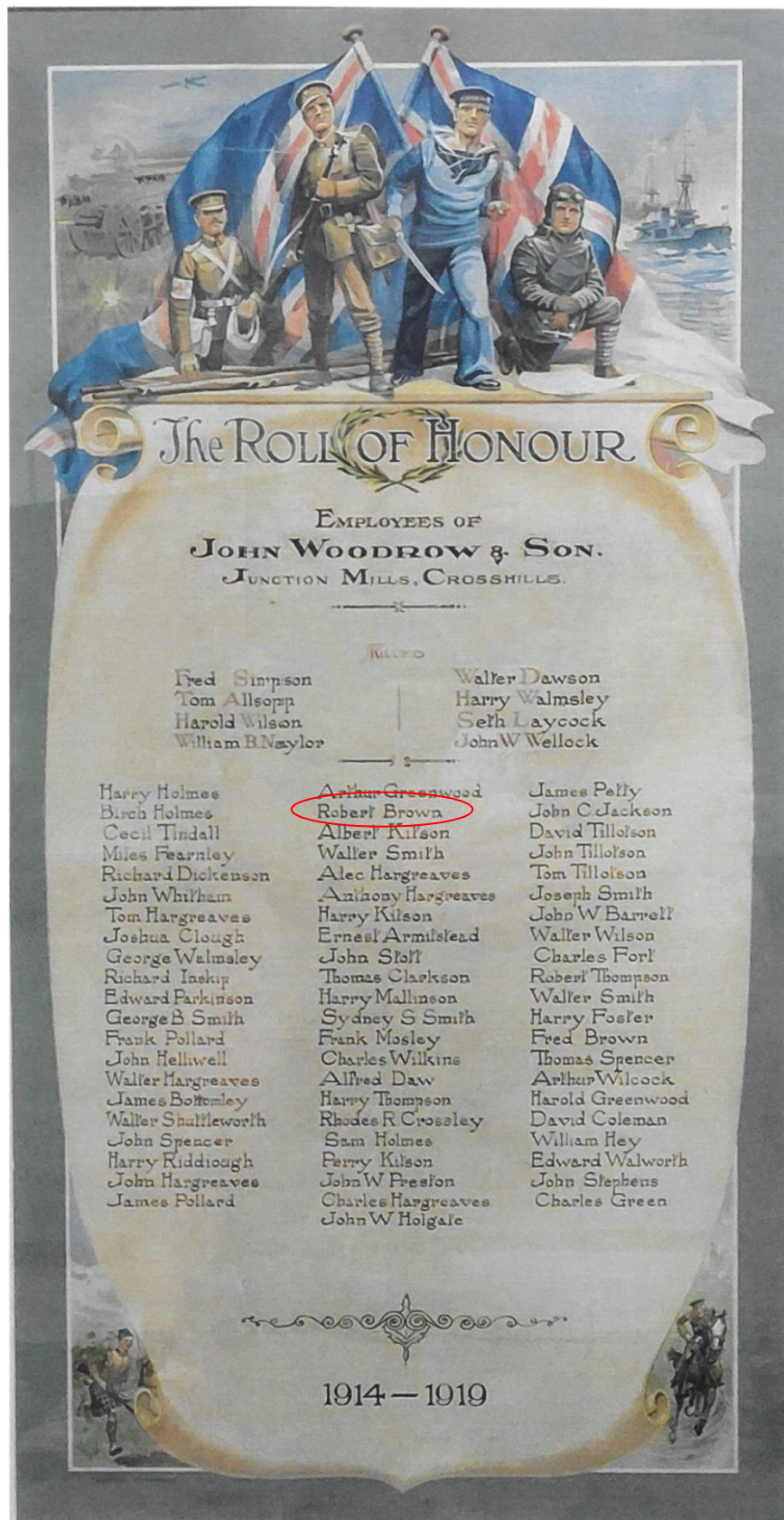
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**John Woodrow & Son Ltd.**

JUNCTION MILLS, CROSS HILLS  
KEIGHLEY, YORKS.

A advertisement for Woodrow's Mill from a local magazine – date and source uncertain  
Provided by Keighley and District Digital Archive

His name was included on the recently discovered WW1 Roll of Honour of men employed by Woodrow's Mill at Junction.



With thanks to Burberry Group, PLC

The 1921 census records the Brown family living at 27 Newby Road and made up of:

Henry Brown, 75, Head; Retired

Christopher Brown, 48, Son; Weaver at J. Woodrow, Junction

Ethel Mary Brown, 39, Daughter; Home duties

Annie Brown, 35, Daughter; Coffee House Attendant at J. Woodrow, Junction

Robert Hugh Brown, 32, Son; Warp Dresser at J. Woodrow, Junction

Robert's father, Henry Brown, died on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1924; aged 78. The following obituary appeared in the Craven Herald (29/2/1924).

## FARNHILL.

### DEATH OF MR. HENRY BROWN.

We regret to announce the death of Mr. Henry Brown, Buckler Hill, Farnhill, which occurred on Monday morning last. Mr. Brown, who was in his 78th year, was out as recently as Friday last but unfortunately he caught a chill. He had also been suffering from heart trouble for a number of years.

The deceased was born in Farnhill and had lived in the village all his life. A great lover of music, he was conductor of the Kildwick Prize Brass Band for a considerable period. In politics he was a Conservative and a loyal member of the Kildwick Conservative Club. He was also a regular attender at the Kildwick Church. For the greater part of his working life he had been employed at the Junction Mills, his occupation being that of a warp dresser. Owing to the state of his health Mr. Brown had taken no active part in the affairs of the village during the last few years.

He was one of a family of brothers who all lived to an advanced age, his two surviving brothers, Mr. Wm. Brown and Mr. Jas. Brown, both being over 70 years old. Mr. Brown, whose wife died about six years ago, leaves two sons and two daughters.

The interment took place at Kildwick Church on Wednesday, the last rites being performed by the Rev. C. E. V. Hodge. There were a large number of relations and friends present. The Conservative Club was represented by Mr. T. Whitaker and the Junction Mills by Mr. John Parkinson. The bearers, who were past and present warp-dressers at the mill, were Messrs. J. W. Holgate, W. Clough, W. Horner, W. Roberts, J. Clough, J. Midgley, and J. Dickenson. There was a number of beautiful floral tributes including wreaths from the Conservative Club, warp-dressers at Junction Mills and workpeople at Junction Mills.

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Christopher, Robert's older brother, died in March 1931.

In 1939, the three remaining siblings moved the short distance from 27 Newby Road to number 1 Bucklar Hill, where they all lived until their deaths.

Keith Bunnett, a resident of Farnhill during WW2, recalls that in 1941 he sold tickets to a dance, and also food at a local cafe, to raise money to support Robert Hugh Brown who had had a leg amputated, was confined to a wheelchair, and consequently had lost his job.

Robert Hugh Brown died of heart disease in St. John's Hospital, Keighley, on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1954 and was buried in Kildwick Extension graveyard. He was 65 years of age.

REGISTRATION DISTRICT		WORTH VALLEY							
1954 DEATH in the Sub-district of Keighley		in the County of York (W.R.)							
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
469	Seventh February 1954 St. Johns Hospital (Keighley W.R.)	Robert Hugh BROWN.	Male	65 years	of 1, Bucklar Hill, Farnhill (Keighley W.R.) a Milk Milk Time Keeper	1. a. Coronary thrombosis 2. Coronary atherosclerosis. Certified by J.P. Raftery M.B.	A. Brown Sister, Bucklar Hill, Farnhill.	Eighth February 1954 105 H	J. Baya Park Registrar

Robert Brown's death certificate  
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The following short obituary appeared in the local press (Craven Herald, 12/2/1954).

**BACHELOR'S DEATH.**—The death occurred at the week-end in hospital of Mr. Robert Brown, of Bucklar Hill. Mr. Brown, who was 65 years of age, was well known in the village and surrounding district. A native of Farnhill, he was a wardresser by trade, and had worked in a local mill until his health failed sometime ago. The funeral took place yesterday at St. Andrew's Church, the service being conducted by the Vicar (the Rev. S. A. Selby). Mr. Brown, who was a bachelor, leaves one sister.

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## Postscript

The last of the Brown siblings, Annie, died in 1962 and was buried with her brother in Kildwick extension graveyard.



Photograph by Farnhill WW1 Volunteers Project

None of the siblings were married or had children and it is unlikely that any close relatives are living in the local area.



## Robert Hugh Brown – a life in summary

**Born:** 2/2/1889, Farnhill

**Baptised:** 31/3/1889, Kildwick

**Died:** 7/2/1954, St. John's Hospital, Keighley; **Aged:** 65  
buried 11/2/54, Kildwick St. Andrew's

**Home address:** 1 Bucklar Hill, Farnhill

### Parents

**Father:** Henry; b. 1848, Farnhill; d. 25/2/1924, Farnhill

**Mother:** Ann Elizabeth (nee Stephenson); b. 1849, Rodley (Leeds); d. 24/3/1918, Farnhill

**Married:** 30/5/1868, Kildwick

### Siblings

Dick; b. 24/9/1868, Farnhill; d. December 1868, Farnhill

Christopher; b. 7/9/1872, Farnhill; d. March 1931, Farnhill

Ethel Mary; b. 10/1/1882, Farnhill; d. 29/1/1944

Annie; b. 27/5/1886, Farnhill; d. 1962

### WW1 service

**Service period:** March 1916 to at least October 1918

**Regt:** Royal Field Artillery (RFA); Gunner, no. 129558

**Medals:** British War Medal, Victory Medal

**Home address:** 27 Newby Road, Farnhill

### Marriage

Unmarried.

