

Cyril Francis Richards

The Royal Newfoundland Regiment

Regimental No. 991

World War I

Born: 06 Jan 1894

Place of Birth: Salmon Cove, South River, Newfoundland

Parents: Isaac and Eliza Richards

The story of WW I veteran Cyril Richards is akin to what one might read in a novel. Young soldier goes to war, is gravely injured, near death but miraculously survives, is discharged as unfit to fight. He returns home, tries to help his widowed mother, marries, has a family, lives a good life and dies of old age.

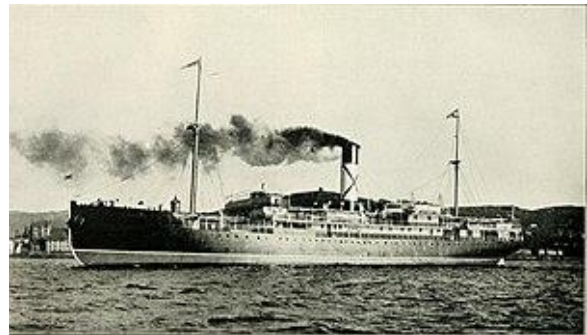
Cyril enlisted in the 1st Newfoundland Regiment (the Regiment had not been given the "Royal" designation as of yet) in June 1915. His enlistment papers describe Cyril as being 5' 9" tall, with brown hair and eyes, he has a scar on his right foot from a

scalding accident as a child. He is single, a labourer by trade and Church of England by religion.

According to Cyril's official service record, he would spend one (1) year and three hundred twenty-three (323) in service.

Here are excerpts from his record by date:

1. 20 – 03 – 15: Embarked St. John's aboard the S.S. *Stephano*



SS *Stephano* was a passenger liner and sealing ship, owned by Bowring Brothers and operated in their Red Cross Line of Arctic steamships. *Stephano* is most notable for her role in the 1914 *Newfoundland* Sealing Disaster, under the command of Captain Abram Kean. *Stephano* was the sister ship to the SS *Florizel*

2. 20 – 08 – 15 Embarked for the British Expeditionary Force (BEF)
3. 31 – 08 – 15: Disembarked Alexandria and then entrained for Cairo
4. 13 – 09 – 15: Embarked for Gallipoli
5. 19-20 – 09 – 15: Landed Suvla Bay the night of the 19-20th
6. 31 – 12 – 15: Admitted 26 CCS with Jaundice
7. 30 – 12 – 15: To 27th general hospital at Mudros. (*Mudros comprised a small Greek port on the Mediterranean island of Lemnos.*)

8. 31 01 – 16: With Battalion and embarked Port Suez
9. 22 – 02 – 16: Disembarked Marseilles
10. 01 - 07 – 16: Wounded severe
11. 03 – 07 – 16: Admitted to hospital at St. Pol with GSW (gunshot) wound to the head
12. 03 – 08 – 16: Transferred to England
13. 04 – 08 – 16: Admitted to London General (Wandsworth)
14. 22 – 09 – 16: Furloughed then attached to Depot
15. 27 – 09 – 16: To Newfoundland
16. ?? – 10 – 16: Arrived Newfoundland
17. 16 – 12 – 16: Discharged “medically unfit”
18. 24 – 10 – 17: Re-enlisted and was accepted
19. 02 – 01 – 18: Discharged.

Pte. Richards amazingly was wounded on the very day that etched in the history of the Newfoundland Regiment and the battle that virtually wiped out the Regiment at Beaumont-Hamel.

According to the official Nominal Roll of those Officers and men of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment who are shown in the records of the District Office of the Department of Veterans Affairs, St. John's, Newfoundland, who were wounded during, just prior to, or subsequent to the action at Beaumont Hamel, 1 July 1916.

Pte Cyril Richard No. 991 is on that list. He was in fact a wounded survivor of Beaumont-Hamel.

A full copy of the injury suffered by Pte Richards is inserted below (first 3 pages). It describes how he was wounded on that faithful day of July 1st, 1916, at Beaumont-Hamel.

His head wound was so severe that in hospital, he was placed on the “dangerously ill list” and not expected to recover. But recover he did although permanently damaged, experiencing memory loss and severe headaches for the rest of his life.

A testament to this man’s sense of duty was that he tried to re-enlist a year following his being discharged as being medically unfit. He was accepted! This lasted just a few months however when he was discharged again.

Once home, now living with his widowed mother, Cyril wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Sir Richard Squires asking for assistance in securing a loan to start a business in South River. He even suggested that as collateral he would use his home and land as security for the loan. (See the full letter below, (pages 4 and 5 inserts)

Cyril appears in the 1935 Newfoundland general census as married man with a family. Cyril 41 is married to Mildred (Batten) Richards (37). They have two (2) children, a boy named Cyril and a girl named Daphne. They are living in South River.

The 1945 census see the family now living in Grand Falls Proper. The family still consists of Cyril, Mildred, Cyril (jr) and Daphne.

Cyril, a long time Legion member, passed away in February 1983 and Mildred died in 1996. They are buried in the All Saints Anglican Cemetery, South River, Newfoundland.

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Medical Report on an Invalid.

Station 3rd London General Hospital
Windsor Park, SW
Date Aug. 19/16

- 1. Unit 1st Seaforth
- 2. Regimental No. 991
- 3. Rank Pte
- 4. Name Richardson, Cyril
- 5. Age last birthday 22
- 6. Enlist { Jan 1915
at St. John's Seaforth
- 7. Former Trade or Occupation { at times

8. Disability.

Trochanter hole in Skull. 1-3
9 SW Skull
Statement of Case.

Note.—The answers to the following questions are to be filled in by the Officer in medical charge of the case. In answering them he will carefully discriminate between the man's unassisted statements and evidence recorded in his military and medical documents. He will also carefully distinguish cases entirely due to general disease.

- 9. Date of origin of disability. July 1916
- 10. Place of origin of disability. France

11. Give succinctly the essential facts of the history of the disability, setting out in the Medical History Sheet bearing on the case. While advancing to the attack. Bullet wound of Skull. Depressed fracture recalled. Decompression operation performed. Successful recovery. Operation was performed in France. Admitted to this hospital Aug. 19/16.

- 12. (a) Give your opinion as to the causation of the disability.
 - (b) If you consider it to have been caused by active service, illness or ordinary military service, specify the special conditions to which you attribute it (See note on page 2).
- G. S. W.
Active Service

13. What is his present condition?

Weight should be given in all cases when it is likely to afford evidence of the progress of the disability.

Wound of scalp is healed. There is a trephine hole posteriorly on the left side. Patient complains of defective memory & inability to read. General health good. Mental state - Depressive

14. If the disability is an injury, was it caused

- (a) In action? *yes*
- (b) On full service? *yes*
- (c) On duty? *yes*
- (d) Off duty?

15. Was a Court of Inquiry held on the injury?

- If so—(a) When?
- (b) Where?
- (c) Opinion?

no

16. Was an operation performed? If so, what?

yes, Decompression

17. If not, was an operation advised and declined?

18. In case of loss or decay of teeth, is the loss of teeth the result of wounds, injury or disease, directly attributable to active service?

19. Do you recommend

- (a) Discharge as permanently unfit,
- (b) Discharge as fit for duty?

yes

(Signed) M. Schwab
C.S.
Officer in medical charge of case.

I have satisfied myself of the general accuracy of this report, and concur therewith, except

Station *1st Lt. Alfred H. Gould*
Officer in charge of Hospital

Date *24/5/16*

* Loss of teeth on an insubstantial basis, active service, should be attributed to disease, unless there is evidence that it is due to some other cause. *25 - 1st Lt. H.A.M.B.*
* Delete this word if an amputation was to be made.

SEP 3 1916

Opinion of the Medical Board.

Notes.—(1) Clear and decisive answers to the following questions are to be carefully filed in by the Board, as in the event of the man being invalided, it is essential that the Commissioners of Chelsea Hospital should be in possession of the most reliable information to enable them to decide upon the man's status in pension.

- (2.) Expressions such as "may," "might," "probably," etc., should be avoided.
- (3.) The rates of pension vary directly according to whether the disability is attributed to (a) active service, (b) disease, or (c) ordinary military service. It is therefore essential when assigning the cause of the disability to differentiate between them (see Articles 1188 and 1189, Pay Warrent, 1915).
- (4.) In answering question 20 the Board should be careful to discriminate between diseases resulting from military conditions and diseases to which the soldier would have been equally liable in civil life.
- (5.) A disability is to be regarded as due to disease when it is caused by military service abroad in disease when there is a special liability to contract the disease.

- 20. (a) State whether the disability is the result of (1.) active service, (2.) disease, or (3.) ordinary military service.
- (b) If due to one of these causes, to what specific conditions do the Board attribute it?

Active Service
J.P.W.

- 21. Has the disability been aggravated by
 - (a) Intemperance?
 - (b) Misconduct?
 - (c) Any of the conditions mentioned in Question 20, and if so which?

P.O.
P.O.

- 22. Is the disability permanent?
- 23. If not permanent, what is its probable minimum duration?
To be stated in months.
- 24. To what extent is his capacity for earning a full livelihood in the general labour market impaired at present?
- 25. Defining the extent of his disability as one a livelihood, estimate it at 1, 1/2, or total incapacity.

Yes, but may improve

Total at present

- 26. Is the man suffering from a disability which would obviously, as far as you can judge, cause him to be rejected by an Approved Society under the National Insurance Act?

Yes

- 27. If an operation was advised and declined, was the refusal unreasonable?

vide 16.

- 28. Do the Board recommend
 - (a) Discharge as permanently unfit, or
 - (b) ~~Discharge as unfit?~~

Yes
Yes

Signatures—

W. Edwards Major R.A.M.C. President
J. J. Wood Capt R.A.M.C. Member
R. P. Howard Lt. Member
 Station *Hoptonwood*
 Date *28-8-16*
 Approved *W. Edwards* Major R.A.M.C. Administrative Medical Officer
 Station *Hoptonwood District*
 Date *28-8-16*
J. D. May Capt District

South River
July 23rd 1920

To the Hon. R. A. Squires Premier,
St. Johns N. F. L. A.

Sir. - Having been seriously wounded
in the head on July 1st 1916 which have
left me unfit for hard labour.

I am the only support of a widowed
mother, my father having been dead for
fifteen years.

I get a Pension of thirty dollars and my
mother \$4.50 Per month.

I am writing to ask you if you will
help me to start a ^{commercial} business here in
South River.

So it is much Sir to ask for the loan
of three thousand dollars for twenty years
to pay back in four payments at a 5%
interest.

I will give as security my house and six
acres of land valued at the same
amount as referred to above.

Trusting that you will kindly consider
my request & thanking you for a reply

I remain yours very respectfully
Lynd Richards