



Samson Hemmell
World War I
Royal Naval Reserve
Service No. 1064X

Samson was born on October 21st, 1891, to parents Edmond and Jane Hemmell of Sandwich Bay, Labrador.

Samson enlisted in the Royal Naval Reserve at Port St. Johns on November 10th, 1913. His enlistment papers describe Samson as 21 years old, single, having black hair and brown eyes. His occupation is given as fisherman (Labrador fishery) and the paper is not signed by him but simply left blank.

There is no service record could be found for Samson. The reason for this is that following his enlistment, he returned to his home in Labrador for a brief period and then on his way back to St. Johns to begin training, he was stricken with “brain fever.”

The ship he was on had to put him ashore at Coley’s Point (Bay Roberts) where he succumbed to the fever and died on August 29th, 1914. He was just 24 at the time.

He is buried in St. John The Evangelist Anglican Cemetery, Coleys Point.

From: CBC News · Posted: Jul 04, 2012 6:27 AM NT | Last Updated: July 4, 2012



The headstone of Samuel Hemmell in Coley's Point. (Gary B.)

David and Ean Parsons, amateur historians from St. John's, have discovered that Samuel Hemmell of the British Royal Naval Reserve was Newfoundland and Labrador's first casualty in the First World War.

David Parsons, a retired doctor, says he and his son found out about Hemmell and his unfortunate death from brain fever while they were doing research on the Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve.

David Parsons, amateur historian. (CBC) They dug a bit deeper and discovered that Hemmell was listed on a Labrador virtual war memorial website as Sampson Hamel, son of Edmund and Jane Hamel, of Muddy Bay, Labrador.

Further research revealed that Hemmell boarded the S.S. Kyle in Labrador on Aug. 24, 1914, for military training in St. John's. But he never arrived.

"While he was on the ship, apparently he fell ill, was seen by one doctor, but told to continue on," explained Parsons. "When he got to Bay Roberts, he was ill enough that he came off the ship. And apparently [he] went to some friends in Coley's Point. That night he went unconscious, and he was dead the next day."

Tombstone of soldier remains in Coley's Point

Hemmell was buried in the St. John the Evangelist Anglican Cemetery in Coley's Point, Conception Bay.

But according to Parsons, Hemmell was never recognized as a casualty of war.

"As we researched it, we found out that once he boarded the S.S. Kyle in Labrador, he was considered to be on active duty," said Parsons.

Now, 98 years after Hemmell's death, Parsons and his son have ensured that Hemmell has been officially recognized as a casualty of the war he never got to fight, which has made Hemmell the first casualty of the Great War from Newfoundland and Labrador.