



Private William Ginn (Regimental Number 5912) lies in Plymouth (Efford) Cemetery: Grave reference, Number 4809. Class C. Church Ground.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman*, William Ginn was a recruit of the 15th(?) Draft. He presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury**, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on August 5, 1918. It was a procedure which found him...*Fit for Foreign Service*.

**The building was to serve as the Regimental Headquarters in Newfoundland for the duration of the conflict.*

It was to be on the day of that medical assessment, August 5, and at the same venue, that William Ginn was now to be enlisted. He was engaged...*for the duration of the war**...at the daily private soldier's rate of a single dollar to which was to be appended a ten-cent per diem Field Allowance.

**At the outset of the War, perhaps because it was felt by the authorities that it would be a conflict of short duration, the recruits enlisted for only a single year. As the War progressed, however, this was obviously going to cause problems and the men were encouraged to re-enlist. Later recruits – as of or about May of 1916 - signed on for the 'Duration' at the time of their original enlistment.*

Only a further few hours were then to go by before there came to pass, while still at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On that same fifth day* of that August** he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, William Ginn became...*a soldier of the King*.

**Although a second source documents the sixth day as that of his Attestation.*

***It had been two months prior to this that the Newfoundland Military Service Act (conscription had come into effect. From May 11 through to the end of the Great War, the Department of Militia was to call a total of 1,470 men into active service. No evidence found among his documents suggests that William Ginn was or was not one of those to be conscripted.*

Many of the recruits during this period are recorded as having been granted several days of a final furlough before departure for *overseas service*. Private Ginn, Number 5912, was to be one of those to receive these several days of leave, his records showing that following some initial training he was granted home leave to the community of Comfort Cove in the District of Twillingate from August 17 to 26 before returning to St. John's and accordingly reporting...*to duty*...with the 3rd Battalion, but not, however, until the 31st day of the month – no reason appears for this among his papers but he was apparently to suffer no consequences because of the delay.

Following his enlistment it is likely that Private Ginn reported...*to duty*...to be quartered in the temporary barracks apparently established since 1915 in the St. John's curling rink and the Prince's Skating Rink at the eastern end of the city. He surely returned there after the aforesaid period of leave.

(Right: *This photograph of the Prince's Rink in St. John's with military personnel, apparently attired in uniforms of Great War vintage, on parade is from the Ice Hockey Wiki web-site. There appears to be no further information a propos.)*



Some three weeks after his return to the capital, on September 22 Private Ginn was one of the 24th Draft to leave Newfoundland. The contingent was to take the train from St. John's to Québec (his files say Halifax but – if the date of September 22 is correct - other information makes Québec almost certain – he likely travelled *via* Halifax). There at Québec the troops embarked onto His Majesty's Transport *Huntsend* and sailed for the United Kingdom on the 28th.



The three troopships in the convoy, *Victoria* and *City of Cairo* the two others, were infected with influenza: about one hundred men in all would die at sea and more were to expire after having arrived in England.

(Right above: *The former German ship Lützow, seized by the British in 1914 and re-named Huntsend.* – from *Old Ship Photos*)

Private Ginn was evacuated from *Huntsend* on October 11 upon the vessel's arrival in Devonport, and was admitted into the nearby Military Hospital, to be confirmed as suffering from influenza and subsequently pneumonia. He was...*admitted unconscious and dangerously ill – apparently unable to expectorate (cough) – stimulants ordered. Patient gradually became weaker and died without regaining consciousness thus details are not available. On admission he was in a very neglected state, lousy and sordid (filthy) about mouth...* (from two medical reports)

The son of William Ginn (occasionally found as *Gynn*) – to whom he had allocated a daily sixty cents from his pay - and of Sarah Ginn (*née Cull* and/ or *Godden*) of Comfort Cove in the District of Twillingate, Newfoundland, he was also youngest brother to Johanna-Godden (married *White*); Lucy-Ann; Alfred-J. (?); James-Godden; and to Reuben-Cull.

**The couple had been married on October 21 of 1881 in the community of the Barr'd Islands.*

Private Ginn was reported as having...*died of sickness...of pneumonia brought on by influenza...*- at hospital in Devonport on October 12, 1918, the day after his landing, and was buried in nearby Plymouth.



William Ginn had enlisted at the *declared* age of twenty-one years. Thus far the exact date of his birth has proved to be elusive.

Private William Ginn was entitled to the British War Medal for his *overseas service*.

Note: *The Wikipedia web-site has 'Huntsend' carrying six-hundred forty-nine Canadians and continues to claim the following: '...five percent of the Canadians died before the troopship disembarked on October 11, 1918. Some, if not all, of these men were buried at Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial, a memorial site'...*

(continued)

Much of this is blatantly incorrect, of course: Firstly - any Newfoundlanders on board the ship were not Canadians; secondly – of those who died on board ship during the passage (such as the above Private Leonard Hynes and also Private Charles McCarthy) at least some, likely all of them, given the contagious and lethal nature of the disease, were buried at sea; thirdly – those sick while on board but who died after having disembarked were quickly buried in England for the same reason*.

Their clothing and bed-linen was usually burned as soon as possible.

****The vessel docked in Plymouth, England, while Beaumont-Hamel is, of course, in France. The memorial does, however, commemorate those whose bodies were committed to the waves.***

The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 31, 2023.