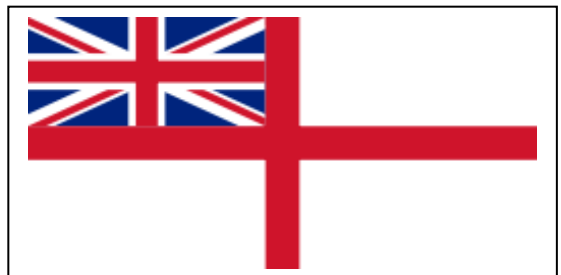




***(Right: The White Ensign has been flown by the Royal Navy in its present form since about the year 1800 although other naval ensigns had existed for at least two centuries. It consists of a red St. George's Cross – the national flag of England - on a white field with the Union Flag\* in the upper canton.***



***\*The Union Flag is commonly referred to as the 'Union Jack'; this is, in fact, a misnomer since a flag is referred to as a 'Jack' only when flown from the bow of a ship.)***

***(Preceding page: A Memorial Scroll, a copy of which was distributed to the families of those who had sacrificed their life while serving in the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve)***

***Samson Hemmell (also found as Hemell and Hamel (in his papers)), (and also found as Samuel in his papers)\* (1064x, Seaman) – having relinquished his occupation as a fisherman on the Labrador, died on board the coastal vessel Kyle (see below). A volunteer of the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, he had trained with that force for twenty-eight days as of his first enlistment on November 10 of 1913, terminating on December 7 of the same year. According to the terms (see further below) of that enlistment, at the outbreak of the Great War\*\* he had been summoned to war-time service.***

***Sailing from Labrador, Seaman Hemmell was to die while en route to St. John's\*\*\*, at Coley's Point, and was interred there where today he lies, in St. John the Evangelist Anglican Cemetery.***

***\*His papers also record that he was...Identified in 2018 by family as Sampson (sic) Hamel...***

***\*\*Apparently once on board the ship, Samson Hemmell was considered to be in service although his headstone does not recognize him as 'Seaman Hemmell' – but that may not be particularly unusual.***

***(Right below: The SS 'Kyle' was a ship of the Reid Newfoundland Company Alphabet Fleet, the vessels named in alphabetical order for places in Scotland, the homeland of the Reid family.***

***Until 1959 when she was sold to mainland interests, apparently for use in the seal hunt, she carried passengers and mail to the farthest reaches of Newfoundland and Labrador; she was used as a ferry on the North Sydney to Port aux Basques run; she was used as a troop-carrier to the mainland; she was called into service as an ice-breaker; and she even doubled as a rescue ship.***



***The vessel, built in England in 1913, remained in service until 1967 when, during a storm, she broke loose from her moorings and grounded at Riverhead, Harbour Grace, where she remains to this day (2021). – photograph from 1915(?)***

***\*\*\*Had he reached St. John's he would have reported...to duty...at the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS Calypso, moored in the harbour.***

***Note: During the years preceding the Great War the only military force on the Island of Newfoundland – apart from a handful of ill-fated local attempts – was to be the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland). Even so, it was to be some thirty years after the withdrawal of British troops from the Dominion in 1870 before the Reserve came into being in 1902.***

(Right below: *Recruits of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) seen here in front of HMS 'Calypso'. The shed-like superstructure seen behind them had been built onto the ship in 1902 to serve as a drill-hall. Whether the vessel was still 'Calypso', or had become 'Briton' by this time (see further below) is not clear. – photograph from Newfoundland Provincial Archives via Wikipedia)*

*Just fewer than four-hundred men were sought to enroll as seamen – apparently automatically at the rank of Able Seaman - and to present themselves annually in St. John's for five years in order to train for a period of twenty-eight days per annum. Allowed to report at a time of their own choosing, it is perhaps not surprising that these volunteers – mostly fishermen – were to opt to train during the winter months when fishing work was minimal.*



*Expenses were apparently defrayed for the most part by the British (Imperial) Government and an attempt was made to ensure the number of recruits would be kept constantly at a maximum. This practice and policy was then to be continued up until the onset of hostilities some twelve years later.*

*Of course, the purpose of having a reserve force at any time is to provide a prepared force ready at any time to serve at a time of need or crisis. Thus in August of 1914, upon the Declaration of War by the government in London, hundreds of those of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) were to make their way to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, from there to take passage overseas to bolster the ranks of the Royal Navy.*

*An elderly vessel, H.M.S. 'Calypso', having become surplus to the Admiralty's needs, had been provided to the Dominion of Newfoundland by the Royal Navy in 1902 for training purposes. After some debate it was eventually decided that she would be permanently moored in the harbour of the capital, her superstructure reduced, and a wooden shelter built on her upper deck to provide training facilities and living quarters for the prospective naval recruits.*

(Right: *H.M.S. 'Calypso' in full sail. She was re-named Briton in 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was launched by the Royal Navy. – photograph by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)*

A partial entry in on his enlistment papers suggests that Seaman Hemmel was a part of the annual Labrador fishery at the time of his recall – many of the recruits were involved in some manner with the fishery – and that during the off-season he was a resident in the community of Bay Roberts.



His grave-stone cites...*who answering the call of duty was stricken with the brain fever...- the aforesaid brain fever a Victorian term often used in lieu of encephalitis or meningitis – Newfoundland Vital Statistics cites the latter.*

The son of Edmond Hemmell and of Jane Hemmell of Sandwich Bay\* (deceased by the time of her son's departure), Labrador, Seaman Hemmell died at the age of twenty-four years (a second source has twenty-three) on August 29, 1914.

*\*As mentioned further above, his stated place of residence in – in 1913 – was Bay Roberts although on the same document he states that his place of birth was Sandwich Bay in Labrador.*

Credited with just five days of service, Seaman Sampson Hamel was apparently the first Newfoundlander to make the supreme sacrifice during the *Great War*. As he had neither travelled overseas nor been in any theatre of war, he was entitled to no medal, although his family should have received a scroll as seen on the first page.

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 21, 2023.