

(A photograph of the grave of Private Ralph is as yet unavailable.)

Private Cecil Ralph (Regimental Number 5201) is buried in the Church of England Cemetery in the community of Flat Island, Bonavista Bay.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman*, Cecil Ralph presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on May 20** of 1918. It was a procedure which was to pronounce him as...*Fit for Foreign Service*.**

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

*****This was the month during which the Newfoundland Military Service Act (conscription) came into effect. From May 11 through to the end of the War, the Department of Militia called a total of 1,470 men into active service – although there appears to be no evidence among his papers to suggest that Private Avery was one of those draftees.***

It was to be on the day of that medical assessment, May 20, while at the same venue, that Cecil Ralph would enlist. He was thus 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 some few hours were now to follow before there subsequently came to pass, while still at the *CLB Armoury* on Harvey Road, the final formality of his enlistment: attestation. On the same twentieth day of that month of May he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Cecil Ralph became...a soldier of the King.

According to his father, Cecil Ralph had attempted to enlist on two previous occasions only to be rejected both times.

Following his enlistment it is likely that Private Ralph 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 in the eastern end of the city.

(Right: This photograph of the Prince's Rink in St. John's with military personnel, apparently attired in uniforms of Great War vintage and here on parade is from the 'Ice Hockey Wiki' web-site.)



As was the case with many of his fellow recruits, Private Ralph was granted furlough to be spent at home while awaiting his eventual departure from St. John's for...overseas service; for him this period of leave was to be from May 31 until June 6. However, by June 8 he had taken sick and was to remain at home to be attended to by Dr. McDonald from Salvage who diagnosed him as suffering from pneumonia and measles, and unable to do anything other than to stay at home.

The Ministry of Militia undertook to pay the billeting allowance of ninety cents per day for the doctor and also one dollar per diem for nursing expenses.

The son of George Ralph, fisherman, and Susannah Ralph (née *Ralph** (sic)) of the Flat Islands, Bonavista Bay, he apparently also had a single sister and a younger brother eight years old in 1918.

**The couple had married in the community of Flat Island on March 12 of 1898.*

Private Ralph was reported to have...*died of sickness*...– of pneumonia and measles - at home on June 10, 1918.



Buried on Flat Island – although the grave is apparently no longer identifiable - on the day following his death, his grave was not completed until, at the earliest, the end of 1925. The first Commonwealth War Grave headstone had been broken in transit and its replacement was not shipped until November of that year.

Cecil Ralph had enlisted at the *declared* age of eighteen years and nine months; however, the exact date of his birth has proved to be elusive.

(Preceding page: *The sacrifice of Private Ralph is honoured on the Screen Wall in the Military Plot, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, St. John's.* – photograph from 2011)

(Right: *The sacrifice of Private Cecil Ralph is also honoured on the War Memorial in the community of Eastport.* – photograph from 2013)



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 30, 2023.

