



Private Chesley (elsewhere found as *Cheslie*) Garfield Ryan (Regimental Number 5690) is interred in Forest Road Anglican Cemetery in St. John's, in the Naval and Military Plot.

His occupation prior to military service recorded as that of a *fisherman*, Chesley Garfield Ryan presented himself for medical examination at the *Church Lads Brigade Armoury, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on June 14, 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, June 14, and at the same venue, that Chesley Garfield Ryan 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 fourteenth day of June* he pledged his allegiance to the reigning monarch, George V, whereupon, at that moment, Chesley Garfield Ryan became...a soldier of the King.

****It had been during the month 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. However, nothing amongst his papers appears to suggest under which circumstances – as a volunteer or a conscripted man – Chesley Garfield Ryan was to be taken into service.***

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 Ryan, Number 5690, was not, however, to be granted these several days of leave as he was soon to be under medical care for a month in the Barracks Hospital – from June 19 until his discharge on July 19 – although there appears to be no documentation among his papers to suggest what the problem may have been.

Following his enlistment it is likely that Private Ryan 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. It is also likely that he was to return there following the aforementioned month spent in medical care.

(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.)



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Six weeks less a day again afterwards, on August 29 Private Ryan was to be one of a detachment which was ordered to perform...*special duty*...in the small coastal community of Petty Harbour, a dozen or so kilometres to the south of St. John's.

Having completed this task, Private Ryan returned on September 14 to his quarters in the capital city:

Thirteen days later, on September 27 he was back in the *Barracks Hospital* once more.

Transferred from the *Barracks Hospital* to the *St. John's General Hospital* on October 2, he was soon to be the subject of a litany of brief medical reports: *October 4, seriously ill with tonsillitis; October 7, 8, and 10, seriously ill; October 11, 12, 18 and 21, seriously ill, tonsillitis and influenza; October 26, improving; October 28, once more seriously ill; November 5, improved; November 11, improving; November 15, convalescent.*

It was apparently not to be until December 16 that the *General Hospital* discharged Private Ryan and even then the reports suggest that he went from there into the *Barracks Hospital* – perhaps to continue his convalescence, rather than having been ordered back...*to duty*.

He was soon to be returning to hospital, on this further occasion into the *Military Hospital for Infectious Diseases*, perhaps on December 23, perhaps on Christmas Day, suffering from a...*Feverish cold*. A report of his medical history was issued on that former date, a document from which the following has been extracted:

Admitted Barracks Hp. 27/9/18 Transferred to Gen Hp. 2/10/18 Discharged 16/10/18

Has been in Barracks Hp. Since discharge from Gen. Hp. Temp has been very variable from normal to 100°. Cough & sputum in morning on waking. Shortness of breath & debility. Has lost weight considerably since enlistment (?15 or 20 lbs)*

*Pain in rt. side... Poor appetite. Heart irregular PR** 110. Breath sounds weak all over. Rales*** over left base. Dullness right base. Tenderness IC**** spaces lower rt. ribs.*

**Normal body temperature (Fahrenheit) 97-99 degrees*

***Normal Pulse Rate 60-100 per minute*

****Also known as crepitation, a fine, soft crackling sound made by air passing through fluid, not normally heard in healthy lungs*

*****Intercostal: between the ribs*

In the *Military Hospital for Infectious Diseases* he was diagnosed as having tubercular peritonitis. On January 2 of the New Year, 1919, he was forwarded once again to the *General Hospital* where the presence of meningitis was discovered.

The son of Thomas Ryan, fisherman, and of Caroline Ryan (née *Rideout**, deceased of heart disease on May 28, 1913) of Round Harbour in the District of Twillingate, he was the youngest brother of Edward, Rose, Mary-Ann, Thomas, of James-Adolphus, of Bertram, Henrietta, Amelia (*Minnie*), Stanley, Albert-Hetley, of Mary-Ann - *and also of Rosalie who had died in 1892, aged six?*

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**The couple had been married on October 20 of 1880. After the death of Caroline, Thomas Ryan was to marry Martha J. Heath, widow, on November 25 of 1914.*

Private Ryan was reported as having ...*died of sickness...* at four-thirty in the morning of January 9 of 1919 in the *St. John's General Hospital*. Specifically, he had died of tubercular- meningitis.

His remains embalmed and placed in a coffin by Mr. J.C. Oke, undertaker, he was buried with full military honours, a bugle and firing party as well as a Guard of Honour comprised of officers and men of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Newfoundland Regiment. This was according to the wishes of his father: *Bury my son at St. John's in Church of England Cemetery.*

Chesley Garfield Ryan had enlisted at a *declared* eighteen years of age. Thus far the exact date of his birth has proved to be elusive.

Mr J OGrady

St. John's
Dec 9th 1918

Dear Sir

I am dropping a line to you to send me down my money if you please I havent been payed for three months I cant as mutch as send a letter home to my people I am in need of it

yours truly
5690 Pte C Ryan
General Hospital
St. John's

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.