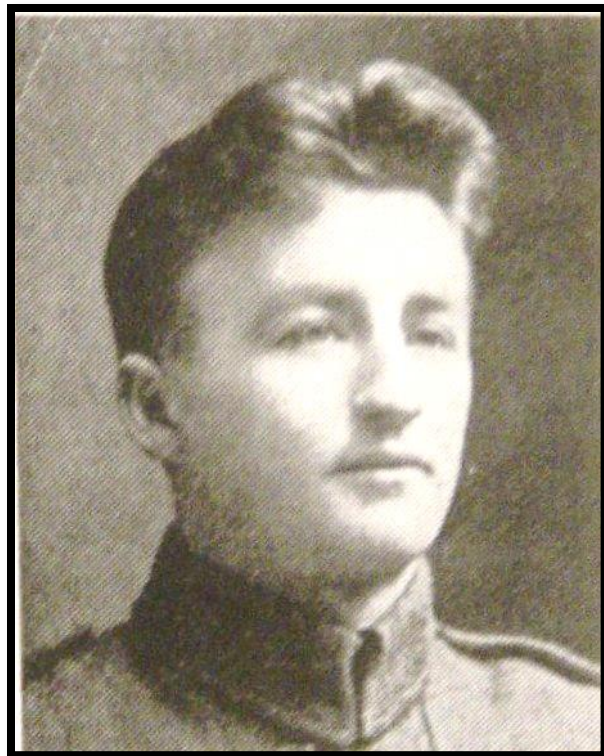


GOWER REMEMBERS

**Lance-Corporal Frederick Moses Janes
(1893-1916)**



“The Caribou Hill fight, as Pte. Janes, another of the heroes of the fight remarks, has made a name for the Newfoundland Regiment.” (The St. John’s Daily Star article entitled “Covered with Glory”, December 18, 1918)

Frederick Moses Janes was born in St. John's on April 19, 1893, the eldest of four sons of Bertha Campbell and Alexander Janes. He also had three sisters, one of whom, Lilla, was older than he. His siblings, in order of birth, were Lilla (born 1891), Elizabeth (born 1895), William George (born 1899), Alexander (born 1903), Mary Gertrude (born 1905) and Cyril Campbell (born 1909). His father, Alexander, was a tinsmith, employed by W. S. Pippy, while Bertha had a full-time occupation as a mother and home-maker. The family lived at 36 Goodview Street.

Little is known of Fred's early life. He attended school at the Methodist College, where in the distribution of prizes at the end of the 1906-1907 school year, he received an award for "General Improvement". At that time he would have been around 14 years old. Whether he returned to school for the 1907-1908 school year is not known, but, according to the St. John's city directory for 1908-1909, he was working as a checker by the time the directory was compiled. In the 1913 city directory he is listed as a clerk at George Knowling Ltd., a major department store located at 211-219 Water Street.

Two years later, on St. Patrick's Day, 1915, Janes's life took a different turn. On that day he joined the Newfoundland Regiment. At the time of his enlistment, he was 5 feet, 6 inches tall and weighed 127 pounds; he had a fair complexion, with brown hair and blue eyes. His Attestation Paper also indicated that he had a monthly income of \$50.00 as a clerk. He was assigned to E Company and given Regimental number 1275.

Janes did not have long to wait before being shipped overseas. He left St. John's aboard the SS *Stephano* on April 22, arriving in Halifax, a day or two later. He and his company were transferred to the HMT *Missanabie*, which took them across the Atlantic, leaving Halifax on April 25 and arriving in Liverpool, England, on May 02. After disembarking at Liverpool, they were put on a train for Edinburgh,

Scotland, where they joined A, B, C and D companies at Edinburgh Castle. The Newfoundland Regiment had been stationed at the castle since February 19, the first colonial regiment to be assigned guard duty at that historic garrison.

His company did not remain long at the castle, as, on May 11, the Regiment was transported to Stobs Camp, near Hawick, in southeast Scotland. Then, on August 2, the 1st Battalion of the Regiment, consisting of A, B, C and D companies headed south from Stobs Camp to Aldershot in Hampshire, some 37 miles southwest of London. (Janes was part of that group, as he had been re-assigned to C Company shortly after his arrival in Scotland.) The men underwent a brief period of rest and relaxation at Aldershot before being moved to nearby Devonport on August 19. There, the following day, they boarded the SS *Megantic*, which took them to the eastern Mediterranean and the war.

There is one curious notation in Janes's personnel file regarding an incident that took place at Stobs Camp. It records that he was absent from the camp from midnight June 20 to midnight June 22, for which he received punishment of five days confined to camp and the forfeiture of two days pay. The reason for this absence is not given.

The *Megantic* took roughly eleven days to transport the 1,120 or so members of the Newfoundland Regiment from Devonport to Alexandria, Egypt. It docked there, on August 31 - September 1, and the men were immediately taken by train to Polygon Camp, near Cairo, to provide them with an opportunity to get used to the hot, dry climate. On September 13, they received a two-hour inspection from General Sir John Maxwell; the following morning they were taken back to Alexandria by train, where they boarded the *Ausonia* and sailed north to the Greek island of Lemnos. On the night of September 19-20, they were transported across the Aegean Sea from Lemnos to Suvla Bay on Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula.

On their arrival at Suvla Bay, the men were greeted with Turkish shelling, which together with mortar fire, were their constant companions over the weeks that followed. During this time a number of Janes's comrades were killed or wounded. One of the prime vantage points for Turkish snipers was a slight knoll about half-way between the two lines of trenches. The Turks would crawl over to the knoll at dusk and take pot-shots at the Newfoundlanders.

The Newfoundlanders soon became tired of this torment. On November 04, one of the officers, Lieutenant James J. Donnelly, led a party consisting of Corporal Harold Barrett, Lance Corporal William J. Snow, and six¹ privates, one of whom was Janes, to the knoll. Janes recounts the events of that night in a letter that appeared, as part of a front-page story entitled "WITH THE ODDS 10 TO 1 AGAINST THEM, NEWFOUNDLANDERS HELD CARIBOU HILL", in the December 18, 1916 edition of *The St. John's Daily Star*.

"Last Thursday night," says Private Fred Janes, writing from the Dardanelles, "I went through an experience that I won't forget for a long while. Lieut. Donnelly – an ex-C.C.C.² officer – was sent with six privates and two Corporals to take a position on a hill and hold it, the hill being at least 150 yards in advance of the British trenches.

Bill Snow was one of the Corporals and I was one of the privates.

"We reached the hill just at dusk about 5:30 p.m., and before we had time to prepare any shelter the Turks came up to attempt to occupy the hill which they have been trying to do for months past.

"When they were within seven yards of us we took our men down and gave them a bit of a surprise.

¹ The other five privates were Frederick E. Snow (#685), James J. Gear (#695), Morley Soper (#1259), John J. Morrissey (#689), and Matthew Collins (#710).

² C.C.C. is the Catholic Cadet Corps, a boys brigade equivalent to the Methodist Guards, the Church Lads Brigade and the Presbyterian Highlanders.

“But Snow got hit in the neck and then one of the bullets hit his cartridges and exploded a few. He went back to the British lines and (censored) to send (...censored). They did so.

“With Bill gone that left eight men to defend the hill. The Turks threw bombs until they made us all deaf. As the bombs fell at our feet Lieut. Donnelly hooked them with the butt of his rifle to a place where they exploded without doing damage.

“When Corp. Snow got back to our lines and reported our position, they sent out a patrol to look for us and help us out and the relief met the Turks in a gulley to the right of us. The enemy outnumbered our patrol and wiped up half of them. I think, however, that that fight saved us as I believe the party of Turks that our patrol met were making round back of the position to surround us, in which case we would have been settled.

“At any time during the night the Turks were ten to one against us.

“We had two men wounded about 2 a.m. and that only left six of us to hold the position.

“Everyone of us was marked by the fight. Lieut. Donnelly had a wound over his left eye but did not trouble to get it dressed until morning. Altogether it was an experience that one has to go through to know what it really was like. Providence and the bravery of Lieut. Donnelly alone saved the situation and our lives. Lieut. Donnelly should get a V.C. as he certainly earned it.

“That hill business has made a name for the Regiment and for Lieut. Donnelly.”

This small band of Newfoundlanders who captured what became known as Caribou Hill was relieved the next day by other members of the Regiment. For his actions that night, Lieutenant Donnelly was awarded the Military Cross and Lance Corporal Snow received the Military Medal. Sergeant Walter M. Greene and Private R. E. Hynes,

who were part of the second unit Janes referred to in his letter, were each awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

In addition to the Turks, the Newfoundland Regiment had to contend with two other enemies during its time at Gallipoli. Large numbers of the men had to be evacuated because of diseases or non-combat injuries, many more than from wounds resulting from the Turkish guns and artillery. The weather that plagued them throughout their stay was a major culprit, with heavy rains flooding their trenches, causing many soldiers to suffer pulmonary ailments and from trenchfoot. If left untreated, the latter could result in hospitalization. The rain eventually turned to snow and ice, and, as temperatures dropped, frostbite became another serious problem. It was a combination of trenchfoot and frostbite that caused Janes to be evacuated from Gallipoli in mid-December 1915. He was first taken aboard the HS *Gloucester Castle* on the 15th and later transferred to the HS *Hunslet*, which transported him to a military hospital at Valetta on the island of Malta, arriving there on the 22nd. He spent more than two months in that hospital before rejoining the Regiment on March 01.

When Janes rejoined his comrades, it was not at Suvla Bay. The Newfoundland Regiment had been withdrawn from there in early January 1916, and had returned to Egypt. It spent the rest of January, all of February and the first half of March there as part of the Western Frontier Force. Then, on March 14, they boarded the MT *Alauria* at Port Tewfik, for the trek back across the Mediterranean.

The Newfoundland Regiment arrived at Marseilles, France, on March 22. From there they were taken north by train, reaching Pont Remy on the 25th. On April 11, Janes was formally promoted to Lance Corporal, effective as of February 27, which was probably the day he was discharged from hospital and ordered to rejoin the Battalion.

He and his comrades spent the next three months preparing for what came to be called the “Great Push”, a major assault on the German

front lines along several miles of the Somme River. Part of their training involved time in the allied front line trenches and periods of rest and relaxation behind the front lines in various war-torn French villages and farms. The day of the battle finally arrived on July 1, with the Newfoundland Regiment to be part of the third wave or clean-up position, after the first and second wave of regiments had broken through and captured the German trenches. Despite those regiments not having met their objectives, the Newfoundlanders were ordered to advance at 9:15 a.m. They went over the top near Beaumont-Hamel, walking head first into a barrage of German machine-gun fire. Of the estimated 801 men who were part of the attack force that morning, 14 officers and 219 other ranks were killed, 12 officers and 374 other ranks were wounded and another 91 were reported as missing. One of the dead was Frederick Janes. He had served for one year, 107 days. His body was identified and his remains were later buried in Y Ravine Cemetery at Beaumont Hamel Park. Buried in that same grave and commemorated along with Janes on the grave marker is Private W. Miller, who was also killed on July 1, 1916. He was a member of the British Borders Regiment, which was part of the second wave at Beaumont Hamel that morning.



Note: the regimental emblems of the Borders Regiment and the Newfoundland Regiment are present on the grave marker.

On Sunday, November 16, 2014, Gower Street United Church initiated a program of commemoration that will last for approximately the next four years. On roughly every second Sunday through to the end of 2018, a brief write-up on one of these individuals, similar to this one, will appear as an insert in the Bulletin and there will be a reference to that person in the service. In this way we hope to recognize their contribution to the war effort, the many sacrifices they made, some with their very lives, and the debt of gratitude we owe to each of them.

We also hope to learn more about them from their descendants or other relatives, thereby fostering a link between our past and our present as we begin our 202nd year as a faith community.

If you know of any relatives of these servicemen and women please contact Bert Riggs at briggs@mun.ca or at 726-6169.