

GOWER REMEMBERS

Private Samuel Pennell

(1898-1990)



“I regret to have to inform you that a report has this day been received from the Record Office of the First Newfoundland Regiment, London, to the effect that No. 2887, Private Samuel Pennell, is at the 2nd London General Hospital, suffering from shell wounds in the left wrist.”
(Letter to James Pennell from Newfoundland Colonial Secretary, October 17, 1917)

Samuel Pennell was born in St. John's on May 15, 1898, the second oldest of seven children of Elizabeth Jane Tizzard and James Pennell. His siblings were William James (b. December 09, 1896); Elsie (b. November 1900); Max (b. June 1902); Richard (b. July 1904); Ralph (b. December 1908); and Mildred (b. October 1911). James Pennell was originally from Ochre Pit Cove and lived in Western Bay for a time. He met and fell in love with Elizabeth Jane Tizzard of Old Perlican and they were married on Christmas Eve, 1895.

Pennell and his wife relocated to St. John's in the mid to late 1890s. He first appears in the city directory for 1898 where he was a resident of 61 Lime Street and was working as a fisherman.

One can assume that Samuel and his siblings attended one of the St. John's Methodist schools, as he signs his name to his Attestation Paper with a strong clear signature. He had finished formal schooling by 1913, when he appears in the city directory for that year as an employee of T. J. Duley & Company, a prominent Water Street jeweler. Pennell was 15 at the time and may have been working as an apprentice to the jewelry and watch-making trades. He boarded at 67 Lime Street, which is where he was still living three years later when he enlisted in the Newfoundland Regiment. That address was just a few doors north of where the family had lived in their early days in St. John's and may have been the result of a move to a bigger house after the family began to increase in number.

Pennell enlisted on June 19, 1916. His Attestation Paper indicates that he was 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighed 112 pounds. He had blue eyes, brown hair and a fair complexion. His chest was 34 inches with an expansion capacity of an additional three inches. His occupation was jeweler at a salary of \$5.50 per week. His Regimental Number was 2887.

His first two months in the Regiment were spent in St. St. John's undergoing rudimentary training. During that time he and his newly enlisted comrades would have heard of the hundreds of casualties sustained by the Regiment at Beaumont Hamel. They did not leave St. John's for the United Kingdom until August 28, on board the SS *Sicilian*. By early October he was in Ayr, Scotland, at the Regiment's main training facility, and getting himself into a bit of mischief. On October 03, he was

absent for parade and was confined to barracks for two days as punishment.

Pennell was stationed at Ayr for more than six months and was probably eager to get to the Western Front and engage with the enemy. This may account for his first infraction of the military rules, and also for his second and final one: being discovered in bed after reveille on February 06, 1917, for which he received another two days of confinement to barracks.

The time to make their way to the Western Front arrived soon enough. On April 25, Pennell and his comrades left Southampton in the south of England, disembarking at Rouen, France, the following day. On June 07, he joined his Battalion in the field, where he saw action at Steenbeek, Belgium, as part of the fighting in the Battle of Langemarck in August, and at Broembeek, Belgium, as part of the Battle of Poelcappelle, in October. It was at the latter engagement, on October 09, that he was wounded by an enemy shell in the left wrist. He was admitted to the 6th General Hospital in Rouen on October 11 and invalided to England aboard the Hospital Ship *Grantully Castle*, on the 14th. The following day he was admitted to the 2nd London General Hospital, at St. Mark's College, King's Road, Chelsea.

Pennell spent the remainder of 1917 in hospital, finally being discharged from No. 1 Military Hospital in Canterbury on January 03, 1918. He was granted a furlough upon his release, with orders to report to H Company at Winchester, on January 24. The six months that followed were spent there. On July 25 he again left Southampton for Rouen, arriving there on the 27th, and joined the Battalion on July 31. He was re-admitted to hospital on August 01, this time the 7th General Hospital at Wimereux with a minor ailment. He was released on September 07 but returned to hospital in Rouen three days later. Then, on October 23, he was admitted to the 44th Casualty Clearing Station with influenza, quite possibly the infamous Spanish flu, as five days later he was transferred to the Contagious Department at the hospital in Boulogne.

After discharge from Boulogne hospital to St. Martin's Rest Camp on November 14 (three days after the Armistice), he travelled to Rouen on

the 16th, and was transferred to England from Quai de Harve, France, to Southampton, on the SS *St. George* on November 27. The following day he was re-assigned to H Company at Winchester. A medical report dated December 08 indicates that he had a scar on the back of his wrist but that it was not attached to bone movement. He did, however, complain of weakness in his left arm.

Pennell left England on board the SS *Corsican* on December 12, 1918, arriving in St. John's on the 21st. On January 13, 1919, the Medical Board recommended him for discharge as permanently unfit. Four days later, on January 17, he appeared before the Civil Re-establishment Committee, where he informed them that he would like "To work as machinist". He was discharged from the Regiment and demobilized on January 31, 1919, having served for two years, 227 days.

Sometime after his discharge and demobilization from the Regiment, Pennell re-entered the workforce as a watch and clock repairman at Ayre & Sons, Ltd., Water Street. According to the 1924 city directory, he was residing with his parents at 68 Lime Street. The following year, on April 14, 1925, he and Effie M. Green, formerly from Greenspond, but working in St. John's, were married at the Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Their first child, Grace, was born in 1926. Three other children, Betty (b. 1928), Samuel Boyd (b. 1929) and Edward J. (b. 1937) rounded out the family.

Pennell continued to work at Ayre & Sons, Ltd., through the remainder of his working life, although his title and responsibilities changed, first to engraver, and then to jeweler. He retired in the early 1960s, spending his retirement with his wife in their home at 60 Hayward Avenue. He died on November 08, 1990, at the Department of Veterans' Affairs Pavilion in St. John's at the age of 92. He was survived by his wife and his four children. His funeral took place from St. Thomas's Anglican Church; he was interred in the Anglican Cemetery on Forest Road. The family asked that donations in his memory be made to the local branch of the Kidney Foundation. Effie Pennell, who had been born on October 18, 1902, survived her husband by eight years. She died on September 11, 1998.

Serial No. 784

Army Form B. 2079.

NOTE—This Certificate is to be issued without any alterations in the manuscript.

WARNING.—If this Certificate is lost a duplicate cannot be issued. You should therefore on no account part with it or forward it by post when applying for a situation.

Certificate of discharge of No. 2827 Rank. Pte

Name Pennell Samuel
Surname Christian Names in full.

Unit* and Regiment or Corps from which discharged Royal Newfoundland Regt
*The unit of the Regiment or Corps such as Field Co. R.E., H.T., or M.T., A.S.C., etc., is invariably to be stated.

Regiment or Corps to which first posted. Royal Newfoundland Regt

Also previously served in.....

Only Regiments or Corps in which the soldier served since August 4th, 1914, are to be stated. If applicable this space is to be ruled through in ink and initialed.

Specialist Qualifications (Military).....

Medals, Clasps, Decorations and Mentions in dispatches { * Nil } Wound Stripes* One
To be inserted in words.

Has served Overseas on Active Service* Yes

Enlisted at St John's Nfld on 19 June 1916
*Each space is to be filled in and the word "nil" inserted where necessary. †To be struck out in ink if not applicable.

He is discharged in consequence of Demobilization and medical unfitness.

after serving* Two years* 227 days with the Colours, and Army Reserve or Territorial Force } Strike out whichever inapplicable.
*Each space is to be filled in and the word "nil" inserted where necessary; number of years to be written in words.
†Service with Territorial Force to be shown only in cases of soldiers serving on a T.F. a testation.

Date of discharge 31/1/1919
M. Howley, Capt } Signature and Rank.
Officer i/c. St John's Nfld (Place). } Records.

Description of the above-named soldier when he left the Colours.

Year of Birth 1898 Marks or Scars Nil

Height 5 ft 7 in

Complexion Fair

Eyes Blue Hair Brown

Private Samuel Pennell's discharge certificate from the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, January 31, 1919. Original in the possession of his son, Samuel Boyd Pennell.



This is a photograph of the King George V War Medal and the Victory Medal that were awarded to Private Samuel Pennell for his service in World War 1. They are in the possession of his son, Samuel Boyd Pennell.

On Sunday, November 16, 2014, Gower Street United Church initiated a program of commemoration that will last for approximately four to five 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 203rd 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.