



Seaman William Cross (Number 1991x) is buried in Badger's Quay Cemetery in the District of Bonavista Bay.

(continued)

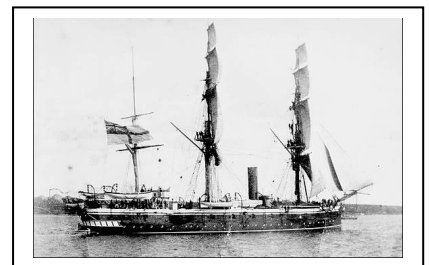
Answering the call by the naval authorities for volunteers in the Royal Naval Reserve, William Cross relinquished his occupation of fisherman(?) and travelled from Badger's Quay to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, there on January 3 of the New Year, 1916, to report to the Reserve training ship *Calypso* moored in the harbour.

On that January 3 he enlisted for the first time into the Reserve (see further below), was signed on to serve for the duration of the conflict* and underwent a satisfactory medical assessment on the same day. He also likely attested at this time, pledging his allegiance to the King-Emperor, George V.

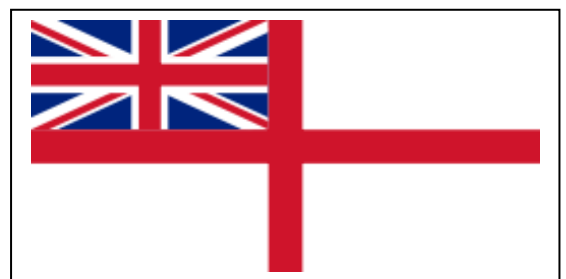
(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India: as a boy and young man he had served in the Royal Navy from 1877 until 1891 and always retained a fondness for the Senior Service. – The photograph of the King attired in the uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet is from the Royal Collection Trust web-site and taken in or about 1935.*)



(Right: *At the outset of their career, the Calypso-Class ships were apparently considered to be superior vessels. Hybrids - powered by both steam and sail - they were able to police the outer reaches of the British Empire most efficiently and economically. The rapid progress in engine technology, however, was to mean that HMS Calypso and her sister-ships would soon be out-classed by newer vessels. – This Royal Navy photograph, taken before 1902 when the drill-hall was reportedly built on her upper deck and the funnel removed, is from Wikipedia*)



**In the early days 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.*



(Right above: *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.*

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.

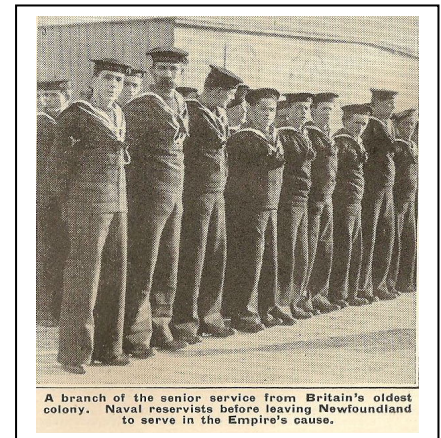
Just fewer than four-hundred men were sought to enroll as seamen – apparently automatically at the rank of Able Seaman - and to present themselves annually in St. John’s for five years in order to train for a period of twenty-eight days per annum. Allowed to report at a time of their own choosing, it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



(Right above: 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)

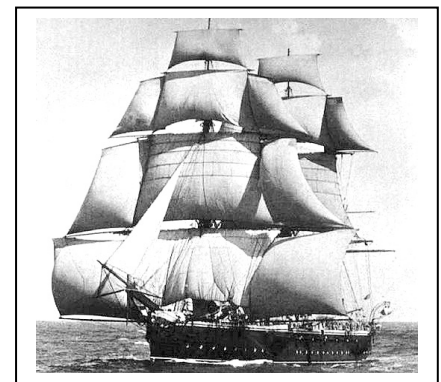
Expenses were apparently defrayed for the most part by the British (Imperial) Government and an attempt was made to ensure the number of recruits would be kept constantly at a maximum. This practice and policy was then to be continued up until the onset of hostilities some twelve years later.

Of course, the purpose of having a reserve force at any time is to provide a trained 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 men of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) were to make their way to St. John’s, from there to take passage overseas to bolster the ranks of the Royal Navy.



(Right above: Naval reservists from Newfoundland, during the early days of the Great War, before their departure for the United Kingdom - from The War Illustrated)

An elderly vessel, HMS ‘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.



(continued)

(Right above: *HMS 'Calypso' in full sail. She was to be re-named 'Briton' in 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was about to be launched by the Royal Navy. – This photograph, taken of her by the Royal Navy in 1898, is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)*



(Right: *The C-Class cruiser 'Calypso' of 1916, seen here on an un-recorded date during the later years of the Great War, was to be sunk by an Italian submarine in 1940. – from Wikipedia)*

Having been promoted from the rank of Seaman Recruit on an unrecorded date but while still attached to *Calypso*, Seaman Cross was to serve on that vessel and under the same name until January 30 of that year of 1916 at which time the vessel was re-commissioned to become *HMS Briton*.

He was then to remain...*on strength*...on *Briton* until April 4, the day of his death, although he had been on leave during the last part of this period.

(Right: *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)*



The son of John Cross, fisherman, and of Kate (also found as *Catharine, Katherine and Katharine*) Cross (née *Sturge**) of Greenspond before later of Badger's Quay, both in the District of Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland, he was also brother to Sarah-Louisa, James, John-McDonald and to two sisters Mary-Louisa (born October 3, 1886 and January 12, 1890).

**The couple was married in the community of Greenspond on December 2 of 1884.*

Discharged dead: ...was returning from leave and fell through the ice of Bonavista Bay. He managed to get out of the water and crawled towards the shore, but died on the ice. – found written on his personal service file

Seaman William Cross died on April 4 of 1916 at the *reported* age of twenty-one years: date of birth in Greenspond, Newfoundland, November 4, 1894 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register), the day the same but the year cited as 1895 on his enlistment papers.

Seaman Cross served only in the Royal Navy and was not in the service of Canada as is cited in some sources, notably the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Seaman William Cross appears to have been eligible for the British War Medal although he was never on overseas service or in a *theatre of war*.



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 22, 2023.