



Seaman Elijah Cullimore, Number 1189x, of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) is buried in Little Catalina United Church Cemetery.

Having already been enlisted into the Reserve on March 4-5 of 1914 when he had trained for twenty-five days before returning home, Elijah Cullimore was to later receive a summons from the naval authorities to return to service; he thereupon relinquished his

occupation as a fisherman and travelled from Little Catalina to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland where, on August 4 of 1914 – the day on which Great Britain declared war on Germany on behalf of the Empire - he reported...to duty...at the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below).

On this second occasion, only five months after his initial training, he was now to sign on to serve for a single year's war-time service*, and was to spend the following three months preparing – his duties appear not to have been recorded - to travel overseas.

As for the oath of allegiance to the King-Emperor, George V, this may have been sworn at the prior moment in March – but if not, it would have been undertaken at this moment in August.

(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.)



**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.*



(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.*

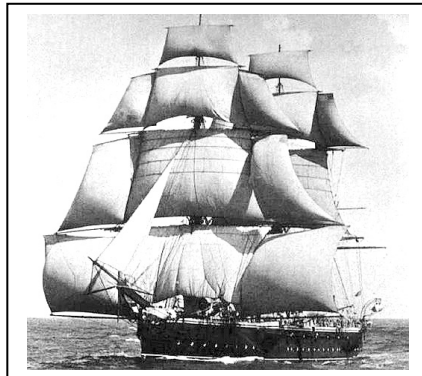
Note: During the years preceding the Great War the only military force on the Island of Newfoundland – apart from a handful of ill-fated local attempts – was to be the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland). Even so it was to be some thirty years after the withdrawal of British troops from the Dominion in 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.

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.

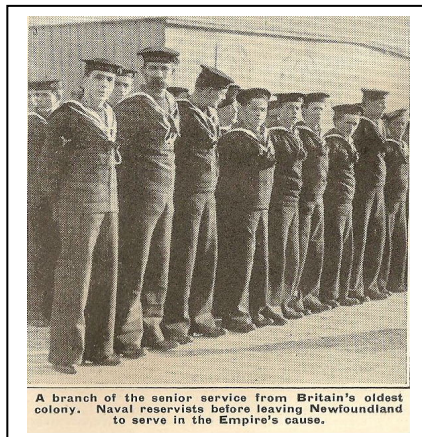
Of course, the purpose of having a reserve force at any time is to provide a prepared force ready at any time to serve at a time of need or crisis. Thus in August of 1914, upon the Declaration of War by the government in London, hundreds of those of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) were to make their way to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, from there to journey overseas to bolster the ranks of the Royal Navy.

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.



(Right adjacent: HMS 'Calypso' in full sail. She was re-named 'Briton' in 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was launched by the Royal Navy. – Royal Navy photograph by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)

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



Following those afore-mentioned three months in St. John's, Seaman Cullimore, one of a draft of three-hundred five Naval Reservists plus four officers, embarked on November 5-6 onto the Cunard ocean-liner Franconia which had arrived in St. John's having sailed from New York.

Their ship then having docked in the English port-city of Liverpool on November 11-12, several of the Reservists were posted directly to a ship. Others were ordered to undergo further training at various Royal Navy establishments and, likely having journeyed by train, reported to these bases on or about November 13.

(Right: A relatively new vessel, 'Franconia' had been launched on July 23 of 1910. Remaining requisitioned as a troop transport until early 1915, it was to be well over a year later that on 4 October, 1916, while heading for Salonika, she was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat to the east of Malta She was not carrying any troops at the time, but out of her 314 crew members, 12 died. – the photograph is from Wikipedia)



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Seaman Cullimore would now serve until on or about December 6 of the same year at the Royal Naval training establishment and barracks at HMS *Vivid**, based at Devonport - perhaps ordered to *Vivid I* which was particularly for seamen rather than for specialists such as engine-room personnel for example.

(Right below: *One of the imposing main gateways to the once-Royal Navy establishment at Plymouth-Devonport stands to this day. – photograph from 2011(?)*)

**'Vivid' was the name of a series of pre-War and, later, post-War training stations – although during the war it was to revert to the role of a shore-base and barracks in the counties of Devon and Cornwall, and at other sites in the United Kingdom. It was also the name of an elderly, obsolescent, vessel to which all of the hundreds, even thousands, of the personnel serving in the myriad stations were attached, officially even if, as in many cases, they were never to set foot on or even see the ship whose name they wore on their cap.*



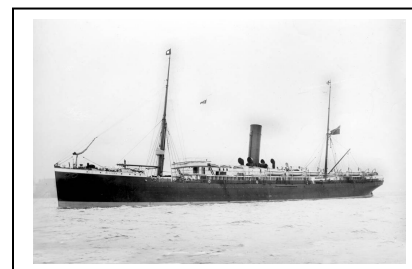
All of this was because of the Naval Discipline Act. The rules and regulations covering the conduct of Royal Navy personnel was unique unto itself, and in order for any sailor to be governed by the Act, he had to be part of a ship's crew. If he were serving on land, he still had to be a member of a ship's crew for the Naval Discipline Act to be in effect.

It was often for this reason only that an old ship and the shore-based establishment shared the same name. In the case of 'Vivid' it was an old gun-boat, originally launched in 1873, which served the purpose, at the same time to be used as a harbour-service vessel.

Seaman Cullimore was to remain in barracks, there to await orders to a posting on one of His Majesty's ships. Thirty days after his arrival at *Vivid I* he was to transfer to one of the many ocean-going vessels requisitioned by the Admiralty to serve as war-ships, His Majesty's Armed Merchant Cruiser *Oropesa*.

The ship of some five-thousand tons had been constructed in 1895 by the *Pacific Steam Navigation Company*. Upon her appropriation by the Admiralty she had been converted and armed: six six-inch guns and two quick-firing three-pounder weapons were installed on her decks before she entered war-time service.

Of course he was not to know that at the time of his leaving her a year later *Oropesa* was to become *Champagne* and to be transferred – retaining her British crew - to the French *Marine nationale*. Some twenty-two months later again, in October of 1917, having been returned to the Royal Navy, she would be sunk by U-Boat 96 off County Down on the east coast of Ireland with a loss of fifty-six lives.



A goodly number of the log-books of the armed merchant cruisers is currently available to researchers but – Alas! – that of HMS *Oropesa* is not among them.

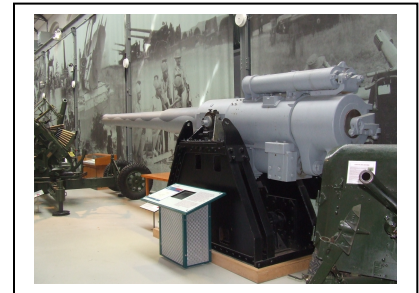
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(Preceding page: The photograph of a peace-time *Oropesa* is from the *Ships' Nostalgia* web-site.)

The ship was to be attached to the 10th Cruiser Squadron, also known as the *Northern Patrol*, a force originally having comprised out-of-date warships which, by that January of 1915, had been replaced by requisitioned ocean-going passenger-cargo ships carrying a few elderly guns at times as old as some of the venerable ships on which they were mounted.

(Right below: A six-inch naval gun such as were mounted on some of the armed Merchant Cruisers – from the Royal Artillery Museum, 'Firepower', at Woolwich. – photograph from 2010)

The ships of the 10th Cruiser Squadron were not spoiling – and certainly not prepared - for a fight. Their job was to form a part of the naval blockade designed to prevent ships carrying goods to Germany from reaching their destination; to accomplish this these vessels had to patrol the area of stormy waters encompassed by Ireland, northern Scotland and Iceland, a thankless job at the best of times: during the tempestuous winter months, even worse.



Seaman Cullimore's time on board *Oropesa* was not to be all that of the routine of a vessel of the 10th Cruiser Squadron. On at least one occasion it appears that there had been something out of the ordinary: in March of 1915, the ship had apparently played a role in the sinking of a U-boat off the Hebrides – although any further detail has thus far proved to be elusive.

On December 4, 1915, the day after HMS *Oropesa* had hoisted the French *Tricolore*, Seaman Cullimore, having disembarked at Liverpool, returned to Devonport and to *Vivid I* where he was to remain for twenty-nine days before being further transferred – for undocumented reasons – to *President III*, another Royal Navy shore-based facility.

Whatever those *undocumented reasons* may have been, he was yet again – and not for the last time - at *Vivid I* on May 13. There appear to be no records of what his duties may have been while at *President III*, nor is there any evidence of him having been granted a period of furlough.

Seaman Cullimore had been back at *Vivid I* for just more than two months when, on July 18-19, he was transferred to HMS *Cambrian* of which at that time – Alas! – there were two thus named, both of them cruisers.

One of the two candidates for having been his ship was a light *Calliope-Class* vessel launched only four months before. She had thereupon become as ship of the 4th Light Cruiser Squadron which was serving with the Grand Fleet and was therefore based at *Scapa Flow* in the Orkney Islands. The other ships of her squadron were to play a somewhat peripheral role during the *Battle of Jutland* at the end of that May of 1916, but *Cambrian* may not have been present.

(Right: The image of the 'Calliope-Class' cruiser HMS 'Cambrian' at anchor, likely at Scapa Flow – is from the Wikipedia web-site.)



Nor does there appear to be any documentation of her activities during the twenty-six days – July 19 until August 14 (this would have included some travel-time) - that Seaman Cullimore had been assigned to her.

The other HMS *Cambrian* was an *Astraea-Class* armoured cruiser, launched in January of 1893, by this time obsolete and nearing the end of her career as a fighting-ship. In March of 1916 she was designated to be the Depot Ship for stokers at the Royal Navy facility at Devonport where Seaman Cullimore was biding his time at *Vivid I*. The only caveat to this having been his ship is that when she became a depot ship in that month of March, her name was changed from *Cambrian* to *Harlech*.



(Right above: The image of the *Astraea-Class* 'Cambrian', de-commissioned then re-instated during the War to become the Depot Ship 'Harlech' is from the 'battleships-cruisers.co.uk' web-site.)

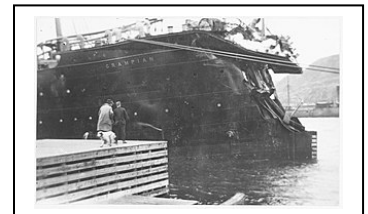
Whatever the ship in question was, there appears to have been no untoward incident to occur on either during the time of Seaman Cullimore's service, at the end of which he was to find himself for a fourth occasion on the books and nominal roll at *Vivid I*.

For a further ninety five days, until November 18, 1916, there appear to be no further entries in Seaman Cullimore's Service Record. In fact his Record appears to conclude on that date with him still at HMS *Vivid I*. Only two words then follow: *Invalidated Tuberculosis*.

No person by the name of *E. Cullimore* was to enlist in the (Royal) Newfoundland Regiment, and there was only a single volunteer in the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) recorded as such: *Elijah*. Thus the *E. Cullimore* listed among the military personnel found on the passenger list of the SS *Grampian*, and on his way via Saint John, New Brunswick, to return to Newfoundland is surely *Elijah Cullimore of Little Catalina**, the subject of this dossier.

**Of the three-hundred fifty listed, he appears to have been the only returnee to Newfoundland.*

The ship had sailed from the United Kingdom – Liverpool - on January 9 of 1917 and had reached its destination on January 19. How it was to be that Seaman Cullimore then continued his journey back home appears not to have been recorded.



(Right above: This is the SS 'Grampian' in St. John's Harbour after having struck an iceberg on July 10 of 1919. It is reported that unlike on board the 'Titanic', the ship's master had decided to hit the berg head-on. – from the Wikipedia web-site)

The son of Alexander Cullimore, fisherman, and of Elizabeth Sarah (Jane?) Cullimore (her maiden name un-recorded*) of the community of Little Catalina, Trinity Bay, Seaman Cullimore was also brother to John-James, Mary-Hannah, Alexander, to Jacob and perhaps to an infant sibling – their first child - who had died at birth.

(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 couple had been married in the community of Little Catalina on December 14, 1886.

Eleven months following his return to Newfoundland, on January 9 of 1918, Elijah Cullimore was to marry Miss Violet Maud Johnson in the community of Little Catalina. The couple would have a single child, son Elijah.

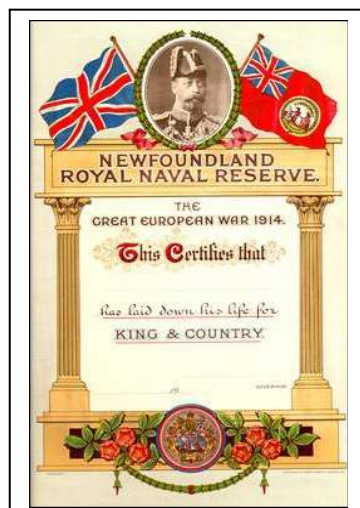
Seaman Elijah Cullimore was to die at home in Little Catalina of tuberculosis on December 17, 1919, at the reported age of thirty years: date of birth in the larger community of Catalina, August 18, 1890 (from his enlistment papers) but the year also recorded as 1889 (by United Church Parish Records).

(Right: The sacrifice of Seaman Elijah Cullimore is honoured on the War Memorial which stands in the United Church grounds in Little Catalina. – photograph from 2010)

(Right: On December 7 of 1918, Seaman Elijah Cullimore received the Silver War Badge which was awarded... 'To service personnel honourably discharged due to wounds of sickness'. It was to be worn on civilian clothes only. – The image is from the empiremedals.com web-site.)

Seaman Cullimore 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 Elijah Cullimore was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



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.