



Seaman Eric Francis Taylor (Number 1183x) is buried in the Glasgow Western Necropolis: Grave reference H. 1444D..

(continued)

Having decided to enlist in the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) Eric Francis Taylor had initially presented himself for enlistment on January 22 of 1914, had undergone a satisfactory medical assessment on the same day, had been engaged for a period of five years' service in the Reserve and had then begun a twenty-eight day training period which would conclude on February 18.

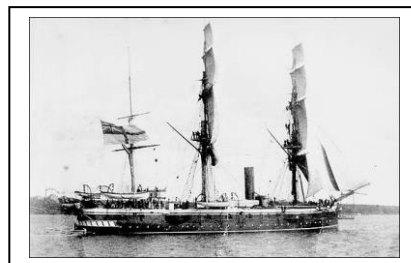
Having thereupon returned to his home, the events of that summer of 1914 then dictated that he be summoned to service by the naval authorities to fulfil his obligations. Thus Eric Francis Taylor relinquished his occupation as a fisherman(?) working out of the Conception Bay community of Port de Grave, and travelled to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland where, on August 25 of 1914 – three weeks following the British Declaration of War - he once more reported...*to duty*\*...on board the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below) and was...*taken on strength*.

It is not clear whether or not at this time he was required – or if he had already done so at an earlier date – to pledge 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.*





**(Preceding page: 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.**

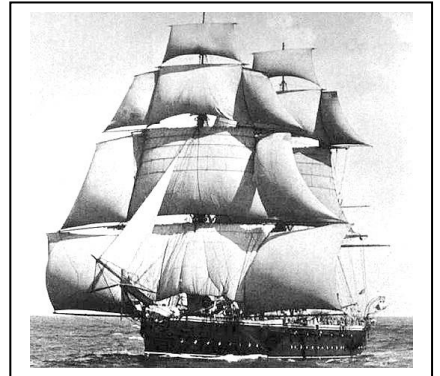
**Note: During the years preceding the Great War the only military force on the Island of Newfoundland – apart from a handful of ill-fated local attempts – was to be the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland). Even so, it was to be some thirty years after the withdrawal of British troops from the Dominion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

**(Right: 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)**



**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.**

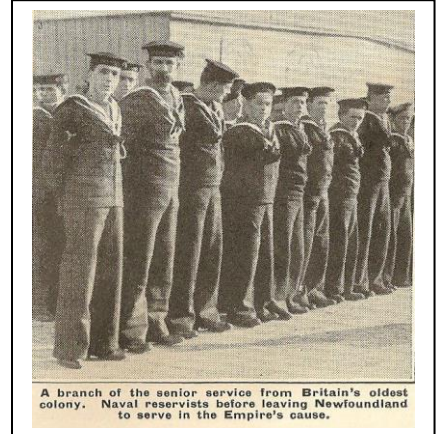
**Of course, the purpose of having a reserve force at any time is to provide a trained force ready at any time to serve at a time of need or crisis. Thus in August of 1914, upon the Declaration of War by the government in London, hundreds of those men of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) were to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

**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 below: Naval Reservists from Newfoundland, during the early days of the Great War, before their departure for the United Kingdom - from The War Illustrated)*

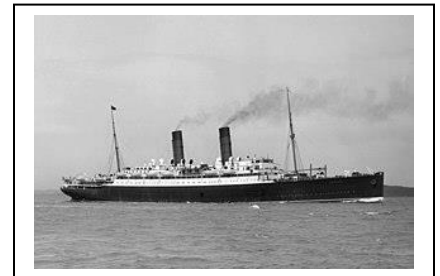
Following those afore-mentioned ten weeks spent in St. John's, Seaman Taylor, promoted by this time from the rank of seaman recruit and one of a draft of three-hundred nine Naval Reservists and officers, embarked on November 5-6 onto the *Cunard* ocean-liner *Franconia* which had arrived in St. John's having sailed from New York on her way to Liverpool.



A branch of the senior service from Britain's oldest colony. Naval reservists before leaving Newfoundland to serve in the Empire's cause.

Their ship then having docked in that aforesaid English port-city on November 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 un-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. The ship was not carrying any troops at the time, but out of her 314 crew members, 12 died. – the photograph is from Wikipedia)*



Thus likely on the aforementioned November 13, Seaman Taylor was...*taken on strength...*at HMS *Excellent*, the Royal Navy gunnery school located on *Whale Island* at the entrance to the harbour at Portsmouth. He was to train there until December 17 when he was ordered to join his ship, HMS *Changuinola* – she already completing her re-fitting in Bristol at the time – and where he was likely destined to man one of the guns with which by that time the ship had been equipped.



*(Right above: The Royal Navy Memorial stands on the coast at Portsmouth from where may be seen 'Whale Island' – photograph from 1917)*

*(Right: A six-inch gun such as those mounted on 'Changuinola', although this one has been fitted for coastal defence – photograph from 2010(?) and taken at the Royal Artillery Museum at Woolwich)*



(continued)

*Changuinola* had been built in 1912 and launched as *Columbia* for the German *Hamburg-Amerika Line*. Some two years later, by the onset of the *Great War* she was in British hands and was requisitioned by the Admiralty for service as an Armed Merchant Cruiser. To this end she was re-fitted and heavily armed with two three-pounder guns as well as six six-inch naval guns. She entered into her war-time service on November 21, 1914.

(Right: A six-inch gun mounted on the poop-deck (after-deck) of '*Changuinola*' (unfortunately there appears to be no date) – from the *Naval History.net* web-site (image donated by Stu Martin))



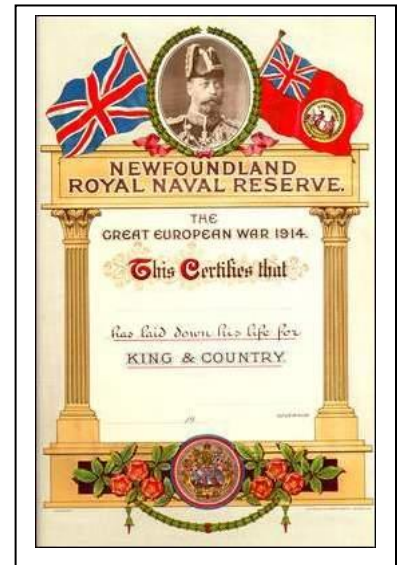
Seaman-Gunner Taylor joined his ship at seven-thirty in the evening of December 28, 1914 while the vessel was at Avonmouth, a part of the Port of Bristol. He was one of a draft of one-hundred twenty ratings and Royal Marines which had been dispatched from the naval establishments at Portsmouth (also see below) and *Whale Island*.



Seaman-Gunner Taylor and *Changuina* did not take to sea until January 6, their course to take them to the west, around Ireland, en route to join the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron whose ships also were to include *Viknor*, *Clan McNaughton* and *Bayano*, all names today known to Newfoundland History (see below).

On January 14, *Changuina* arrived at her patrol position although by that time she had already inspected two cargo vessels\*.

(Right above: Seen here later during the *Great War*, '*Changuinola*' is here clad in dazzle camouflage. – again from the *Naval History.net* web-site (image donated by Stu Martin))



\*HMS '*Changuinola*' had now taken up her place in the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron - also known as the Northern Patrol - a force based at Scapa Flow – although often also out of Liverpool and Loch Ewe (see below) - and originally having comprised out-of-date warships which, by that January of 1915, had been replaced by requisitioned ocean-going passenger-cargo ships fitted with guns, some as elderly as a number of the venerable ships on which they were mounted.

(Right above: 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 ships of the 10<sup>th</sup> 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.***

***Two of the first losses during the War among those Armed Merchant Cruisers were to be vessels of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron: 'Viknor' was lost on January 13, 1915, taking with her the entire crew of three-hundred two, including twenty-five Newfoundland sailors; only three weeks later 'Clan McNaughton' sank and a comparable number of crewmen died, of which twenty-two Newfoundlanders. 'Bayano' was to be the next, torpedoed in early March, again with a heavy loss of life, eleven of them from Newfoundland.***

**On February 2 Seaman-Gunner Taylor's ship dropped anchor at Loch Ewe, a temporary naval base on the north-west coast of Scotland. By that time *Changuinola* had stopped or otherwise inspected a further thirteen ships and it was now time to replenish fuel – she was a coal-fired ship – and supplies.**

**Six days later, on February 8, she put out to sea once more.**

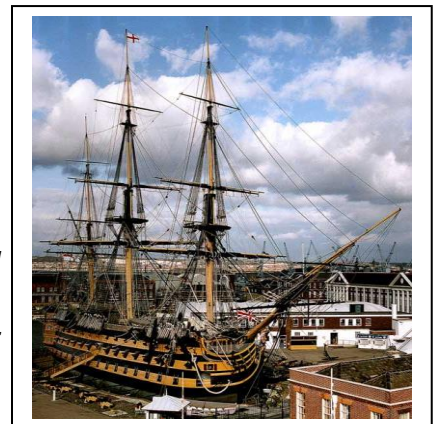
**This next patrol saw another fourteen ships intercepted and inspected by *Changuinola* and it was not to be until March 3 that the ship entered the River Clyde to dock in the Port of Glasgow. Restocking and maintenance were to commence almost immediately once the ship had been moored, at twenty minutes past six on the following morning.**

**The vessel's logs do not record the departure of Seaman-Gunner Taylor from the ship, but by March 5, according to his Service Records, he was no longer on her strength – perhaps the infectious nature of his complaint had something to do with it. It was to be as a sailor attached to *Victory I*\* that he would be admitted into hospital - surely never transferred south to HMS *Victory I* at Portsmouth (see immediately below).**

***\*The Royal Navy had a disciplinary system which in certain ways differed from civil – and even Army – law; but for it to be employed, a sailor had to be attached to a ship. While at sea, of course, this posed no problem, but when a sailor was performing duties on land that were not associated directly to a particular ship he still had to be held accountable for any untoward behaviour.***

***The Navy's training establishments were for the most part on land: Devonport, Chatham, and Portsmouth for example, were land bases for many thousands of naval personnel, some of who were permanently stationed there. Thus the practice became to base an elderly or even obsolete ship in the nearby port to be, nominally, the vessel to which this personnel was to be attached.***

***By the same token, HMS 'Excellent', the Navy Gunnery School on 'Whale Island' where Seaman Taylor had trained after his arrival in the United Kingdom from Newfoundland, was not only all the buildings and facilities on the Island, but also a small, elderly, nondescript depot ship, to which all the gunnery personnel was attached and was the name to be emblazoned on the bands of their caps.***



(Preceding page: *HMS 'Victory' in dry dock in the southern English port-city of Portsmouth where she has been for a century: the venerable war-ship is likely best known for her role as Nelson's flag-ship at the Battle of Trafalgar although her illustrious history is not limited to that one single incident. Today she is not only perhaps the centre-piece of the Naval Museum at Portsmouth, but she also remains as flag-ship to the First Sea Lord.* - photograph from Wikipedia)



Now Seaman-Gunner Taylor was to change his 'HMS Changuinola' band for 'HMS Victory', the land-based establishment (also known as a 'stone frigate') at Portsmouth.

And thus during the *Great War* HMS *Victory* served to represent the Naval land-based establishment at Portsmouth and was to be the name under which Seaman-Gunner Taylor was now to serve, even though that service would be done from a hospital bed in Glasgow.

(Right above: *A family memorial in the Anglican Churchyard in Port de Grave commemorates the sacrifice of Seaman Eric Francis Taylor.* – photograph from 2011(?))

The son of John Joseph Taylor, fisherman, and of Keziah Taylor (née *Anthony*\*) of Port de Grave in the District of the same name, he was also brother to Arthur, to Wilfred and to Ethel (also known as *Hettie*).

*\*The couple had been married in the not far-distant community of Cupids on November 27 of 1884.*

(Right: *The sacrifice Seaman Eric Francis Taylor is honoured on the War Memorial in the community of Port de Grave.* – photograph from 2011(?))



Seaman-Gunner Taylor was to die...*of sickness...*, of cerebrospinal meningitis on March 14, 1915, reportedly at the age of seventeen (as cited on the family memorial shown above): date of birth in Port de Grave, Newfoundland, February 11, 1895 (from his own enlistment papers).

*Seaman Taylor 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 Eric Francis Taylor was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, to the British War Medal (centre) and to 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 20, 2023.