

YOUNG, W.



Seaman Wallace Young, Number 1884x, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on a bronze beneath the Caribou at the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

Having relinquished his occupation of the time and having travelled from the west coast community of Middle Brook in the District of St. George to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on June 14 of 1915 Wallace Young reported...to duty...at the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below).



On that same mid-June day he enlisted for the first time into the Reserve (see further below), was signed on to serve for a single year of war-time service and underwent the required medical assessment on the morrow. Wallace Young most likely was then also to attest, 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: 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.



(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 by the Royal Navy in 1898, is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)

Only three days* after having first reported to Calypso in St. John's, Seaman Young had apparently already been promoted from the rank of Seaman Recruit; his sparse Service Records also suggest that this, June 17, was also to be the date on which he was to depart from St. John's to cross the Atlantic.

****It appears that in many cases, even if the recruit in question had not already previously been with the Royal Naval Reserve, the required twenty-eight day training period, all or partially, was waived by 'Royal Proclamation'.***

Contradictory to this, the Discharge Register of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) records that Seaman Young was to board the armed merchant cruiser HMS *Calgarian* in St. John's Harbour as one of a draft of eighty-five reservists, on the twentieth day of that June; but No! – it was the seventeenth, at least according to *Calgarian's* log-book, although she sailed on the twentieth (perhaps we are splitting hairs here) in the company of the two-hundred forty-two men and officers of 'F' Company, the Newfoundland Regiment, en route to Scotland.

(continued)

(Right: The photograph of Newfoundland military personnel in tenders on their way to board 'Calgarian' is from the Provincial Archives. 'Calgarian' was not a requisitioned troop transport but in September of 1914 had been taken over by the British government to serve as an armed merchant-cruiser. She did, however, as on this occasion, at times carry troops and civilian passengers across the Atlantic. She was later torpedoed and sunk by U-19 off the north of Ireland on March 1, 1918.)



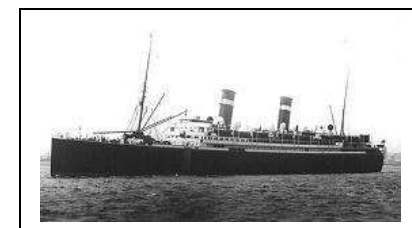
Apparently the ship took nineteen days to make what was usually the journey of about a week. Not only was 'Calgarian' escorting four submarines, but she sailed by way of the Portuguese Azores and then Gibraltar – some of the Newfoundlanders apparently even having the time to cross the straits to spend a few hours in North Africa. She reached Liverpool on July 9.



(Right above: The British Crown Colony of Gibraltar in pre-Great War days: The Spanish mainland is in the background beyond the harbour and Royal Navy dockyard. – from a vintage postcard)

HMS 'Calgarian' and her trans-Atlantic crossing of June 20 to July 9, 1915...

The armed merchant cruiser HMS 'Calgarian' arrived in St. John's Harbour from Halifax at about six o'clock in the morning of June 17, anchored and almost immediately began coaling. Her log suggests that she had sailed alone rather than in the company of the submarines (see below) since at times 'Calgarian' had been doing sixteen knots and the submarines' top speed was only thirteen.



(Right above: The photograph of the SS 'Calgarian' is from the naval-history.net web-site.)

At about five-fifteen of that same evening of June 17 the personnel of 'F' Company of the Newfoundland Regiment came on board as well as eighty-seven naval reservists and a single petty officer.

June 18 was to be spent transferring stores to HMS 'Calgarian' and completing the coaling of the ship. On this day is first mentioned the SS 'Glenalmond', a smaller cargo ship which was to accompany 'Calgarian' across the Atlantic to Gibraltar, the vessel from which some of the above-mentioned stores were to be drawn, and on which a small detachment of eight naval reservists and some few more senior ranks were to travel.

Also noted for the first time in the log of that June 18 was one – the vessel H2 - of the apparently four submarines – 'H1', 'H2', 'H3' and 'H4' - which were to be escorted across the ocean. They had presumably already made the journey from Montreal where they had been built to St. John's where they had been awaiting 'Calgarian'. Where exactly the SS

'Glenalmond' fits into the picture is not clear unless she was the submarines' depot ship or acting as an ocean-going tug.

'Calgarian' sailed out of St. John's Harbour at ten minutes past ten on the morning of June 20, 1915, at a speed of ten – then lowered to eight – knots. This had surely been to allow the submarines, otherwise un-mentioned, to keep pace with the larger vessel.

Proceeding at a reduced rate of speed, often about eight and a half knots, it was not until the afternoon of June 26 that the small convoy of HMS 'Calgarian', SS 'Glenalmond' and the four small submarines reached 'Flores Island' in the Portuguese Azores. During those days 'Calgarian' had been towing Submarine 'H3', at times its crew being required to repair a ruptured or slipped towline.

The remainder of the afternoon and early evening was spent anchored off 'Flores Island' with the submarines in turn drawing alongside to take on fuel (diesel oil) and supplies. It was a task soon accomplished and – after 'H3's towing-line had once more been repaired – the ships were on their way again at a speed of nine knots just after ten o'clock on that same evening of June 26.



(Right above: 'Delgado Point' on 'Flores Island', close to where the convoy anchored, and then past which it sailed on June 26, 1915 – photograph the cruisemapper.com)

It was not to be until the late morning of July 3 that they arrived at the British possession of Gibraltar situated at the narrow entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. This was to be where HMS 'Calgarian' would part ways with 'Glenalmond' – her eight naval reservists and five higher ranks to transfer immediately to 'Calgarian'*

****The four submarines were now to enter the Mediterranean Sea and proceed to the island of Malta from where they were to operate for the remainder of the Great War – except for H3 which would strike a mine a year later, on July 15, 1916, and be lost with all on board.***



(Right: The photograph of 'H4' in Brindisi Harbour in August of 1916 is from Wikipedia.)

Two days only were spent in Gibraltar although a number of those on board were able to leave the ship for 'liberty' on July 4. On July 5, having taken on board coal, supplies and a number of German prisoners-of-war, the ship sailed at eight o'clock in the evening and for the first time in some two weeks was able to proceed at a speed greater than ten knots. She was now en route to Liverpool.

There she arrived without incident of July 9 and at ten minutes past eight of the following morning, HMS 'Calgarian's' record-keeper documented... "Clypso" (sic) Boys left ship.

(The above has been adapted from the log-book of the armed merchant cruiser HMS 'Calgarian' for the period of June 13, 1915, to July 9, 1915.)

On July 10 of that 1916, *Calgarian* having docked in Liverpool, the Naval Reserve personnel would thereupon have been either posted directly to a ship or ordered to undergo further training – or to simply wait - at one of various Royal Navy establishments – these for the most part operating around the coast of England.

In the case of Seaman Young, not immediately attached to a vessel, *HMS Victory I* (see below) was the posting to which he was directed and where he was to remain until August 13 of that same year – although exactly what his occupations were to be during this period of wearing a cap-band emblazoned *HMS Victory* is not clear.

HMS Victory, like most of the so-called stone-frigates (naval establishments on shore), was three entities: it was a training establishment originally, and also a holding-barracks for seamen not only in training but awaiting a posting to one of His Majesty's ships, its facilities initially set in the naval city and port of Portsmouth; thirdly, it was also the ship to which the majority of the land-based personnel would have been, at least officially and bureaucratically – if not physically - attached**.*



At Portsmouth this vessel was HMS Victory, the warship from which Admiral Nelson had directed the Battle of Trafalgar – although her illustrious history is not limited to that one single incident.

**The large influx of personnel due to the War necessitated further Divisions and functions being transferred to other areas of the United Kingdom.*

(Right above: HMS 'Victory' in dry dock in the southern English port-city of Portsmouth where she has been for a century – photograph from Wikipedia)

***Naval discipline differed in some ways from civil and even Army law, and those in naval uniform, even though based on land and perhaps never to go to sea, had to be on the books of a real ship for that discipline to be applied. Thus a normally small, obsolescent and obscure vessel – 'Victory' was the exception - was used for this purely bureaucratic purpose.*

After about a week of serving at *Victory I*, on the aforesaid August 13-14 Seaman Young was transferred to nearby *Whale Island* from where on a fine day Portsmouth Harbour is visible.

**HMS 'Excellent' was the name – and also still is the name - of the Royal Navy's Gunnery School which had been established in a ship of the same name in 1829, the vessel being permanently moored just outside Portsmouth dockyard. As the years passed the ships were to be replaced, but each in turn was to be named HMS 'Excellent'.*



(Right above: *Recruits at drill on a naval gun on 'Whale Island' during the period of the Great War – from Wikipedia*)

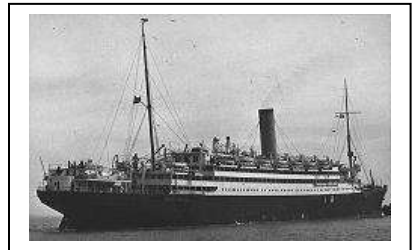
And as the years passed, the use evolved of the nearby 'Whale (originally 'Whaley') Island' as facilities were constructed on it. In 1885 the Gunnery School was moved from the ship of the time to be re-established on the island itself.

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



Which is why Seaman Young would thereupon have worn an HMS 'Excellent' cap-band.

After a short seventeen days of learning how the Royal Navy's armaments worked, Seaman Young was again transferred, on this occasion to one of His Majesty's Armed Merchant Cruisers on which he was to serve for a most memorable eighty-three days*.



**Seaman Young was officially attached to Arlanza from September 2 of that 1915 until November 24 although, as will be seen, some of that time would be spent elsewhere.*

(Right above: *Built in 1911-1912 for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, before the coming of the Great War 'Arlanza', was to serve the Company's commercial route between England and South America. In early 1915 she was requisitioned for war-time use as an armed merchant cruiser and was re-fitted and armed with six six-inch guns and two six-pounder quick-firing weapons. From April of 1915 until December, 1918, she sailed with the 10th Cruiser Squadron, had an adventure in North Russian waters (see below) and was later employed to escort North Atlantic convoys. Having returned to commercial life after the conflict, she ended her service in 1938. – photograph from the Naval-History.net web-site*)

Unfortunately, the log-books of *Arlanza* for the months of September and October of 1915 are not available. The second day of that September, as cited above, had been the day that Seaman Young was officially attached to HMS *Arlanza* which, at the time, may have been on the point of arriving in Liverpool after a four-week patrol with other armed merchant cruisers of the 10th Cruiser Squadron, also referred to as the *Northern Patrol*.



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

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 stormy waters encompassed by Ireland, northern Scotland, the Shetlands and Iceland, a thankless job at the best of times: in tempestuous winter months, even worse.

The duties of that August of 1915 were to be *Arlanza's* final patrol for a goodly period of time: the ship, with Seaman Young now on board, was soon to be on her way to Russia.

What follows is a condensed version of *Arlanza's* voyage to northern Russia while he was a member of her crew - from an account found on the *Wikipedia* website:

In the autumn of 1915 *Arlanza* was sent to Archangel carrying a large consignment of platinum. On her return she was to bring a Russian delegation to Britain for a conference with Britain and France. She left Archangel on October 21 with accompanying naval trawlers and a convoy of merchant ships, the trawlers to part company as soon as the danger of enemy mines was felt to have passed.

One hour later she was holed, having struck one of the supposed non-existent mines.

Arlanza took on water, dipped at the bow and some of her lifeboats were launched. However, her bulkheads held and she remained afloat, to the point where those in the lifeboats were taken back on board. Some of the tugs returned and despite damaging one of *Arlanza's* propellers, were able to tow the vessel into an anchorage near to the village of Yukanski where the vessel was now to remain until the seventh day of April of the following spring.

Apparently there had been no casualties during the incident.

The salvage of supplies and ammunition began although it was to be slow work, particularly where some of the material was now below water in the forward section. The arrival of another armed merchant cruiser, HMS *Orotava*, produced some equipment that made the work easier, but it also was to afford the captain of *Arlanza*, twenty-nine officers and two-hundred twenty-two petty officers and ratings – Seaman Young among that number – the means to return to the United Kingdom.



(Right above: The photograph of the rescue ship *Orotava* is from the *Ships Nostalgia* website.)

Arlanza was left with a much-reduced crew to effect temporary repairs and was not to reach home again until July 8, 1916, when she was partially towed into port at Belfast.

In the mean-time, HMS *Orotava*, having been escorted for some of the return journey by armed trawler-minesweepers, and having zig-zagged much of the remainder of the way home, was to dock in the Scottish port city of Glasgow on November 24. At four o'clock in the afternoon, one detachment of *Arlanza's* ratings...left for Devonport Barracks (Vivid I). Four hours later a further contingent, the... Remainder of HMS *Arlanza's* crew left the ship, to entrain for their various depots.

Seaman Young was on his way back to HMS *Victory I*.

He was to remain in the holding-barracks for five weeks and a day before being assigned to another of His Majesty's ships, the mine-layer *Princess Margaret**.

**The ship had been launched only six weeks prior to the British Declaration of War and had been built for the 'Canadian Pacific Railway Company' for the Canadian West Coast passenger service. The British, however, having a paucity of mine-layers, chartered both 'Princess Margaret' and her sister-ship 'Princess Irene' to serve as such and both. 'Princess Margaret', by the war's end had laid more than twenty-five thousand mines.*



She survived the conflict but was not returned to her owners. The British Admiralty was to purchase her outright in 1919 and she served as a mine-sweeper until 1921 when she was converted for use as an Admiralty yacht. She was eventually sold for scrap in May of 1929.

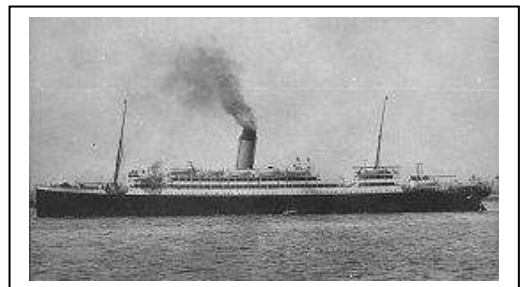
(Right above: The image of the British Mine-layer 'Princess Margaret' is from the 'Wikipedia' web-site.)

Seaman Young was to serve – at least on paper – for just over a full year on *Princess Margaret*, from January 1 of 1916 until January 9, 1917, during which time the vessel worked almost exclusively in the North Sea, laying offensive mine-fields off the Belgian coast and defensive ones off the English coast. However there does not appear to have been any occasion on which the ship was to confront any German counterparts.

On January 10 of 1917, Seaman Young was...*taken on strength...at Pembroke I* in the naval town of Chatham in the county of Kent. This posting may have been again only on paper as, only days later, he was to be taking a train to the port of Birkenhead in England's North-West.

Even while Seaman Young had been serving the final days of the year 1916 and the first of 1917 on HMS *Princess Margaret* and at HMS *Pembroke**, the naval authorities had been deciding that his time in service since 1914 was deserving of a month's furlough back in Newfoundland.

He was thus assigned trans-Atlantic passage on an armed merchant cruiser, HMS *Laurentic*.



He was not to travel alone. A number of other Newfoundland naval reservists, having by this time been deemed worthy of a month's leave at home, were to travel – likely as far as Halifax – on her.

(Right above: The photograph of 'Laurentic', likely seen here in peace-time as no guns are visible on her decks, is from the Naval-History.net web-site)

The ship was to sail from Birkenhead, a port adjacent to Liverpool, on that January 23 with a reported four-hundred seventy-five* persons on board as well as some forty tons of gold to buy munitions in North America.

**While it is recorded that 'Laurentic' was carrying no passengers or troops, it should be remembered that some of those on board were returning home for leave or for repatriation.*

While passing by the north-west coast of Ireland on the morning of January 25, the ship unexpectedly put into the small town of Bunrana in Lough (pronounced as in *Loch Ness*) Swilly to put ashore several sick crew-members. At five o'clock on that same afternoon *Laurentic* was under way again.



She then passed through the protective boom at the entrance to Lough Swilly and gathered speed – it was apparently for her speed that she had been chosen to carry the gold as she could out-run most ships and any U-boat. She was barely three kilometres from the coast when she struck two German mines in quick succession and rapidly began to sink; nor after the second explosion was there any power and thus no distress signal could be sent.

There was little time to lower the life-boats although apparently all on board *Laurentic*, apart from perhaps some engine-room personnel who were already dead, were able to board them. It was to do them little good.

A snow-storm was blowing and most of the men were not clothed to resist it. Any help had to travel the length of the Lough and then through open seas to reach them. Apparently the nearest land could only be reached in the teeth of the gale that was blowing, a temperature of minus twelve degrees, and the boats were filling with water.

And those that eventually managed to land found themselves isolated on the rocky, barren, uninhabited coast of Donegal.



(Right top and right above: The Memorial to those who perished on that January 25 of 1916 during the sinking of HMS 'Laurentic'; and the churchyard of St. Mura of the Church of Ireland at Upper Fahan, Ireland, wherein stands the aforesaid Memorial and where many of the dead lie to this day – photographs from 2011)

Little wonder, perhaps, that of the four-hundred seventy-five on board *Laurentic*, three-hundred fifty-four were to die.

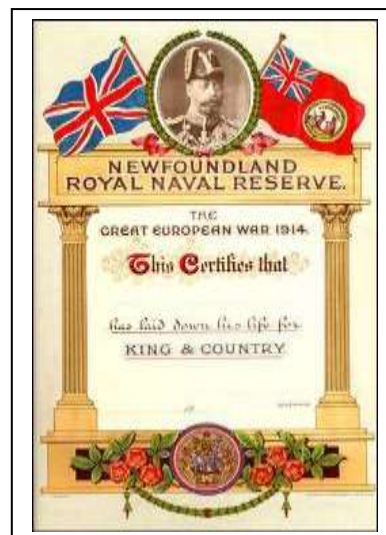
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The son of Thomas Young, labourer, and of Ellen Young (likely née *Benoit**) of Middle Brook, he was also brother to Angelina, Norman, Finlay, Bridget, Henry and to Bertha.

**The couple had been married in either Sandy Point or St. George on October 27, 1890.*

(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)

Seaman Wallace Young was recorded as having died in the...*sinking of HMS Laurentic*...on January 25 of 1917 at the age of twenty-one years: date of birth at Middle Brook, District of St. George, Newfoundland, December 15, 1896 (from his enlistment records); however the 1911 Census appears to have the year of his birth as late as a perhaps questionable 1901.



Seaman Young 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 Wallace Young 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.