



**Seaman Nathaniel Gooby (also found as *Goobie*), Number 1582x, is buried in Gillingham (*Woodlands*) Cemetery: Grave reference Naval. 26. 1389.  
(continued)**

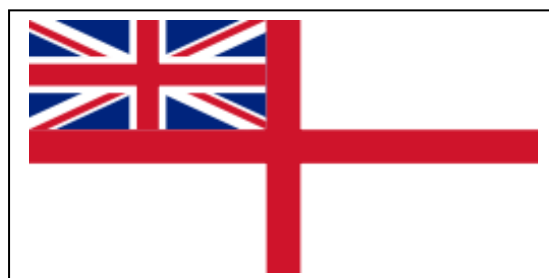
Having relinquished his occupation, possibly that of fisherman, working out of the Southside, St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on January 23 of 1915 Thomas Nathaniel Gooby reported...*to duty...*at the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Briton*, moored in the harbour (see below).

On that same January day he enlisted for the first time into the Reserve (see further below), was signed on to serve for the...*Duration of the War\**...and underwent the required medical assessment. 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.*)



*\*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.*

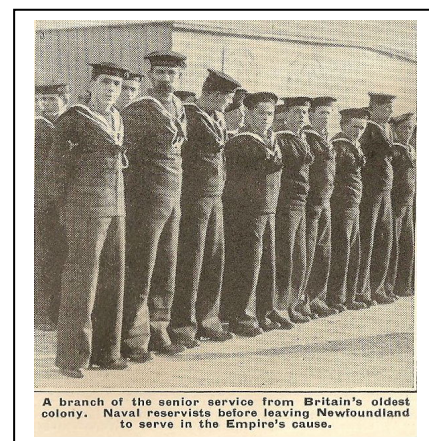
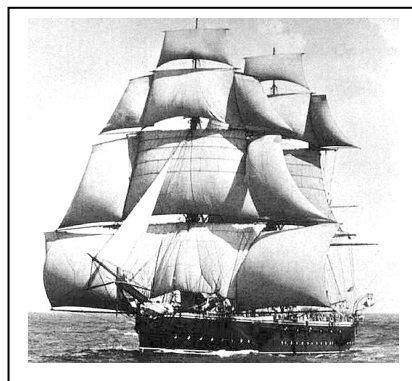
*Just fewer than four-hundred men were sought to enroll as seamen – apparently automatically at the rank of Able Seaman - and to present themselves annually in St. John's for five years in order to train for a period of twenty-eight days per annum. Allowed to report at a time of their own choosing, it 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 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 above: HMS 'Calypso' in full sail. She was to be re-commissioned HMS 'Briton' in early 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was about to be launched by the Royal Navy. – This photograph, taken of the 'Newfoundland Calypso' by the Royal Navy in 1898, is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)**



**(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)**

**Some thirteen days\* after having first reported to Calypso in St. John's, on February 5 – also the day on which he was placed on the nominal roll of HMS Pembroke I (see below) - Seaman Gooby had apparently received promotion from the rank of Seaman Recruit; it would then appear that on the same February 4-5 of that 1915, he was to depart from St. John's to cross the Atlantic – this suggested by the dates documented in his sparse service file.**

**\*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'.**

**On that February 4, the detachment of volunteers for the Army (the Newfoundland Regiment) that upon its arrival at Edinburgh Castle was to become 'C' Company of the Newfoundland contingent in the United Kingdom, boarded the tender Neptune in St. John's Harbour for the short journey down the coast to Bay Bulls. There the ocean-going vessel Dominion awaited to carry it across the Atlantic and it might be assumed that the Naval Reservists were to be a part of that contingent.**

(Right: The photograph of personnel of 'C' Company on board the 'Neptune' on the way to the harbour at Bay Bulls is from the Provincial Archives.)



The available sources do not, however, record any Newfoundland naval reservists taking passage on *Dominion*. In fact, *Calypso's* drill register of the time records that the personnel were to leave St. John's on board the *Allan Line* vessel, the *SS Mongolian*, on February 17 – although the ship's captain records (see below) that it was the 18<sup>th</sup>.

The situation seems to have been even a bit more complicated than that: Days before, according to the local newspapers, on that February 4-5, *Mongolian* had left St. John's to attempt to force a passage through the heavy ice surrounding the entrance to St. John's and extending well offshore. It was to no avail and after three days of futile effort the ship returned to port.

In re-entering St. John's Harbour, however, the vessel struck a rock and, after inspection, it was decided necessary to do emergency repairs in the local dock. In the meantime some of the vessel's passengers were to take the train across the island so as to catch another ship in Halifax.

On or about February 23, the repairs having been completed, *Mongolian* departed Newfoundland once again, only to be immediately met with heavy seas which eventually were to at least partially undo much of the temporary work which had been completed to the ship only days before.

The following is an adaption of a letter written by *Mongolian's* captain after his ship had reached the safety of the harbour of Halifax on February 25. It was addressed to Lieutenant-Commander McDermott of *HMS Calypso* who saw fit to forward it to the Office of the Colonial Secretary – whence it made its way to the local press.

Dear Sir:-

It is but just that I submit the following to your notice.

As you are aware, the ship under my command left St. John's 18<sup>th</sup> February with 200 R.N.R. ratings from your ship under the command of Captain Alan Goodridge. On their arrival on board '*Mongolian*' Captain Goodridge at once established regular discipline and routine.

Shortly after leaving port rough and foggy weather was encountered and as ship proceeded East this weather became worse each day. On 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> a heavy gale raged from North-East with very high seas, causing the ship to labour considerably. On the latter date trouble arose through the giving-out of temporary repairs done in St. John's. Considerable water was found making its way into the fore end of the ship. After consultation I decided to return here to Halifax.

I requested Captain Goodridge with ratings under his command to assist me in every way consistent with requirements. It is needless to say such help was given in the most energetic and cheerful manner by way of preparing for any emergency. Manning deck pumps (which were kept going day and night until arrival into port). Also a number of men were detailed to assist in the engine room and stokehold. (Chief Engineer Brown of this ship desires me to specially mention the valuable assistance of these men.

For my part I cannot speak too highly of Captain Goodridge. His cheerful and composed manner throughout went far to inspire confidence not only in the men under his command but also the passengers entrusted to my care.

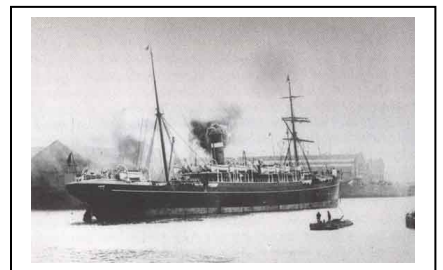
I would request, Sir, that you would be good enough to forward to His Excellency the Governor my appreciation for the assistance so ably rendered by him. I would also ask you to place on record my high opinion of Petty Officer George Gill and Armourer Luxon.

The entire staff of my ship join with me in thanking the men of the Newfoundland Reserve whose conduct throughout was most exemplary and helpful in every way.

I may say that almost immediately upon arrival here the men were transferred to the SS 'Scandinavian' and sailed about 9 p.m..

J.W. Hatherly  
Master S.S. Mongolian

**(Right: The SS 'Mongolian' was an elderly vessel constructed in 1891. Built for the Allan Line Company she was to have served as a troopship during the Boer War before being bought by the British Admiralty, again for war service, in 1914 or 1915. She was not to survive the conflict: on July 21 of 1918 she was torpedoed and sunk by U-boat 70 with a loss of thirty-five lives. – The photograph of Mongolian is from the British Home Child Group International web-site.)**



Once having disembarked from *Scandinavian* - on which they had journeyed from Halifax (see in letter found above) - in the United Kingdom in early March, any Naval personnel would have been either posted directly to a ship or ordered to undergo further training at one of various Royal Navy establishments – these for the most part in England.

Seaman Gooby was dispatched to report to HMS *Pembroke*\*, the naval establishment at Chatham on the River Medway, itself a tributary of the better-known River Thames, and in

the county of Kent. Not only was *Pembroke* a barracks – it operated from 1878 until 1983 – but it was the name given to a number of training establishments, mostly not far-removed from Chatham, which were numbered according to the purpose of the training – or otherwise - involved.

*Pembroke I* was the training-station and holding-barracks for regular seamen and it thus was surely *Pembroke I* to which Seaman Gooby would have been attached, there to await a posting to one of His Majesty’s ships.

*\*There was also a series of ships named ‘Pembroke’, the last several of which were used as depot ships and for harbour service at Chatham. This is the HMS ‘Pembroke’ found on the cap-bands of the sailors who served there perhaps in their thousands - but who were never to set eyes on the actual ship in question.*

*Naval discipline being distinct in some ways from the laws that governed other parties such as the Army and civilians, sailors had to be on the books of a serving naval vessel to be legally subject to naval law and order, even when these sailors were serving on land.*

*Thus the elderly and obsolescent vessels that plied the waters adjacent to the many naval land establishments – and known as stone frigates – were in theory the home ships of the tens, hundreds, thousands of men who laboured ashore.*



*Which is why Seaman Gooby would have worn an HMS ‘Pembroke’ cap-band.*

*(Right above: Some buildings of the large Royal Navy complex which was the HMS ‘Pembroke’ naval establishment at Chatham for just over one hundred years. Today it has been transformed into a university campus. – photograph from 2010)*

Seaman Gooby was to serve one-hundred one days at *Pembroke I* – this including the days of the trans-Atlantic passage. On May 17 he was taken off *Pembroke’s* strength and on the morrow reported to HMS *Ceto*, the small naval base in the coastal town of Ramsgate – further down the Thames from Chatham - from which operated some of the ships of the *Dover Patrol*.

Prior to the *Great War*, Ramsgate had been a popular seaside destination and it had also been a thriving fishing centre, both of which had suffered hugely because of German U-boat activity, mine-laying and, later, bombing raids. It was in order to counter the submarines and mines that the Admiralty created the *Dover Patrol* for which it requisitioned a number of fishing-boats, drifters and tugs, armed them, and placed Navy personnel on board.



*(Right above: Drifters and other small vessels lined up at the quay-side of Ramsgate Harbour during the early days of the Great War – from the Imperial War Museum website...livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk)*

Thus HMS *Ceto* came into being at Ramsgate, the small naval base where Seaman Gooby was to be...*taken on strength*...on May 18 of 1915.

(Right below: *Minelaying from a German surface vessel during the Great War: these were for the most part contact mines. U-boats were also used for this purpose – from the NavWeaps web-site*)

There appears to be nothing among his papers to apprise us of what Seaman Gooby's duties may have been at HMS *Ceto*; whether he was to serve on *Ceto* herself, an elderly hired yacht, employed as a Depot Ship in Ramsgate Harbour and which was responsible for the administration of many of those afore-mentioned smaller boats, or if he was working at some of the shore-based facilities which were a part of the HMS *Ceto* complex, is not clear.



It appears that he was not attached to any of those smaller craft as no name appears on his service records to suggest this.

On January 28 of 1916 Seaman Gooby was transferred from *Ceto* and Ramsgate and found himself back at *Pembroke I*. But the attachment was to be short-lived and on February 11-12, only two weeks less a day he was on his way to another shore-based establishment, HMS *Victory II*, amongst other things a training facility for stokers – much of the shipping of the time, including the Royal Navy, still relied on coal – and other engine-room crew.

*Victory II* was based in the port-city of Portsmouth on England's south coast and, like the other land-bases naval complexes, was also responsible for a number of ships, both big and small. Seaman Gooby was to join the crew of one of these, although whether as one of its engine-room staff or otherwise appears not to have been documented.

The vessel in question was *Pioneer II*, a private yacht hired by the British Admiralty in 1915 and which was to remain in service until March of 1919. Armed with a twelve-pounder naval gun and also two quick-firing six-pounder pieces, she may also have been equipped with wireless – a relatively new innovation – which was to allow her to act as an Auxiliary Patrol Group Leader or in a special yacht squadron – either of these duties in waters around the British Isles and in the Mediterranean.



(Right above: *A quick-firing naval twelve-pounder (the weight of the shell) and twelve hundred-weight (1200 lbs. the weight of the barrel and breech) gun, here seen adapted for use in 1941, such as found on HMT 'Pioneer II'.– taken at the Royal Artillery Museum 'Firepower', Woolwich, in 2010*)

His term – long or short is not recorded – was to last until April 19 of that 1916 when there was then to be an absence – un-accounted for – of forty days from that April 19 until May 30, an unusual occurrence\*.

*\*The author has found no evidence that he was granted furlough at this time.*

The period of May 30 until July 11 was likewise passed in a manner almost as mysterious as the that of the time recounted in the above paragraph: *Victory I to III* appears to be recorded, suggesting that he spent his time in two locations, but nothing further appears among Seaman Gooby's papers.

He was then recalled to *Pembroke II*, apparently still awaiting an attachment to a ship. There he was to wait until December 20, five months later, before a summons to ship-board service arrived.

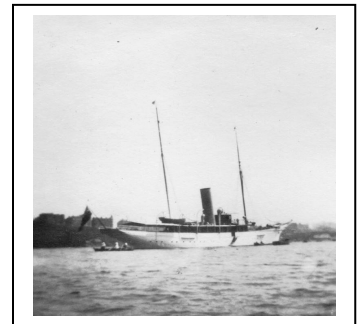
On this occasion the vessel was to be a paddle-steamer built in 1882, *Mona's Island*, converted and armed – as was *Pioneer II*, with a twelve-pounder gun and also a single six-pounder - for use as a net-layer\*.

Naval bases were often vulnerable to underwater attacks and were thus were usually protected by heavy nets strung across all entrances. Not only would ships such as *Mona's Island* assist in the laying of these obstacles but, of course, regular maintenance of them was an obvious necessity.

There appears to have happened nothing of exception during Seaman Goody's tenure on *Mona's Isle*. One might thus assume that his time on board was occupied by the routines of any such ship during the *Great War*, but nor do the records even show where the ship was stationed although given the proximity of *Pembroke II* to the Rivers Medway and Thames, she may well have been assigned to the protection of the numerous facilities of the London Dock area.

On April 17-18, Seaman Gooby was on his way to the Principality of Wales on the western side of the English mainland. He had been ordered dispatched to HMS *Idaho*, since August of 1916 the name given to the Auxiliary Patrol and Q-ship Base at Milford Haven\*.

*\*As was the case at Victory, there was also a ship of the same name to which the base personnel was attached; she was a requisitioned steam yacht, HMS Idaho, armed with a single one-pounder quick-firing gun and which was used at Milford Haven during the Great War as a local patrol vessel and apparently later as a tug-boat.*



(Right above: *This grainy photograph is of the requisitioned yacht 'Sabrina' which was the vessel which 'Idaho' replaced in 1916 at Milford Haven. The two ships were likely comparable: apart from both being ex-luxury yachts, both were unfit to be used in any fighting capacity but quite adequate to be used as floating offices and occasional billets. – from the Maritime Quest web-site)*



*Idaho's* role was also to act as a base ship, to be responsible for the personnel, the arming, fuelling, provisioning, maintenance as well as the finances of a flotilla of smaller boats, usually trawlers and drifters and the such-like which operated out of *The Haven* to aid in the defence of the approaches to the English Channel and the River Severn leading to the port of Bristol.

Once again, however, there is a dearth of information concerning the activities of Seaman Gooby. There is no record of him serving on a ship of the above-mentioned *flotilla* at Milford Haven but neither is it clear if he was to serve on the ship *Idaho*, or in its shore-based operations. All that may be gleaned is that he was there for nine weeks before being posted back to *Pembroke I* on June 20-21 of that 1917.

In fact, he had now been ordered to return to the *Royal Navy Barracks* at Chatham – the home of HMS *Pembroke* – to likely again await a summons to a ship. He was still to be there at the time of his demise.

He and three other Newfoundland Reservists of *Pembroke I* (see elsewhere among these files) were to be billeted at the *Barracks* at a time when there was apparently some overcrowding and so the Drill Hall with its glass roof had been requisitioned as a dormitory.

This was now the beginning of the period when the Germans were to send their large *Gotha* bombers over England during the night-time. On the night of September 3-4 the towns of Chatham and Gillingham, both naval communities, were the selected targets, the bombers' job apparently made easy by the absence of a blackout and any anti-aircraft activity.

(Right: *This photograph of the glass-covered Drill Hall at the Chatham Royal Naval Barracks in or about 1905 is from the 'campus.medway.ac.uk > history' web-site.*)

There were apparently some nine-hundred men accommodated in the above-mentioned Drill Hall at the time. The damage was done by two bombs and by the glass roof transformed into flying projectiles by the explosions.

(Right adjacent: *The image of the funeral procession of September 6, 1917, is from the 'sussexhistoryforum.co.uk.' web-site.*)

The aforementioned *sussexhistoryforum.co.uk.* web-site article from which this present information is drawn cites that ninety men had been killed at the time and that a further forty had been expected to die of wounds in the aftermath.

A mass funeral was undertaken on September 6 for the majority of the dead to be interred in *Woodlands Cemetery*, Gillingham, as seen on the first page of this file, with several more later buried once they had been identified.



He is recorded as having been the son of Margaret Rogers, possibly the Margaret Goobie (sic), widow, who married a Robert Rogers on November 3, 1907, in St. John's. Thus far, any further family information has proved to be elusive.

(Preceding page: *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 Gooby (perhaps *Goobie* as seen above) was reported as having died on the night of September 3-4, 1917, during the bombing of the *Royal Naval Barracks*, Chatham, as described above: date of birth in Saint John's, Newfoundland, October 28, 1896 (from his enlistment papers).

*Seaman Gooby 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 Nathaniel Gooby 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 22, 2023.