

Deck Hand Moses Dewling, Number 1712x of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland), but who later was transferred and served as DA 10559 of the Royal Naval Reserve, is honoured on the Chatham Naval Memorial in the English county of Kent.

Having *answered the call* of the naval authorities for volunteers, Moses Dewling presented himself for enlistment on February 17 of 1915, in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, perhaps having travelled from the Trinity Bay community of Trouty, of which place he was apparently native, or from as near as 77, leMarchant Road, his *declared* place of residence at the time. He thereupon reported to the Naval Reserve training ship HMS *Calypso*...moored in the local harbour.

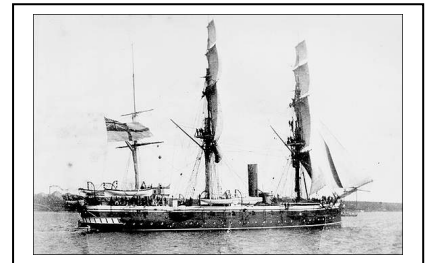
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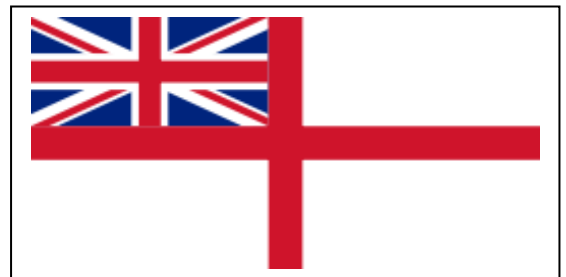
On or about that same February 17 he would have signed on to serve for a single year's* war-time service and undergone a satisfactory medical assessment. Moses Dewling also likely attested at this time, pledging his allegiance to the King-Emperor, George V.

(Preceding page: *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.*



(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*)

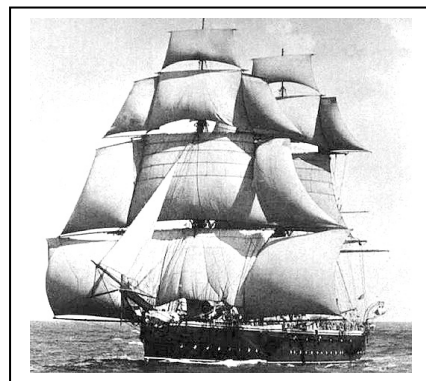
Note: During the years preceding the Great War the only military force on the Island of Newfoundland – apart from a handful of ill-fated local attempts – was to be the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland). Even so, it was to be some thirty years after the withdrawal of British troops from the Dominion 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: HMS 'Calypso' in full sail. She was to be re-named 'Briton' in 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was launched by the Royal Navy. – Royal Navy photograph of 1898 by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)

Some four weeks after having first reported in St. John's – twenty-eight days of which perhaps to be spent in training* - and on March 16 having been elevated from the rank of Seaman Recruit, the now-Seaman Dewling, one of a draft of seventy Naval Reservists, departed Newfoundland on March 20 on board the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* for passage to Halifax. From there the sailors were to subsequently traverse the Atlantic on board the ocean-liner *Orduña*.

***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 oft-times waived.**

The Reservists were not to travel alone from St. John's: 'D' Company of the Newfoundland Regiment was also to make the voyage on its way to Scotland to join the Newfoundland contingent already serving there at Edinburgh Castle.

(Right: The photograph of 'Stephano' sailing through the Narrows of St. John's Harbour is by courtesy of the Provincial Archives.)

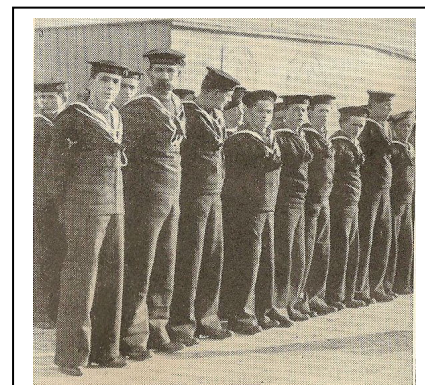
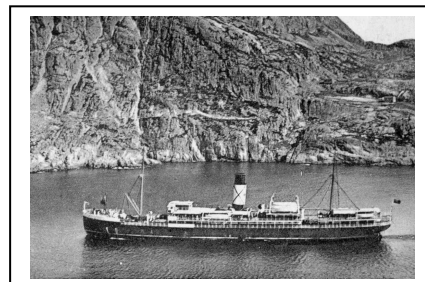
(Right below: Naval reservists from Newfoundland, during the early days of the Great War, before their departure for the United Kingdom - from *The War Illustrated*)

(Right below: The recently-built 'Orduña' – the vessel constructed in 1913-1914 - was requisitioned during the Great War for use as an armed merchant cruiser and also as a troop transport.

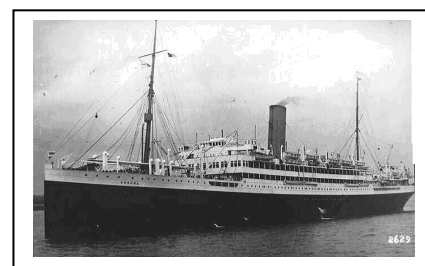
Twenty years afterwards to be Involved with the unfortunate Jewish refugees in the 'Voyage of the Damned' affair, the vessel was later again to be used as a troopship and an evacuation transport during the conflict of 1939-1945 before being finally laid up in 1950. – photograph from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site)

Once having disembarked from *Orduña* in the port-city of Liverpool it appears that several of the men were thereupon posted directly to a ship. Others were ordered to proceed to various Royal Navy establishments and thus, likely having journeyed by train, reported to these bases on or about March 30.

In the case of Seaman Moses Dewling, the destination was to be *Pembroke I*.



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



Once having disembarked in the United Kingdom it appears that while some few of the men were posted directly to a ship, the majority was ordered directly to undergo further training at various Royal Navy establishments and thus, likely having journeyed by train, reported to these bases on or about November 28-29.

Seaman Dewling was 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 Dewling 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 presence of elderly and obsolescent vessels that plied the waters adjacent to the many naval land establishments which were known as stone frigates. The ships were in theory the home ships of the tens, hundreds, even thousands of men who laboured on shore.

Which is why Seaman Dewling would have worn an HMS 'Pembroke' cap-band – until he joined 'Clan McNaughton'.

(Right above: 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)



On April 17-18 of 1915 Seaman Dewling was transferred from Pembroke I and was to exchange his HMS *Pembroke* cap-band for that of HMS *Ceto*, the sea-side base at Ramsgate in which harbour the Navy had a number of small vessels for work in the estuary of the River Thames and the nearby Dover Straits, both of which are adjacent to the town and to its small port.

Prior to the 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 that 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.



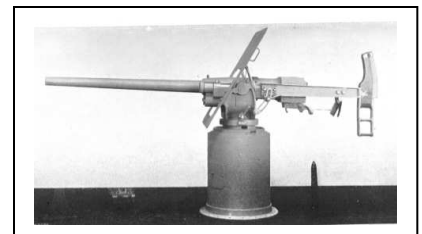
(Right above: Drifters and other small vessels lined up at the quay-side of Ramsgate Harbour during the early days of the Great War – from the Imperial War Museum web-site...livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk)

Thus HMS *Ceto* came into being at Ramsgate, a base where Seaman Dewling was...*taken on strength*...on April 18 of 1915 – one of a number of Newfoundlanders to be transferred there at that time.

Shortly after having reported to HMS *Ceto*, he became a crew-member of a requisitioned drifter, HMS *Reaper*, a ninety-ton fishing vessel re-fitted for the detection and destruction of enemy mines and then based at HMS *Ceto*. Built in 1907 and having worked out of the east-coast fishing-centre of Lowestoft, *Reaper* had been converted and armed with a single 6-pounder gun for war-time service, these comprising duties not only as a mine-sweeper but also as a patrol boat and escort vessel, tasks which commenced in December of 1914.

(Right below: *A Quick-Firing Hotchkiss six-pounder gun such as was mounted on the fore-deck of 'Lord Durham' – from Wikipedia*)

Neither the exact date on which Seaman Dewling was to set foot on the deck of His Majesty's Drifter *Reaper* nor that on which he was eventually to be discharged from her, appears to have been documented. However, he was to *officially* serve at HMS *Ceto* from the afore-mentioned April 18 of 1915 until February 19, 1916, a period of some ten months.



He was then transferred back to HMS *Pembroke* and to the Trawler Section. In addition to that Seaman Dewling was dis-associated from the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) and became a regular Reservist of the Royal Navy. His Newfoundland service number, 1721x, was withdrawn and on that February 19, 1916, he became a Deck Hand, Number 10559 DA.

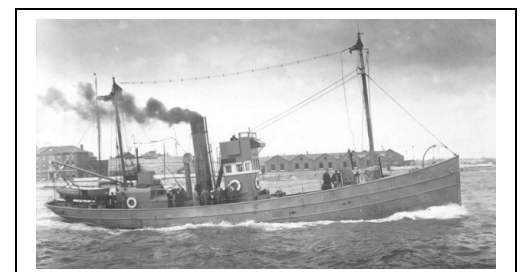
Nor was he any longer officially referred to as a Newfoundlander which is why his Newfoundland Service Record ceases at this point*. On this same February 19 his Royal Naval Reserve records begin.

**His transfer to the Royal Naval Reserve may have occurred in some quarters prior to this since Andrew Hiscock is recorded as having enlisted into the Newfoundland Reserve on February 27 of 1915 and was thereupon assigned the Service Number 1721x.*

His New Service Record, that of Deck Hand Dewling, Number 10559 DA, begin of that February 19, 1916, and document him as remaining at HMS *Ceto*, but the date on which he was to report to his next ship is not to be found.

She was another requisitioned drifter, the *City of Liverpool*, of eighty-eight tons and, like *Reaper*, armed with a six-pounder weapon for war-time service as a patrol boat, a task begun in November of 1914.

(Right above: *The photograph of the City of Liverpool, likely seen here before the War as no gun appears to be visible, is from the uboat.net web-site.*)



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Nothing untoward seems to be reported in the few sources available a propos Deck Hand* Dewling's new ship either before or after he joined her; her more than three years of war-time service thus appear to have been a period of the everyday routines and tasks of a small ship at sea.

**This may have been a rank for men of the Naval Reserve, particularly in the trawler Section, men who were a sort of jack-of-all-trades and experienced sailors respected for their expertise. But finding an exact description has proved to be difficult.*

On the last day of July of 1918 those routines were to come to an abrupt end.

There is a part of the Kentish coast, the *South Foreland* some five kilometres up the coast from Dover and close to Ramsgate, which is the part of England, at thirty-two kilometres, the most close to the Continent of Europe. It was in these waters that the *City of Liverpool* was operating on that date.



(Right above: *The War Memorial in St. Matthew's Churchyard, Trouty, honours the sacrifice of Moses Dewling. – photograph from 2015*)

Not long before this time a German submarine, the UC-71, had also been operating there. She was not a hunter but a vessel whose job was to sow mines and it was one of those which was struck by the *City of Liverpool*.

The mine struck back and the small ship disintegrated and was sunk. All on board perished. As for the German U-boat, UC-71, she survived the War, but on her way across the English Channel to surrender to the British in February of 1919, she sank, some sources speculating that her crew had preferred to scuttle her.



(Right above: *This brass plaque to the memory of Walter J. Spurrell, George Johnson, George H. Miller, and of Moses Dewling is found in St. Matthew's Anglican Church in the community of Trouty. – from the communitystories.com web-site*)

(Right: *The photograph of Seaman Moses Dewling is from the Virtual War Memorial, Canadian Veterans' Affairs.*)

The son of David Dewling, fisherman, and of Lucy Anne LeDrew Dewling of Trouty, Newfoundland, he was also brother to Richard*-John, Julia-Ann, Joseph-William, Thomas, Emma-Charlotte – named as his next-of-kin - , Jacob, Edward and John.



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**His brother Richard-John had already enlisted into the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) but had withdrawn because of ill health.*

Seaman (Deck Hand) Moses Dewling died on July 31 of 1918 in the sinking of His Majesty's Drifter *City of Liverpool*; date of birth in Trouty, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, July 18 of 1895 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register and from *Terry's Tree Fort*).

Seaman (Deck Hand) Dewling is recorded in most sources as having served in only the Royal Naval Reserve, any mention of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) is usually not to be found.

Seaman Moses Dewling was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, 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 22, 2023.