



Seaman Walter Samuel Emberley, Number 1185x, having passed away in Newfoundland, is buried in the Church of England Saint Mary the Virgin Cemetery in the Burin Peninsula community of Lamaline.

Walter Samuel Emberley had been one of those to enlist prior to the *Great War* in the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve. He had done so on January 27, 1914, and undergone a medical assessment at the same time, all on the day that he had begun the required twenty-eight days of training.

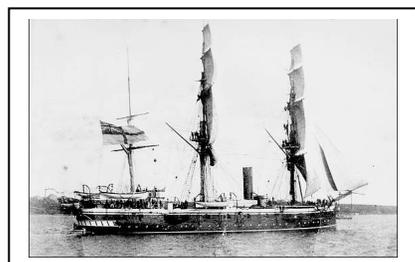
He was thereupon to be signed on to serve in the Reserve for five years (see further below) and likely also thereupon pledged his allegiance to the King-Emperor, George V.

Having returned to his home in February of 1914, only some six months were to pass before the events of that summer resulted in the British Declaration of War and the summons to return...to duty. This he did, relinquishing his occupation of fisherman and returning to the Naval Reserve training-vessel, HMS *Calypso* – moored in St. John’s Harbour – on August 14 of that same 1914.

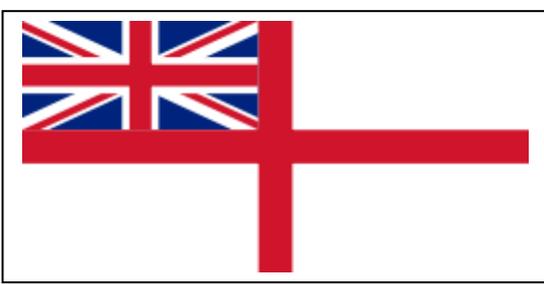


(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India: as a boy and young man he had served in the Royal Navy from 1877 until 1891 and always retained a fondness for the Senior 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.

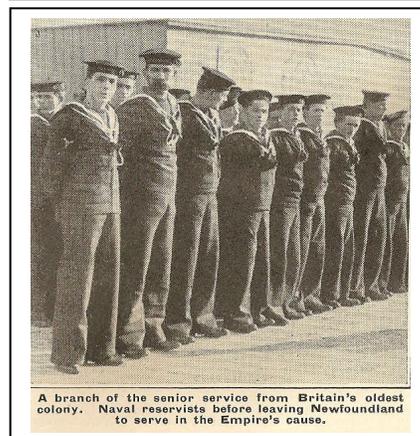
Just fewer than four-hundred men were sought to enroll as seamen – apparently automatically at the rank of Able Seaman - and to present themselves annually in St. John's for five years in order to train for a period of twenty-eight days per annum. Allowed to report at a time of their own choosing, it 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)



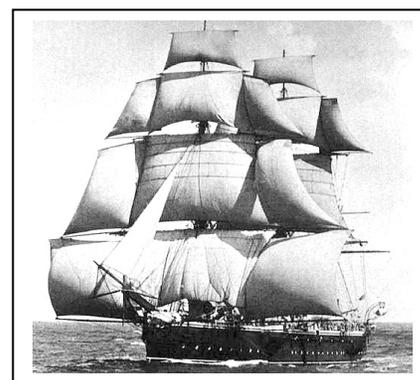
Expenses were apparently defrayed for the most part by the British (Imperial) Government and an attempt was made to ensure the number of recruits would be kept constantly at a maximum. This practice and policy was then to be continued up until the onset of hostilities some twelve years later.

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.)

At some time during the period of three weeks plus a day following his arrival there was confirmation of Walter Samuel Emberley's rank as seaman. As seen above, he had already undergone the mandatory training earlier that year, so what his duties were to be during those twenty-two days is not certain. But on September 5 he was to be seconded to the fledgling Royal Canadian Navy and to board the cruiser HMCS *Niobe* which at the time was in St. John's Harbour awaiting a detachment of the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve.



(Right above: '*Niobe*', seen here in St. John's Harbour, was ceded by Great Britain to Canada on September 6 of 1910 to be the country's main naval vessel on its east coast. Superfluous to Royal Navy needs, she was an elderly... '1st Class Armoured Diadem Cruiser'... of eleven-thousand tons, armed with numerous guns, thirty-two altogether, and two torpedo-tubes. However, by October of 1915 '*Niobe*' was worn out, to be disarmed and relegated to the role of harbour-service and headquarters ship in the harbour at Halifax see below). – from the collection of William Herbert Rose and Marmaduke Rose (by Courtesy of Bud (Donald Rose) and found in the *For Posterity's* sake – an RCN Historical Project web-site)

(Right: A naval tender carry Newfoundland Reservists from HMS '*Calypso*' to HMCS '*Niobe*'. – The photograph by *The Evening Telegram* is from the Provincial Archives.)



*Some sources refer to the ship – in 1914 - as HMS '*Niobe*', but as of September 6, 1910, she was HMCS '*Niobe*'.

By the time that the detachment of just over one-hundred Newfoundland Reservists* was to join the ship's complement on that September 5**, HMCS *Niobe* had already started her war-time service

*They were apparently needed as when *Niobe* was being re-fitted and readied for war, many of her crew had been ordered to Canada's west coast and were unavailable when the ship herself had been prepared to sail after her repairs.

**Some few Reservists are recorded on their service records as having joined HMCS '*Niobe*' on October 15 but this is highly unlikely as '*Niobe*' had contact with two Royal Navy ships off New York as late as a quarter past six on the evening of October 13. Moreover, the discharge register of HMS '*Calypso*' documents that September 5 was indeed the date on which some of these men joined '*Niobe*' – the records of the others appear to be absent from the register.

HMCS *Niobe*'s first duty after having absorbed the Newfoundland Reservists into her crew was to escort the Royal Canadian Regiment from Halifax on its passage to Hamilton, Bermuda, where it was to become the island's garrison. This mission accomplished, the ship sailed northwards to patrol the waters of the Cabot Strait and the Straits of Belle Isle, a task she shared with a Royal Navy cruiser, HMS *Lancaster*.

Following this episode of but a few weeks, by mid-October of 1914 she was working with the Royal Navy's 4th Cruiser Squadron, also known as *Force 'H'*, which was responsible for the inspection of shipping off the east coast of the United States and as far south as the West Indies.

The United States was a neutral country at the time – she did not join the conflict until April of 1917 – and thus this patrolling and policing of the western Atlantic was the burden of the Royal Navy during the first years of the *Great War* as was the blockading of German shipping in American harbours. The job involved intercepting merchant ships of all flags, the inspection of cargoes and at times the boarding and the escorting thereof under armed guard of shipping to an Allied – or Associated – port.

This often also involved a great deal of boredom with the exception, perhaps, of the few days – every three weeks or so – when the patrol ships put into Halifax or, rarely, Bermuda for re-fuelling and replenishing of other supplies.

HMCS *Niobe* was already an elderly ship and the continuous effort of those several months resulted in a worn-out ship. Thus when she returned to Halifax in July of 1915, it was decided that she should remain there to become a depot ship and headquarters for the other, smaller, ships of the Royal Canadian Navy on Canada's east coast. She was to remain in Halifax for the remainder of the conflict.

The Newfoundlanders of the Royal Naval Reserve were then to return to St. John's to serve on HMS *Calypso*, some for only a short period of duty, before being dispatched overseas to the United Kingdom and thence to ships of the Royal Navy.

Seaman Emberley's Service Record shows that he was put back on the nominal roll of HMS *Calypso* on September 1 of 1915 – although this may have been partially only on paper. Some three weeks later he was on his way once more.

He was a seaman of the draft of one-hundred forty-four Royal Navy Reserve personnel which was to travel across the island of Newfoundland to Port-aux-Basques likely overnight on September 23-24, 1915. The detachment then embarked on the Reid Newfoundland vessel, the SS *Kyle*, for passage to North Sydney where the ship docked on the morrow at ten minutes past five in the morning.

From there the Reservists were to travel by the *Inter-Continental Railway* to Québec City where they would be taken on board the SS *Sicilian* arriving from Montreal on her commercial route across the Atlantic to Liverpool.

(Right: *The image of the SS Sicilian at anchor(?) just off-shore is from the WikiTree web-site.*)



It was likely at the end of the first week of October, 1915, and having disembarked in that English port-city, that the Naval Reservists would thereupon have been either dispatched directly to a vessel or ordered to undergo further training – or otherwise to simply await a posting to one of His Majesty's ships - at one of various Royal Navy establishments, these for the most part operating around the coast of England.

In the case of Seaman Emberley, not having immediately been attached to a vessel, *HMS Pembroke I* (see below) was the establishment to which he was directed and where he was to remain until likely the end of the second week of November of that year – although exactly what his occupations, apart from waiting, were to be during this period of wearing a cap-band emblazoned *HMS Pembroke* has not been made clear.

**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.

(Right: A part 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 Emberley was to remain on the nominal roll call of *Pembroke I* until November 14, at which time he was to be...*taken on strength...*of *George V.*, of which, unfortunately, there appear to have been two vessels of that name.

The first was a fishing boat, a small drifter of sixty-seven tons, built in 1910 and registered in the East Anglian port of Lowestoft. Hired in 1915 by the Admiralty to serve as a *net vessel* she was sunk near Dover in June of 1917 by an exploding mine – whether their mine or our mine is not clear.

(Right above: The photograph of the drifter ‘George Albert’ from the neighbouring East Anglian fishing-port of Great Yarmouth during the war is from the ‘Wikipedia’ web-site.)



George V was also a two-hundred twenty-four ton rescue tug built in 1915 and apparently put into service almost immediately in His Majesty’s Dockyard on the River Tyne(?) but surely working for a private company. Then in 1917 she was requisitioned by the Admiralty. Perhaps surprisingly, she was apparently still working for the last of her owners as late as the year 2007.

(continued)

(Preceding page: *The image of 'George V.' undergoing conversion in dry dock is from the 'Tyne Tugs and Tug Builders' web-site – with the caveat that this may not be the vessel in question.*)

Seaman Emberley appears to have been on the crew list of *George V* until January 7 of 1916, although this may not have been so since his subsequent posting at *Pembroke II* is recorded as having commenced only on July 8 of the same year*. However, as his record also shows that he was to suffer from pulmonary tuberculosis it may be possible that he was receiving treatment during this six-month period which, otherwise appears as a void on his papers.

**Also possibly a clerical error.*

But it might also have been in that year of 1916 during that Seaman Emberley was to be found deserving of a period of furlough in Newfoundland – or ill enough to be invalided home.

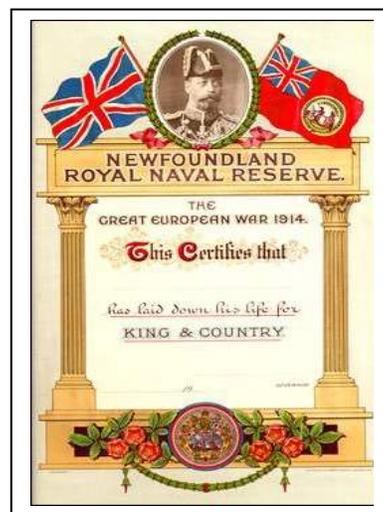
On September 6 or 8 – both dates are found - a twenty-one year-old Walter Emberley from Newfoundland – reason for travelling...OHMS (*On His Majesty's Service*) - disembarked in the Canadian port of Québec. There was only one Walter Emberley in the Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) and none in the Newfoundland Regiment.

Only a matter of days later – the time necessary to travel back to Newfoundland from Québec – on September 11 of 1916 he was invalided and discharged from HMS *Briton*. According to Newfoundland Vital Statistics he died in Lamaline two years and a month after his return home, on October 24 of 1918. However, the records of Saint Mary the Virgin Cemetery in Lamaline cite the date as April 20 of the same year.

The sacrifice of Seaman Walter Emberley – which records his death on October 24 – is honoured on the War Memorial in the community of Lamaline (see first page of this dossier). – photograph from 2015

The son of George Nelson Emberley (former fisherman, deceased of stomach cancer on August 11, 1901), and of Jane Emberley (née *Williams**) of the North Side, Lamaline, he was also brother to Elizabeth-Mary, perhaps to Henry, and half-brother to older Alice-Clara, half-brother to younger Leo and George, half-brother to Catherine (see all immediately below) and step-brother to Thomas Hillier.

**The couple had been married in Lamaline the month of December, 1893. She was his second wife, the first having been Agnes Hepditch whom he had married on December 15 of 1876 and who had passed away in 1892. Jane appears to have married twice more after George's death: to Hillier in 1901 by whom she had a daughter, Catherine; and to George Foote with whom she had two sons, Leo and George.*



(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*)

Seaman Walter Samuel Emberley is also recorded as having died at the age of twenty-four years: date of birth in Lamaline, Newfoundland, February 13, 1894 (from his enlistment papers and also from the Newfoundland Birth Register where he is documented as having been named *Walter Stanley* Emberley – *Samuel* is found in his enlistment papers).



Seaman Emberley served only in the Royal Navy and was not in the service of Canada – only seconded - as is cited in some sources notably the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Seaman Walter Samuel (*Stanley*) Emberley was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, to the British War Medal (centre), to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) and to the Silver War Medal (seen right above), having been honourably discharged due to wounds or sickness.



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.