



Seaman Albert Hallett (found also as *Hollett*), Service Number 931x, having no known last resting-place is commemorated on a bronze beneath the Caribou at the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

Having decided to volunteer for the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland), Albert Hallett had originally presented himself for enlistment on November 9 of 1910, whereupon he was to undergo a recorded twenty-eight days of training, terminating on December 5 of that same year.



As with all pre-War volunteers, he had joined-up for five years on the understanding that he would undergo the required annual training of at least twenty-eight days. However, he was to complete only four such undertakings: December of 1913 and January of 1914 saw his last such term of training on *Calypso* before world events intervened and he was to be called to war-time service.

Summoned from home *to service* two months after the onset of hostilities, Albert Hallett relinquished his occupation as a fisherman and travelled from his residence on Flat Island, Bonavista Bay, to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland. There, on October 2 of 1914 – fifty-nine days following the British *Declaration of War* – he was once again to report...*to duty*...to the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below).

On that above-mentioned October day, Albert Hallett was signed on for wartime service\* and it was likely to have been at this time – if he had not already done so - that he also attested, pledging his allegiance to the King-Emperor.



(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.*

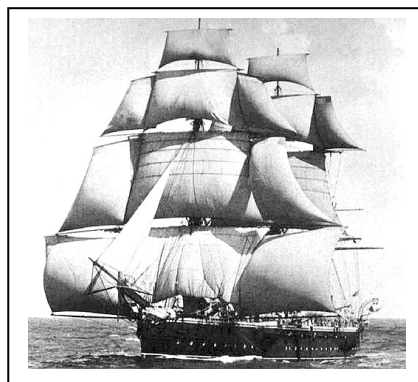
*Note: During the years preceding the Great War the only military force on the Island of Newfoundland – apart from a handful of ill-fated local attempts – was to be the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland). Even so, it was to be some thirty years after the withdrawal of British troops from the Dominion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

*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.*

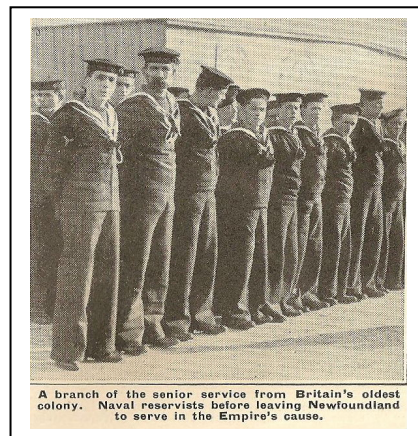
***Of course, the purpose of having a reserve force at any time is to provide a trained force ready at any time to serve at a time of need or crisis. Thus in August of 1914, upon the Declaration of War by the government in London, hundreds of those men of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) were to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

***An elderly vessel, H.M.S. '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: H.M.S. '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. – photograph by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)***

**Following some three months of duties in St. John's – no further training has been recorded - Seaman Smith, one of a draft of three-hundred five Naval Reservists, embarked on November 5-6 onto the *Cunard* ocean-liner *Franconia* on the trans-Atlantic British-bound leg of its commercial route between New York and Liverpool.**



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

**Once having arrived in the port-city of Liverpool on November 11, it appears that several of the men were posted directly to a ship. Others were ordered to undergo further training at various Royal Navy establishments and thus, likely having journeyed by train, reported to these bases only hours later.**



***(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 submarine to the east of Malta She was not carrying any troops at the time, but out of her 314 crew members, 12 died. – photograph from Wikipedia)***

**It would appear that Seaman Hallett was to be one of this latter category as he was transferred to HMS *Pembroke* upon his disembarkation; there he would serve for the several weeks which followed until December 10.**

**HMS *Pembroke*\* was the Royal Navy shore-based establishment at Chatham on the River Medway, itself a tributary of the better-known River Thames, in the county of Kent. Not only was it 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 was perhaps likely that it was *Pembroke I* to which Seaman Hallett was to be temporarily attached.**

***\*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.***



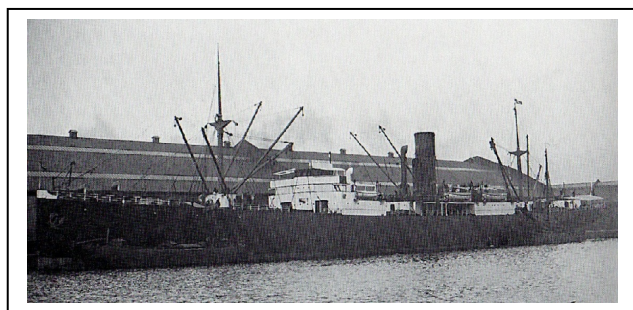
***Which is why Seaman Hallett would have worn an HMS ‘Pembroke’ cap-band until he joined his ship.***

***(Right above: Some of the impressive buildings of the large Royal Navy complex which was a part of 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)***

**The ship to which Seaman Hallett was ordered on December 10-11 of that same 1914 was HMS *Clan MacNaughton*, reportedly at Liverpool on December 4, likely the port from where she was to sail on patrol with the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron days before that Christmas with Seaman Hallett on board.**

***(Right: The image of *Clan MacNaughton* – with unfortunately no further details - is from the Royal Marines History.com web-site.)***

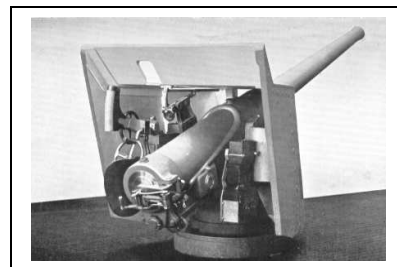
**The vessel, a passenger-cargo ship of the *Clan Line*, had been hired by the British on November 19 of that autumn and had been fitted out with eight 4.7 inch naval guns for the purpose of serving as an armed merchant cruiser.**



But although a number of Newfoundland Reservists had been sent upon arrival in the United Kingdom to train at HMS *Excellent*, the Royal Navy's gunnery school, Seaman Hallett had not been among them and he was posted to *Clan McNaughton* to likely serve as an ordinary seaman.

(Right below: An example of the naval gun with which *Clan McNaughton* had been equipped prior to sailing on her war-time duties. – from Wikipedia)

*Clan McNaughton* was to be attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron, also known as the *Northern Patrol*, a force originally comprised of 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.



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, the Shetlands and Iceland, a thankless job at the best of times: during the tempestuous winter months, even worse.

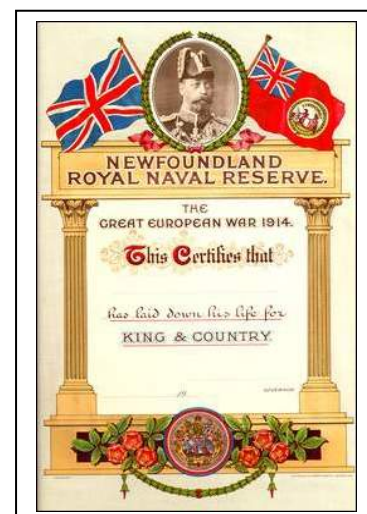
Even so, the first several weeks of her service appear to have been uneventful and *Clan McNaughton* apparently was to return to Liverpool on one if not two occasions before setting out to sea once again on what was to be her last voyage\*.

*\*It appears not to be recorded whether she was in the company of 'Viknor' when that vessel left the Squadron to return to Liverpool in mid-January, not to be seen again before her discovery on the ocean floor almost a century later.*

The weather during that part of the winter of 1914-1915 was apparently foul and the last message from *Clan McNaughton*, sent by radio by her captain on February 3, was that the ship – on patrol off the north coast of Ireland and west of the Hebrides - was in a storm, apparently...*one of the worst 10<sup>th</sup> Squadron experienced during the whole war.*

She was not heard from again.

The cause of her loss has never been ascertained: she may simply have been the victim of the weather as reported by her captain; or perhaps, as originally thought, she had encountered a German mine although apparently the vessel was not particularly close to a mine-field.



A third theory suggests a combination of circumstances: the weather, perhaps a top-heavy ship because of the eight naval guns that she was carrying (just more than two tons per gun), and an inexperienced crew all may have contributed to her loss.

(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*)

The son of Jonas Hallett, former fisherman, deceased – no cause recorded - on February 22, 1895, and of Sarah Hallett (née *Samson*\*) of Flat Island, Bonavista Bay, he was also brother to Reuben, William, John and Thomas (twin), to Daisy and to Bessie.

*\*The couple had been married on May 28, 1874, at King’s Cove.*

(Right: *The sacrifice of Seaman Simmons is honoured on the War Memorial in the community of Eastport. – photograph from 1913*)



Seaman Hallett died on February 3, 1915, at the *reported* age of twenty-three years: date of birth on Flat Island, Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland, October 25, 1892 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register and Royal Navy records).

*Seaman Hallett served only in the Royal Navy and was not in the service of Canada as recorded elsewhere, notably by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.*

Seaman Albert Hallett 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 22, 2023.

