



Seaman William Jones, Number 1678x, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on a bronze beneath the Caribou at the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

Having travelled from Trinity East to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on February 16 of 1915 William Jones, fisherman, reported...*to duty*...at the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below).



On that same February 16 he enlisted for the first time into the Reserve (see further below), was signed on to serve for a single year* and underwent the required medical assessment on the morrow. 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.



(Preceding page: *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 from 1898 by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum*)

Following thirty-two days of training and service in St. John's and by that time having been promoted on March 16 from the rank of Seaman Recruit, Seaman Jones is recorded as having left St. John's for overseas service in the United Kingdom on March 20 in the draft of seventy-one reservists which left for Halifax on board the Bowring Brothers' vessel *Stephano* with 'D' Company of the Newfoundland Regiment, from there to take ship on the ocean-liner *Orduña* for trans-Atlantic passage*.

**'D' Company of the Newfoundland Regiment was on its way to Scotland to join the Newfoundland contingent already serving there at Edinburgh Castle.*



(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*)

Once having disembarked in the English west-coast port-city of Liverpool it appears that several of the Naval 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 on or about the end of March, beginning of April. In the case of Seaman Jones, the destination was to be *Victory I*, established in the south-coast port-city of Portsmouth.



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



(Right above: *The recently-built 'Orduña' – constructed in 1913-1914 - was requisitioned during the Great War for use as an armed merchant cruiser and also as a troop transport. Involved with the unfortunate Jewish refugees in the 'Voyage of the Damned' affair, the vessel was later also 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*)

**The Royal Navy had a disciplinary system which in certain ways differed from civil – and even Army – law; but for it to be employed, a sailor had to be attached to a ship. While at sea, of course, this posed no problem, but when a sailor was performing duties on land that were not associated directly to a particular ship he still had to be held accountable for any untoward behaviour.*

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The Navy's training establishments were for the most part on land: Devonport (although apparently it was only a shore-base during the Great War), Chatham, and Portsmouth for example, were land bases for many thousands of naval personnel, some of who were permanently stationed there. Thus the practice became to base an elderly or even obsolete ship in the nearby port to be, nominally, the vessel to which this personnel was to be attached. This appears to have been the procedure for the large number of shore bases organized around the coast of the United Kingdom during the Great War.

Thus, HMS 'Victory', the base to which Seaman Jones had been ordered after his arrival in the United Kingdom from Newfoundland, was not only all the buildings and facilities on shore, but also HMS 'Victory' the warship, the vessel from which Admiral Nelson had directed the Battle of Trafalgar – although the ship's illustrious history is not limited to that one single incident.

It was also the name which all the sailors attached to HMS 'Victory' were to have emblazoned on the bands of their caps.

Furthermore, these establishments were at times divided into sections: 'Victory I' was where the seamen (as opposed to the engine-room personnel, for example, in 'Victory II') such as Seaman Jones were to be stationed while awaiting a posting to one of His Majesty's ships.

(Right: HMS 'Victory' is seen here in dry dock in the southern English naval port-city of Portsmouth where she has been since the late 1920s – photograph from Wikipedia)



Seaman Jones was to serve at *Victory I* from the time of his arrival in the United Kingdom until May 2-3 of 1915. Following this period, on May 3, he was transferred to the above-mentioned *Victory II* for a short tem of only two days before being transferred once more, on this occasion to HMS *Attentive*.

It is not at all clear when he was to join the crew of His Majesty's Trawler *Goeland*: it was either for those three days' posting to *Victory II* or it may have been later when he was dispatched to serve in the north-east at Immingham (see further below) – then again it may have been on both occasions. Whichever was the case, on May 5-6, 1915, Seaman Jones was to be attached to HMS *Attentive*, the name assigned to the trawler apparently being used at the time as a depot ship – like HMS *Victory* above in Portsmouth - in the port of Dover, and which was responsible for the organization of the other vessels of the *Dover Patrol*.*

****The coastal town of Dover lies on that part of the English coast which lies closest to France and the port-town of Calais. The Dover Straits, some thirty kilometres wide, allow vessels from the Baltic sea, from northern Europe and from the North Sea to have access to the English Channel – or 'La Manche' as the French call it – and from there the Atlantic***

Ocean. Today it is the world's second busiest waterway – and it was already critical to British interests at the time of the Great War.

Even some seventy years prior to that conflict the British had seen fit in the mid-nineteenth century to construct a harbour for commercial, for cross-Channel and for naval reasons. The port of Dover today is the main maritime link between the United Kingdom and the continent – and the more recently-constructed 'Chunnel' (Channel Tunnel) passes almost directly underneath it.



(Right: One of the entrances to the port of Dover as seen from the Dover Straits with, flanking it to the right, the well-known White Cliffs – photograph from 2010)

With the Germans having occupied a part of the Belgian coast almost opposite Dover and with a goodly number of British vessels, both commercial and naval – to which should be added the troop transports which from there and from nearby Folkestone were, by the end of the War, to have carried some five million troops across to the 'Western Front' – using the aforementioned waterway, the British created the 'Dover Patrol'.



The biggest fear was that the Germans would employ U-boats and torpedo-boats based on the Belgian coast to attack British shipping, and would also set mines in those waters. In fact they did although it was the mines that were to become the greatest threat to shipping.

Thus began the 'Dover Patrol'. In its early days it was a motley collection of old, even obsolete war-ships, for the most part destroyers, to which was very soon to be added a number of requisitioned and purpose-built small vessels, notably fishing-boats, trawlers and drifters, lightly-armed but capable of mine-sweeping and keeping their German opposite numbers at bay.

(Right above: Armed trawlers of the 'Dover Patrol' in the harbour at Dover – The undated photograph is from the 'Imperial War Museum' web-site.)



The 'Dover Patrol' rapidly became a large and important entity of Britain's naval defences and vessels from it were to be stationed not only at Dover but at other points around the nearby coast*. Its base came to be known as HMS 'Attentive'.

***HMS 'Ceto' was another facility at nearby Ramsgate where several Newfoundlanders serving in ships of the 'Dover Patrol' were based.**

(Right above: *HMS 'Attentive', seen here at some time prior to the Great War during which she served as a cruiser of the Dover Patrol. The base reportedly was named after she became the parent ship because her Commanding Officer was to become senior officer of the Dover Patrol itself**. – photograph from Wikipedia)

**Yes - there was also the trawler mentioned in an above paragraph, but she was to be supplanted by the cruiser HMS 'Attentive'. The administrative story is complex, perhaps more than necessary for the telling of Seaman Jones' tale, thus the author will leave it in its abridged form.*

What exactly his duties were to be during that posting to *Attentive* - either afloat on board the ship *Attentive*, or on shore at one of the facilities of the same name - does not appear to have been documented on the few meagre lines of Seaman Jones' personal service record.

He is recorded, however, as having served at Dover from the aforementioned May 6 until June 30, fifty-five days hence. Then, for only a single week – July 1 to 7 – Seaman Jones was ordered attached to HMS *St. George* and there, for perhaps a second time, to His Majesty's Trawler *Goeland*.

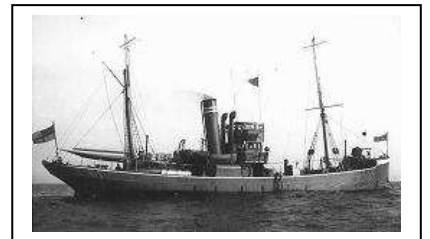


HMS *St. George* was a cruiser constructed twenty-three years earlier and which by 1915 was obsolete and of little use as a fighting vessel. In that year she was relegated to the task of Depot Ship in the small port of Immingham on the Humber River where she was made responsible for a flotilla of escort vessels, mine-sweepers and the like.

(Right above: *The photograph of the Edgar-class cruiser HMS 'St. George' is from the naval-history.net web-site.*)

One of those smaller craft was the fishing-vessel HM Trawler *Goeland* whose acquaintance has already been made in a preceding paragraph.

His Majesty's Trawler *Goeland* was a requisitioned and then hired, fishing-boat, a trawler from Liverpool and recently built in 1915. Having been converted and armed with a single six-pounder gun, she was ordered into war-time service as a mine-sweeper in March of that 1915. She was to survive this first war and serve in the same capacity some twenty years afterwards in the conflict of 1939-1945.

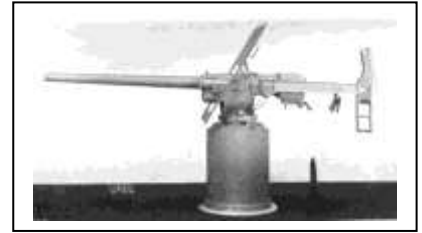


(Right above: *The photograph is not of 'Goeland' but of a larger trawler, 'John Edmund', which was also requisitioned and fitted out – the gun may be perceived on the fore-deck - for the same duties. – The image is from the naval-history.net web-site.*)

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



Once again it is not clear what Seaman Jones duties were to be now at Immingham although he is recorded as having served with or on *Goeland* in some capacity. But the duration of that service was to be short: from July 1 to 7.



(Right: A Quick-Firing Hotchkiss six-pounder gun such as would had been mounted on the fore-deck of the trawler *Goeland* – from Wikipedia)

Then Seaman Jones was apparently to return down England's east coast to report back to *Attentive* at Dover. There, although no dates appear to have been documented, he was to serve on board another of His Majesty's Trawlers: HMT *Returno*.

The author has once more been confronted with a dearth of information a propos the actions of Seaman Jones and his ship, the trawler *Returno*, during the late summer and autumn of 1915.



The story of *Returno* is much akin to that of *Goeland* above. She was one year older, having been built in 1914, and had worked out of the east-coast port of Grimsby. Her armament was also a single six-pounder gun and she had gone to work as a mine-sweeper from March of 1915 until 1919*, to return twenty years later to play the same role.

**While the shooting war was over in November of 1918, there were many thousands of live mines still littering the seas which had to be eliminated; thus there was a large number of casualties among the mine-disposal flotillas whose job continued.*

(Right above: The photograph of Seaman Jones is from the Veterans' Affairs, Canada, web-site to which it has been donated by the Jones family of Trinity.)

But what *Returno* was doing on that December 9 of 1915 is not clear, although it might be surmised that the ship was at sea since the body of Seaman Jones was not recovered. It is reported that he accidentally drowned.

The son of John Jones, likely a cooper, and of Jane Jones (née *Penny*) of Trinity East, he was also brother to Eva-May, Edward, Naomi, Mary-Elizabeth, Walter, Alfred-Charles, Mark-Batson, Amy-Anne, Kenneth, Thomas and John.

Seaman Jones was a reported twenty-four years of age at the time of his death on December 9-10, 1915: date of birth March 25, 1891 at Pease (*Peace?*) Cove (from the Newfoundland Birth Register) and February 18, 1891 (from his enlistment records).

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Seaman Jones served the Royal Navy and was not in the service of Canada as found in some sources, notably the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Seaman William Jones 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 21, 2023.