



Seaman James Albert Mahaney, Number 2216x, is buried in Cobh* Old Church Cemetery in County Cork, Ireland: Grave reference, C.25.78..

****Cobh (pronounced 'Cove') is the present-day name for the town and port of Queenstown of the British era in the country.***

(continued)

Having relinquished his occupation, likely as a fisherman, and likely having then travelled from Fogo Island to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on October 7 of 1916 James Albert Mahaney reported...*to duty...*at the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Briton*, moored in the harbour (see below).

On that same seventh October day of 1916, 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 on the morrow. He also most likely was to attest 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 below: HMS 'Calypso' is seen here in full sail. The vessel was to be re-commissioned HMS 'Briton' in 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was launched by the Royal Navy. – The Royal Navy photograph dated 1898 is by courtesy of the Admiralty House Museum)

Five weeks and three days after having been...taken on strength...at 'Briton', his sparse Service Records suggest that it was on November 14, having by that time been promoted from the rank of Seaman Recruit, that the now-Seaman Mahaney was on his way to the United Kingdom.



The Discharge Register of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) records that it was on the Reid Company ship, the SS Sagona that he, Seaman Mahaney, and the others of his draft were to leave St. John's for the United Kingdom and for overseas service.

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

However, local newspapers report that while the vessel was to sail on that date with one-hundred fifty passengers on board, it – and they – were to travel directly by sea only as far as North Sydney* from where the Naval reservists were then obliged to travel by train via Halifax to the Canadian port-city of Québec.



***Where the ship was to be for the next while, going back and forth to Port aux Basques on the cross-Cabot Strait service.**

(continued)

Transport to the United Kingdom for the one-hundred twenty-eight Newfoundland naval reservists – although as was often the case, they were identified as Canadians – and their (presumed) officers was to be provided by the *White Star* liner, *Northland*, which had originated its voyage from Montréal and was on its way to Liverpool on England’s west coast.



Northland arrived there on December 1 of that 1916.

(Right above: ‘*Northland*’ had originally been the Belgian ship ‘*Zeeland*’, but her German-sounding name obliged the war-time British owners to change it to the more expedient ‘*Northland*’. Employed for a while as a troop-ship, in August of 1916 she recommenced her commercial runs, carrying military personnel whenever the situation presented itself. – photograph of a peace-time *Zeeland* in 1906 from Wikipedia)

On December 1 of that 1916, *Northland* having docked in Liverpool, the Naval Reserve personnel would thereupon have been either posted directly to a ship or ordered to undergo further training – or 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 Mahaney, not having immediately been attached to a vessel, *Victory I* (see below) was the establishment to which he was directed and where he was to remain *on strength* until the end of the third week of February of the New Year, 1916 – although exactly what his occupations, apart from waiting, were to be during this period of wearing a cap-band emblazoned *HMS Victory* is not clear.

**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.*

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 Mahaney 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.

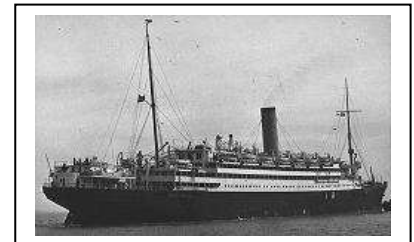
It was also the name which all the sailors attached to HMS 'Victory' were to have emblazoned on the bands of their afore-mentioned caps.

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 Mahaney 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)



*At the end of the afore-mentioned third week of February, 1917, and with the awaited summons having arrived, Seaman Mahaney was to take up a posting to His Majesty's Armed Merchant Cruiser *Arlanza* and thus reported to his ship on or about February 22 in the port-city of Liverpool*.*



**This appears to have been the case, although several of the log books of 'Arlanza' appear not to be available, those, unfortunately, of February and April, 1917, being amongst them.*

(Right above: Built in 1911-1912 for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, before the coming of the Great War 'Arlanza', was to serve the Company's commercial route between England and South America. In early 1915 she was requisitioned for war-time use as an armed merchant cruiser and was re-fitted and armed with six six-inch guns and two six-pounder quick-firing weapons. From April of 1915 until December, 1918, she sailed with the 10th Cruiser Squadron, had an adventure in North Russian waters (see below) and was later employed to escort North Atlantic convoys. Having returned to commercial life after the conflict, she ended her service in 1938. – photograph from the Naval-History.net web-site)

*On that March 2, 1917, with Seaman Mahaney one of her complement, HMS *Arlanza* was to resume her duties in the waters north of the British Isles after an adventure to northern Russia which had lasted from the autumn of 1915 until the summer of 1916 (see below).*

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The Voyage of HMS 'Arlanza' to Russia – with at least one Newfoundlander, Seaman Wallace Young, 1884x, of Middle Brook in the District of St. George serving as one of her crew. (This is an abridged version of the original account from Wikipedia.)

In the autumn of 1915 'Arlanza' was sent to the Russian port of Archangel carrying a large consignment of platinum. On her return she was to bring a Russian delegation to Britain for a conference with Britain and France. She left Archangel on October 21 with accompanying naval trawlers and a convoy of merchant ships, the trawlers to part company as soon as the danger of enemy mines was felt to have passed.

One hour later she was holed, having struck one of the supposed non-existent mines.

'Arlanza' took on water, dipped at the bow and some of her lifeboats were launched. However, her bulkheads held and she remained afloat, to the point where those in the lifeboats were taken back on board. Some of the tugs returned and despite damaging one of 'Arlanza's' propellers, were able to tow the vessel into an anchorage near to the village of Yukanski where the vessel was now to remain until the seventh day of April of the following spring.

Apparently there had been no casualties during the incident.

The salvage of supplies and ammunition began although it was to be slow work, particularly where some on the material was now below water in the forward section. The arrival of another armed merchant cruiser, HMS 'Orotava', produced some equipment that made the work easier, but it also was to afford the captain of 'Arlanza', twenty-nine officers and two-hundred twenty-two petty officers and ratings – the above-named Seaman Young among that number – the means to return to the United Kingdom.



(Right above: The photograph of the rescue ship, HMS 'Orotava', is from the 'Ships Nostalgia' web-site.)

Arlanza was left with a much-reduced crew to effect temporary repairs and was not to reach home again until July 8, 1916, when she was partially towed into port at Belfast.

In the mean-time, HMS 'Orotava', having been escorted for some of the return journey by armed trawler-minesweepers, and having zig-zagged much of the remainder of the way home, was to dock in the Scottish port city of Glasgow on November 24. At four o'clock in the afternoon, one detachment of Arlanza's ratings...left for Devonport Barracks ('Vivid I'). Four hours later a further contingent, the...Remainder of HMS 'Arlanza's' crew left the ship, to entrain for their various depots.

For Seaman Young's story, see elsewhere in these files.

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The duties to which HM Armed Merchant Cruiser Arlanza and Seaman Mahaney were to sail on that March 2, 1917, were those of a vessel of the 10th Cruiser Squadron, also referred to as the Northern Patrol.

(Right: A six-inch gun such as those mounted on 'Arlanza', although this one has been fitted for coastal defence – photograph from 2010(?) and taken at the Royal Artillery Museum 'Firepower' at Woolwich)



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The ships of the 10th 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 stormy waters encompassed by Ireland, northern Scotland, the Shetlands and Iceland, a thankless job at the best of times: in tempestuous winter months, even worse.

Although, as seen above, some of the ship's log books are not available, those that *are* give to the reader an idea of what the several weeks of a typical patrol entailed. From the day of her departure from Liverpool until March 31 when she entered Loch Ewe in northwest Scotland to take on coal, *Arlanza* effected the following: challenged and identified nine ships of the Royal Navy; challenged and verified the identity and cargo of seven British commercial vessels; did likewise with thirteen foreign-registered ships, on several occasions leaving armed guards on board to direct them to a British port; challenged and identified a war-ship of an Allied country; proceeded to Loch Ewe for coaling on the last day of the month before continuing patrol.

In April of 1917, HMS *Arlanza* returned to Liverpool to take on stores, coal and ammunition as well as replacements for sick crew members and those due leave. Any necessary routine maintenance would have been undertaken at this time. She then put out to sea once more on May 11 for her next patrol until June 15 when she once more returned to Liverpool.

These had been Seaman Mahaney's last dealings with HMS *Arlanza* as her log-book entry of June 21 records: *11.00am – 8 Seaman ratings left ship for Royal Navy Barracks, Portsmouth* – which was where he reported for duty on the next day and where he would remain until November 8 some twenty weeks later.

At that time Seaman Mahaney was to be transferred to another Royal Navy shore-based establishment, this one on the River Medway in the county of Kent and also in the naval town of Chatham: *Pembroke I*. In this case the posting was to be for a mere two weeks and three days, from November 9 to 26, 1917.

His scant ten lines of his Service Records record Seaman Mahaney as now being added for a full year, as of November 27, 1917, until possibly January 27 of 1918, a period of two months, to the nominal roll of HMS *Briton*, the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve drill-ship in St. John's Harbour to where he was now presumably to travel some three-thousand kilometres.

However, there does not appear to be any evidence to confirm his travel to and from Newfoundland – which, on the other hand, does not preclude him having done so.



(Right above: A part of the large Royal Navy complex which was HMS 'Pembroke' naval establishment, Chatham, for just over one hundred years. It has since evolved into a university campus. – photograph from 2010)

In early 1918, the date officially recorded as January 28, Seaman Mahaney was to travel from England to Ireland where he was to report to the Royal Navy base at Queenstown: *HMS Colleen*.

As was the case with *Victory* at Portsmouth and with *Pembroke* at Chatham, there were two *Colleens*: one was a vessel of that name which was at the time the depot ship and administrative centre for the war-time naval base of the same name, located at Queenstown (today *Cobh*, pronounced as *Cove*) on the southern coast of Ireland*. The other, of course, was the base itself.

**Ireland at the time of the Great War was a British possession and one of the British Isles. It was to be during the period between the two World Wars that the country became the independent nation that it is today.*

Queenstown – named as such in 1849 for a visiting Queen Victoria – had already by that time been an important naval base since the Napoleonic Wars and was to remain so during the remainder of the years of British sovereignty. As one might surmise, it lost none of that importance during the years of the *Great War*.

As with most of the other vessels which shared their name with a shore-based establishment – *Pembroke*, *Vivid*, *Ceto* etc., *HMS Colleen* was not to venture out into the perils of the high seas. But there was a number of smaller vessels operating out of Queenstown for whom the depot ship was responsible in such matters as financial expenditure – crew’s wages for example - personnel, supplies, armaments et al..

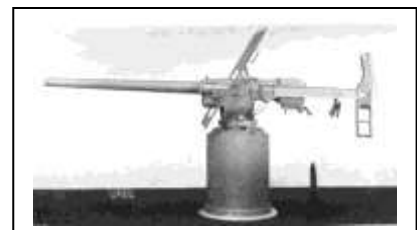


(Right above: *HMS ‘Royalist’, seen here before becoming HMS ‘Colleen’, was a hybrid corvette – both sail and steam – built in 1883, and was in many ways similar to HMS ‘Calypso’ (later ‘Briton’), the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve training-ship. – photograph from Wikipedia)*

It is not recorded in his files whether Seaman Mahaney was at any time to work on board the base ship *HMS Colleen*, but although the exact date once again has gone undocumented, he was on some unspecified date to join the crew of His Majesty’s Trawler *Lord Durham*, one of those afore-mentioned *smaller vessels*.



(Right above: *Royal Navy armed trawlers in the port of Dover during the Great War – from the Imperial War Museum website...iwm.org.uk.. During the War, 1456 such vessels were requisitioned from ports around the British Isles and even elsewhere, of which two-hundred sixty-four were to be lost.*)



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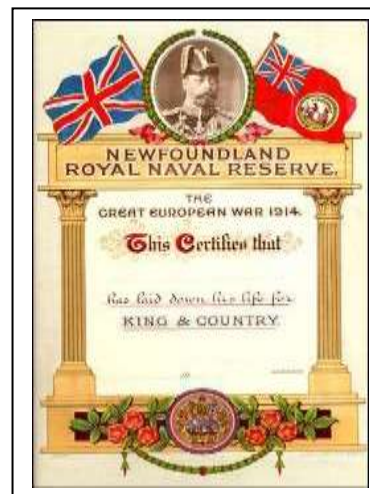
Lord Durham was requisitioned and hired trawler, one of many such craft requisitioned by the British Admiralty during the course of the *Great War*. Built in 1911 she was thereupon registered in the English east-coast fishing port of Grimsby as GY. 132.. In 1915 she was refitted for war-time work and equipped with a single six-pounder gun before coming into service with a crew of about twelve in February of that year and assigned to Queenstown and to HMS *Colleen*.

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

Seaman Mahaney was documented as having been stationed at Queenstown from January 28, 1918, until October 14 of that same year. However, this period would have included travel and the time spent receiving medical attention, thus the amount of time that he served on *Lord Durham* is far from clear.

During that year of 1918, the pandemic due to the condition known as the *Spanish 'Flu* took hold, and while it is not stated in his service file, it is perhaps likely that Seaman Mahaney was one of its victims.

(Right: *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 Alfred Israel Mahaney (also found as *Mahoney* in the 1935 Census), fisherman, and of Susan Mahaney (née *Clinch*) of the town of Fogo on the island of – and in the District of – the same name, and all on the Island of Newfoundland, he was brother to at least Joyce-M. and to Stanley Gilbert*.

Seaman James Albert Mahaney was recorded as having died of disease – pneumonia - on October 14, 1918, at the *reported* age of nineteen years: date of birth in Fogo, Newfoundland, April 21, 1898 (from his enlistment papers), the year found as 1899 in Royal Navy Records.



(Right above: *The sacrifice of Seaman James A. Mahaney is honoured on the War Memorial in the community of Fogo. – photograph from 2013*)

Seaman Mahaney 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 and the Imperial War Museum.

Seaman James Albert Mahaney was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

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****Seaman Stanley Gilbert Mahaney (also found as Mahoney), the youngest sibling of James Albert Mahaney, was also a victim of war; in his case it was the Second World War, and he died as a result of enemy action, in the sinking of His Majesty's Yacht 'Rosabelle'.***

'Rosabelle' was a six-hundred ton yacht built in Scotland in 1902 for a Mr. Theodore Pim and which was requisitioned and hired, converted and armed by the British Admiralty for wartime service in early 1915 until April of 1919 after the cessation of hostilities. Having been then returned to her owner, she was again sought after by the Admiralty to perform the same duties in the Second World War.



(Right above: The photograph of a peace-time 'Rosabelle' shows her as a vessel of the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes. – from the wivenhoehistory.org.uk website (Wivenhoe is a town and small port in the county of Essex.)

In the Straits of Gibraltar in the early hours of December 11, 1941, the ship HMS 'Lady Shirley' was hit by a torpedo, exploded and sank with all on board. In the area, 'Rosabelle' of the Royal Naval Patrol Service, endeavouring to find survivors, was almost immediately torpedoed herself – by U-boat 374 - and sank within seconds. Of her crew only twelve were rescued with thirty lost.

The sacrifice of Seaman Stanley Mahaney is honoured on the Naval Memorial in the English coastal town of Lowestoft.

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.