



Seaman Fred Miller, Number 2262x, is buried in St. Andrew's Churchyard in the English east-coast town of Immingham.

(continued)

Having relinquished his occupation, likely that of fisherman, and having then travelled from the community of Back Cove, Fogo, in the District of the same name to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on November 2 of 1916 Fred Miller reported...*to duty*...at the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Briton*, moored in the harbour (see below).

On that same November day 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 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.

(Right above: HMS 'Calypso' in full sail. She was to be re-commissioned HMS 'Briton' in early 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was about to be launched by the Royal Navy. – This photograph, taken of the 'Newfoundland Calypso' by the Royal Navy in 1898, is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)

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



Thirty-one days after his arrival on 'Briton', on December 3-4 of that same year, Seaman Miller – as one of a draft of fifty naval reservists and a single Chief Petty Officer - departed Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, for the United Kingdom. The transport vessel was the SS *Southland* en route from Portland, Maine, to Liverpool – the vessel had previously been called *Vaderland*, a Dutch or Belgian ship whose name had been deemed too Germanic-sounding and which later, in June of 1917, was to be torpedoed and lost while en route from Liverpool to Philadelphia.

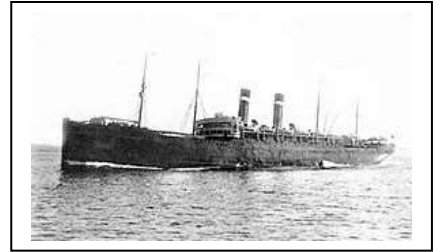


(Right above: The newly-constructed C-Class cruiser 'Calypso' of 1916, seen here on an un-recorded date during the later years of the Great War, was to be sunk by an Italian submarine in 1940. – from Wikipedia)

Of course, Seaman Miller's draft had left St. John's for Halifax some days before the SS *Southland* sailed for Liverpool. But ascertaining how the reservists were to journey to there has proved to be more than difficult. There were two reasonable possibilities for a contingent of some fifty persons: by train to Port aux Basques, a ferry-ride across the Cabot Strait, and then a train journey once again on to Halifax; or there was the direct passage by ship from St. John's to Halifax – both means of transport necessitating up to three days' travel.

Whichever was to be the case, a revised schedule saw *Southland* leave Halifax three days late, on December 6, and arrive in Liverpool eleven days afterwards, on December 17.

Once having set foot in the United Kingdom, the Naval personnel would have been either posted directly to a ship, ordered to undergo further training or to await a posting, at one of various Royal Navy establishments – these for the most part around the coast of England. In the case of Seaman Miller, the destination was to be HMS *Pembroke I* at Chatham in the English county of Kent.



(Right above: *The photograph of the Red Star Line – later White Star-Dominion Line - ship 'Vaderland', later 'Southland' – is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)

Pembroke I (the establishment had several Divisions) was the base and holding barracks for regular seamen and it was therefore *Pembroke I* to which Seaman Miller was to be attached.

**There was also a series of ships named 'Pembroke', the last several of which were to be employed 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 same sailors were serving on land.

Thus the explanation for the often elderly and obsolescent vessels that plied the waters adjacent to the many naval land establishments – also known as 'stone frigates' – and which were in theory the home ships of the above-mentioned numbers of men in naval uniform who laboured ashore.

Which is why Seaman Miller would have worn an 'HMS Pembroke' cap-band - as will be later seen.

(Right: *Some still-impressive 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*)



Seaman Miller was to remain stationed at *Pembroke I* for one-hundred twenty-three days – he had been on *Pembroke I*'s nominal roll since his departure from Newfoundland – until April 6-7 of 1917 when he was dispatched to HMS *President III*. It would appear that by the time he was transferred to *Pembroke III* he had not set foot on any ship of the Royal Navy. And if the records are to be believed, this was also to be the case during the time – one-hundred thirty-one days – that he was to be on the strength of *President III*.

**The service records of Seaman Miller pertaining to the period encompassing his service of these weeks at both 'Pembroke I' and 'President III' include the words 'Demobilized' and 'Remobilized'. In other records they at times suggest that the seaman in question had been granted furlough – usually for a month – at home. However, in the case of Seaman Miller, evidence to support this has proved to be more than elusive – and, of course, he had not been long in the United Kingdom.*

The last above-mentioned Royal Navy establishment had initially been in London where the original – floating – *President* had been opened to serve as a drill-ship for recruits of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve. *President III*, however, not a vessel but one of several Divisions to emerge as the *Great War* progressed, was to deal primarily with ships' finances and accountancy, its offices at times located outside the capital city.

Yet there is nothing in the records to show that Seaman Miller was to serve either in London or at any other part of the *President* complex...or on any ship. In fact, he had been transferred on August 16-17 back to HMS *Pembroke I* – to again await a summons to a ship.

That summons came on October 5-6, a month after four Newfoundland seamen, billeted in the Royal Naval Barracks at *Pembroke I*, had died during or as the result of a German bombing raid (see elsewhere in these files).

Discovering HMS *Wallington* is a bit complex and anything that the author has entered here deserves confirmation from other sources. Before the *Great War* it was the name of a trawler which was later to be requisitioned as a Boom Defence vessel in December of 1914, and which also served as a mine-sweeper, until 1919,

It was also to be the name of an elderly cruiser, HMS *Wallaroo*, but which became *Wallington* only after the conflict, in 1919, when it became the depot ship for the naval base of the same name: HMS *Wallington*.

It was the aforesaid naval base, HMS *Wallington*, to which Seaman Miller was to be dispatched from *Pembroke I*. In fact, *Wallington* was not a single entity but a composition of smaller establishments in harbours situated on the River Humber, on England's east coast, in such places as Grimsby, Immingham, Kingston-upon-Hull and Barton-on-Humber. Each of these ports was to have its own flotilla of small craft which sailed in the defence of the coast as patrol vessels, inspection vessels, escorts and mine-sweepers.

Having joined HMS *Wallington* on October 6 of 1917 – exactly which particular harbour appears not to have been recorded – he was presumably to serve on the above-mentioned Boom Defence Vessel *Wallington* herself or at one of the shore-based facilities of the

same name. His service records show he was not to join one of those smaller vessels until July 1 of 1918, some nine months later.

The ship in question was the requisitioned and hired trawler *Commandant Nasmith*. Some two-hundred fifty tons in weight and built in 1915, she had been armed for war-time service with a single six-pounder gun and also a new weapon: a BL 7.5-inch naval anti-submarine howitzer.



(Right: *The above-mentioned weapon is seen here mounted on board the merchant ship SS Boonah. The photograph is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)

(Right: *A Castle-Class trawler of the Great War. 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. – an official Royal Navy photograph from the Imperial War Museum via Google*)



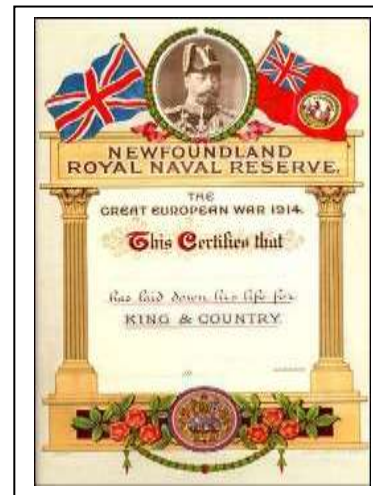
(Right below: *A Memorial Scroll, a copy of which was distributed to the families of those who had sacrificed their life while serving in the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve*).

This last posting of Seaman Miller to *Commandant Nasmith* was to last thirty-three days, until August 3, but this period would have included the days of his hospitalization in the Grimsby Isolation Hospital as, by that time, Seaman Miller was very ill.

The son of Martin Miller, former fisherman deceased from nephritis on May 6, 1912, and of Emma (née *Baker*), Newfoundland, he was also brother to four sisters: Hilda-Josephine, Bessie-Lovelace, Harriet-Maria and Florence.

**The couple had married in Fogo on October 29 of 1885.*

Seaman Miller was reported as having died in the Grimsby Isolation Hospital of meningitis on August 3, 1918: date of birth in the community of Fogo, Newfoundland, October 24, 1897 (from both the Newfoundland Birth Register and his enlistment papers, although a copy of Vital Statistics has the year as 1896).



Seaman Miller 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.

Seaman Fred Miller was entitled to the British War Medal (left) 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.