



Seaman Frederick Morgan, Number 1209x, 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 *answer the call* of the naval authorities for volunteers, Frederick Morgan travelled from the not-distant community of Seal Cove to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland where, on August 12 of 1914, he reported...*to duty...* on the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below).

On that same August 12 he enlisted for the first time into the Reserve (see further below), was signed on to serve for a single year's* war-time service and underwent a satisfactory medical assessment. 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.)



(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 above: 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.



A branch of the senior service from Britain's oldest colony. Naval reservists before leaving Newfoundland to serve in the Empire's cause.

(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 of her by the Royal Navy in 1898, is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)

Following apparently just twenty-five days of training in St. John's, Seaman Morgan, one of a draft of one-hundred forty-nine naval reservists, embarked on November 18-19 onto the Allan Line ocean-liner *Carthaginian* which was apparently returning on its commercial route from Philadelphia(?) to Glasgow and thereupon took the draft on board. She sailed at nine o'clock in the evening of the 19th, its reservist passengers un-mentioned in the local newspapers.



(Right above: A relatively elderly vessel, 'Carthaginian' had been launched in October of 1884. She apparently remained un-requisitioned as a troop transport during the conflict although this did not prevent her from being sunk by a mine laid by a U-boat off the Irish coast on June 14 of 1917 – happily without any loss of life it may be added. – the un-dated photograph of *Carthaginian* entering St. John's harbour has been donated to the Maritime History Archive web-site by Captain Harry Stone.)

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**It appears that in many cases, even if the recruit in question had not already previously been with the Royal Naval Reserve, the required twenty-eight day training period, all or partially, was oft-times waived.*

Once having disembarked in the United Kingdom it appears that while some few of the men were posted directly to a ship, the majority was ordered directly to undergo further training at various Royal Navy establishments and thus, likely having journeyed by train, reported to these bases on or about November 28-29.

It seems that Seaman Morgan was one of those ordered to immediately join his ship, HMS *Viknor*, on November 19 at a time while she was based on the River Tyne in north-east England. She was not to leave port until December 28 and not to join her squadron (see below) until January 1.

The Armed Merchant Cruiser *Viknor* was an elderly ship, obsolete and apparently under-powered with a top speed of only fourteen knots. In her earlier lives she had firstly been, as of 1888, the SS *Atrato*, before then having been re-named as the SS *Viking* in 1912. Upon the outbreak of the *Great War* in 1914 she had been requisitioned by the British Admiralty and baptized on a third occasion as HMS *Viknor*.

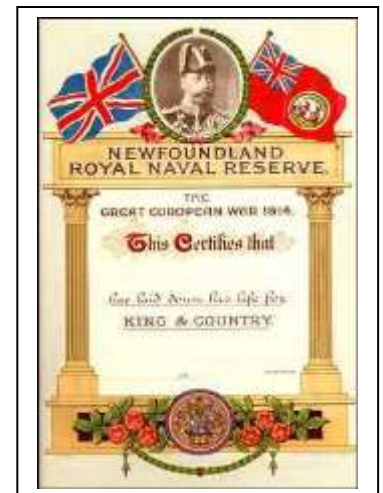


(Right above: *The luxury cruise-liner Atrato seen here in her pre-War condition – from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site*)

'*Viknor*' was to be attached to the 10th Cruiser Squadron, also known as the *Northern Patrol*, a force originally having comprised out-of-date warships which, unable to cope with the harsh elements, by that January of 1915 had been replaced by requisitioned ocean-going passenger-liners sometimes carrying guns perhaps as old as some of the venerable ships on which they were mounted.

The ships of the 10th Cruiser Squadron were not spoiling 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.

In early January the ships of the *Northern Patrol* stopped a Norwegian vessel, the *Bergensfjord*, and transferred a number of persons, one of them a suspected spy, to *Viknor*, she then being ordered to proceed to Liverpool.



From what is known about *Viknor*, she was hardly a vessel fit for the task at hand and January and February of 1915 were to apparently be particularly stormy. What is more, a German counterpart, the steamship *Berlin*, had recently been reported in the area sowing mines – one of which had already sunk the British battleship *Audacious* some three months before.

Thus it still remains a bit of a mystery as to what happened to *Viknor* although it appears to be that either she fell victim to the bad weather or that she was sunk by a mine. All that may be sent with any great certainty is that there was not to be a single survivor: of the crew of three-hundred two, including twenty-five of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland), all were to perish*.

**Her wreck was found off the coast of County Donegal, Ireland, in the year 2006, but no firm conclusion was to come about as to the cause of the ship's sinking.*

(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 Joseph Morgan, former fisherman deceased – possibly April 6, 1897 - and of Virtue* Morgan (née *Bishop***), of the community of Indian Pond, Seal Cove, Seaman Morgan was also brother to Caroline, to Joseph-Heber (born 1884), Marie, Stuart, Heber (born 1891), Laura, Joseph-Joe, Selena, John-Thomas*** and to Samuel-Bishop.

**She is possibly recorded at times as Victoria but...*

***The couple had likely married in Hopewell – today a part of Upper Gullies - on December 15 of 1881.*



Seaman Morgan died on January 13 of 1915 at the *recorded* age of nineteen years: date of birth at Indian Pond, Seal Cove, Conception Bay, March 25, 1896 (from Newfoundland Vital Statistics) although his enlistment papers document March 23 of the same year.

(Right above: *This family monument which stands in St. Peter's Churchyard in Upper Gullies honours the sacrifice of Frederick Morgan and of his brother John-Thomas. – photograph from 2014*)

Seaman Morgan 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 Frederick Morgan was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



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******John Thomas Morgan, Number 1255x, was lost when the ship 'Clan McNaughton' sank in the North Atlantic on or about February 3 of 1915, likely because of the violent weather, but possibly having struck a mine. All two-hundred eighty-one on board perished and apart from some debris washed up on the Irish coast, nothing more is known about the circumstances of her disappearance.***

John Thomas Morgan was seventeen years of age at the time of his death. His life and death are commemorated on the family monument seen above and he also is honoured at Beaumont-Hamel in France and in Bowring Park at home.

A more complete version of his all-too brief naval career is to be found among these files.



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.