

A photograph of Seaman Peach's last resting-place is not available at this moment.

Seaman Archibald Wilfred Peach, Service Number 717x, is buried in Kingwell (formerly *Mussel Harbour Arm*) Salvation Army Cemetery on Long Island, Placentia Bay, and is also commemorated on the Screen Wall in the Military Plot of the Mount Pleasant Protestant Cemetery in St. John's (see right – photograph from 1910).

Having decided to volunteer for the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland), Archibald Wilfred Peach had originally presented himself for enlistment on January 9 of 1911, whereupon he was to undergo a two-month (*twenty-eight day*) period of training which terminated in the month of February month.

As with most pre-War volunteers he had *joined-up* for five years but in the months prior to the onset of hostilities was able to complete only two further training sessions – seven days in May of 1913 plus twenty-one days in March of 1914 having been the last before world events were to intervene only months later.

Summoned from home *to service* just a day subsequent to the British *Declaration of War*, Archibald Wilfred Peach relinquished his occupation – formerly that of a fisherman but by this time perhaps that of an agent with the *Reid Newfoundland Company* - and left his family residence in Mussel Harbour Arm, Placentia Bay – or again, perhaps he was residing by that time, August 5, 1914, in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland and was again to report...*to duty*...to the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below).

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

(Right above: 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 in the uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet is from *the Royal Collection Trust* web-site, taken in or about 1935.)

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**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.



(Preceding page: *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)*

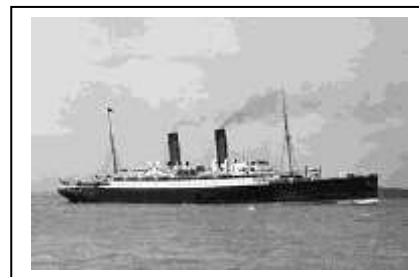
Following some three months of duties in St. John's – no further training has been recorded - Seaman Mugford, one of a draft of three-hundred five Naval Reservists, embarked on November 5-6 onto the *Cunard* ocean-liner *Franconia* on the trans-Atlantic Britain-bound leg of its commercial route between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



Seaman Peach was not immediately dispatched to a ship, although in only eighteen days' time he would be. But at first he was sent to serve until November 29 at the Royal Naval training establishment *Vivid I** - this Division for seamen rather than for specialists such as engine-room personnel, for example - based at Plymouth-Devonport.

(Right below: *An imposing main gateway to the once-Royal Navy establishment at Plymouth-Devonport which stands to this day. – photograph from 2011(?)*)

**'Vivid' was the name of a series of pre-War and, later, post-War training stations – although during the war it was to revert to the role of a shore-base and barracks in the counties of Devon and Cornwall, and at other sites in the United Kingdom. It was also the name of an elderly, obsolescent, vessel to which all of the hundreds, even thousands, of the personnel serving in the myriad stations were attached, officially even if, as in many cases, they were never to set foot on or even see the ship.*



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All of this was because of the Naval Discipline Act. The rules and regulations covering the conduct of Royal Navy personnel was unique unto itself, and in order for any sailor to be governed by the Act, he had to be part of a ship's crew. If he were serving on land, he still had to be a member of a ship's crew for the Naval Discipline Act to be in effect.

It was often for this reason only that an old ship and the shore-based establishment shared the same name. In the case of 'Vivid' it was an old gun-boat, originally launched in 1873, which served the purpose, at the same time to be used as a harbour-service vessel.

On the above-mentioned November 29-30, Seaman Peach was transferred from HMS *Vivid I* on land, to HMS *Columbella*, there to serve at sea. She had initially been the eight-thousand ton SS *Columbia* built in 1902 for the *Anchor Line*. Requisitioned early in the conflict, she had been re-fitted and armed with six six-inch naval guns as well as two six-pounder weapons (other sources say differently).



She was commissioned as HMS *Columbella* at nine o'clock in the morning of that November 30. Her crew* was to at least partially comprise one-hundred twenty ratings, Seaman Peach among that number, who had likely travelled overnight from *Vivid* in the south of England to Scotland and to the port-city of Glasgow where they reported to the ship at eleven-thirty on that same morning.



****Apparently to total two-hundred seventy ratings and twenty-eight officers.***

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



(Right: A Quick-Firing Hotchkiss six-pounder gun such as was mounted on HMS 'Columbella'. – from Wikipedia)

HMS *Columbella* was to remain berthed in Glasgow until December 17 preparing for her first patrol as a ship of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. also known as the *Northern Patrol*, a force originally comprised of out-of-date warships which, unable to cope with the elements, by January of 1915, had been replaced by requisitioned ocean-going passenger–cargo ships carrying a number of guns, in some cases as elderly as some of the venerable vessels on which they were mounted.

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

The daily task of the ships of these ships was to intercept the ships passing through the waters listed in an above paragraph, be they flying a British or a foreign flag. The ship might be only spoken to, perhaps boarded for inspection, or even sent with a boarding party to report for further scrutiny to a British or Allied port. All vessels were to be treated with suspicion.

On her first patrol HMS *Columbella* was to spend only thirteen days at sea before putting into the English north-western port of Liverpool. It had been a short and not particularly busy patrol: she had communicated with eight ships of the Royal Navy, mostly fellow armed merchant cruisers, and sighted just a single commercial vessel, a Norwegian freighter, which they had not challenged.

After months of routine, on August of 1915, Seaman Peach was to be involved in an operation to search for a suspected German submarine base on *Bear Island*, the southernmost island of the Norwegian Spitzbergen (*Svalbard*) archipelago located in the Arctic Ocean. HMS *Columbella*, the sloop HMS *Acacia* and two of His Majesty's armed trawlers were dispatched to investigate, the expedition thereupon spending the entire month to sail there, to find no trace of any submarine activity whatsoever, and to return to Glasgow via the naval base of *Scapa Flow* in the Orkney Islands.

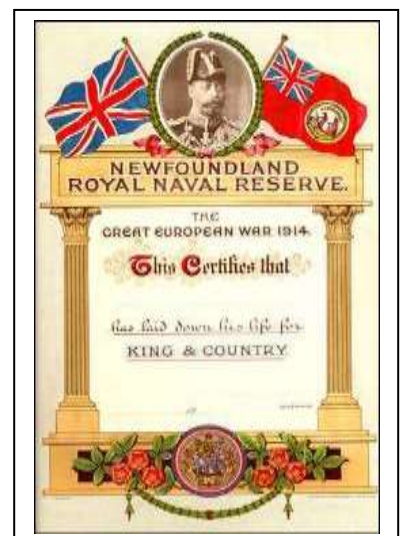
Seaman Peach was then to serve a further nine months on *Columbella*, a great deal of that time to be spent on patrol. Between September 11, when the ship resumed her routine patrolling, and April 3 when she tied up in Glasgow with Seaman Peach on board for the last time, of those some two-hundred days one-hundred forty-two had been served at sea.

Patrolling was mostly a monotonous routine but apparently necessary – or so thought the *Admiralty* – albeit not very popular among those nations whose commerce was affected. Even though some of the ships stopped were British-owned, this did not afford them any immunity from being questioned and searched and the practice was thus to continue until the year 1917.

The port where Seaman Peach was to be discharged from *Columbella* was Glasgow, the date May 7, 1916, which was also the day on which he then became for a second occasion – at least *officially* – the responsibility of HMS *Vivid*, although this may not have been the day on which he physically reported back *to duty*.

He remained attached to HMS *Vivid* for forty-five days before being declared medically unfit – *pulmonary tuberculosis* - for further service and, on June 22 was recommended by the Authorities to be invalided back to Newfoundland.

(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)



A letter dated July 5, 1916, was thereupon sent to the Commanding Officer of HMS *Briton* (formerly HMS *Calypso*) apprising him that Seaman Peach would be sailing from Liverpool only two days later on board the *Canadian Pacific* vessel *Missanabie*. On July

15 he disembarked in Québec and made his way by train, ferry, and then train again to arrive in St. John's some days later – the date appears not to have been recorded.

Although Seaman Peach was assigned to HMS *Briton* as of June 23, 1916, until July 27 of that same year, for how long or, indeed, if at all he was to serve on her is not clear. On that last above date he was surely discharged from naval service and may well have entered into hospital – this is speculation, of course, since nothing more appears among his scant personal records.

Thus far it has proved more than difficult to identify either the parents or any siblings of Seaman Archibald Wilfred Peach. His father may have been James, the only Peach cited in the 1894 and 1898 Business Directories – but 1894 is twelve years after the *declared* date of Archibald's birth in 1882.

Archibald Wilfred Peach had married Eva Boutcher in Harbour Buffett on November 16 of 1905. After her death from consumption on December 22, 1908, Archibald was to then marry Lena Boutcher* at Mussell Harbour on April 22 of 1914. Whether or not children were born of either marriage appears not to be documented.

**Her address is also cited as Rennie's Mill Road in St. John's but there appears to be no date attached.*

Seaman Archibald Wilfred Peach was reported as having died of phthisis (consumption, tuberculosis) at Mussel Harbour Arm* on November 12-13 of 1917: date of birth at Mussell Harbour Arm, Newfoundland, January 7, 1882 (from Royal Navy Records).

**Where it was that he was to die is not sure. Newfoundland Vital Statistics appears not to have documented his passing.*

Seaman Peach 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 Archibald Wilfred Peach was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, to the British War Medal and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal) (right).



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 19, 2023.