

PEDDLE . A .



Seaman Alec (also found as *Alex* and *Alexander*) Peddle, Service Number 389x, 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 volunteer for the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland), Alec Peddle had originally presented himself for enlistment on December 3 of 1907, whereupon he was to undergo a recorded twenty-eight days of training, terminating on the penultimate day of the same month.



As with all pre-War volunteers, he had joined-up for five years on the understanding that he would undergo the required annual training of at least twenty-eight days. These he was to complete within a period of forty-nine months. November and December of 1911 saw what could have been his last such term of training but he had then re-enrolled in November of 1912. What proved to be an ultimate period of training commenced on January 14 of 1914, and the final day of which was to be February 10.

Twenty weeks and four days later, of course, world events were then to intervene and Seaman Peddle would be called to war-time service.

Summoned from home by Royal Proclamation *to service* some eleven weeks following the onset of hostilities, Alec Peddle relinquished his occupation as a fisherman and travelled from his residence in the area of Southwest Arm, Random, or perhaps by that time at the closer locale of Number 40, LeMarchant Road in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland – both are recorded.

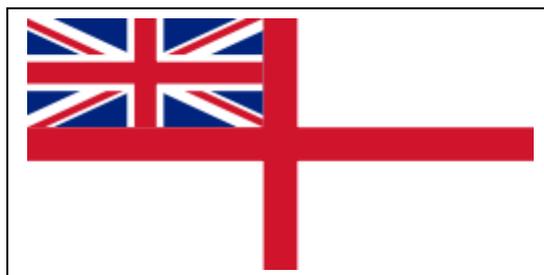
There in St. John's, on October 22 of 1914 – seventy-nine days following the British *Declaration of War* – he was once again to report...to duty...to the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below).

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

(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 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.



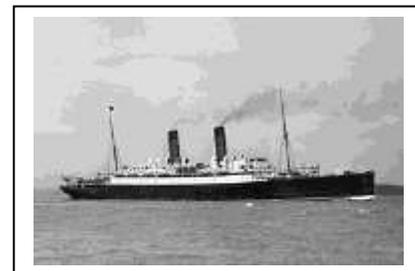
(Right: H.M.S. 'Calypso' in full sail. She was to be re-named 'Briton' in 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was launched by the Royal Navy. – photograph by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)

Following some two weeks of duties in St. John's – no further training has been recorded - Seaman Peddle, 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 British-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 above: 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*)

In the case of Seaman Peddle, there had been no ship awaiting him and his destination was to be *Pembroke I*.

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HMS *Pembroke was the Royal Navy establishment at Chatham on the River Medway, itself a tributary of the better-known River Thames, in the county of Kent. Not only was it a barracks – it operated from 1878 until 1983 – but it was the name given to a number of training establishments, mostly not far-removed from Chatham, which were numbered according to the purpose of the training – or otherwise - involved.**

***Pembroke I* was the training station and holding-barracks for regular seamen and although it is not documented it was likely, for the reasons cited above, *Pembroke I* to which Seaman Peddle was to be attached.**

****There was also a series of ships named ‘Pembroke’, the last several of which were used 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 sailors were serving on land.



Thus the elderly and obsolescent vessels that plied the waters adjacent to the many naval land establishments – and known as stone frigates – were in theory the home ships of the tens, hundreds, thousands of men who laboured ashore.

Which is why Seaman Peddle would have worn an HMS ‘Pembroke’ cap-band.

(Right above: Some of the impressive buildings of the large Royal Navy complex which was a part of 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)

It was then to be only a matter of three weeks before Seaman Peddle was ordered dispatched to one of His Majesty’s ships, HMS *Cornwallis*, a vessel on which he was to serve for more than two years.

HMS *Cornwallis* was a thirteen year-old pre-*Dreadnought* battleship of some fourteen-thousand tons of the *Duncan-Class*. Having served in British waters until January of 1915, she was then ordered to the Mediterranean where the ship was to support the first landings and some of the subsequent operations of the *Gallipoli Campaign* (also known as the *Dardanelles*).

This being the case, Seaman Peddle would have joined HMS *Cornwallis* in England and then travelled on her as she made her way southwards from England as of January 24 before turning eastward and past Gibraltar into the Mediterranean en route to the Aegean Sea.



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(Preceding page: *HMS 'Cornwallis' is shown here firing her guns in anger during naval operations in the 'Dardanelles'. – photograph from the Wikipedia*)

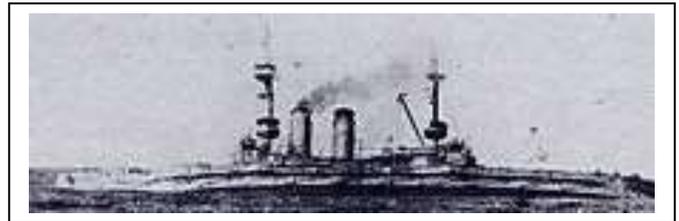
(Right below: *One of the German artillery pieces manned by the Turks and which withstood the Allied bombardments and which were to repulse ships of both the 'Marine nationale' and the Royal Navy. As may be surmised, it and the fort on the Bosphorus where the weapon was sited during the Great War is today a historic attraction. – photograph from 2011*)

HMS *Cornwallis* ended her participation in the Campaign when she supported the British withdrawal from *Suvla Bay* where the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment was serving at the time. She and Seaman Peddle then went on to operate as an element of the *Suez Canal Patrol* before moving into the Indian Ocean where the ship then worked as a convoy escort. In March of 1916 she re-entered the Mediterranean Sea to be re-fitted then stationed at Malta.



On January 9 of 1917 HMS *Cornwallis* was torpedoed some one-hundred kilometres to the east of that island and was sunk by a German submarine, U-Boat 32, the loss of life fortunately being the relatively low number of fifteen.

Seaman Peddle, still serving on the ship, had been one of the survivors of that attack and had likely been taken to Malta on one of the rescue ships where he was officially discharged from her service on January 16 of that 1917. From Malta he eventually returned to England but there appears to be no further information available.



(Right above: *A photograph of HMS 'Cornwallis' at the time of her sinking in January of 1917. – from Wikipedia*)

Back *officially* on the nominal roll of HMS *Pembroke* on January 17 of that same year, when Seaman Peddle actually set foot on English soil is not recorded – once there, however, he was to remain there until the final week of the month of May.

The scant records which comprise Seaman Peddle's personal file document that he was transferred to the books of HMS *Briton*, the Royal Naval Reserve Drill-Ship at St. John's, on May 24-25 of 1917 until December 9-10, this latter date having been when he was reported as having once again become the responsibility of HMS *Pembroke*. Once again – Alas! – there appears to be no further information a propos this episode of his war-time service*.

*There is an A. Peddle recorded as having travelled from Port aux Basques to North Sydney on January 4 of 1918 in a draft of Reservists, but apart from the date not being

quite compatible with the records, there were three such-named Naval Reserve personnel, and to identify which of the three this may have been has thus far proved to be difficult.

Seaman Peddle, having returned to the United Kingdom, is recorded as having thereupon been Attached to HMS *Pembroke* for two months until February 11-12 of 1918 before being dispatched to serve at another Royal Naval base. In this case it was to be HMS *Wallington* in the north-east of England.

Researching HMS *Wallington* is a bit complex and anything that the author has entered here deserves confirmation from other sources. Before the *Great War* it had been the name of a trawler which was later to be requisitioned by the Admiralty as a Boom Defence Vessel in December of 1914, and which then had subsequently served as a mine-sweeper until 1919, the year following the conflict.

It was then subsequently to be the name of an elderly cruiser, HMS *Wallaroo*, which became *Wallington*, also after the conflict, 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 Peddle was to be dispatched from *Pembroke*. In fact, *Wallington* was not a single entity but a composition of smaller establishments 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 would sail in the defence of the coast as net-repair ships, patrol vessels, inspection vessels, convoy escorts and mine-sweepers.

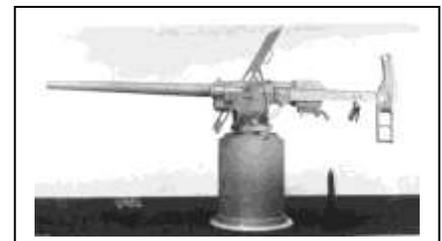
Having joined HMS *Wallington* on February 12 of 1918 – although exactly at which of those afore-mentioned ports appears not to have been recorded – he was eventually to join a ship on an unrecorded date, a vessel classified as His Majesty's Trawler *Dirk*. However, she was apparently a small cargo and passenger steamer initially based in the port-city of Glasgow which prior to the War was to serve the Scottish Isles as a ferry-boat – and then the Navy as an anti-submarine patrol boat.

A vessel of one-hundred eighty tons built in 1908, she had been hired by the Admiralty in 1917 to be re-fitted and armed with a twelve-pounder gun and also a six-pounder weapon adapted for anti-aircraft use. In mid-September of 1917 she had entered into war-time service.

(Right: A quick-firing naval twelve-pounder (the weight of the shell) and twelve hundred-weight (1200 lbs. the weight of the barrel and breech) gun, here seen adapted for use in 1941. – photograph taken at the Royal Artillery Museum 'Firepower' at Woolwich in 2010)



(Right: A Quick-Firing Hotchkiss 6 pounder gun such as would had been mounted on the fore-deck of the trawler *Lochiel* – from Wikipedia)

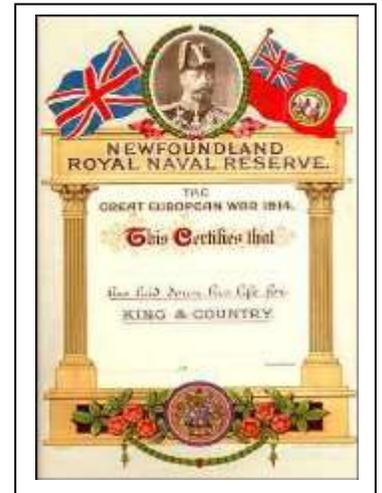


On May 28 of 1918, Seaman Peddle's ship was the lead escort-ship of a convoy navigating the North Sea off the *Flamborough Head*. Most sources record that it was the *U-Boat UC 75** which torpedoed *Dirk* although a single one cites that the vessel struck a mine. Whichever might have been the case, all agree that the vessel had disintegrated almost immediately.

Of the twenty men manning her, not one survived.

**The German submarine UC 75 was apparently rammed and sunk by a Royal Navy destroyer only two days after she had sunk Seaman Peddle's ship.*

(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 David Peddle and of Mary Ann Peddle (née *Benson**) of Random, Newfoundland – perhaps more precisely, Hodge's Cove - he was brother to Belinda and Abijah (sic), twin; to Eleanor-Catherine; and to Archer.

**She and David had married on January 4 of 1885 in Little Heart's Ease. She was the second wife of David, the first having been Sarah Smith, deceased September 10, 1879, of Bishop's Cove whom he had married in Harbour Grace of November 16 of 1878.*

(Right: The photograph of Seaman Alexander Peddle is from the South West Arm Historical Society web-site (swahsociety.com.)

He was also husband of Julia (née *Bishop*), their residence at the already-recorded Number 40, LeMarchant Road in St. John's. The couple had married on January 3, 1914, in the community of Hatchet Cove and had parented a son, Ralph, who was born on June 25 of the same year, 1914.



(Right: The sacrifice of Seaman Alexander Peddle is honoured on the War Memorial which stands today in the community of Hodge's Cove. – photograph from 2022)

Seaman Alexander Peddle is recorded as having died on May 28, 1918, in the sinking of his ship, at the *reported* age of twenty-nine years: date of birth at Hodge's Cove, South-West Arm, Newfoundland, April 1, 1889 (from the South West Arm Historical Society).

Seaman Peddle served only in the Royal Navy and was not in the service of Canada as recorded elsewhere, notably by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Seaman Alexander Peddle was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, 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 20, 2023.