



Seaman Frederick Joseph Price, Number 1408x, is buried in Oostende New Communal Cemetery, Belgium: Grave reference B. 21..

Having decided to *answer the call* of the naval authorities for volunteers, Frederick Joseph Price thereupon relinquished his work (possibly fishing) with *A. Harvey and Company* in St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland where, on November 24 of 1914 (other sources have November 25) he reported...*to duty*...on the Naval Reserve training ship, *HMS Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below).

On that same November 24-25 he enlisted into the Reserve (see further below), was signed on to serve for a single year's war-time service\* and then underwent a satisfactory medical assessment – being passed despite a lack of height. He also likely attested at this time, pledging his allegiance to the King-Emperor, George V.

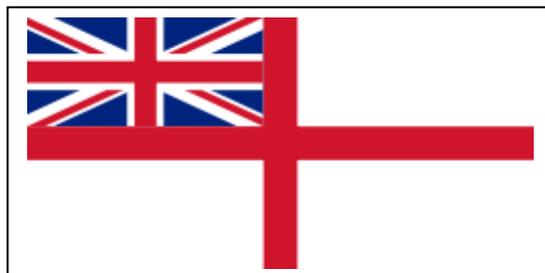


(Right: *George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India: as a boy and young man he had served in the Royal Navy from 1877 until 1891 and always retained a fondness for the Senior 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.*



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**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.**

**(Preceding page: 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)**

**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.**



**A branch of the senior corsier 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)**

Twenty-three days\* after having first reported to *Calypso* in St. John's, on December 17 Seaman Recruit Price was one of a draft of one-hundred fifty-three Naval volunteers to board the steamship *Mongolian* in St. John's Harbour for passage across the Atlantic to the United Kingdom. The ship sailed for the Scottish port-city of Glasgow at four o'clock on that same afternoon.

(Right: *Built in 1891 for use by the 'Allan Line' for the transport of emigrants from Europe to North America, 'Mongolian' was a slow vessel with a speed of just twelve knots and was, by 1914, becoming obsolescent. She was nevertheless to be bought in 1914 for use by the Admiralty and remained in service until July 21 of 1918 when she was torpedoed and sunk by U-boat 70 with a loss of thirty-five lives. – photograph from the British Home Child Group International web-site)*



SS Mongolian

*\*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 at times waived either partially or entirely.*

As seen above, Glasgow was to be the destination of Seaman Recruit Price's draft. Upon disembarkation the Naval Reserve personnel would thereupon have been either posted directly to a ship or ordered to undergo further training at one of various Royal Navy establishments – these for the most part in England.

In the case of Seaman Recruit Price, the destination was to be HMS *Excellent*, the Royal Navy Gunnery School and facilities just off-shore from the south-coast naval port-city of Portsmouth at almost the other end of the country.

*\*HMS 'Excellent' was the name – and also still is the name - of the Royal Navy's Gunnery School which had been established in a ship of the same name in 1829, the vessel being permanently moored just outside Portsmouth dockyard. As the years passed the ships were to be replaced, but each in turn was to be named HMS 'Excellent'.*



(Right adjacent: *Drill on a naval gun on Whale Island during the period of the Great War – from Wikipedia)*

*And as the years passed, the use evolved of the nearby 'Whale (originally 'Whaley') Island' as facilities were constructed on it. In 1885 the Gunnery School was moved from the ship of the time to be re-established on the island itself.*



(Right: *The Royal Navy Memorial stands on the coast at Portsmouth from where may be seen Whale Island – photograph from 1917)*

Which is why Seaman Recruit Price would soon have been wearing an HMS *Excellent* cap-band.

After some few weeks of learning how the Royal Navy's armaments worked, and following a promotion, the by-then promoted (from *Recruit*) Seaman Price was transferred to the books of the nearby HMS *Victory I* on January 29-30 – but for a mere six days, until February 5 - there to await further developments and another posting

*HMS 'Victory', like most of the so-called stone-frigates (naval establishments on shore), was three entities: it was a training establishment originally, and also a holding-barracks for seamen not only in training but awaiting a posting to one of His Majesty's ships, its facilities initially set in the naval city and port of Portsmouth; thirdly, it was also the ship to which the majority of the land-based personnel\* would have been, at least officially and bureaucratically – if not physically - attached\*\*.*

*At Portsmouth this vessel was HMS 'Victory', the warship from which Admiral Nelson had directed the Battle of Trafalgar – although her illustrious history is not limited to that one single incident.*

*\*The large influx of personnel due to the War necessitated further Divisions and functions being transferred to other areas of the United Kingdom.*

*(Right: HMS 'Victory' in dry dock in the southern English port-city of Portsmouth where she has been for a century – photograph from Wikipedia)*

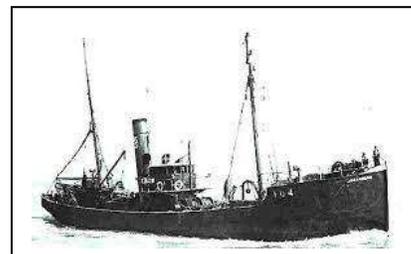


*\*\*Naval discipline differed in some ways from civil and even Army law, and those in naval uniform, even though based on land and perhaps never to go to sea, had to be on the books of a real ship for that discipline to be applied. Thus a normally small, obsolescent and obscure vessel – 'Victory' was the exception - was used for this purely bureaucratic purpose.*

As seen above, Seaman Price was posted to *Victory I*, one of the several Divisions of HMS *Victory*, each specializing in some way from the others – *Victory II*, for example, trained stokers and other engine-room personnel. *Victory I* was dedicated to the training of seamen or, if they were already trained as was the case of Seaman Price, it was, as also seen above, a holding-barracks where he was now to stay for the above-mentioned six days...perhaps only on paper (but at least *officially* until the aforementioned February 5).

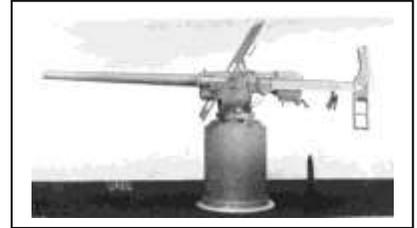
On that date he was transferred to *Victory II* from where he was to join His Majesty's Trawler\* *Petunia*, although exactly on which date it was that Seaman Price would set foot on the deck of the aforesaid HMT *Petunia* appears not to have been documented.

*(Right: A vessel similar to 'Petunia', the trawler 'Dagon' in peace-time: the photograph shown is from the maritimearchaeologytrust web-site via Google.)*



***\*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.***

***Petunia*** was a requisitioned and hired trawler of less than two-hundred tons built in 1899 which before the War had worked out of the Welsh fishing-port and town of Milford Haven. She had been converted for war-time service, armed with a single six-pounder quick-firing gun and ordered out to war-time service as a mine-sweeper in January of 1915.



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

Another ship joins the story: The information a propos HMS *Columbine* is confusing at times. It would appear that at the time of Seaman Price's attachment to her, *Columbine* was the...*Home of the King's Harbour Master*...at the Royal Navy Base at Rosyth in the *Firth of Forth* and, at the same time, was Depot Ship to other vessels, including destroyers, stationed there.

His records show that he was to become a seaman attached to *Columbine* on February 11, 1915 – apparently leaving *Petunia* after only six days - in which case he had to travel northwards to Scotland, Rosyth being, as seen above, on the Firth of Forth and not far removed from Edinburgh. Seaman Price was attached to her from the above date until March 31 of the same year although whether he was to serve on board the vessel or at a shore-based facility which carried the *Columbine* name is not clear.

***(Right: The unwieldy-looking vessel pictured here is purportedly of HMS 'Columbine' in 1917, the superstructure having been added to provide accommodation for personnel. The ship, originally launched in 1876, by 1914 was not expected to be mobile and she remained 'in situ' until after the War. – from the edinphoto.org.uk web-site.***



On March 31, 1916, some thirteen months hence, he was re-assigned to HMT *Petunia* – whether the trawler had been stationed at Rosyth when Seaman Price was first posted to her in February of 1915 appears not to be registered in available documents – where his and his boat's duties were to be as before: mine-sweeping.

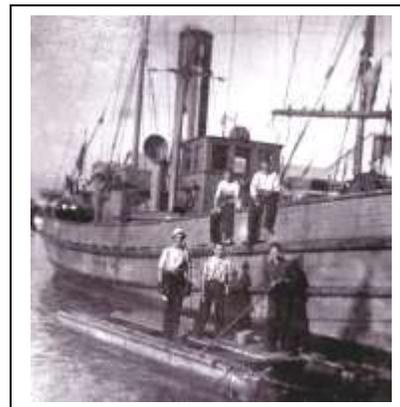
***(Right: Minelaying from a German surface vessel during the Great War: these were for the most part contact mines. U-boats were also used for this purpose – from the NavWeaps web-site)***



After a month's service at Rosyth, *Petunia* was ordered across the *Firth of Forth* to the harbour at Granton, a northern district of the city Edinburgh itself. There at Granton had been assembled a large flotilla of smaller ships for the defence not only of the waters of

the Firth, but also those further out towards the sea where there were other Royal Navy installations. These hundred or so *smaller ships* were collectively known by the name of one of the larger vessels: *HMS Gunner*.

Seaman Price was to remain with *Petunia* for a further two months, from May 1, 1916, to June 30 when, while still at *Gunner* (the base), he was attached to another such ship, perhaps either *Trogon* or *Trojan* – the recorder's writing is less than clear. Both were small ships requisitioned soon after the onset of hostilities, converted and armed, each with a single six-pounder weapon and *Trogon* with a naval twelve-pounder gun as well – perhaps the responsibility of (Gunner) Seaman Price. Both were to be employed as minesweepers and remained in service without incident until 1919.



(Right above: *The photograph showing crew-members refitting their unidentified trawler for mine-sweeping duties is from the 'Pinterest' web-site to which it was donated by Dr. David Beatty and Leslie Goodwin.*)

(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. – taken at the Royal Artillery Museum 'Firepower', Woolwich, in 2010)*



His service on this second ship was to last a year and several months, from July 1 of 1916 until December 31, New Year's Eve, 1917. On the morrow, New Year's Day, Seaman Price was once more to be transferred, on this further occasion to another ship whose name is also quasi-indecipherable in his papers: *Elpananalee* as it is found.

Alas! – All that may be said in this case is that Seaman Price was to serve on this ship – while still posted at Granton to *HMS Gunner* – for just more than six months, from that January 1 of 1918 until July 5 of the same year.

His period of service in Scotland appears to have terminated on that last-named July date when he was re-attached to *Victory I* in Portsmouth, there to languish for less than a month before once more being dispatched for further gunnery practice on August 4 to *HMS Excellent* on *Whale Island*. There appears to be no mention in his Service Records of how his time at *Excellent* was to be spent – apart from the obvious.

Two months later to the day, on October 4-5, he was ordered to a further naval establishment: *HMS President III*, for the space of ten weeks. This Royal Navy facility had initially been located in London where the original – floating – *President* had been opened in 1862 to serve as a drill-ship for recruits of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve. *President III*, one of several Divisions to emerge as the *Great War* progressed, was to deal primarily with finances and accountancy, its offices at times located outside the capital city.

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While it is unlikely that Seaman Price was to become involved with the finances of the Royal Navy, he may have been ordered to a holding barracks while awaiting further orders which, when they were issued, saw him dispatched on December 15 to the Naval Trawler Section at the complex of facilities at Plymouth-Devonport known as *Vivid III*.

By this time, the final weeks and days of 1918, the Royal Navy was no longer at war. The last of several armistices having come into effect on November 11, thoughts were already turning to post-War problems. For the Navy, one of the most pressing was the detection and then disposal of the thousands of still-active mines – those of both friends and foe – in British, Mediterranean and other waters, explosive devices which yet posed a threat to any and all shipping.

Many of His Majesty's Trawlers and Drifters continued the work that they had been undertaking for the last several years and it was to this end that Seaman Price, after seven months *reportedly* on land at *Vivid III*, was attached to *Attentive III*, the primary base of the *Dover\* Patrol* based on the straits of the same name which separate the island of Great Britain from the European Continent.

*\*The coastal town of Dover lies on that part of the English coast which lies closest to France and the port-town of Calais. The Dover Straits, some thirty kilometres wide, allow vessels from the Baltic sea, from northern Europe and from the North Sea to have access to the English Channel – or La Manche as the French call it – and from there the Atlantic Ocean. Today it is the world's second busiest waterway – and it was already critical to British interests at the time of the Great War.*

*Even some seventy years prior to that conflict the British had seen fit in the mid-nineteenth century to construct a harbour for commercial, for cross-Channel and for naval reasons. The port of Dover today is the main maritime link between the United Kingdom and the continent – and the more recently-constructed 'Chunnel' (Channel Tunnel) passes almost directly underneath it.*

(Right: *One of the entrances to the port of Dover as seen from the Dover Straits with, flanking it to the right, the well-known White Cliffs – photograph from 2010*)



*With the Germans having occupied a part of the Belgian coast almost opposite Dover and with a goodly number of British vessels, both commercial and naval – to which should be added the troop transports which from there and from nearby Folkestone were, by the end of the War, to have carried some five million troops across to the Western Front – using the aforementioned waterway, the British created the 'Dover Patrol'.*



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**The biggest fear was that the Germans would employ U-boats and torpedo-boats based on the Belgian coast to attack British shipping, and would also set mines in those waters. In fact they did although it was the mines that were to become the greatest threat to shipping.**

**Thus began the ‘Dover Patrol’. In its early days it had been a motley collection of old, even obsolete, war-ships, for the most part destroyers, to which was very soon to be added a number of requisitioned smaller vessels, notably fishing-boats, trawlers and drifters, lightly-armed but also capable of mine-sweeping and keeping their German opposite numbers at bay.**

**(Preceding page: Armed trawlers of the ‘Dover Patrol’ in the harbour at Dover – The undated photograph is from the Imperial War Museum web-site.)**



**The ‘Dover Patrol’ was rapidly to become a large and important entity of Britain’s naval defences and vessels from it were to be stationed not only at Dover but at other points around the nearby coast. Its base came to be known as HMS ‘Attentive’ and was eventually divided: thus ‘Attentive III’.**

**(Right above: HMS ‘Attentive’, seen here at some time prior to the Great War during which she was to serve as a cruiser of the ‘Dover Patrol’. The base reportedly was named after she became the parent ship because her Commanding Officer was to become senior officer of the ‘Dover Patrol’ itself. – photograph from Wikipedia)**

**Whether Seaman Price had in fact served on another vessel during the early months of 1919, months of *presumed* inactivity on his part, is not clear. However, once at Dover and *Attentive III*, he was assigned to a vessel, perhaps as early as the day of his arrival there, July 13.**

**HMS *Gainsborough* had been completed on November 10, 1918, the day before the war-ending *Armistice* had come into effect. She was a purpose-built mine-sweeper, not an adapted fishing-vessel, and her immediate work was to rid the North Sea of some of those instruments of destruction.**



**(Right above: This photograph taken in 1917-1918 of HMS ‘Belvoir’, a Hunt-class Fleet Minesweeping Sloop, and sister-ship to ‘Gainsborough’ is from the ‘Wikipedia’ web-site.)**

**The complete circumstances of Seaman Price’s death appear not to be documented. The ship was operating off the Belgian coast during that month of August, 1919, close to the port of Zeebrugge, a port occupied by the Germans during the conflict and employed by their submarines. Thus a goodly number of mines had been laid in the area by both sides.**

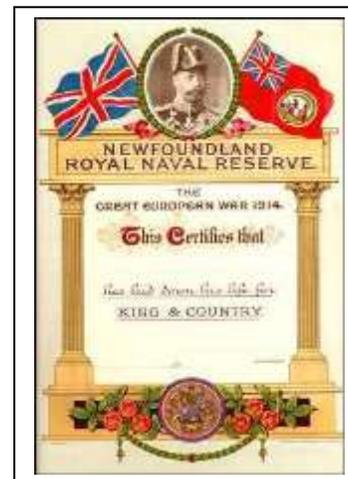
**Otherwise, all that seems to be recorded is that Seaman Price drowned on August 10 whilst on Mine Clearance Service on HMS *Gainsborough*.**

(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*)

The son of Frederick Price, labourer, and of Annie (also found as *Hannah*) Price (née *Stamp*\*, deceased of dropsy on November 24, 1899), of 7, College Square in St. John's at the time of his enlistment, he was also brother to John-Joseph and to Gertrude.

*\*The couple was married in St. John's on September 6 of 1894. Annie Price having passed away, Frederick was to re-marry, to Ellen Murphy, on August 31, 1902.*

Seaman Price was recorded as having died as cited above, on August 10, 1919, at the *reported* age of twenty-three years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, March 30 of 1896 (from the Newfoundland Birth Register), but also found as March 15, 1896 (in his enlistment papers).



*Seaman Price 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 Joseph Price was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, to the British War Medal (centre) 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](mailto:criceadam@yahoo.ca). Last updated – January 21, 2023.