

PRINCE . H . P .



Seaman Harold Heber Prince, Number 1973x, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated on a bronze beneath the Caribou at the Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel.

Having relinquished his occupation, likely that of fisherman, and having travelled from his home community of Charleston, Bonavista Bay, to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland, on December 3 of 1915, Harold Heber Prince reported...*to duty*...at the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour (see below).



On that same December date he enlisted for the first time into the Reserve (see further below), was signed on to serve...*for period of the War*...and underwent the required medical assessment on the same day. Harold Heber Prince most likely was then also to attest, 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.***

***(continued)***

(Right: HMS 'Calypso' is seen here in full sail. The vessel was to be re-commissioned 'HMS Briton' in 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was launched by the Royal Navy. – The Royal Navy photograph dated 1898 is by courtesy of the Admiralty House Museum)



Both Seaman Prince's sparse Service Records and the Discharge Register of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland) document him as in service with HMS Calypso just until December 8 of that same year before leaving for overseas service.

It was to be only a mere five days\* after having been...*taken on strength*...on 'Calypso', but perhaps having during that short time been promoted from the rank of *Seaman Recruit*, that the now-Seaman Prince was on his way to the United Kingdom.

*\*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 per times waived.*



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

On the date of his departure, December 8, it was a draft of one-hundred Newfoundland Reservists accompanied by perhaps two officers – which was to begin the journey across the island by express train. Upon the contingent's arrival at Port aux Basques, it was to embark onto the by-that-time *Reid Newfoundland Company* vessel, the SS *Sagona*, for passage on the night of December 9-10, 1915, to North Sydney, to arrive there at six o'clock in the morning.



(Right above: *The photograph of the SS 'Sagona', a 'Crosbie Red Cross Line' ship at the time the picture was taken, and possibly at Harbour Grace with a sealing crew aboard, is from the 'Maritime History Archive' web-site.*)

The *Sagona's* passenger manifesto for December 9-10 of 1915, then records that by half-past six the contingent had cleared customs and immigration formalities. The party was then to undertake the onward journey at seven fifteen, via Halifax on the *Intercontinental Railway*...(but see immediately below).



(continued)

The *Discharge Register Royal Naval Reserve*, also as cited above, documents that the draft was now to board the SS *Scandinavian* and the passenger manifesto of the *Sagona* records that the detachment was to...*travel by rail to Quebec...*in order to do so.

(Preceding page: *The image of the 'White Star Line' vessel 'Romanic', taken before 1912 when she was sold to the 'Allan Line' and re-named 'Scandinavian', is from the 'Wikipedia' web-site.)*

However, the Port of Montréal Harbour Master's Register of Sea-Going Vessels, records only three smaller ships sailing from there in early December – and the SS *Scandinavian* was not one of them. This was likely because the St. Lawrence River had started to freeze, in which case – as it was every year – vessels were to leave from Saint John, New Brunswick, the port and city not only ice-free but joined to Montréal by railway.

This was the normal arrangement with the *Allan Line* ships which, during the winter months, sailed from St. John – possibly via Halifax – to Liverpool. Thus the Newfoundland Reservist Draft recorded above made its way, still likely by rail, not as documented from North Sydney to Québec, but to Saint John for passage to the United Kingdom.

British records have the *Allan Line* ship, the SS *Scandinavian*, arriving in Liverpool from Saint John, New Brunswick, on December 20 of 1915 with the Newfoundland Reservists on board.

Having arrived in the United Kingdom towards the end of that third week of December, the Naval Reserve personnel would thereupon have been either posted directly to a vessel or ordered to undergo further training – or to simply await a posting to one of His Majesty's ships - at one of various Royal Navy establishments – these for the most part operating around the southern coast of England.

In the case of Seaman Prince, the destination was to be HMS *Victory I*.

*\*The Royal Navy had a disciplinary system which in certain ways differed from civil – and even Army – law; but for it to be employed, a sailor had to be attached to a ship. While at sea, of course, this posed no problem, but when a sailor was performing duties on land that were not associated directly to a particular ship he still had to be held accountable for any untoward behaviour.*

*The Navy's training establishments were for the most part on land: Devonport (although apparently it was only a shore-base during the Great War), Chatham, and Portsmouth for example, were land bases for many thousands of naval personnel, some of who were permanently stationed there. Thus the practice became to base an elderly or even obsolete ship in the nearby port to be, nominally, the vessel to which this personnel was to be attached. This appears to have been the procedure for the large number of shore bases organized around the coast of the United Kingdom during the War.*



(continued)

**(Preceding page: HMS 'Victory' is seen here in dry dock in the southern English naval port-city of Portsmouth where she has been sited since the late 1920s – photograph from Wikipedia)**

**Thus, HMS 'Victory', the base to which Seaman Prince had been ordered after his arrival in the United Kingdom from Newfoundland, was not only all the buildings and facilities on shore, but also HMS 'Victory' the warship, the vessel from which Admiral Nelson had directed the Battle of Trafalgar – although the ship's illustrious history is not limited to that one single incident.**

**It was also the name which all the sailors attached to HMS 'Victory' were to have emblazoned on the bands of their afore-mentioned caps.**

**Furthermore, these naval establishments were at times divided into sections: 'Victory I' was where personnel (as opposed to the engine-room personnel, for example, in 'Victory II') such as Seaman Prince were to be stationed while awaiting a posting to one of His Majesty's ships.**

**Seaman Prince was to remain on the nominal roll of Victory I where he was to remain for a period of eighty-six days – this was inclusive of the time of his travel from Newfoundland - before the Royal Navy saw fit to dispatch him to HMS Excellent, its Gunnery School on nearby Whale Island from where on a fine day Portsmouth Harbour is visible.**

**\*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 for some three weeks, March 5 until March 26, 1916, Seaman Prince likely was to have worn an HMS Excellent cap-band.**

**On March 27 there came a posting, not to a ship, but to another Division of HMS Victory. On this occasion Seaman Prince was transferred to Victory II, not only a further barracks but also a station for the training of stokers – the Royal Navy still was powered mostly by coal – and of other engine-room personnel. What exactly were his duties during the**

sixteen weeks during which he served there appears not to have been recorded among his few papers. He was then again transferred on July 17-18.

HMS *Satellite* was an elderly war-ship of some fourteen-hundred tons launched in 1881\*, a sloop powered by both wind and steam. By the turn of the century she had become obsolescent and her service had been reduced to that of a harbour-service vessel as well as a drill-ship\*\* for the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in the port of North Shields at the mouth of the River Tyne, north-eastern England.

*\*Although it was it was not to be until 1947 that she had served her purpose and was sold.*

*\*\*A career comparable to that of HMS 'Calypso' ('Briton') of the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland).*

At the outset of the *Great War* a number of coastal towns and their ports became bases for the Auxiliary Patrol, flotilla of smaller boats, often requisitioned and often fishing vessels manned by their peace-time crew, which acted as escorts, patrol-ships, anti-submarine ships and as mine-sweepers. These smaller craft were often administratively the responsibility of larger vessels, parent- or depot-ships which were attached to the above-mentioned towns and ports.



(Right above: *The gloomy photograph of the 'River Tyne at North Shields circa 1910' is from the 'co-curate.ncl.ac.uk/northshields/' web-site.*)

There appears to be little, if any, information a propos the duties of Seaman Prince during the ten months that he spent in service at North Shields. He may have served on the vessel itself or at one of the shore-based facilities which were elements of the Auxiliary Patrol Base. It is less likely that he was to be attached to any of those smaller craft which comprised the North Shields flotilla as none is mentioned in his records.



(Right above: *This image of a Satellite-class sloop – likely HMS 'Royalist' – is from the 'Wikipedia' web-site.*)

Having terminated his attachment to HMS *Satellite* on May 16 of 1917, Seaman Prince was to return to Portsmouth and to HMS *Victory I*. There he was to await his next posting which came about on October 10 and which saw him report to another war-time Auxiliary Patrol Base, this one on the *Straits of Dover*, in the port of Dover itself, and designated as HMS *Attentive III*.

It was the main port out of which operated the *Dover Patrol*.



***\*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 above: 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’.***

***One of the biggest fears of the British 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 was 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 and purpose-built small vessels, notably fishing-boats, trawlers and drifters, lightly-armed but capable of mine-sweeping and keeping their German opposite numbers at bay.***

***(Right above: 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 rapidly became 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’.***



***\*HMS ‘Ceto’ was another facility at nearby Ramsgate where several Newfoundlanders serving in ships of the ‘Dover Patrol’ were based.***

***(continued)***

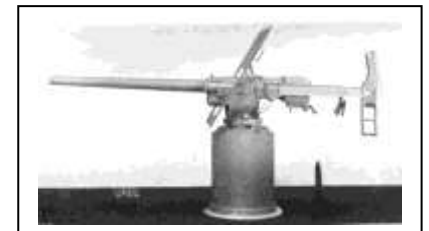
(Preceding page: *HMS 'Attentive', seen here at some time prior to the Great War during which she served as a cruiser of the Dover Patrol. The base reportedly was named subsequent to her becoming the parent ship because her Commanding Officer was to become senior officer of the 'Dover Patrol' itself. – photograph from Wikipedia)*

What exactly his tasks were to be during the first days of that posting to *Attentive III* does not appear to have been documented on the single page of Seaman Prince's Service Record. As it had been when posted to *HMS Satellite*, he may have been attached to the parent-ship *Attentive III* herself or to a land-based facility which shared the same name: or he may have immediately or soon joined the requisitioned trawler now commissioned as a mine-sweeper: *HMT Gambri*.

(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)*



When exactly Seaman Prince was to set foot on the deck of His Majesty's Trawler\* *Gambri* is not certain, although it could of course have been as early as that May 17. A new vessel built in 1916 and of two-hundred seventy-four tons, she had immediately been converted and armed for war-time service with a single quick-firing six-pounder gun. In April of 1917, she had become one of the flotilla of smaller vessels attached to *Attentive III* at Dover, was incorporated into the aforesaid *Dover Patrol* and since then had been employed as a mine-sweeper.



*\*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.*

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

*HMT Gambri* appears to have been the only vessel on which Seaman Prince was to serve for the next fifteen weeks until January 18 of the following year.



The English south-coast town of Eastbourne overlooks the English Channel and it was there on January 18 of 1918 that *HMT Gambri* was patrolling some eleven kilometres off-shore in the area where the *Royal Sovereign Lightship* – it operated from 1875 until 1971 – was stationed to warn shipping of the proximity of the *Royal Sovereign Shoal*: it would have been there on the above date.

(Right above: *The photograph of the 'Royal Sovereign Lightship' on an unreported date is from the 'Eastbourne Herald' newspaper web-site.)*



It was not, however, to warn the twenty-one man crew – which included two Newfoundlanders\* – of the proximity of an enemy mine that had been laid by the German *U-boat 71*. There were no survivors of the explosion and subsequent sinking.

(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 other Newfoundland seaman lost on that day was John Thomas Berrigan, Number 1455x, of Renews on the Southern Shore. His story is soon to be found elsewhere in these files.

The son of John Prince, fisherman, and of Elizabeth (known as Lizzie (née Taylor\*) of the Bonavista Bay community of Charleston (formerly Southern or Southward Bay), he was also brother to Minetta(?)-Jane, Llewelyn, Carrie-Blanche, Christopher\*\*, May-Ann, James-Edwin, Mary-Florence (or Frances), Albert-John and Ingram-Roy.

\*The couple married on January 3, 1896, in Seal Cove (today Princeton).

(Right: The sacrifice of Seaman Prince is honoured on the Summerville War Memorial. – photograph from 2010)

\*\*His brother Christopher George enlisted in October of 1915, two months before Harold Heber and sailed with him on ‘Scandinavian’ to overseas service. Seaman Christopher George Prince survived the conflict.

Seaman Harold Heber Prince was recorded as drowned in the...sinking of HMT Gambri...on January 18, 1918, at twenty-one years of age: date of birth at Charleston, Bonavista Bay, August 12, 1897 (this date from enlistment papers), likely later as brother Christopher is recorded as having been born in February of 1897.

(Right: The photograph of Seaman Prince, taken during his time of service at HMS ‘Victory’, is from the Canadian Virtual War Memorial, Veterans’ Affairs Canada, to which it has been donated by the Prince Family of Charleston, Bonavista Bay.)

Seaman Prince served only in the Royal Navy and was not in the service of Canada as cited in some sources, notably the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Seaman Harold Heber Prince was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

