

RANDALL, F.



Seaman Frederick Randall (also found as *Randell* and *Randle*), Number 816x, having no known last resting-place (although see further below) 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), Frederick Randall had initially presented himself for enlistment on October 15 of 1910, whereupon he was to undergo twenty-eight days of training, until November 11 of that same year.

As with the majority of pre-War volunteers, he had joined-up for five years and was to undergo the required annual training of at least twenty-eight days on four occasions during the following forty-four months. December of 1913 saw his final term of training on *Calypso* before the events of the summer of 1914 dictated that he be called to war-time service.

Summoned from home *to service* at the onset of hostilities, Frederick Randall travelled from his family residence on the Southside of Fogo Island to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland where, on an unspecified date during August of 1914 – not long after 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).

(continued)



On that above-mentioned August day, Frederick Randall 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.

(Preceding page: *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.*)

**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)

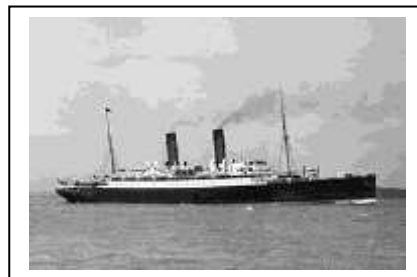
Following some three months of duties in St. John's – no further training has been recorded - Seaman Randall, one of a draft of three-hundred five Naval Reservists, embarked on November 5-6 onto the Cunard ocean-liner *Franconia* on its way serving its commercial route from New York to Liverpool.



(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*)



It would appear that Seaman Randall was to be one of this latter category as he was transferred to HMS *Pembroke* upon his disembarkation. *Pembroke* was the Royal Naval establishment at Chatham on the River Medway, itself a tributary of the better-known River Thames, in the county of Kent. Not only was *Pembroke* a barracks – it operated as such from 1878 until 1983 – but it was the name given to a number of training establishments – a goodly number during the War - most not far-removed from Chatham, and which were numbered according to the purpose of the training – or otherwise - involved.

Pembroke I was the training station for regular seamen and also the location of those holding-barracks from where seamen would sooner or later be attached to one of His Majesty's ships. Thus it was likely *Pembroke I* to which Seaman Randall was to be posted.

****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 many of whom were never to set eyes on the actual ship in question.***

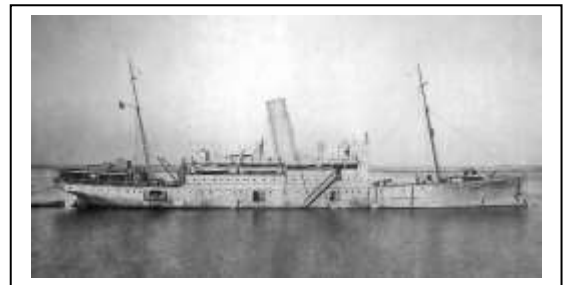
Naval discipline being distinct in some ways from the laws that governed other parties such as the Army and civilians, sailors had to be on the books of a serving naval vessel to be legally subject to naval law and order, even when these sailors were serving on land.

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 on shore.



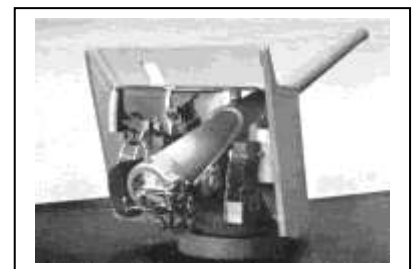
Which is why Seaman Randall would have worn an HMS 'Pembroke' cap-band.

On December 8-9, less than a month following his disembarkation in Liverpool, Seaman Randall was dispatched to join his ship, the Armed Boarding Steamer *Carron*.



(Right: The image of the steamer SS Carron, owned by the Company of the same name, is from the following web-site: www.clydeships.co.uk)

The ship had been built and launched in Scotland in 1909. A small vessel for carrying both passengers and cargo, she was to be requisitioned by the Admiralty soon after the outbreak of the *Great War* to be converted for carrying out inspections of foreign shipping at sea, stopping them and boarding them if deemed necessary. To that end she was fitted with two 4.7-inch naval guns on her forward area before going into her war-time service on November 22 of 1914.



(Right above: An example of the naval guns with which 'Carron' had been equipped prior to sailing on her war-time duties. – from Wikipedia)

Her first duties had been to patrol the waters of the Western Approaches to the English Channel and it may have been prior to or during this period of several months that Seaman Randall became a member of her crew. But by April of 1915 he was on board ship when *Carron* set sail to take up station in the *Aegean* Sea towards the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

The British and the French were by that time becoming embroiled in a campaign against the Ottoman Empire (the Turks) which had recently entered the *Great War* on the side of Germany and Austria. To the Allies this episode of the conflict became known as the *Dardanelles* or *Gallipoli* and to the Turks as *Çanakkale*, and was an attempt by force to take control of the waterway from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea and the Turkish capital city of the time, Istanbul – known to history as *Byzantium* before *Constantinople* – which lies on that channel, the *Bosphorus*.

Not only was Newfoundland naval personnel to be involved at *Gallipoli* but the Newfoundland Regiment also played a role at a place called *Suvla Bay*. To say that the entire affair was not a great success would be to understate the situation but that is another story to be told elsewhere.



(Right above: *Azmak Cemetery at Suvla Bay wherein lie twelve dead of the Newfoundland Regiment* – photograph from 2011)

Both sides were to incur many casualties: there were apparently to be more victims from disease rather than from enemy action although it is nowhere found that *Carron* was ever employed as a hospital ship.

The British and the French had imposed their collective will upon the Greek government – neutral at the time – and had established a large base on the Greek island of Lemnos (also found as *Limnos*) and particularly around *Mudros Bay*.



(Right above: *This is Mudros Bay on the Greek island of Lemnos in the spring of 1915 where the French and the British established their Advanced Base for the attack on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Most of the tents seen are hospitals, casualty clearing stations and other medical facilities, and likely a number of hospital ships was among the vessels seen anchored in the waters of Mudros Bay. – the image from Illustration)*



(Right above: *Before and after the Gallipoli Campaign this area was entirely empty, fishing huts and a decrepit wooden wharf the only evidence of human activity, much as it still is to this day. – Photograph from 2011)*

On board HMS *Carron* during this period Seaman Randall had undoubtedly met a fellow Newfoundlander, George Bragg from the Channel-Port aux Basques area. Seaman Bragg was to die of dysentery on August 23, 1915, and was buried in the East Mudros Military Cemetery. His history is to be found elsewhere among these files.



(Preceding page: *The grave-marker of Seaman George Philip Bragg, Number 1560x, in the East Mudros Military Cemetery on the Greek island of Lemnos – photograph from 2011*)

HMS *Carron* remained in the *Aegean Sea* and eventually played a role in the evacuation of British Troops – among them the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment – from the *Gallipoli Peninsula* during the withdrawals of December 1915 and January 1916. She and Seaman Randall then remained there on patrol for a short period before the ship was recalled to England for maintenance and repairs.

It was then to be from one extreme to the other. Having experienced the warm climate of the Mediterranean basin, in April of 1916, HMS *Carron*, Seaman Randall still serving among her crew, was dispatched on duty to protect the sea-lane around northernmost Norway and into the Russian port of Murmansk, unpleasantly-cold waters at the best of times.

There was to reportedly be no German activity in that area during the summer of 1916 and it was apparently not to be until that September that any enemy U-Boats began to make an appearance. HMS *Carron* is not recorded as having to deal with any untoward incidents during this time and she was to return to England in time for Christmas.

Seaman Randell is recorded as having terminated his service on board HMS *Carron* on December 20, 1916, and as having once again been posted on the morrow, December 21, back to *Pembroke*, likely to the Naval Barracks there.

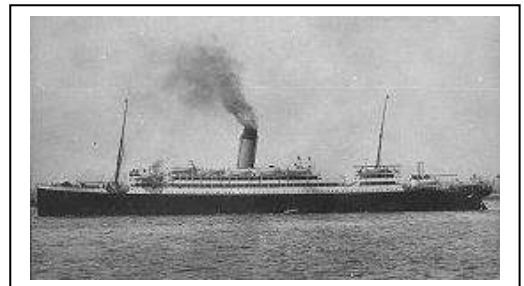
It must have been soon during the period that now followed Seaman Randall's return to *Pembroke* – or even prior to that - that he was deemed worthy of a month's leave back in Newfoundland. When the details of passage had been decided, the ship on which he was to journey was to be the armed merchant cruiser, HMS *Laurentic*.

He was not to travel alone: a number of other Newfoundland naval reservists, having by this time also having served long enough to merit some furlough at home, were to travel with him – likely to Halifax – on the ship.

The ship was to sail from Birkenhead, a port adjacent to Liverpool, on that January 23 with a reported four-hundred seventy-five* persons on board as well as some forty tons of gold with which to buy munitions in North America.

(Right: *The photograph of 'Laurentic', likely seen here in peace-time as no guns are visible on her decks, is from the Naval-History.net web-site*)

**While it is recorded that 'Laurentic' was carrying no passengers or troops, it should be remembered that some of those on board were returning home for leave or for repatriation.*



While passing by the north-west coast of Ireland on the morning of January 25, the ship unexpectedly put into the small town of Buncrana in Lough (*Lough* pronounced as in *Loch Ness*) Swilly to put ashore several sick crew-members. At five o'clock on that same afternoon *Laurentic* was under way again.

She then passed through the protective boom at the entrance to *Lough Swilly* and gathered speed – it was apparently for her speed that she had been chosen to carry the gold as she could out-run most ships and any U-boat. She was barely three kilometres from the coast when she struck two German mines in quick succession and rapidly began to sink; after the second explosion there was to be no power and thus no distress signal could be sent.

(Right above and right: *The Memorial to those who perished on that January 25 of 1916 during the sinking of HMS 'Laurentic'; and the churchyard of St. Mura of the Church of Ireland at Upper Fahan, Ireland, wherein stands the aforesaid Memorial and where many remains of the dead lie to this day, some identified, most not – photographs from 2011*)



There was scarcely time to lower the life-boats although apparently all on board *Laurentic*, apart from perhaps some engine-room personnel who were already dead, were able to board them. It was to do them little good.

A snow-storm was blowing and most of the men were not clothed to resist it. Any help had to travel the length of the Lough and then through open seas to reach them. Apparently the nearest land could only be reached in the teeth of the gale that was blowing, a wind reckoned to be at minus twelve degrees, and the boats were filling with water.

And those that eventually managed to land found themselves isolated on the rocky, barren, un-inhabited coast of Donegal.

Little wonder, perhaps, that of the four-hundred seventy-five on board *Laurentic*, three-hundred fifty-four were to die.

(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 John Randall (he also found as *Randle*), fisherman, and of Elizabeth (née *Green**) of the Southside, Fogo, Newfoundland, he was also brother to Amy-Jane and to Joseph-William.

(continued)

**The couple was married in the community of Fogo on April 9, 1889.*

Seaman Frederick Randall was reported as having died in the...*sinking of HMS Laurentic...*on January 25 of 1917 at the age of twenty-six years: date of birth in Fogo, Newfoundland, May 24 of 1891 from his enlistment papers and also from the Newfoundland Birth Register.

(Right: The sacrifice of Seaman Frederick Randall is honoured on the War Memorial which stands next to St. Andrew's Church in the community of Fogo – and on which his name is spelled Randell. – photograph from 2015)



Seaman Randall 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 Randall was entitled to the 1914-1915 Star, as well as to the British War Medal (centre) and 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 21, 2023.