



Seaman Edward Tilley, Number 2399x, is interred in Harcourt Cemetery in the community of the same name in the District of Trinity Bay.

(continued)

Having decided to *answer the call*, Edward Tilley relinquished his work as a fisherman working out of the area of Broad Cove, Smith's Sound, and travelled to St. John's, capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland where, on May 1 (also found as May 10) of 1918, he reported...*to duty**...on board the Naval Reserve training ship, HMS *Calypso*, moored in the harbour.

On that same May 1 he enlisted into the Naval Reserve for a first time (see further below), signing to serve for the *Duration of the War** and undergoing the required medical assessment**. He also likely attested at this time, pledging his allegiance to the King-Emperor, George V.

**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.*

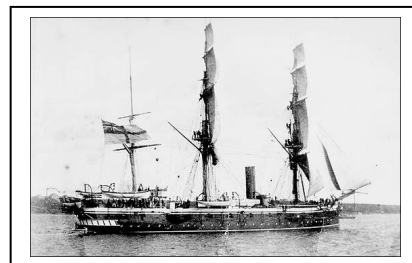
***May of 1918 was the month during which the Newfoundland Military Service Act (conscription) came into effect. From May 11 through to the end of the War, the Department of Militia was to call a total of 1,470 men into active service. However, nothing amongst his papers appears to suggest under which circumstances – as a volunteer or a conscripted man – Edward Tilley was to be taken into service. In fact, it is difficult to ascertain that conscription ever became a necessary policy in the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve.*

Whatever was the case, it appears that no Newfoundland conscripts were ever to see 'active service'.



(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 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)



(Right: 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.**

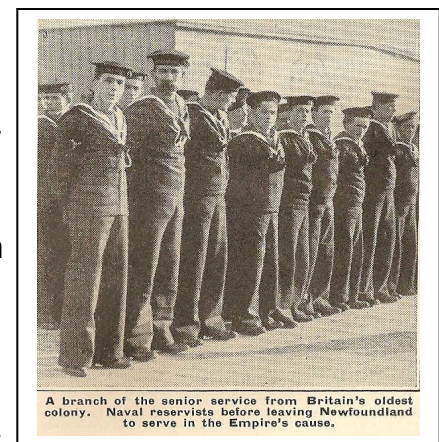
Note: During the years preceding the Great War the only military force on the Island of Newfoundland – apart from a handful of ill-fated local attempts – was to be the Royal Naval Reserve (Newfoundland). Even so, it was to be some thirty years after the withdrawal of British troops from the Dominion 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.



(Right above: 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)

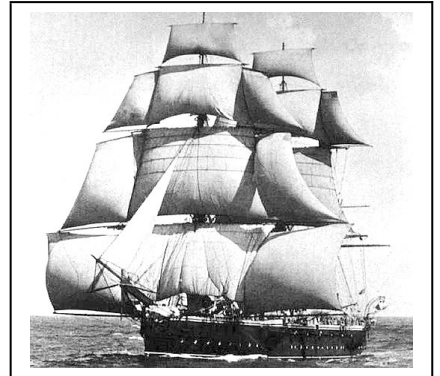
Expenses were apparently defrayed for the most part by the British (Imperial) Government and an attempt was made to ensure the number of recruits would be kept constantly at a maximum. This practice and policy was then to be continued up until the onset of hostilities some twelve years later.



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.

(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, 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.



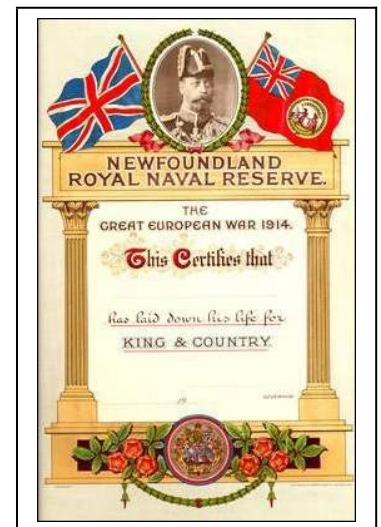
(Right: H.M.S. 'Calypso' in full sail. She was to be re-named 'Briton' in 1916 when a new 'Calypso', a modern cruiser, was about to be launched by the Royal Navy. – This photograph, taken of her by the Royal Navy in 1898, is by courtesy of Admiralty House Museum)

(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)

It could not have been very long after having reported to HMS Briton, or even before, that Seaman Tilley was to exhibit the symptoms of his illness and to be hospitalized.

The son of Simeon Tilley, former fisherman deceased of paralysis on October 19 of 1921, and of Mary Anne Tilley (née Pelley*), he was brother to Ann Maria, William Joseph, Elizabeth Gertrude, John, Elsie Bertha, Emily Sarah, Robert, Edward and to Henry Thomas.

***The couple likely married circa 1884.**



Seaman Tilley – attached to HMS Briton – was recorded as having...died of pneumonia...in the General Hospital in St. John's on May 16 of 1918.

He died at the reported age of twenty-two years: date of birth in Smith's Sound, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, September 1 of 1896 (from his enlistment papers).

As Seaman Edward Tilley did not depart on service, either 'overseas' or 'active' from Newfoundland, he was entitled to no medal. However, a copy of the Memorial Scroll seen above should have been received by his family.

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.