

# HMCS SACKVILLE - CANADA'S NAVAL MEMORIAL ACTION STATIONS

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**On the Front...**

**HMCS *Halifax* Gun Shield Art**

Shipboard art was popular in World War II RCN ships, particularly corvettes. It varied greatly from ship to ship and included crests of towns, pin-up models and cartoon characters. HMCS *Halifax* (FFH 330), a Halifax-Class frigate commissioned 29 June 1992, continues the tradition sporting new gun shield art prior to deploying for Op Reassurance in early January 2021.

(DND/RCN photo)

**On the Back...**

**WW II Gun Shield Art**

A crew member of HMCS *Halifax* (K237) secures some creative artwork to the gun shield of the corvette's main 4-inch gun. HMCS *Halifax*, a Revised Flower Class corvette built in Collingwood, ON and commissioned in Montreal in November 1941, served as an escort in the Caribbean and North Atlantic during the Battle of the Atlantic. On May 19, 1942 she rescued three survivors from an American trawler that had been attacked by U-432 just south of Halifax. In August of that year *Halifax* was assigned to escort a Trinidad-Aruba-Key West convoy of tankers. In company with HMC Ships *Snowberry* and *Oakville* she was in action with U-94, which culminated in *Oakville* ramming and sinking the U-boat. After a refit, *Halifax* served during the remainder of hostilities as part of Escort Groups C-1 and C-9. In late 1945 the ship was sold and converted to the mercantile trade.

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LCdr Murray Knowles presents HMCS *Sackville* tie to Prince Philip during 2010 Royal Visit to ship



HMCS *Sackville* undocks following refit at HMC Dockyard.



WW II Merchant Navy veteran Capt Earl Wagner, left, and Cdr Bill Gard (ret'd) participate in BoA Convoy Bells ceremony at CFB Halifax

# From the Chair

## Capt(N) (ret'd) William Woodburn

Dear Trustees,

In June 2019, I had the distinct honour of accompanying Mr Philip Clappison, along with members of his family, onboard HMCS *Sackville* as the ship made its annual harbour move to its summertime berth on the Halifax waterfront. It was a crisp but beautiful, sunny day and I can only imagine the thoughts that went through his mind as we made our way down the harbour. This was the first time I had met Mr Clappison, a member of the ship's wartime crew, and it was very clear that he was enjoying every moment of his visit. In 1944, while still a teenager, he was alone, on watch in the boiler room when No.1 Boiler experienced a serious defect that could have proven catastrophic to the ship. Instead, Phil raised the alarm and took action to avert the crisis. HMCS *Sackville* was taken out of the order of battle soon after to effect repairs and would not see combat again. Quite an incredible story. This happened 77 years ago and unbeknownst to Mr Clappison, his actions on that day likely saved the ship in more ways than one. Over the following years HMCS *Sackville* would play many roles under many guises but the ship has remained steadfast and alive throughout. This year marks the 80th Anniversary of her initial launch and commissioning. 80 years later and now the last of her kind. Quite the incredible story indeed!

Not only does this year mark HMCS *Sackville's* 80th Anniversary, it will also mark the completion of one of the most significant refits of her life. I can say without reservation that the work performed by Fleet Maintenance Facility Cape Scott and various other supporting contractors in HMC Dockyard was completed in a highly professional manner and went well beyond expectation. This was no easy undertaking and proved to be a journey of discovery as we learned of the true state of the hull and, through trial and er-



HMCS *Sackville* re-docking.  
Doug Struthers photo.

ror, the best way to inject new life into the ship. Although the final outcome may be considered a “temporary solution” I personally believe we have given HMCS *Sackville* a new lease on life for at least a decade and hopefully well beyond with the right planned maintenance routine put in place. In addition to cladding of the hull and keel some of the key jobs completed include: replacing rotting frames in the Engine Room and Boiler Room; cleaning, treating and coating all internal tanks as well as the Engine and Boiler Rooms; encapsulating the port and starboard stabilizers; reinforcing tug push areas; painting the entire uppers as well as applying fresh underwater coatings to the hull; refurbishing the Hedgehog weapon system; installing a new electrical distribution system; installing submersible bilge pumps and; improving accessibility to the Trustees' Mess...the list goes on. None of this would have been possible without the kind donations of everyone who has supported the ship over the years.

Indeed, work completed on the ship has been extensive but, insofar as the hull is concerned, the decision to envelope it with a second “skin” will, over



William Woodburn onboard HMCS *Sackville* alongside Philip Clappison.

time, expose the original plating to the risk of galvanic deterioration associated with dissimilar metals. The long-term solution to this problem is to actually remove the original hull and replace it with an entirely new one. As challenging as the task sounds, this type of operation has been completed on historical ships in the United States with great success and HMCS *Sackville* is an ideal candidate to proceed with such an undertaking. I am proud to say that the work just completed in refit will buy the Trust invaluable time to raise the funds needed for a complete hull replacement. It is to this objective we must now turn our focus starting with our “For the Hull of It” campaign.

Finally, I am very pleased to inform you that the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust was invited to speak before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs tasked with studying a Strategy for Commemorations in the

21st Century. I appeared before the Committee along with our past Chair, Wendall Brown, on the 5th of May where I had the opportunity to make an opening statement that explained who the Trust is, who and what we commemorate and, what we will require in the future. The text of my opening address is carried on page 34 and was written with the insight, advice, and support of our Board.

In closing, HMCS *Sackville* is expecting to return to her summer berth on the Halifax waterfront by Canada Day. Though COVID restrictions will likely remain in place for the summer, the crew will do its best, as always, to tell the story of the ship and pay homage to those who have served and sacrificed, or continue to serve at sea. Should you have the opportunity to visit the Halifax waterfront this summer please stop by to say hello.

In the meantime,  
Stay Safe and Stay Strong!

# From the Captain Cdr (ret'd) Gary Reddy

As we head into our summer program pleased to report significant progress on HMCS *Sackville*'s refit during the winter and spring carried out by Fleet Maintenance Facility Cape Breton.

This includes:

- Hull Work: cladding, hull water blasting, and marine protective coating work completed. The hull looks awesome!

- Painting Ship: final work on painting the hull above the waterline, superstructure, and deck completed.

- Undocking/Docking: Undocking carried out in April to move the ship out onto the synchrolift and complete water tank ballasting, followed by FMF personnel prepping cradle for redocking.

- Complete Phase II – plates welded to the exposed keel areas for planned undocking in early June in preparation of cold move to downtown berth before Canada Day.

- Electrical (Shore Power): Electrical breakers will be installed during Phase II.

- Trustee Mess Servery: Chief Shipwright is ready to move on mess servery project once welding, forward salvage pump and mess insulation work complete.

- Watertight Safety Door: Watertight safety door between Trustee Mess and Conference Room installed and will be a tremendous addition to the



mess. It will open up the two spaces and allow Trustees and their guests easier access. Most importantly, it provides for another egress point in case of an emergency.

- Heat Pumps: Awaiting a final quote on heat pumps that will allow us to control the temperature inside the ship to provide heat that will enable

the ship to remain at its downtown berth for eight to nine months of the year instead of five.

- Forward Salvage Pump: Installed.

In other ship activities, an expanded social events program has been developed for Board consideration; we continue to recruit for experienced PR/communications support for the ship and Trust, and we look forward to welcoming several hires as guides for 2021 as we did last summer. We continue to work on a date for the committal of ashes ceremony.

CNMT Chair Bill Woodburn officiated at the presentation of a HMCS *Sackville* model to the Naval Museum of Halifax

and Naval Fleet School. Our CERA, Pat Devenish, worked with Guy Godin at the Naval Museum and CPO1 Turgeon, Fleet School Coxswain, to make this happen. The model was built by Darrell Kayes, (retired submariner) and will be placed in the Naval Fleet School foyer display case.

We look forward to our move to *Sackville* Landing prior to Canada Day.

Continue to serve.



HMCS *Sackville* undocking April 2021.  
Doug Struthers photo.

# Remembrance Day 2020

## “We Must Never Forget Them”

By: Len Canfield

With 2020 Remembrance Day ceremonies affected by COVID-19 members of the Nova Scotia Naval Association of Canada (NSNAC) and the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust (CNMT) were joined by Commissionaires Nova Scotia (CNS) in conducting a limited service at the Halifax Memorial (commonly referred to as Sailors Memorial) in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax.

Public health protocols may have limited the number of participants but it did not detract from the recognition and honor of all those who served



and made the ultimate sacrifice.

Prior to HMCS *Scotian* conducting a limited service at the 11th hour at the Halifax Memorial, NSNAC and CNMT that maintains and operates HMCS *Sackville*, Canada’s Naval Memorial, along with CNS held a limited service at 0900.

Commodore Bruce Belliveau (ret’d), Chair of NSNAC in his remarks drew attention to the striking memorial that is highly visible to ships entering and leaving the historic harbor. The memorial’s 12-metre tall Cross of Sacrifice stands on an octagonal platform that bears 23 bronze plaques inscribed with the names of more than 3,000 veterans who lost their lives during the First and Second World Wars.

“We must never forget them...they made the ultimate sacrifice so that others may live free. We need to keep faith with the fallen forever and to explain to children the need to keep this faith,” he said.

Captain (N) Bill Woodburn (ret’d), Chair of CNMT offered the Naval Prayer.

Chaplain Charlie Black reflected on the wartime sacrifices of Canadians. He read surgeon John McCrae’s immortal poem “In Flanders Fields” written in 1915 during the battle of Ypres and noted that more than 60,000 Canadians lost their lives during the First World War. During the Second World War one million men and women served in the military and more than 45,000 gave their lives in the fight for freedom. In closing he offered a prayer for those who continue to serve Canada.

Several wreaths were placed at the memorial including NSNAC, CNMT/HMCS *Sackville*, represented by Chief Petty Officer Pat Devenish (ret’d) and Commander Gary Reddy (ret’d), and CNS, represented by Commander Rob Rounds.

# Trustee Profile

## Following in the Footsteps

By: Patrick Charlton, CNMT Volunteer

Captain (N) Robert Darlington RCN (ret’d) and his son Commander Colin Darlington RCN (ret’d) are long-standing members of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust (CNMT) who firmly believe in the Trust’s mission to preserve and operate HMCS *Sackville*, “The Last Corvette,” for the benefit of all Canadians.

Robert had a distinguished career in the RCN. He was part of a unique cadre of sea logistics officers who were also qualified Officers-of-the-Watch. His connection with HMCS *Sackville* harkens back to the start of the ship’s transition in the early 1980s from a CFAV (Canadian Forces Auxiliary Vessel) to become Canada’s Naval Memorial. In 1981, as the assistant chief of staff material in Maritime Command Headquarters, Robert was called to a meeting with the head of the Defence Research Establishment Atlantic (DREA). The issue at hand was the removal of CFAV *Sackville* from DREA’s roster due to significant problems with her boiler. The ensuing discussions ultimately led to the creation of the volunteer Canadian Naval Memorial Trust and the migration of *Sackville* from oceanographic research ship to HMCS *Sackville*, Canada’s Naval Memorial, in 1985.

Robert retired in 1982 but has remained active in naval circles volunteering with the Naval Officers Association of Canada (now the Naval Association of Canada) and the Navy League. In addition, he became a naval historian, being the co-author of several books and publications with retired Commander Fraser McKee.

Following in his father’s footsteps, son Colin joined the RCN as a maritime surface officer (MARS) in 1974. During his career he deployed with the first Naval Task Group for Operation Apollo in 2001/2 as Executive Officer, HMCS *Preserver*. He subsequently held positions as MARLANT N6 (communications) and CFB Halifax Base Ops officer. Colin retired in 2008 from the Regular Force but continued with the Reserves until 2014. In retirement, he has

remained engaged in military affairs as vice-president of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Nova Scotia.

When asked about what they would say to the younger generation today regarding the importance of preserving *Sackville*, the essence of Robert’s and Colin’s response was straight-forward: Nothing is more important than knowing our history. *Sackville* represents a very significant element in understanding life-at-sea in arduous wartime conditions. The ship is a living part of the rich history of the RCN.

If HMCS *Sackville* is to continue to commemorate the men and women who served in the RCN during the Second World War and honour the commitment and sacrifice of sailors of all generations, then preserving her hull is paramount in allowing the ship to take her place in the new Canadian Maritime Heritage District in downtown Halifax.

For more information on the CNMT, the ship and the “Just For The Hull Of It” campaign, visit the CNMT website: [www.canadasnavalmemorial.ca](http://www.canadasnavalmemorial.ca). The support of all members of the Trust and the Canadian public is very much appreciated.



Colin Darlington is sworn into the RCN by his father Robert Darlington.

# 20 MM Oerlikon Anti-Aircraft Guns in the RCN – WW II

By: Doug Thomas



There were a range of light anti-aircraft and general-purpose machine guns (MG) in the RCN early in the war. Some of them were left over from WW I, such as the .303 calibre Lewis and .50 calibre Browning machine guns, in single and dual mountings. In the River class destroyers, there were quadruple .50 cal. MGs mounted vertically. Another weapon widely fitted early in the war was the single 2-pounder pom-pom; we are familiar with that in Flower-class corvettes where it was fitted aft in a gun tub as the principal anti-aircraft gun. As the war

went on, the single 20 mm Oerlikon replaced lighter MGs in the bridge wings and other locations. It was very dependable, had a high rate of fire, and the projectile was much heavier. In a typical single-barrel naval version, it was free-swinging on a fixed pedestal mounting with a flat armoured shield affording some protection for the crew. The cannon is aimed and fired by a gunner using, in its simplest form, a ring-and-bead sight. The gunner is attached to the weapon by a waist-belt and shoulder supports. Twin 20 mm power-operated

mountings were widely fitted in larger new construction vessels such as the River Class frigates and Tribal Class destroyers.

Life Trustee and World War II Veteran Fraser McKee, recalls his experience in practicing with the Oerlikon in 1944:

“They had one of these training set-ups at Cornwallis (I think) too. For as a Seaman there in early 1944, I recall strapping myself into the harness and firing. The problem was that after each person had a turn, the gun was set to ‘safe’ and uncocked. To cock a single Oerlikon, you had to connect a strap from the outer bottom of the mounting to the front end of the large spring around the barrel, depress the rear fully & quickly to cock it again. At about 5’10” and only 130 lbs., that was about the spring pressure, and I couldn’t get it to cock & lock! After

all these years, I forget whether someone helped me force the rear right down ... “Do it again and GET IT RIGHT!!” ... or did it for me. I recall that on firing it rather shook you, and the whole arrangement didn’t seem to me a very practical AA system in an emergency! I rather liked the twin .50 cal. Browning machine guns we had in HMCS *Vinson* (Armed Yacht) just below the bridge on each side, which cocked by just pulling back on levers on the side of each gun!

Comment by Life Trustee and World War II Vet Bill Wilson:

“Note the bell bottoms on the rating in the gun’s harness. On my gun on the H 31 (Destroyer HMCS *Ottawa* (#2) we had to use a cut-splice rope to cock it, but that was replaced with the wire strop somewhere around mid-May of 1944.



Training site near Esquimalt Harbour Entrance

# A Labour of Love for a National Treasure

By Brian Bowman

*Dusty Dreams and Troubled Waters*, a much-anticipated graphic novel about HMCS *Sackville*, will launch on June 30 this year. Its process of production is borne of deep roots, delayed by tragic loss and recovered by an act of courage.

At war's end, my father, 2nd Lt. in HMCS *Edmundston*, returned to the prairies with the corvette's ensign, his seaboots and uniforms. They were stored in my closet, smelled like the North Atlantic and inspired my interest in our 'wavy navy.' Later, I helped with his book about it and while visiting HMCS *Sackville* to trigger old memories, Father met maritime artist Richard Rudnicki who offered to illustrate the cover. We corresponded and Richard said that if I could write he would illustrate a graphic novel about *Sackville*. The genre was popular with young readers. We both wanted something that would generate awareness and interest in Canada's naval history and the tough little ship that defines us. So, we partnered on it – hands across the nation.

We wanted a central figure who could make the tale a national story and found him on the dusty plains. The prairies of the day produced farm boys who, conditioned by isolation and distant horizons,

made pretty good sailors. Wally then, is a cowboy/ploughboy who trains at Cornwallis and crews in HMCS *Sackville*. The story follows him through *Sackville*'s entire wartime service against a back-story of his life before the war and a rivalry with his brother over a girl they both want.

I developed the script in collusion with Richard and toured him around when he was out west to get visual reference, the only time I ever met him. Once the script was accepted, work began on illustrations. But it was slow going at first owing to commissioned work that Richard had to complete, and a move from Halifax to a rural property at Port Royal. Then, in 2019, he really got into it. Emails flew and I was proofing new image files several times per week. I was confident proofing the western scenes, but we both knew we needed advice regarding *Sackville* at sea and in action.

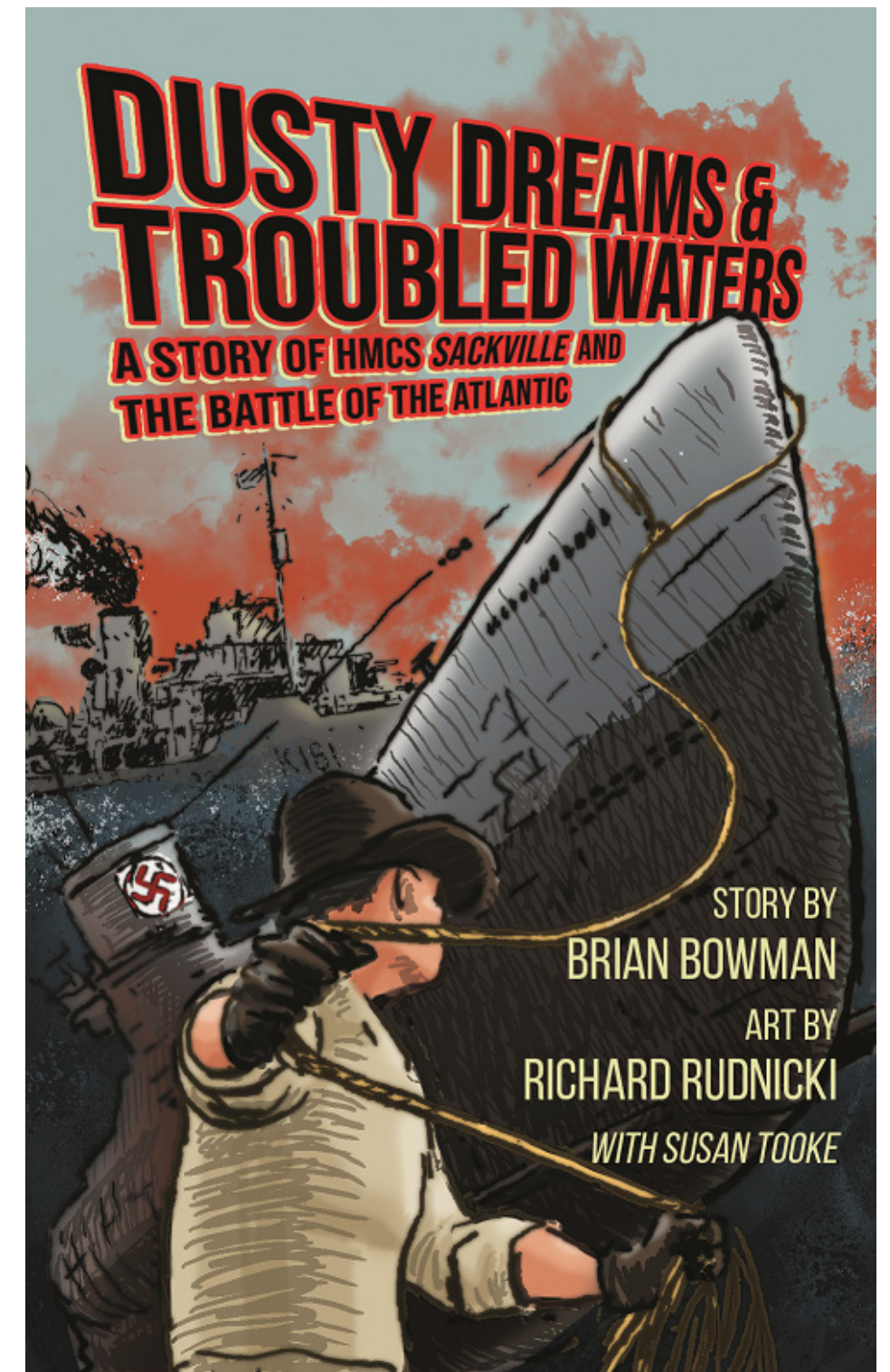
To that end Richard's friend, your past-Executive Director and Action Stations editor Doug Thomas, assumed the role of technical advisor and his contribution to image and historical accuracy was constant and welcomed. It helped to speed the process, too, so that by October of 2019, more than 400 images

were completed. Nimbus, the publisher, was even considering a launch date when, on November 4, Richard, a strong, hale and active man, went to sleep for the last time.

I won't dwell on how people were affected by that. There was a period of respect; the project was on hold and in jeopardy. Then Richard's wife, Susan Tooke, also a notable artist/illustrator, expressed interest in seeing the project through. Richard had put his heart in it. She would go through his files, adopt his style and see the work, his legacy, completed. Nimbus was thrilled, Doug and I assisted, and Susan finished and submitted the artwork to Nimbus. Assembly is now underway, pre-press soon to come, and the book will launch June 30.

It has been said that a graphic novel is "a movie you hold in your hands." This story, to fit the struggle and the period, is shown in black and white, and like the classic movies of the day, its illustration makes very good use of it.

The objective? Well, bat-



tleships get preserved and honoured but they don't win wars; sometimes, they don't even fight them. *Sackville* did, she's the last of 269 Canadian and British corvettes that got it done and speaks volumes for what this nation can do when needed. She is a national treasure: Canada's equivalent of HMS *Victory* or USS *Constitution*.

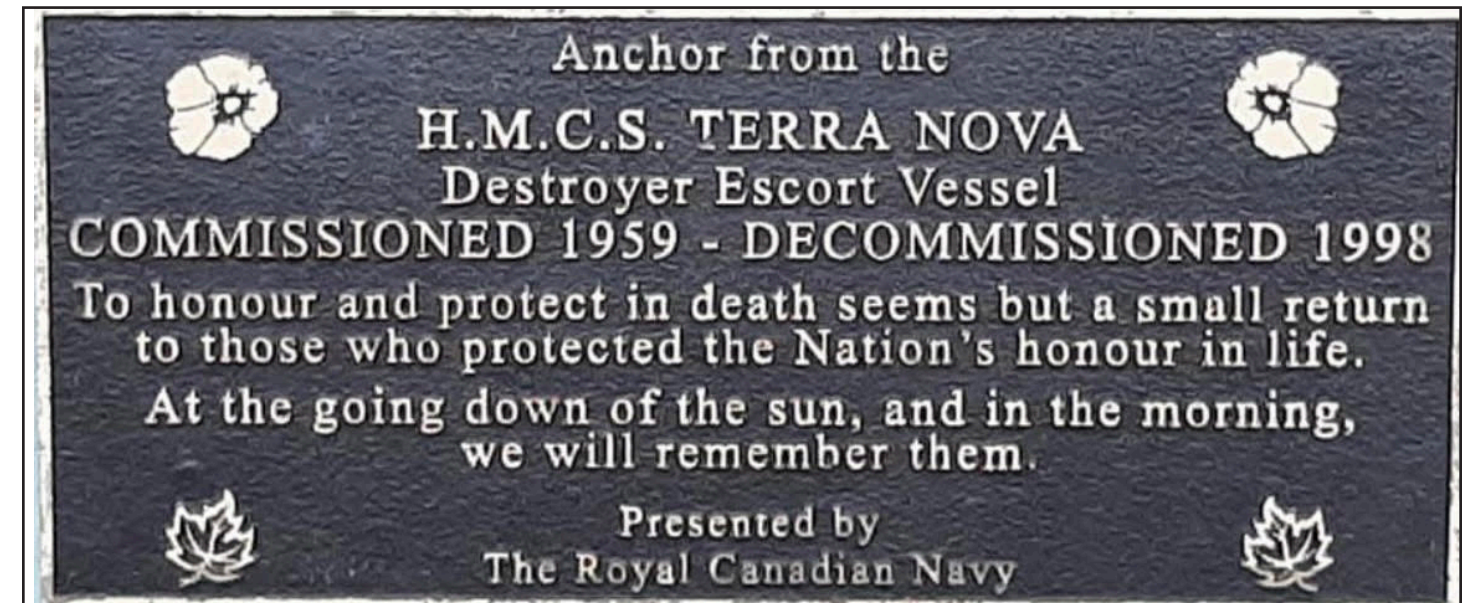
# Trust and Mess Events



Capt(N) (ret'd) William Woodburn, right, Chair of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust presided at the presentation of model of HMCS *Sackville* to the Naval Museum of Halifax and the Naval Fleet School Atlantic. Taking part in the presentation were, from left: Jennifer Gamble, Curator of the Naval Museum; Cdr David Roberge, Commandant of the Naval Fleet School and Capt(N) Sean Williams, Base Commander, CFB Halifax. The model, built by Darrell Kayes, will be on display in the foyer of the Naval Fleet School.

## Key Chains Lasting Keepsake...

Chief Petty Officer Pat Devenish (ret'd), who has been involved in HMCS *Sackville*'s docking and refit as Chief ERA has found a creative way to make creative use of some of the deteriorated metal that was removed from the hull. Approximately 300 pounds of suitable material was saved and cleaned up and now Trustees and supporters can own a piece of *Sackville*'s original steel in the form of a key chain. These are a lasting keepsake of the ship's rich history and can be obtained for \$7.50 each by contacting Pat at [devenishp@yahoo.ca](mailto:devenishp@yahoo.ca) with proceeds going to the reskinning of the ship's hull.



Naval artifacts representative of different ships, establishments and eras are on public display across the country, a timely reminder of Canada's naval heritage in peace and time of conflict. These include the bow of HMCS *Iroquois* on display at the new DND Headquarters in west end Ottawa; an anchor from HMCS *Terra Nova* on display at Veterans Memorial in Moncton and a propeller from HMCS *Huron* on display at the Military Museums complex in Calgary. If you know of or have photos of other naval displays please contact CNMT Recording Secretary Bill Gard: [wgard@eastlink.ca](mailto:wgard@eastlink.ca)



# RCN Frigates of World War II

By: Doug Thomas



HMCS *Matane*

CNMT members tend to think of the RCN's 123 Corvettes to the exclusion of the many other ships that helped to win the Battle of the Atlantic – after all we are the proud custodians of HMCS *Sackville*! Nevertheless, although corvettes were the RCN's most numerous convoy escort; destroyers, frigates, and minesweepers played important roles too.

Due to a shortage of small warships in the last years leading up to World War II, Smith's Dock Company in the UK was tasked by the Royal Navy (RN) to develop a design for a

new naval patrol vessel. This was done by scaling-up their plans for a recently completed Antarctic whaling vessel, the *Southern Pride*: a hardy, seaworthy vessel built to merchantile rather than naval standards. The first RN orders for Flower-class corvettes were placed in July 1939, and plans for building them were sent to Canada. When the first Canadian orders for 64 corvettes were placed in 1940, we had very little capability. Some of our shipyards struggled due to a need to ramp-up their facilities and expertise from very

basic levels while the few established East Coast shipyards were busy repairing damaged merchant and naval ships. Both Saint John (after building three corvettes) and Halifax were designated as repair yards. St. Lawrence, Great Lakes, and West Coast Shipyards turned out many corvettes, including a number of units for the RN and USN.

Although the corvette was designed for coastal patrol it was pressed into blue-water service until a more suitable convoy escort could be developed. Corvettes were slow (16 knots maximum – slower than a surfaced U-boat!), had a very short range - early units struggled to cross the Atlantic, accommodation was very limited, and they could not carry enough depth charges (40). Over the course of the next few years some of these issues were addressed by updates and improved versions of the Flower-class: foc'sle extensions, improved weapons and sensors, fitting additional fuel tanks, and finally a larger Castle class corvette designed as a naval vessel rather than an

adapted merchant hull.

The RN quickly recognized these limitations and an improved version, first referred to as a "Twin-screw Corvette" and then officially as a "frigate," was designed by Smith's Dock and ordered in considerable numbers from UK shipyards. These ships were nearly 100' longer than corvettes, 50% larger displacement, twinshafts produced double the power of corvettes and about 3 ½ knots faster. Importantly, they could cross the Atlantic easily without refuelling, were much more comfortable, better-equipped and armed, and could carry many more depth charges. The first River-class frigate was delivered to the RN in April 1942 and RCN orders for 60 frigates were placed with Canadian yards in and near Quebec City, Montreal, and Esquimalt (they couldn't be built in Great Lakes shipyards as the St. Lawrence locks were limited to ships of 255' or less). HMCS *Waskesiu* was delivered in June 1943 and soon the majority of new-entries to the Navy were being sent to man new frigates. These excellent escort vessels were often employed on North Atlantic convoy routes as command ships for Senior Officers of Escort Groups. This was the case with HMCS *Matane*, commanded by Lt. Cdr. Alan Easton after he left *Sackville*, with Cdr.

AFC Layard RN embarked as Senior Officer of Escort Group Nine (EG 9). Initially this and other EGs were composed of a mix of older destroyers, corvettes and frigates but this soon changed to frigates only. In the book *Commanding Canadians*, based on Layard's wartime diaries, Editor Michael Whitby states that "...Layard had a first-rate anti-submarine platform at his disposal in the River Class frigate. Good sea boats with a fair turn of speed and excellent endurance, they were equipped with the latest anti-submarine sensors and weaponry, ...carried some 200 depth charges, enough for twenty full patterns, which enabled them to take part in extended hunts without having to break off or return to port."

The influx of these excellent new anti-submarine escorts took the strain off the corvettes, and many of them were finally available to undergo the major foc'sle extension conversion – *Sackville* underwent hers in Galveston, Texas in 1944

A total of 70 frigates served in the RCN during World War II. 60 River-class built in Canada (named after towns and cities, like our corvettes). In addition, seven British-built River-class and three Loch class frigates were commissioned into the RCN in 1944 retaining their British names, and returned to the UK at war's end. Of the 70 frigates, only one was sunk – HMCS *Valleyfield* in 1944 off Cape Race with the loss of 125 officers and men; but three were declared CTL (Constructive



HMCS *Sea Cliff*

Total Loss): HMC Ships *Chebogue*, *Magog*, and *Teme* were all hit aft by acoustic-homing Gnat torpedoes which blew off their sterns.

HMCS *Swansea* holds the Canadian record for U-boats sunk at four, having taken part in the sinking of U 845, U 448, U 331 and U 247 between 10 March 1944 and 01 September 1944.

A number of frigates were taken in hand after VE Day to ready them for the Pacific War as Canada had committed to a fleet of sixty ships as a contribution to the war against Imperial Japan. Adequate air-con-

ditioning, improved radar and communications equipment, and self-defence weapons to counter kamikaze attacks were to be installed. This work came to a grinding halt with the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and subsequent surrender of Japan.

Most of the frigates were turned-over to Crown Assets and subsequently sold to foreign navies and commercial interests or scrapped. Soon, with the standing-up of NATO in response to the belligerence of Soviet Russia, the beginning of the Cold War, and the Korean crisis, there was a need

to increase the strength of the Canadian Navy. Some of the frigates had been retained, and others had been mothballed: 21 were converted and modernized as the Prestonian-Class (three were transferred to the Norwegian Navy during the 1950s) and three unconverted ships were transferred to the Department of Transportation for duty as Weather Ships off the coast of Newfoundland and Vancouver Island. They were excellent training vessels and many who served in the navy of the 1950s and 1960s have fond memories of their time in the frigates.



# Crew Profiles

## CPO Jeff Morrison

### Chief Shipwright: "All very rewarding"

Chief Petty Officer 1st Class (ret'd) Jeff Morrison CD MMM CET, a Hull Tech specialist by trade, and 37-year veteran of the RCN, brings a wealth of experience to HMCS *Sackville*. As Chief Shipwright he is a key member of the ship's crew involved in *Sackville's* hull refit and ongoing operation.

"I enjoy tinkering with history, on the ship, working with the crew and the Navy. Much is to be done, and with the current team we are moving steady forward...all very rewarding." His message: "continue to serve."

He joined the Navy in 1977, sailed in HMC Ships *Preserver*, *Protecteur*, *Annapolis*, *Nipigon*, *Athabaskan* and *Iroquois* (Cox'n) and served in a number of appointments including fleet patternmaker, senior instructor CF Naval Engineering School (hull), chief HT Sea Training Unit Atlantic and SSO Damage Control.

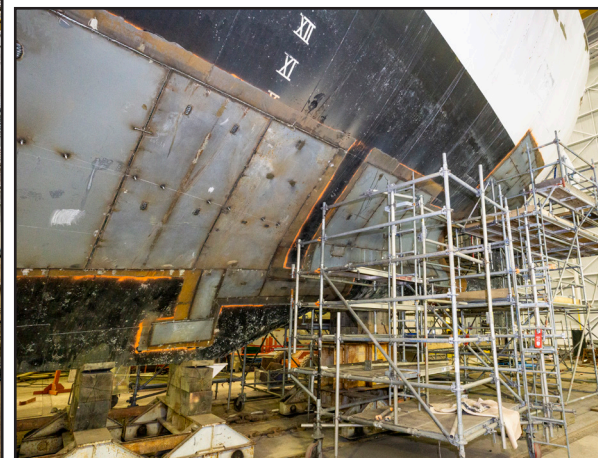
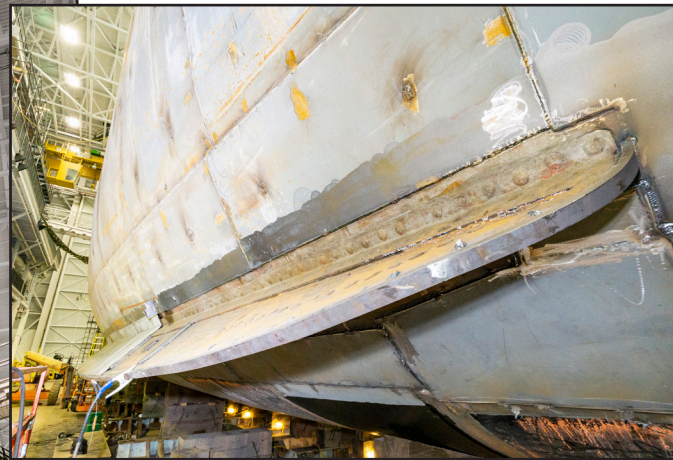


**Editor's Note:**  
This is the first in a series of short profiles on members of the Trust and Ship's crew active in the operation of HMCS *Sackville*.

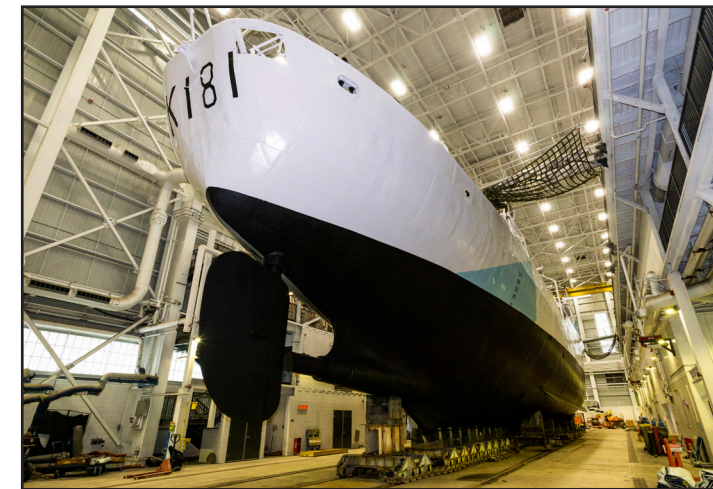
# Hull Refit



**Before  
& During...**



**After!**



## Looking Great

HMCS *Sackville* was front and centre on the synchro lift and submarine shelter in HMC Dockyard during the winter and early spring as Fleet Maintenance Facility Cape Scott work crews carried out a refit of the 80 year-old corvette, including hull cladding and marine protective coating; painting the hull above the waterline, superstructure and deck and undocking to complete water tank ballasting. The ship is scheduled to return to her summer berth at Sackville Landing prior to Canada Day.

Sandy McClearn and  
Doug Struthers photos



# 2020 Donors

Last year proved to be a very good year for fundraising for the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust and HMCS *Sackville*. The main focus was, of course, the “Just For The Hull Of It” campaign, which generated over \$345,000. Total contributions to the Trust in all funds (Preservation, Hull, Operating and Endowment) surpassed \$450,000. So a hearty Bravo Zulu / Well Done to all donors for their tremendous support and sincere thanks for your commitment to the Trust and the ship.

As we enter year two of the multi-year “Just For The Hull Of It” campaign it is hoped that more members, other individuals and groups will help out in the drive to generate funds for the critical and necessary work to safeguard the ship. The target is still a long way off.

## General Donors (\$100 - \$499)

Anonymous (2)  
W. Robert Allan, Calgary, AB  
A.J. Andrea, Dartmouth, NS  
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(In Memory of Audrey Lancashire)  
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Robert Street, Halifax, NS  
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## Destroyer Class Supporters (\$10,000 - \$24,999)

Robert Edward Mansfield (Estate), Vaughan, ON  
Ian McKee, Halifax, NS

## Carrier Class Supporters (\$50,000 - \$99,999)

Sonja Bata (Estate), Toronto, ON

## Squadron Level Supporters (\$250,000 Plus)

Darcy Bullock & Family, Surrey, BC



# God Bless You for Stopping Convoy Rescue Ships in the Battle of the Atlantic

By: Carl Anderson

*“Stop engine!”*

*“Stop engine, sir. ... Engine stopped, wheel  
amidships, sir.”*

*“Number One!”*

*“Sir?” said Lockhart.*

*“Standby to get those survivors in-board. We  
won’t lower a boat— they’ll have to swim or row to-  
wards us. God knows they can see us easily enough.*

*Use a megaphone to hurry them up.”*

*“Aye, aye, sir.”*

*As Lockhart turned to leave the bridge, the Cap-  
tain added, almost conversationally:*

*“We don’t want to waste any time, Number One.”*

With this exchange in Nicholas Monserrat’s clas-  
sic 1958 novel *The Cruel Sea*, the fictional Roy-  
al Navy Corvette *Compass Rose* stopped in mid-  
ocean to rescue survivors of a sinking tanker. She  
already had on board survivors from another sink-  
ing, and every man in her knew the risk of stop-  
ping yet again. But there were men in the water,  
and *Compass Rose* was the designated rescue ship.  
A boat drew alongside, bumping and scraping:  
Lockhart called out: “Hook on forrard.” There  
were sounds of scrambling: an anonymous voice,  
foreign, slightly breathless, said: “God bless you  
for stopping!” The work of collection began.

## The Men in the Water

The invasion of Poland by Germany in September 1939 had brought Britain into the second European war of the twentieth century. By June 1940 German forces occupied continental Europe from France to Norway. Britain faced a solid wall of enemy-occupied territory across the English Channel and North Sea. The sea lanes stretching westward across the North Atlantic to the Americas were Britain’s life-line, bringing much of her food, fuel, war materiel, and raw materials. In the early months of the war, the convoy system of sea transport was adopted.

Merchant ships, mostly un-armed, came together to cross the North Atlantic in convoys, fast and slow, with scores of ships in rows and columns screened by naval escorts to keep enemy submarines at bay.

The enemy got through the screens, though, and found their targets. Ships went down, and scores of merchant seamen and officers perished. Others survived, but the ships stopping to rescue them were especially vulnerable to attack. Losses mounted as the enemy subs grew in number and skill.

Replacing those lost ships, cargoes, and men was vital to Britain’s survival. The pace of shipbuilding could be increased, and the might of North American industry meant goods and raw materials could continue to flow to Britain, if there were ships. The men, however, came from a finite pool of competent merchant navy officers and men whose replacement would take time. It was clear that saving the lives of the men in the water was not only a humanitarian task— it was vital to winning the Battle of the Atlantic.

## Nominated Rescue Ships

In the early convoys, the last merchant ship in each column of a convoy was officially tasked with rescuing men abandoning a ship ahead in that column. The rescue required stopping dead in the water and lowering boats to collect survivors. Fear of being attacked while stopped unfortunately led to the failure of many nominated ships to perform rescues.

## The Convoy Rescue Service

In September 1940 the Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches, Admiral Sir Martin Eric Dunbar-Nasmith, recommended the formation of a rescue ship fleet to ensure that maximum effort was made to preserve the lives of merchant seamen, and to maintain merchant navy morale. The Convoy Rescue Service was thus formed under the administration of the Port Sea Transport Officer in Glasgow,

Scotland. Reporting to him was a Rescue Ship Officer and a Technical Officer. The specially- equipped ships of the Rescue Service were manned by British Merchant Navy officers and seamen and flew the Blue Ensign as non-commissioned Mercantile Fleet Auxiliaries.

The rescue ships sailed with slow convoys on the North Atlantic run (UK-Halifax or Sydney, Nova Scotia), Russian convoys (UK-Murmansk), and on the UK-Gibraltar run. They were positioned at the stern of the convoy where they could best respond to the distress of ships ahead, and where they could serve as an extra set of eyes for the Convoy Commodore and naval escort.

## The Ships

During the war, a total of 32 ships were assigned to the Convoy Rescue Service. (One ship was released due to defects after a single voyage.) Typically, the rescue ships were 250 ft. long 1,500 gross tonne passenger/cargo ships. Their average age at commissioning was 14 years, but four of them were more than 30 years old, and four were in their twenties. Gross tonnages ranged from 900 to 2,200, with 1,500 the average.

The cargo space, accommodations, and catering facilities of these cargo/passenger vessels ideally suited them for the Rescue Service. Unused cargo space could be used to increase their fuel and fresh-water capacity, and their accommodations and catering capacity were needed for rescued survivors who might be in the ship for a week or more.

As the ships were converted to rescue service, arrangements were added for boarding survivors, including scrambling nets, rowed and powered life-boats, and lifting equipment such as deck cranes and slings.

Accommodations for survivors were separate from those of the ship’s company. Where possible, survivor officers occupied twin-berth cabins, while seamen were billeted in bunkrooms.

The ships were under the command of merchant navy masters, many of whom had been in their ship prior to its joining the Rescue Service. Typically serving under the Master were three navigating officers, a Rescue Officer, 12 to 15 seamen, a Chief Engineer and 3 Engineer Officers, and 12 or more engine room staff. The catering department, under the Chief Steward, varied in number depending on the size of the ship and its accommodations. A Royal Navy Surgeon served as the rescue ship’s Medical Officer, assisted by two or three Sick Berth Attendants. The Medical Officer was responsible for the operating room, dispensary, medical supplies, and clothing and toiletries for rescued survivors.

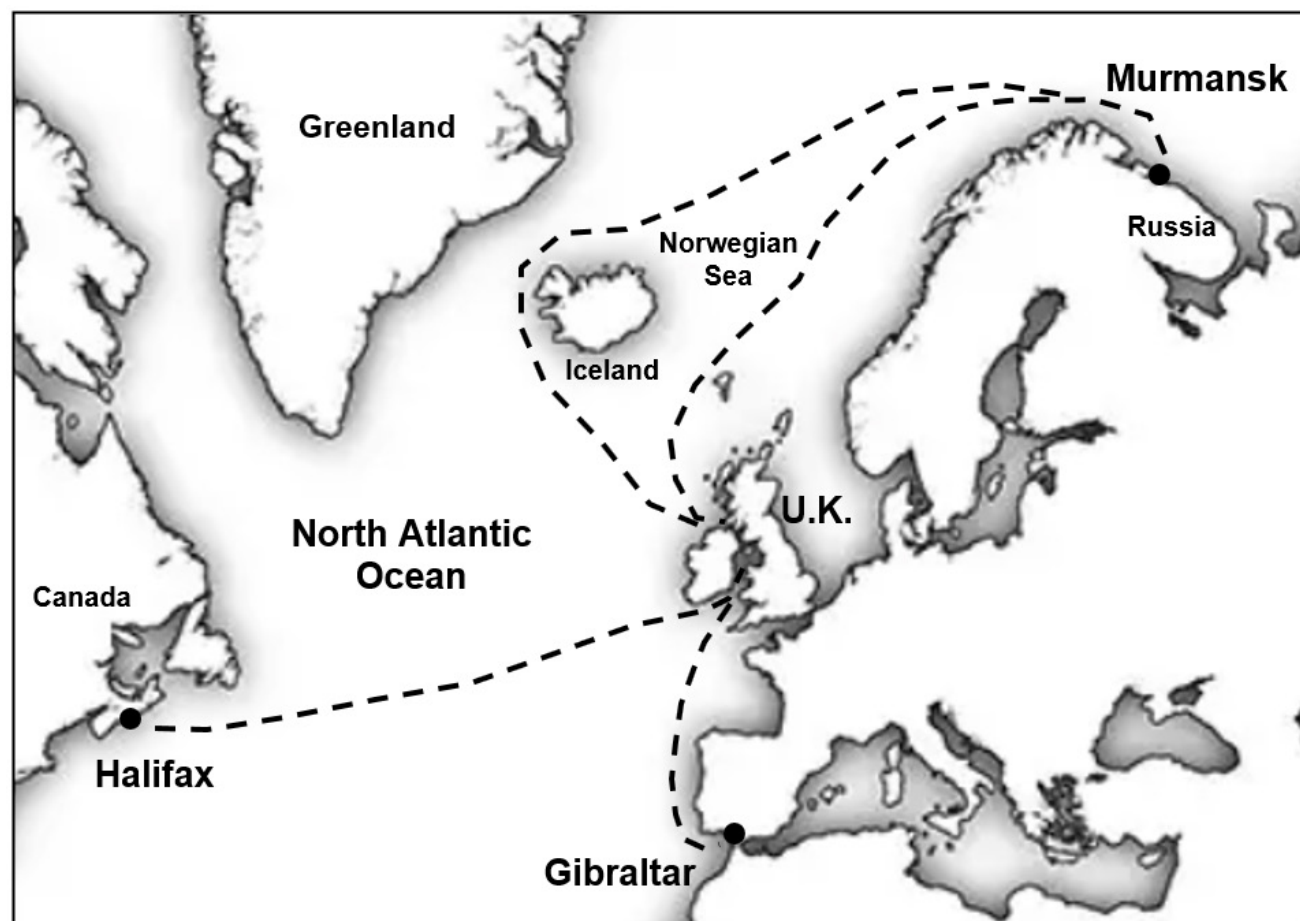
The rescue ships were not hospital ships. They were Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships, and carried up to a dozen DEMS gunners. The ships had sufficient radio officers and Royal Navy signalmen to communicate with the Convoy Commodore and the Escort Force Senior Officer via wireless telegraphy, radiotelephone, and visual signals (lamp and flag). Rescue ships were fitted with High Frequency Direction Finding equipment (HF/DF, known as “Huff Duff”) which, when used in conjunction with the naval escort, enabled the determination of the positions of enemy submarines.

## Operations

Rescue Service ships were only assigned to the slow convoys, as their speed was not usually adequate to rejoin a fast convoy after conducting rescue operations. Initially, the ships sailed with

a convoy until meeting an on-coming one, to which it would attach itself for a return voyage. This procedure risked the rescue ship’s having to wait in mid-ocean for the oncoming





convoy, at risk of being attacked. Following the loss of the rescue ship *Beachy* in early 1941, the ships steamed with their convoys from forming up to dispersal.

To lessen the demands on vital stocks of food, fuel, and supplies in the UK, rescue ships on trans-Atlantic runs took on their fuel and stores in Halifax. Rescue ships for the Russian convoys stored in Glasgow, and those on the Gibraltar runs stored in the UK.

Standing orders were issued to all rescue ship Masters by the Port Sea Transport Officer, Glasgow. These orders covered every aspect of a rescue ship's management and operation. Notable was the requirement for a daily inspection tour by the Master and the Medical Officer of the entire ship to assure the highest standards of cleanliness were maintained. Frequent rescue drills, and lifeboat and fire-fighting drills were required. Equipment and gear to be issued to the ship's officers and crew were specified, as were details of the clothing to be provided to rescued seamen. The standing orders noted that the Navy League's Seamen's Club in Halifax would be open to rescue ships' crews.

Confidential Admiralty Fleet Order 1066/42 informed Royal Navy Senior Officers of the rescue ships' function in convoys between the UK and Halifax, Gibraltar, and Russia. HF/DF coordination between escort and rescue ships was to be conducted by radiotelephone or visual signals. It was also noted that rescue ships would proceed to assist stricken vessels without awaiting orders from the Convoy Commodore. Senior Escort Officers were instructed to transfer to the rescue ships any survivors taken aboard by escorts or other ships.

#### Provision of Aid and Comfort

Merchant seamen who survived the sinking of their ship were classed as "distressed," as under the terms of their employment their pay stopped with the loss of the ship. Most were also destitute, having abandoned ship with nothing but the clothes on their backs. They might be nearly drowned, poorly clad, drenched in seawater, covered with oil, suffering from injuries, burns, hypothermia, or shock. They would need first aid, medical care, proper bathing, warm clothing, toiletries, food, comforting, and rest.

The Rescue Service did not fund the provision of

clothing and personal effects for distressed seamen. Two charitable organisations, the British Sailors' Society and the British War Relief Society of the USA, extended themselves to provide the men with "survivor's kits" consisting of underwear and socks, shoes, trousers, jerseys, coats, rain gear, caps, and gloves. They provided the rescue ships with modest libraries, games, and other diversions for the rescued. The Sailor's Society also provisioned rescue ships with medical supplies to supplement what was available to them from naval stores.

Towards the end of the war as the threat from enemy submarines diminished, many convoys, some with more than 100 ships, made their entire runs without attack. Rescue ships were frequently called on for medical services and advice to an entire convoy, care that would normally have been unavailable to the thousands of merchant seamen among whom they sailed.

#### Rescue Ships by the Numbers

The 31 ships of the Rescue Service sailed in 773 convoys and were credited with rescuing 4,192 survivors of enemy attacks, including 36 downed aircrew.

Forty-six percent (46%, or 337 sailings) of the total sailings by Rescue Service ships were accomplished by six ships:

*Copeland* (71 convoys)

*Zamalek* (68)

*Perth* (60)

*Rathlin* (47)

*Melrose Abbey* (46)

*Toward* (45)

Seventy percent (70%, or 2,927 rescues) of all recorded rescues were performed by six ships:

*Zamalek* (655)

*Rathlin* (632)

*Perth* (455)

*Copeland* (433)

*Stockport* (413) (16 convoys)

*Toward* (337)

The 1,600-gross tonne *Rathlin* was a typical rescue ship. She was in commission with the Rescue Service from 3 October 1941 to 30 May 1945, and spent 41% (547 days) of that time at sea, sailing with 47 convoys. *Rathlin* made 24 round-trip voyages originating and ending in the Clyde or Loch Ewe, Scotland. Thirteen voyages were on the North Atlantic run to Halifax (272 rescues), six were to Russia (265 rescues), three to Iceland, and two to Gibraltar (95 rescues). Her longest voyages were North Atlantic round trips in winter, typically requiring from 32 to 35 sea days with 12 to 14 days alongside in Halifax to take on fuel, food, and stores.

#### Losses

Six rescue ships were sunk by enemy action, and another, *St. Sunniva*, was lost without a trace in



January 1943. She was presumed to have capsized due to icing in heavy weather.

Rescue ship *Beachey* was sunk by air attack in January 1941 with a loss of five crew while awaiting a home-ward bound convoy out of Gibraltar. As a

result, the mid-ocean handover system was abandoned in favour of full sailings.

*Walmer Castle* was attacked by air in September 1941 and sank with the loss of 11 of her crew and 20 previously rescued survivors then onboard. Sixty-one other rescuees and the remaining crew were picked up by the Royal Navy sloop HMS *Deptford* and the corvette HMS *Marigold*.

After being hit by an air attack off the Russian coast in July 1942, rescue ship *Zaafaran* sank, fortunately with only one of her crew. Sixty-one other crew and 36 earlier rescuees were taken aboard the rescue ship *Zamalek*.

*Stockport* was sunk, probably by the German submarine U-604, in February 1943. Her entire ship's company and 106 rescuees were lost. *Toward*, one of the Rescue Service's most active

ships, was sunk by U-402 in February 1943. Twenty-eight of her crew of 72, and two rescuees were picked up by the corvette HMS *Mignonette*.

In September 1944 *Pinto* was sunk by U-482 while attempting to assist the whaling factory ship *Empire Heritage*, which had also been torpedoed by U-482. Forty-one of *Pinto*'s crew were picked up by the trawler HMS *Northern Wave* and the frigate HMS *Inman*. There were 48 survivors of *Empire Heritage*'s sinking, but 52 of her crew, eight gunners, and 53 previously rescued seamen aboard her were lost.

#### Honours and Commendations

Members of the Convoy Rescue Service, both Merchant Navy (MN) and Royal Navy, were awarded a total of 110 honours and decorations for their valor and service. One George Medal was awarded to a MN Radio Officer. Two Distinguished Service Orders (DSO) went to MN Masters and nine Distinguished Service Crosses (DSC) were awarded, eight of them to MN men. Distinguished Service Medals (DSM) were awarded to five men, four of whom were MN recipients. Fifteen men were made Officers of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and 14 were made Members (MBE). Twenty-two

received British Empire Medals and seven were Mentioned in Dispatches. Eight Lloyd's Medals were awarded, and 27 men received Commendations.

#### In Closing...

Rear Admiral Leonard Murray, RCN, Commander-in-Chief, Canadian North Atlantic, said "The Battle of the Atlantic was not won by any navy or air force, it was won by the courage, fortitude and determination of the British and Allied merchant navy." And in his memoir *50 North: An Atlantic Battleground*, Lt. Cdr. Alan Easton, RCNR, wrote, "A merchant seaman could fortify himself with nothing but hope and courage. Most of them must have been very afraid, not for days and nights, but for months and years."

To the men in the water, then, it was a godsend to be hoisted up and to hear "It's alright, mate. We've gotcha."

#### Sources

This article draws heavily on the only available work devoted solely to the *Rescue Ships, Arnold Hague's Convoy Rescue Ships: A History of the Rescue Service, Their Ships and Their Crews 1940-1945* (1998 World Ship Society, Gravesend UK).



# Membership Update

Despite the pandemic, Canada's Naval Memorial was fortunate to sign up thirty-five new members in 2020 and eleven members so far in 2021.

Welcome Aboard and thank you for your tremendous support.

#### Life Members 2020

Peter Bartlett, Halifax, NS

Robert Blakely, St. Albert, AB

Austin Joseph Bullock, Surrey, BC

Cooper Lee Bullock, Surrey, BC

Darcy Bullock, Surrey, BC

Greg Cottingham, Three Fathom Hbr., NS

Karen Davenport, Ottawa, ON

Chris Fralic, Halifax, NS

David Messham, Tantallon, NS

Peter Neville, Dartmouth, NS

Shawn Papke, Lake Echo, NS

John Philips, Dartmouth, NS

Keith Walker, Beaverton, ON

John F. Watson, Ottawa, ON

#### Annual Members 2020

James Anderson, Halifax, NS

Colin Cooke, Ottawa, ON

Jerzy Gajewski, Halifax, NS

David Gorsline, Bedford, NS

Geoffrey Hamilton, Bedford, NS

Jason Harris, Regina, SK

Victoria Hines, Dartmouth, NS

Stephen & Deborah Horne, Fort Ellis, NS

Warren Hyde, Hamilton, ON

Robert Klein, Porters Lake, NS

Rick Lusk, Ottawa, ON

Chris Marriot, Halifax, NS

Rick Mercer, Middle Sackville, NS

Delia Murphy, Dartmouth, NS

Kaela Ramsay, Dartmouth, NS

Phillip Rody, Mirimichi, NB

Richard Rowe, Halifax, NS

Kate Scarth, Halifax, NS

Hal Sherrard, Perth-Andover, NB

#### Life Members 2021

David Benoit, Bedford, NS

Jean Brown, Halifax, NS

Ross Connell, Oakville, ON

Iain Parker, Brentwood Bay, BC

Richard Rowe, Halifax, NS

Fred Schmidt, Fairview, PE

Elizabeth Stuart, Fairview, PE

#### Annual Members 2021

John Conrad, Sherwood Park, AB

Jacob Fleck - Giesbrecht, Halifax, NS

Dale Silvester, Lawrencetown, NS

Edward Erving Kline, Dartmouth (Youngest new member on record)

Marcus Mau, Potsdam, Germany

Patrick Walsh, Orleans, ON

# Reflections on a Fading Era

## By Captain Rolfe Monteith (ret'd)



The passing of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, has highlighted his contribution to the nation and the Commonwealth and as such I felt it timely to take pen in hand and share my reflections as a shipmate and veteran of the World War II era.

The first link in our shared history was the Navy and World War II. We both joined our respective navies under a Royal Navy system open to the Commonwealth known as Special Entry (SE). This entry system was devised in the early 1930s by Winston Churchill.

Traditionally, entry into the Royal Navy was a three year course at the Royal Navy College at Dartmouth in Devon for those between ages of 14 and 17. The SE system was one year aboard a training cruiser. With war approaching the training cruiser joined the

**Editor's Note:**  
*CNMT Life Trustee Rolfe Monteith, a native of Clinton ON joined the RCN in April 1941 at age 17, travelled to the UK on RMS Laconia and undertook officer training at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. He qualified as an engineering officer and served in HMS Hardy, including Arctic convoys. (He was not serving in Hardy when the V Class destroyer was sunk in January 1944). He married an English Wren and they celebrated their honeymoon on VE Day. He returned to Canada after the war; served in the RCN and retired as captain (N) in 1970. Following retirement he returned to the UK to work in industry, remains active in veterans' affairs and resides in Plymouth.*

operational fleet and the training of SEs was conducted at RNC Dartmouth and the course reduced to six months.

Prince Philip joined Dartmouth in mid 1939 as part of SE course No. 53. I arrived at RNC Dartmouth in mid 1941 as part of SE course No. 55.

Also of interest was that Prince Philip's uncle was Lord Louis Mountbatten. He was serving as an officer in the Royal Navy had arranged for Prince Philip to attend the renowned public school Gordonstoun in Scotland prior to his entry into the Royal Navy.

When Prince Philip was at RNC Dartmouth it was 'arranged' to have Princess Elizabeth join her father when King George VI made an official visit to the college. Prince Philip was introduced to Princess Elizabeth and so began

the relationship which ended with 73 years of marriage.

Some years back I was invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace and requested an audience with Prince Philip. I wanted to discuss my research into the Special Entry system and he was most helpful. My final connection was only recently when I provided him with a personalized copy of my memoir *Last Man Standing*.

A somewhat unusual event occurred when Ann and I were visiting Kenya in 2009. I was introducing her to my connections there when a Kenyan official confided that the Royal Suite at the historic Treetops Lodge

## Ringling of the Convoy Bells

On Saturday 15 May 2021, services were held simultaneously in Londonderry, Northern Ireland; Halifax, N.S. and St. John's N.L. as part of annual Battle of the Atlantic commemorations. The ceremony coincided with the visit of HMC Ships *Kingston* and *Summerside* to Londonderry and involved the ringing of the Convoy Bells in all three locations. The Convoy Bells were an initiative of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust (former HMCS *Sackville* CO LCdr Jim Reddy and LCdr Pat Jessup) and RNA Londonderry (Cdr Robert Buchanan) to commemorate allied naval and merchant sailors, as well as maritime patrol aviators who lost their lives maintaining vital supply lines from North America to Europe during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Halifax, Londonderry and St. John's form what was known as the 'North Atlantic Run' during the Battle of the Atlantic, each city now possessing its own specially crafted ship's bell to sym-

was available to special visitors. As a result we had a fabulous two nights there and had an opportunity to view the local wildlife at night as was the custom at the time. It was at Treetops in late 1952 that Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip were advised of the death of George VI and that she would be beginning her reign.

It will be most interesting to note how future historians view the Elizabethan era and Prince Philip's contribution to it. He has left a legacy with British public life, has diligently served the Crown and justifiably earned the time-honored naval accolade BRAVO ZULU.

bolize the relationship. These bells include the North Atlantic Convoy Bell (Halifax); the Newfie-Derry Run Bell (Londonderry) and the Newfoundland Escort Force Bell (St. John's).

Captain Earle Wagner (97) – Master Mariner and WWII Merchant Navy veteran and retired Commander Bill Gard, Canada's Naval Memorial Trust board member and past CO, HMCS *Sackville*, participated in the small physically-distant bell ringing ceremony at St. Brendan's Chapel in CFB Halifax.



April 27, 2021

Her Majesty The Queen  
Buckingham Palace  
London SW1A 1AA  
UNITED KINGDOM

Your Majesty:

On behalf of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust, it is my solemn honour to convey our heartfelt sadness and deepest sympathy to Your Majesty on the passing of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

The Canadian Naval Memorial Trust is made up of a thousand plus members world-wide. Our sole mandate, as a registered Canadian Charity, is to preserve HMCS Sackville, the last remaining World War II Flower Class Corvette, and tell her story. Many of our members have served for, or with the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Navy, or the Royal Australian Navy, all of our members are deeply committed to our cause. They share in The Duke of Edinburgh's passion for life at sea and unwavering loyalty to service. Indeed, in 2010, on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy, it was our distinct privilege to host Your Majesty and The Duke of Edinburgh for a visit to HMCS Sackville. This was a very happy moment and a fond memory that so many of us deeply cherish as a unique and special event in our lives.

His Royal Highness was by every account a remarkable individual who served as the finest of examples for all of us to emulate. His love of Canada was renowned and his influence on Canadian youth through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Programme was profound.

It is our hope this letter of condolence brings Your Majesty and the Royal Family some small degree of comfort. Many of our members asked that their names be included with this letter wanting you to know that our thoughts, affections, and sympathies are with you. Your Majesty, you are in our prayers.

I have the honour to remain, Your Majesty's most humble and obedient servant,



William Woodburn  
Chair  
Canadian Naval Memorial Trust



# Second Edition of S.S. Nerissa, The Final Crossing Now Available

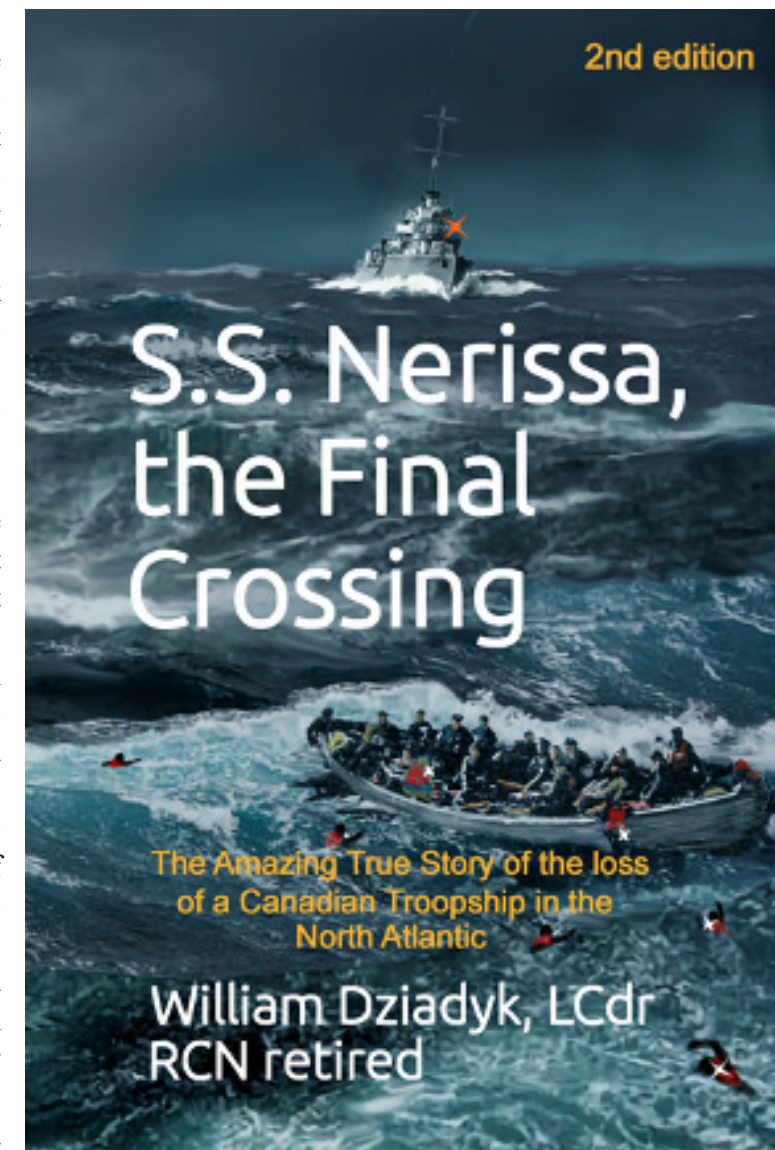
*S.S. Nerissa, the Final Crossing*, by LCdr (ret'd) Bill Dziadyk, tells "The Amazing True Story of the Loss of a Canadian Troopship in the North Atlantic". The details were highly classified for almost 50 years. The first edition was published on Remembrance Day in 2019 (and reviewed by Doug Thomas in Winter 2020 issue of Action Stations). The second edition paperback and Kindle e-book will be available via Amazon on the 80th anniversary of the sinking (April 30, 2021).

The foreword to the second edition was provided by submariner Captain (ret'd) Sherm Embree, RCN. His uncle, Captain William Hazen Embree, Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, was one of the 83 crew and 124 passengers who were lost during the sinking of *Nerissa* off the north west coast of Ireland.

The second edition is the result of feedback from readers and additional research and analysis related to *Nerissa's* many wartime sailings prior to and including her final crossing of the North Atlantic; personnel and other records; public relations dilemmas in both Canada and the UK, and inclusion of additional humanizing details to a very tragic story. Also included are historical contextual details of the overall Battle of the Atlantic war efforts and Bletchley Park's advances in decrypting German naval Enigma encoded messages during the few weeks before and after the sinking of the *Nerissa*.

During *Nerissa's* final 45 minutes of calm, a U-boat was silently stalking her before firing a spread of three torpedoes. The engine room and lower aft crew quarters were instantly flooded. Then came the hectic five minutes of inexperienced passengers attempting to launch lifeboats and abandon ship ... before the final torpedo quickly sunk the ship at 22:34 (GMT) April 30, 1941.

The book focuses on the events which led up to the sinking by U-552, the deadly 10 hours awaiting rescue in the open ocean, and the aftermath in both the United Kingdom and Canada. Much of the material is based on the analysis of testimony, recollections and official reports taken from survivors, as well as declassified Canadian, British and German documents. The S.S. *Nerissa* was the only troopship carrying Canadian Army troops to be lost during the Second World War and resulted in the third largest loss of life (207) for a ship sunk by U-boats in the approaches to the British Isles. These tragic human losses are largely unknown to our current generation.



# House Standing Committee on Veterans' Affairs Strategy for Commemorations in the 21st Century Opening Remarks - William Woodburn Canadian Naval Memorial Trust

05 May 2021

Mr Chair, Honourable Committee Members, thank you for the important work you are doing. My name is Bill Woodburn and I'm here today with my close colleague and good friend Mr. Wendall Brown, representing the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust. We are both retired naval officers, and proud veterans, I might add.

The Trust is an independent, not for profit, Canadian Charity, operated by volunteers. Our unique mandate is to ensure the long-term preservation of HMCS *Sackville* throughout the 21st Century and beyond, and to honour those who served or continue to serve at sea.

HMCS *Sackville* is the last remaining World War II Corvette and is recognized by The Government of Canada as the Canadian Naval Memorial and a National Historic Site.

Every year, on the first Sunday in May we commemorate The Battle of The Atlantic, the longest continuous battle of the entire war. According to Sir Winston Churchill, it was the only battle we could not afford to lose. This was not just about the Navy, it was a monumental undertaking to save the Free World. It forced our country to transform and grow into an independently industrial nation, holding meaningful voice amongst our Allies. HMCS *Sackville* is not just a historic ship or Naval Monument, it is a concrete and enduring symbol of one of the greatest achievements of our nation. I suggest we would not be sitting here today if not for everything HMCS *Sackville* signifies. That is what this ship means to Canada.

More than 4400 Canadian Sailors, Air Men, and Merchant Mariners perished during the Battle. Our Navy would expand from 6 to 373 ships. Of the 269 Corvettes built world-wide for the war effort, 123 of them were built here in Canada in Canadian shipyards found coast to coast. The global importance of HMCS *Sackville* as the last remaining vessel of its kind was recently confirmed by its "appearance",

using today's modern technology, in the Netflix film *Greyhound*, championed by Mr Tom Hanks.

Canadian Corvettes were named after Canadian towns and cities, and crewed by men from every province and every walk of life. They suffered an endless mission of convoy duty in the North Atlantic under every imaginable condition. HMCS *Sackville* was there through it all, witnessing both the hardships and horrors endured by Canadians at war, at sea. This year marks the 80TH Anniversary of her commissioning.

Our Trust is made up of approximately 1000 members spanning every Province, the USA, and Europe. Our membership consists of serving military, Veterans and civilians alike. HMCS *Sackville* exists today because of the efforts and dedication of these very volunteers.

We are funded primarily through donations and the ongoing support of our members. Each Summer we open the ship to visitors on the Halifax waterfront. HMCS *Sackville* has been rated a top tourist destination in the city for several years now based on its unique historic and commemorative significance.

But, collaboration truly holds the key to our survival. Without doubt, the strong support of the Royal Canadian Navy has been crucial to our success. More recently we have partnered with like minded organizations to help create a Maritime Heritage District on the Halifax waterfront. In addition, we have established an agreement with the RCN and Heritage Canada to assist with the conservation of the ship, and have benefitted from a formal agreement with The Canadian Government to help fund a crucial refit that I am pleased to say will be completed within days.

As a result, we've given HMCS *Sackville* a new lease on life for the next decade or so by addressing significant deterioration of the hull. However, long term preservation will eventually require the hull to be completely replaced. We estimate the cost to be in the order of Twelve Million Dollars. Raising this money will be the main focus of the Trust in the years ahead. In doing so, we look forward to working with all three levels of government and will need their support and guidance to achieve this vital goal.

HMCS *Sackville* represents, and is a reminder of what Canadians, from all walks of life, from all regions of the country can do in times of peril. From the builders in shipyards to the sailors who served, to the families that were so tragically affected, HMCS *Sackville* still resonates as a pillar of our collective national history, we must ensure that legacy endures.

We would be pleased to invite each of you to visit HMCS *Sackville* at your convenience should you ever be in Halifax.

Thank-you.

# Crossed the Bar

**Lieutenant Commander Alma Lorraine Jenson (ret'd)**, who served in the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS) during the Second World War and rejoined the RCN in 1950s passed away January 24 in Hubbards, NS at age 95. During her naval career she served in Shearwater, Halifax, Portsmouth, England and Ottawa. She was predeceased by her husband Commander Latham (Yogi) Jenson, an early supporter of acquiring and preserving HMCS *Sackville* as Canada's Naval Memorial and author of a number of books including *Tin Hats, Oilskins and Seaboats*. Survivors include daughter Sarah, granddaughter Kate and stepson Lynn.

**Lieutenant (N) Hugh Sproule**, a veteran of the Korean War passed away Jan 18 in Nanaimo, BC. Survivors include his wife Jean, Nova Scotia family Mary Doucet, Pat Sproule (Janet), Deborah and Lee Thibault; Nanaimo family Trevor Davis (Wanda) and Keith Davis (Chrissy); a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren and brother David. He joined the RCN in 1951, trained on the east coast and served in HMCS *Huron* in Korea, followed by postings to Cornwallis, Shearwater and Halifax. In civilian life he worked as an aquatic and athletic director with the YMCA in Fredericton and Saint John, NB. He continued his naval career as a reservist including serving at Maritime Command HQ in 1980s, retiring in 1990. Hugh and Jean ran a B&B for several years on Gabriola Island, BC and also lived in Port Alberni, BC and then Digby, NS before finally settling in Nanaimo in 2015.

**Rear Admiral Timothy (Tim) Porter (ret'd)**, Cornwall, ON, who commenced his career as a naval cadet at HMCS *Venture* in the 1950s and would hold a number of senior appointments prior to his retirement from the Navy in 1993 passed away April 5 at age 83. He served as commanding officer of HMC Ships *Saskatchewan* and *Restigouche* and the Fourth Canadian Destroyer Squadron; Canadian Forces Liaison Staff, Washington; chief of staff to Commander Maritime Command; Chief of Personnel Services and Chief of Personnel Careers and Development at National Defence Headquarters. He he was active in a number of organizations including serving as president of the Navy League of Canada and chair of the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Educational Foundations. Survivors include his wife Sharon and son Christopher; he was predeceased by daughter Jocelyn.

**Chief Petty Officer 1st Class William L (Bill) Marlow (ret'd)** of Halifax, who joined the Navy at 17 passed away April 6 at age 82. He served in a number of ships including a NATO deployment and shore establishments, retiring in 1994. A Life Trustee of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust he was an active musician including playing at long term care facilities. Survivors include sons Billy and Douglas, daughter Mary, sister Susan, brother David, a number of grandchildren and partner Jessie.



**Lieutenant Commander Desmond Francis (Des) Nugent**, who commenced his career in the British merchant marine, immigrated to Canada at 21 and served in the RCN until 1981 passed away in Halifax March 12 at age 86. During his naval career he served in the peacekeeping force in Vietnam in 1973. Following retirement from the Navy he served with NATO in the Command Control and Communications Directorate in Brussels, Belgium. He was active in several community and military support organizations including the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust/HMCS *Sackville*, the Nova Scotia Naval Association of Canada and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Survivors include his wife Louise, children Alexandra (Lexa), Kirsten (Kirsty) and Roger; sister Ann and a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**Hugh Brian Vincent**, a well-known consulting psychologist passed away in Halifax March 27 at age 90. His early career included serving members of the Navy and at Camp Hill Veterans Hospital later he established his own human resources consulting firm. He was active in a number of community and professional organizations including the Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia, Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron, Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts and the Theatre Arts Guild. He was predeceased by his wife Margaret (Marnie), daughter Monica and son Mark; survivors include sister Carol and grandson Jonathan.

**Frederick John Turnbull**, who joined the RCN at 17 and served as a gunner and bowman on landing craft during the D-Day invasion in 1944, passed away in Halifax March 29 at age 96. He was awarded the French Legion of Honour for his role in the liberation of France. Following the war and studies at McGill University, Montreal he served in a number of senior positions with Montreal Trust and later wrote *Invasion Diaries* based on the war diary he kept. He was predeceased by his wife Grace; survivors include his partner Zonda, daughter Beth, son Robert and several grandchildren.

**Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Leo Francis McTaggart (ret'd)**, a veteran of the Battle of the Atlantic and the Korean War passed away at Camp Hill Veterans Memorial Hospital, Halifax November 12, 2020. During WW II he served in the corvette HMCS *Owen Sound* (1943-45) and in HMCS *Haida* in 1950s, retiring in 1974 after serving as coxswain of HMCS *Protecteur*. On his special 95th birthday he was recognized for his service by the Navy, former messmates and RCL members. He was predeceased by his wife Lillian; survivors include daughters Karen and Kimberlee and a number of grandchildren.

# Crossed the Bar Cont...

**Commander John L. Woodbury (ret'd)**, a career naval officer and public servant passed away in Ottawa in November 2020 at age 100. A native of Nova Scotia, he served in the RCN 1951-1975 followed by a second career with Transport Canada/Canadian Coast Guard, retiring in 1997. He was the husband of Elizabeth Ann and father of Elizabeth Irene and Nova Lorraine.

**Petty Officer 1st Class Richard Michael McNair, CD**, a 35 year veteran of the Navy and a Canadian Naval Memorial Trust Life Trustee passed away in Halifax April 20 at age 74. A naval weapons technician he served in a number of ships, the Canadian Forces Fleet School and Maritime Command headquarters retiring in 2001. In addition to CNMT he was active in several organizations including the Royal United Services Institute-NS and the Army Cadet League. Survivors include his wife Alison, brother Ian and half-sister Jane. Contributions in his memory may be made to the CNMT or charity of choice.

**Bernice Doreen (Bunny) McIntyre**, who joined the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service in 1942 and served in Halifax and St John's, NF during the Second World War, passed away in Dartmouth, NS March 16 at age 99. In 1952 she enrolled in the Naval Reserve, was a member of Canada's naval contingent at Queen Elizabeth's Coronation in 1953 and transferred to the Regular Force in 1955. In civilian life she operated a grocery store and later served with the Corps of Commissioners 1986-1996. She was active in church and community organizations and in 2012 was recognized by Governor General David Johnson for her service to Canada at a ceremony at Rideau Hall. At the time of her passing she was the longest serving member of the Nova Scotia Wrens Association. Survivors include sons Ian and Barry, daughter Noreen and several grandchildren.



## 2021 Canadian Naval Memorial Trust Essay Competition

*Canadian Naval Review* will be holding its annual essay competition again in 2021. There will be a prize of \$1,000 for the best essay, provided by the **Canadian Naval Memorial Trust**. The winning essay will be published in *CNR*. (Other non-winning essays will also be considered for publication, subject to editorial review.)

Essays submitted to the contest should relate to the following topics:

- Canadian maritime security;
- Canadian naval policy;
- Canadian naval issues;
- Canadian naval operations;
- History/historical operations of the Canadian Navy;
- Global maritime issues (such as piracy, smuggling, fishing, environment);
- Canadian oceans policy and issues;
- Arctic maritime issues;
- Maritime transport and shipping.

If you have any questions about a particular topic, contact [cnrcoord@icloud.com](mailto:cnrcoord@icloud.com).

### **Contest Guidelines and Judging**

- Submissions for the 2021 *CNR* essay competition must be received at [cnrcoord@icloud.com](mailto:cnrcoord@icloud.com) by Thursday, **30 September 2021**.
- Submissions are not to exceed 3,000 words (excluding references). Longer submissions will be penalized in the adjudication process.
- Submissions cannot have been published elsewhere.
- All submissions must be in electronic format and any accompanying photographs, images, or other graphics and tables must also be included as a separate file.

The essays will be assessed by a panel of judges on the basis of a number of criteria including readability, breadth, importance, accessibility and relevance. The decision of the judges is final. All authors will be notified of the judges' decision within two months of the submission deadline.



