

HMCS SACKVILLE - CANADA'S NAVAL MEMORIAL

# ACTION STATIONS

Volume 39 - Issue 1   Winter 2020



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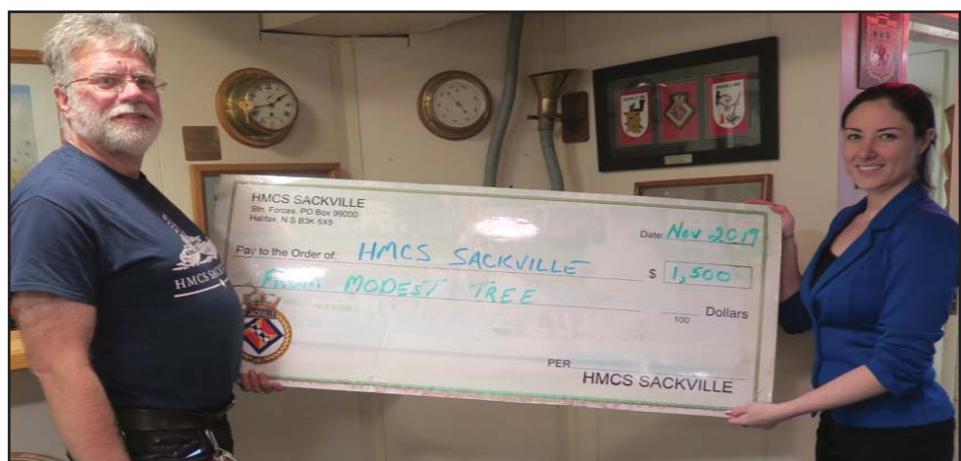
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**HMCS Sacvville returns to her Summer berth June 2019.  
(Doug Struthers photo)**



**HMCS Sacvville provided a historical venue for a corporate anniversary celebration for staff of Modest Tree, a Halifax training and marketing company. In appreciation, the company presented a cheque for \$1,500 to Art Forward, chief boatswain's mate who conducted a tour of the iconic WW II corvette for company staff.**

## HMCS Sackville

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### Front Cover

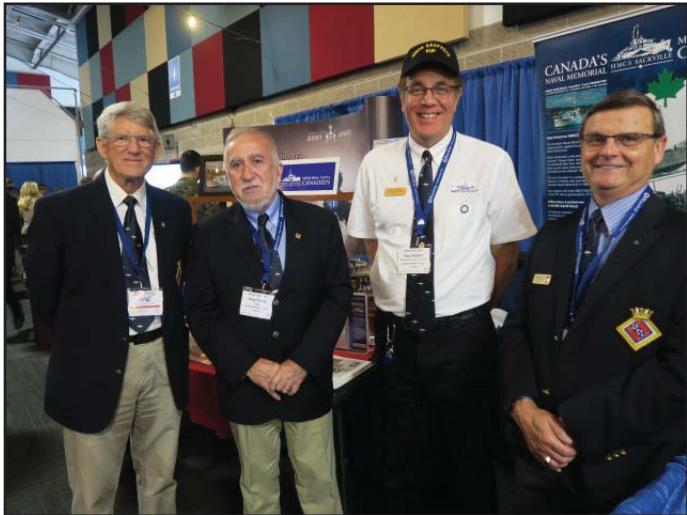
The late LCdr Jim Reddy oversees move of HMCS Sackville to summer berth in June 2019.  
(Sandy McClearn photo)

### Back Cover

HMCS Digby was one of many minesweepers that served during the Second World War. Launched at Levis and commissioned in Quebec City in July 1942, the 162-foot diesel-powered mine-

sweeper served in WLEF (Western Local Escort Force) and the Sydney Force during the Battle of the Atlantic. At the end of 1945 Digby was placed in reserve and recommissioned in 1953, serving until paid off in 1956. Life Trustee Ian Urquhart provided this ship's company photo that shows his late father Chief Petty Officer Alexander Herbert (Lofty) Urquhart (Chief ERA) kneeling at lower left. The last wartime commanding officer of Digby was Lieutenant O. Ormsby RCNVR (1944-45).

# Contents



## DEFSEC 2019 Crew

The Canadian Naval Memorial Trust's participation in the 2019 Defence Security and Aerospace Exhibition Atlantic at the Cunard Centre, Halifax in early October included a display promoting HMCS Sackville. Trustees staffing the display and meeting with exhibition attendees included, from left, Carl Anderson, Doug Thomas, Doug Struthers and Patrick Charlton.



## Presentation of Model F.N.S. Surcouf

Michael Zimmerman and his wife, visiting from the USA, presented a finely detailed model of the French cruiser submarine Surcouf (1929-1942) he had built for display in HMCS Sackville. With the fall of France in 1940 the sub was taken over by the Free French Navy and served for a period operating out of Halifax escorting Allied convoys. The sub mysteriously disappeared in the Caribbean en route to the Pacific with the loss of 130 crew including four Royal Navy sailors. Shown with the Zimmers are Doug Thomas, left, and Wendall Brown at right. (Doug Struthers photo)

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# FROM THE CHAIR

By Cdr Wendall Brown (ret'd), Chair of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust



**Wendall Brown, Chair of the CNMT briefs members on "the way ahead" at the Trust's semi annual general meeting Jan 11 at Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre. (Pat Charlton photo)**

Battle of the Atlantic Commemorative weekend commenced a very active 2019 summer season for the CNMT and HMCS SACKVILLE. The BoA activities included a free concert featuring the Stadacona Band held in the Halifax Central Library, and a BoA Commemorative dinner in the Stadacona wardroom for 150 trustees and guests, with the incoming Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, Vice Admiral Art McDonald, in attendance.

SACKVILLE was not available for the traditional committal of veteran's ashes to the deep in the harbour approaches off the Point

Pleasant Park Sailor's Memorial during the Battle of the Atlantic commemorative service. The RCN provided HMCS Ville de Quebec to commit the ashes, with the assistance of the CNMT committal team.

The CNMT played a significant role in the Canadian 75th Anniversary D - Day commemoration. SACKVILLE moved from HMC Dockyard to Sackville Landing to be available to the veterans and open to the public. SACKVILLE was used as a photo backdrop for the official veteran contingent. Several of them and their families toured the ship.

SACKVILLE was honoured on June 15 by VAdm Art McDonald when he requested that SACKVILLE be the backdrop for his change of command ceremony on his appointment as Commander of the RCN. The ceremony was held in Halifax in the Naval Dockyard.

The change of command ceremony was the last day that SACKVILLE's Commanding Officer, Jim Reddy, was able to be on board the ship. He passed away on 25 August. Jim was very committed to SACKVILLE for more than twenty years, having served as 1st Lieutenant for eight years followed by Commanding Officer

from 2012 until his untimely death. He was very active with other maritime and veteran's associations including the Master Mariners Association, Merchant Navy Veterans, the Convoy Cup organization, and the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. The esteem in which Jim was held was amply demonstrated by the very large attendance at his Celebration of Life and by the musical tributes paid by the Stadacoma Band at the Remembrance week "Til We Meet Again "concert.

HMCS SACKVILLE opened for visitors at her summer berth at Sackville Landing on 17 June. Technical difficulties on opening day in operating a visitor ticket system resulted in a decision to make admission to the ship free and to put a classy donation chest in a prominent position by the brow. This turned out to be a sound decision as our visitor numbers of 47,000 almost doubled our previous recent best year of 25,000 in 2017. There was a significant in-

crease in donations over the 2017 ticket receipts and the increased exposure and publicity is significant. A huge thank you to our trustees who stepped forward to assist the guides hired by the Trust.

The interim solution to ensure the survivability of SACKVILLE until resources become available to achieve the long-term solution of replacing the below waterline hull plate remains an active issue. The lifting dates for the fall of 2019 were precluded because the submarine in refit remains in the submarine shed. The date proposed for SACKVILLE to enter the S/M shed is mid-February. Both the Navy and the Trust would like to have SACKVILLE available in May 2020 to participate in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the end of the Battle of the Atlantic. The implication of these plans on the refit schedule has not yet been determined. The Navy and the Trust will have to analyse the refit options when a firm date

for facility availability is known.

The preservation and interpretation plans are proceeding slowly. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) among Develop Nova Scotia, the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic and the Canadian Maritime Heritage Foundation to create a Canadian Maritime Heritage District on the Halifax Waterfront has been signed. The public announcement of this initiative is expected in early 2020. The CNMT challenge is to have the underwater hull plate and any deteriorated hull frames replaced within the life expectancy of the interim solution to ensure the long-term hull integrity essential to be a partner in the Maritime Heritage District. A letter to be sent to all trustees will request support to the Trust to raise private funds demonstrating the Trust's commitment to restore the integrity of the ship's hull, a prerequisite to achieve public and corporate support.

Given the state of national and international economic and related issues, and the encumbrances on all levels of government, progress on creating the Maritime Heritage District will be incremental. This, however, will not deter the Trust from continuing to improve the quality of the Trust's presentation of SACKVILLE as Canada's Naval Memorial. She is a living example of the ships in which young Canadians endured for the duration of WWII the fear of the enemy, and the privation and hardship of life at sea.

Renewed efforts are being made to find a formula which would provide a legal basis for the Navy to



**HMCS Sackville at her Sackville Landing berth on a summer evening.  
(Doug Struthers photo)**

directly support HMCS SACKVILLE. A group of Trust members, retired naval officers familiar with naval governance, are exploring the issue in an attempt to develop a proposal that would achieve the requirements of the Trust and be acceptable to the Navy and the Federal Government. This is a complex issue that will require time and skillful negotiation to resolve.

The Trust has undergone some administrative changes over the summer. Doug Thomas retired as Executive Director at the end of June. This position will not be filled at the present time as the partners of the MOU for the co-operative development of the Maritime Heritage District have just

commenced analysing the staffing requirements for this venture. The mandate and terms of reference for a steering committee and working groups will develop in the next few months. The Trust will be required to fill new positions and the Board will determine Trust staff requirements once the MOU organization is up and operating.

Kaela Ramsay joined the Trust in August to manage our office at 1657 Bedford Row. She works closely with administrator Debbie Findlay and stick-handles a myriad of tasks.

The RCN and the CNMT are planning celebrations in May to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Battle of the Atlantic.

Plans are at an early stage. A sail past, a professional development day, and a dinner are being planned. The trust is being included in all events. The plan is to hold one large BoA dinner including the Navy, the Trust, and probably government and civic representatives. The venue will be the new Seamanship School, just inside the Göttingen Street gate at Stadacona. It has a seating capacity of approximately 400. The

trust will not hold a separate BoA dinner.

Londonderry, NI, the eastern base for many of the Canadian Escorts on Atlantic convoy duty, will also commemorate the 75th Anniversary.

The RCN is participating in the Londonderry celebration with senior naval personnel and two ships. The CNMT has conducted exchange visits with the Royal Naval Association - Londonderry since 2005. Jim Reddy and his wife Pat Jessup have initiated and coordinated group visits and events with the association since 2007. Pat will again lead a CNMT group to Ireland this year.

May I, on behalf of the Board, extend New Year's greetings and best wishes to all trustees and friends of the Trust, for the New Year and the new decade.

***“Pat Jessup, the long-serving and creative Editor of Action Stations, asked to be relieved of her responsibilities for the magazine while remaining involved with Trust and Ship commemoration activities and events.”***



**Kaela Ramsay (Office Coordinator, CNMT) onboard HMCS Sackville during September, 2019**

# **Steve Chard 10,000 km Later**

## **Great Loop trek completed in support of HMCS Sackville**



**Steve Chard, kneeling lower left, was welcomed by Cdr Wendall Brown (ret'd), Chair of CNMT and crew of HMCS Sackville; family and friends on his return to Halifax in mid-August after completing 10,000 kilometer trek by kayak of Canada and the US. (Doug Struthers photo)**

In mid-August former Royal Navy submariner Steve Chard paddled his kayak into Halifax Harbour and alongside HMCS Sackville to complete a 15 month, 10,000 kilometer “Great Loop” of Canada and the US inland and coastal waterways.

Chard, a native of Dorset, England, had started his trek June 1, 2018 from the same location to raise funds for nine British, American and Canadian charitable causes, including the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust (CNMT) and HMCS Sackville. His route took him north from Halifax to the St Lawrence, through Ontario to the

US midwest where he entered the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico, over to Florida and up the eastern seaboard and back to Halifax.

With the ship’s Bravo Zulu (well done) signal flags flying, Commander Wendall Brown (ret’d), chair of the CNMT along with Sackville’s crew, family and friends were on hand to welcome and congratulate Chard on his return.

In the ship’s mess Brown ordered the traditional naval “splice the mainbrace” in recognition of a job well done and presented the RN veteran with an honorary life

membership in CNMT.

“It’s been a major effort on Steve’s part, and I’d like to say very well done Steve, and we really appreciate your efforts made for our benefit,” Brown explained.

“We have to get donations to repair the hull plating of the 79 year-old Sackville to keep her afloat in perpetuity ...and all donations are greatly appreciated,” he explained.

Sackville, commissioned in 1941 and designated Canada’s Naval Memorial in 1985, is the last of the Allies 269 wartime corvettes that played a pivotal role in winning the Battle of the Atlantic.

# ‘Til We Meet Again Concert

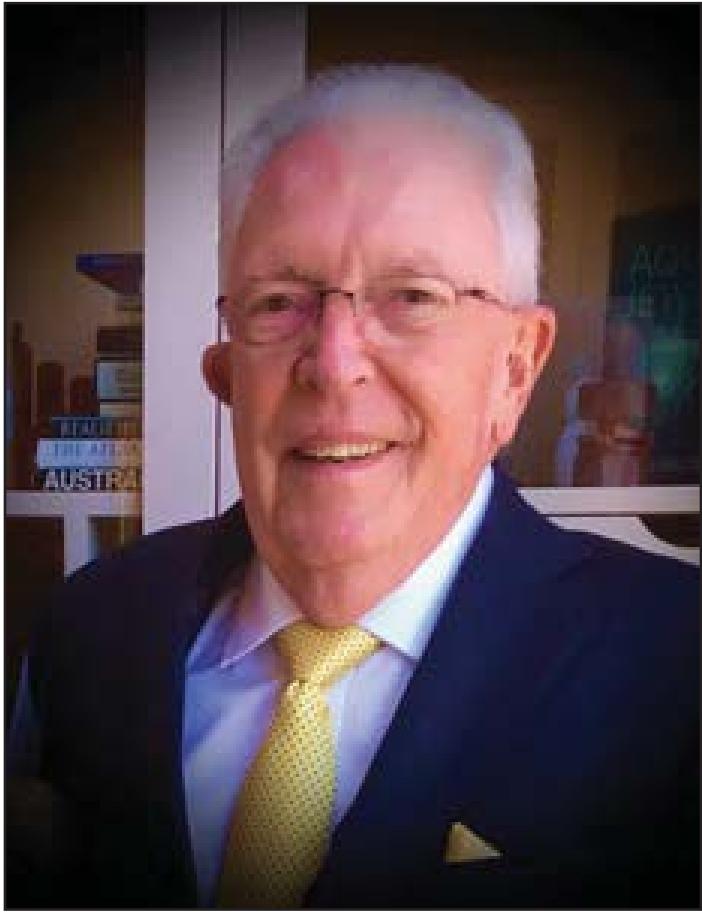
Bill Gard photos



The popular ‘Til We Meet Again Concert hosted by the Stadacona Band of the Royal Canadian Navy along with guest performers was held November 5 at the Central Library, Halifax. The concert, in support of Camp Hill Veterans Memorial Garden at the Queen Elizabeth Health Sciences Centre features wartime favorites and modern music. During the performance members of the band recognized the contributions of the late Lieutenant Commander Jim Reddy as commanding officer of HMCS Sackville and supporter of other naval and community organizations, by the performance of “Salty Soak” in memory of Jim.



# Crossed The Bar



**Commander Harold Russell (Russ) Wilcox (ret'd)**, a career naval officer and long-time supporter of preserving HMCS Sackville passed away December 4, 2019 in Bedford, NS at age 88. Born in Regina, SK, he commenced his naval career at 19 at Royal Roads Military College, Victoria. After completing training at the Royal Naval College in England he served in HMCS Micmac, flag lieutenant to the Flag Officer Atlantic Coast followed by exchange duties with the Royal Navy. He served as executive officer of HMCS Assiniboine (1968-1970) and later at headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic in Norfolk, Va. He retired from the Regular Force in 1981 but returned to active duty 1982-1985 as planning coordinator for the 75th anniversary of the Naval Service of Canada. He served as a director and secretary of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust, president of the NS Naval Officers Association (1987-88) and was active in church and community organizations. He is survived by his wife Liz, children Dave, Larry, Barb and Andy and a number of grandchildren. Donations may be made to the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust/HMCS Sackville.

**Commander Roy (Rusty) Allan (ret'd)**, of Victoria and Ottawa, who held a number of engineering and submarine appointments during his naval career, passed away March 28, 2019 at age 89. A graduate of Royal Roads Naval College (1949), he undertook marine engineering specialist training in the UK and later submarine training with the US Navy. He served in a number of ships and establishments including HMCS Ontario, HMCS Naden, HMCS Jonquiere and HMCS Grilse; served at NDHQ during construction of the Oberon Class submarines in 1960s, followed by HMCS Cape Scott as fleet repair officer and HMCS Niagara Washington as assistant naval attaché; he retired in 1980. In civilian life he was employed with shipyards in Victoria. Survivors include his wife Jewell, son William James, daughter Grace Elizabeth and several grandchildren.

**Richard Rudnicki**, well-known graphic designer, illustrator and visual artist passed away in Port Royal, NS Nov 4 at age 68. During his career he worked as a graphic artist for CUSO, operated a design/advertising company, wrote/illustrated a number of books and was artist-in-residence at the Army Museum Halifax Citadel. Among his accomplishments was being chosen to paint one of the six Naval Centennial paintings depicting the Canadian Naval Task Group en route to the Persian Gulf War in 1990. At the time of his passing he was nearing completion of a graphic novel featuring HMCS Sackville, a project that he briefed CNMT members several years ago at a semi-annual general meeting. The book will be published by Nimbus Publishing, tentatively in autumn 2020. Survivors include his wife Susan Tooke, daughters Darielle and Tansy, brothers Michael and Stephen and sisters Denise and Elaine.

**Lieutenant Commander Albert Clare (Whitey)**

**Williamson (ret'd)**, who joined the Navy as an ordinary seaman in 1945, obtained his pilot wings and served much of his career at CFB Shearwater, passed away Oct 29 at age 90. During his time at sea he served in HMCS Warrior, HMCS Ontario, HMCS Magnificent and HMCS Bonaventure, Canada's last aircraft carrier. In civilian life he was employed at the Halifax International Airport. Survivors include his wife Patricia, children Susan, Steven and Shelley and a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Donations may be made in his name to Shearwater Aviation Museum or Canadian Naval Memorial Trust/HMCS Sackville.

**Mary Macdonald**, wife of Captain Angus Macdonald, passed away in Halifax Sept 24 at age 88. Born in Scotland, she was a graduate of the University of Glasgow and immigrated to Canada with her family in 1967. She taught at several Dartmouth schools, active in music and played in several bands. In addition to her husband, survivors include children Alan, Lindsay and Alison and several grandchildren.

**Helen Patricia Kathleen (Patsy) Timbrell**, a long-time resident of Chester Basin, NS and wife of the late Rear Admiral Robert Timbrell passed away May 29 at age 91. She was active in the community and an avid golfer and gardner. Survivors include daughter Nancy, grandson Tony, brother Peter and sister Nancy.

**Captain Peter B. Garnham**, of Dartmouth, NS, a Royal Navy veteran of the Second World War, master mariner and Trustee of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust passed away Aug 6 at age 96. Born in Ipswich, Suffolk, England he led an active life with a passion for sailing. He was predeceased by his wife Dorothy and brothers Sidney, Ivan and Derrick; survivors include daughter Julie Menzies, several grandchildren and a great-granddaughter.

**Werner Hirschmann**, a veteran of the Battle of the Atlantic who served in German U-Boats as a chief engineer passed away in Toronto Nov 7 at age 96. Following the end of hostilities he entered the growing field of computers in Canada, including working with the Bank of Montreal and City of Toronto. He was a supporter of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust and shared his wartime experiences with HMCS Sackville members and other veterans. Survivors include sons Mike (from first marriage to Ruth) and Thomas (from his marriage to Diana) and a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**Frederick Knight Fowler**, a veteran of the Second World War who served in a number of Royal Navy ships and submarines passed away in Saint John, NB Jan 10 at age 101. Following the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 and while attending the University of New Brunswick he joined the RCNVR at Saint John. Following training in the UK he was posted to HMS Fearless and survived the sinking of the destroyer in the Mediterranean. He later served in HM submarines Sceptre, Truculent and United in the North Atlantic and was twice Mentioned in Dispatches for "valiant conduct in the presence of the enemy." Following the war he entered his family's insurance business and joined the 'Byng Boys' Club (a group for WW I and WW II veterans who had seen active service overseas that operated until 2007). He was predeceased by his wife Catherine; survivors include his children Peter, Pamela, Douglas and Judith and a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

# HMCS KOOTENAY COMMEMORATION

By: Ryan Melanson Trident Staff

The explosion that took place in HMCS Kootenay on Oct 23, 1969 off Plymouth, UK killed nine sailors and injured 53 more who suffered from burns and inhalation of toxic smoke. As Steve Rowland explains, however, the damage caused on that tragic day went far beyond physical injuries.

"Make no mistake, not one person got off that ship unscathed. Fifty years later, we all carry scars, either physical, emotional or psychological, related to what happened," said Rowland, who was a young sailor in just his second year of service in 1969.

The survivors didn't shy away from those difficulties as they gathered on Oct 23 at Point Pleasant Park, Halifax to mark the 50th anniversary of the explosion, which remains the Royal Canadian Navy's deadliest incident at sea during peacetime. The ceremony drew a large crowd, including Nova Scotia Lieutenant Governor Arthur J. LeBlanc, Premier - Stephen McNeil, Halifax Mayor Mike Savage, MPs, community leaders and senior naval officers who joined the survivors, families and members of the CAF and the naval community for the occasion. All

wore the new HMCS Kootenay ribbon, which has now been approved for RCN members and others to wear from the start of October until midnight on the 23rd.

The explosion took place about 200 miles off the southwest coast of England when – Kootenay was ordered to break off from its nine-ship task group to conduct routine full power trials. Cause of the incident was an improperly installed bearing casing in the ship's starboard gearbox, which allowed oil to overheat to the point it caught fire, causing the devastating explosion. The 10 sailors in the engine room suffered the worst, and struggled to scramble up a melting aluminum ladder as the room filled with flames. The two remaining survivors from the engine room, Allan "Dinger" Bell and Al Kennedy, were both in attendance and specially recognized during the event. Both were also awarded wound stripes earlier this year in recognition of their bravery on that day.

John Montague, who was a junior officer on board Kootenay, spoke at the ceremony, touching on the



actions of the crew in the immediate aftermath, as sailors fought to save their colleagues and their ship through black smoke, with limited equipment, and with the vessel steaming uncontrollably at full power through the North Atlantic.

"There were many acts of extreme bravery that day, and outstanding courage by everyone involved. Many sailors acted valiantly and volunteered for dangerous tasks they had never done before in an effort to save the ship and help their fellow sailors," he said. He also recalled the well-known quote from Kootenay CO Cdr Neil Norton, who said at the time that "a less professional crew could easily have finished the day in liferafts."

"The aftermath, however, was as bad as the incident itself," Montague added, as crews got the fire under control and learned that several colleagues had perished. Four were buried in England, four were buried at sea, and only one in Halifax, because of repatriation policies at the time.

"On the homefront in Halifax, there were eight women who suddenly became widows, and 18 children who no longer had a father," he said. "And back in 1969, we had never heard of post-traumatic stress disorder."

He said the annual gatherings for Kootenay survivors, which began 20 years ago, have helped many of them cope with the difficult memories and mental health issues stemming from the incident, and many have begun receiving professional help as well.

Members of the crew also find comfort in the les-

sons learned from Kootenay, which led to major changes in the way navies prepare for and combat fires and other incidents on ships. New types of equipment, procedures, and training initiatives have a direct link back to the tragedy in 1969.

"We consider these positive changes to be Kootenay's legacy, and that's something we are very proud of," Montague said.

The day also served as a chance to rededicate the Bonaventure Anchor Memorial, which serves as a monument to all men and women who died serving the RCN during peacetime. The day saw 46 new names added to the plaques around the memorial. This addition, along with refurbishment work completed on the anchor in 2018, has long been sought by members of the Kootenay crew and family members of other deceased sailors.

During the reception following the ceremony, Commander Royal Canadian Navy Unit Commendation was presented to HMCS Kootenay, to be held by the Damage Control Training Facility Kootenay "...which continues the proud legacy of that crew."

*Printed with permission  
of Trident Newspaper*





#### **HMCS Kootenay Commemoration**

Crew members of HMCS Kootenay who survived the explosion and fire aboard the destroyer on 23 Oct 1969 off Plymouth, UK gathered at the Bonaventure Anchor Memorial in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax to participate in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the tragedy; nine of their fellow crew died and 53 others were injured. Along with the survivors the ceremony was attended by family members, other veterans, serving members, military, political and community leaders. (Formation Image Services Halifax)

# **75th Anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic (BoA) and Victory in Europe (VE Day Pilgrimage)**

**LCdr (ret'd) Pat Jessup**

In addition to national commemorations on 8 May, 2020 the Canadian Naval Memorial Trustees will mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the BoA and VE Day in Londonderry, Northern Ireland and Bunrana, Republic of Ireland.

During the Second World War, Londonderry was the home-away-from-home for over 20,000 RCN sailors. Convoy Bells have been consecrated and placed in St John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Halifax, Nova Scotia and Londonderry linking these three communities which repaired and replenished

the escort warships protecting convoys carrying much needed supplies to the United Kingdom and Russia.

As in years past since 2005, Trustees have participated in events hosted by Londonderry Branch of the Royal Naval Association, Northern Ireland, and supported by the CNMT. This year's events (7 – 10 May 2020) will include the arrival of international warships and Veterans, with the pilgrimage now fully subscribed. Currently rooms are being held at the City Hotel, Londonderry for our contingent.

# Liberation of the Netherlands Commemoration



The Canadian Army is credited with freeing The Netherlands, and the Dutch people of 1945 have ensured that their gratitude is passed on to succeeding generations.

The 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands from Nazi occupation during WW II, will be commemorated May 5, 2020 in Halifax. Peter Stoffer, CNMT Life Trustee and chair of the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands Committee reports that the event will not only focus on freedom of the Dutch people but will also acknowledge the country's liberators.

Canada along with her allies answered the call during the Netherlands darkest hour. Thousands of allied heroes are buried on Dutch soil, including more than 5,700 Canadians; thousands more were wounded or injured.

After the war, Canada and other countries opened their doors to immigration; three per cent of Canada's population (1.3 million) is of Dutch heritage. Today the Netherlands, 17 million strong, is a vibrant, democratic and free society along with being a major foreign investor in Canada.

"In honour of the memory of the fallen and current serving members our commemoration will include a parade, wreath laying ceremony, reception

and dinner at the Cunard Centre, Pier 23, beginning at 4:30 pm on May 5, with Lieutenant-General (ret) the Honorable Roméo A. Dallaire as guest speaker," Stoffer explains.

The proceeds will be distributed amongst five veterans and first responder organizations: The Royal Canadian Legion Benevolent Fund, the Society of Atlantic Heroes, Military Family Resource Centres, the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust/HMCS Sackville and Paws Fur Thought.

*Trustees can obtain tickets for the event by contacting the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust Shore Office, 1657 Bedford Row, Halifax, Tel: 902-492-1424.*

# Lieutenant Commander James P. Reddy CD, RCN (ret'd)

## Celebration of Life 31 Aug 2019

By Doug Thomas



**The late Jim Reddy, right, chats with since-deceased life members and WW II veterans Kevin Power, left, and Vince McDonnell during 2012 Battle of the Atlantic reception in HMCS Sackville Mess. (Bill Gard photo)**

Jim Reddy passed away 25 August 2019 after a long and courageous battle with cancer. A Memorial Service was held in the CFB Halifax Base Chapel at Stadacona with a Celebration of Life and Reception following in the Ball Room of the Wardroom Officers' Mess. Approximately 600 people attended the event in the Wardroom. Five of us were privileged to speak: Vice-Admiral Dean McFadden (ret'd), Captain (N) David Benoit, Commander Wendall Brown (ret'd), Jim's daughter Elizabeth and myself.

The following were my remarks: Good afternoon. For the past eight years I was executive director of the Canadian Naval Memori-

al Trust. I first met Jim Reddy 50 years ago when we both served at sea in Halifax-based destroyers, and I considered him a close friend. He was very-well thought of in the Navy, and was known to be highly professional. He had many jobs at sea and ashore, but I think he particularly enjoyed being the Queen's Harbour Master in Halifax to close-out his career.

Condolences have been received from across Canada and abroad from friends, acquaintances, and trustees of the Memorial Trust. As an indication of how far-flung his connections were, Jim's wife Pat Jessup has heard from Sir George Bain in Northern Ireland, Vice-Admiral Paul Maddison now living

in Australia, and very good friend Captain Rolfe Monteith now living in Plymouth, England. In March of this year, Rolfe nominated Jim for the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, an official honour administered by the Governor-General of Canada. Confirmation of the award of the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers was received yesterday, the 30th of August, and the Citation reads as follows:

"James (Jim) Reddy devoted the years of his retirement from the Royal Canadian Navy to the demanding volunteer task of being the Executive Officer and since 2012 Captain of HMCS Sackville, the last of 269 corvettes, which played a key role in escorting convoys of merchant ships full of food, fuel, personnel and war-fighting equipment from North America to the United Kingdom during the Battle of the Atlantic. As a member of the Company of Master Mariners, he actively supported Merchant Mariners' commemoration of their sacrifice while sailing the ships that carried those precious cargoes. Sackville is Canada's Naval Memorial, and is visited by tens of thousands to Halifax waterfront every year. Jim's dedication to preserving the ship and presenting her as a living artifact of that successful campaign is an outstanding gift to all Canadians and to many others



interested in our naval heritage.”

His wife Pat will accept the Sovereign’s Medal from the Governor-General during an awards ceremony in 2020.

Jim has been awarded other honours, including the Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 and the Naval Association of Canada’s Gold Medallion in 2015, in recognition of his many contributions to the extended naval community of Canada. His principal contribution has been his dedication to the unique role of commanding officer of HMCS Sackville over the past sev-

***“James (Jim) Reddy devoted the years of his retirement from the Royal Canadian Navy to the demanding volunteer task of being the Executive Officer and since 2012 Captain of HMCS Sackville***

en years and for nine years before that as 1st Lt., or executive officer. This is far from a ceremonial position – it required a great deal of ongoing personal effort to do the role justice – and his hard work was truly inspiring. Jim had the “busiest unpaid job in the Navy.”

It was a rare day when Jim was not involved in some aspect of operations, repairs and maintenance to the ship working with the Dockyard Fleet Maintenance Facility to plan and conduct major work such as the recent docking on the Syncrolift, helping to conduct and host events involving the ship; and organizing major events such as participation in international yacht races, Tall Ship events, Battle of the Atlantic commemorations, and periodic visits by the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, the Minister of National Defence (MND), and senior members of the Canadian Forces and the government. Working hand-in-hand with him was Pat – they were a very strong team and the face of the Naval Memorial Trust and HMCS Sackville at many events in Canada and abroad.

Jim also served as secretary to the Maritimes Division of the Company of Master Mariners of Canada.

He was on the board of directors of the Convoy Cup Foundation which has, since 2002, honoured the sacrifices of our Battle of the Atlantic veterans by way of sailing regattas in Halifax, St. John’s, Ontario, Norway and Scotland. This co-ordination of the extended naval, merchant marine and recreational sailing communities of the Halifax area was very beneficial to many.

Jim has left very big shoes to fill, and he will be remembered with great affection by many. He is survived by his wife, Pat; his children Elizabeth and Stephen; and his ex-wife Barbara.

# VAdm Hugh MacNeil

## HMCS Sackville "...quintessential example of Canada's response in the Second World War

Vice Admiral Hugh MacNeil (ret'd) served as Chair of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust 2000-2004 and Interim Chair 2011-2012. In assuming the chairmanship in 2000 he noted, "...HMCS Sackville's outstanding war record and her quintessential example of Canada's response in WW II."

The 2000-2004 period was highlighted by a number of significant events and long-term initiatives, including advancing planning for the long-term preservation and operation of Canada's Naval Memorial and fine-tuning Board governance and financial management.

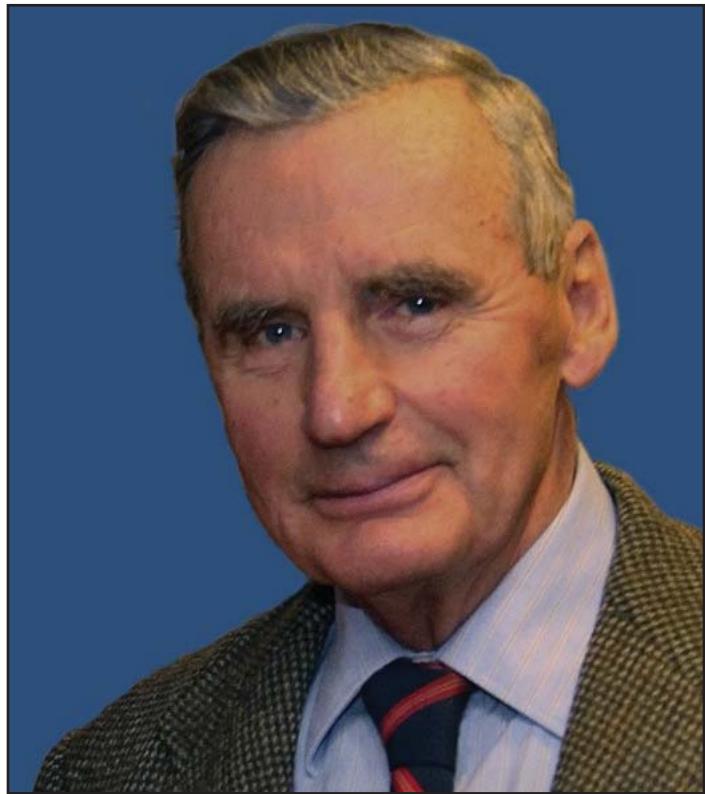
### 2001

The Board developed a more coordinated working relationship with the naval leadership, including the Navy assisting with the maintenance and operation of SACKVILLE whenever possible and appropriate.

The Trust conducted a Trustee 'visioning' exercise that produced the Vision: "CNMT in partnership with the Canadian Navy will maintain HMCS Sackville, Canada's Naval Memorial and Museum in perpetuity, as the symbol of Canada's Naval Heritage, in order to enhance the Canadian public's appreciation, awareness and knowledge of our naval heritage, and to be an inspiration for future generations." At the same time, a meeting was held with a number of retired Flag Officers to obtain their views on the way ahead for the Trust and the importance of preserving Sackville.

The Trust became a partner in the Canadian Naval Heritage Foundation (CNHF) initiative to develop a major naval heritage project in Halifax. Other partners included the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic (MMA), the Navy, Halifax Waterfront Development Corp (WDC) and private sector sponsors. Among the objectives: securing a permanent facility for Sackville, establishing an enhanced permanent naval heritage exhibit in MMA and pursuing key tourism initiatives identified in a report prepared by the Economic Planning Group.

The Board introduced a number of measures to upgrade and formalize administrative and financial procedures, including retaining a professional ac-



countant to maintain the books/ provide timely advice regarding Board decisions, and a policy manual was developed covering different aspects of Trust and ship operations and activities.

A number of volunteers were recognized, including immediate Past Chair Hal Davies for his leadership role and former Commanding Officer Max Corkum for his conspicuous contribution to the ship over the years.

Educators were contacted to discuss ways and means to increase understanding among students of the significance of Sackville and the Battle of the Atlantic and work was underway on development of a teachers resource package for different grade levels.

Governor General Adrienne Clarkson agreed to become the Trust's first Patron.

### 2002

Consultations continued with HMC Dockyard and other specialists on how best to preserve Sackville in perpetuity, in or out of the water.

Phase 1 of the CNHF initiative to develop Halifax

as an international destination for telling Canada's naval story proceeded, with Phase II designed to propose specific plans, including Sackville's role, and how the undertaking would be funded.

The first Battle of the Atlantic memorial dinner was held in the two forward mess decks. Guests of honour included WW II destroyer captain Rear Admiral Desmond (Debby) Piers (ret'd), accompanied by Mrs Piers, and Dr Tania Li, granddaughter of Rear Admiral Leonard Murray, Commander-in-Chief Northwest Atlantic during WW II.

Liaison continued with education officials and work advanced on production and distribution of educational resource materials. At the same time, historian Donald E. Graves was engaged to write a book about the Canadian naval story, the Battle of the Atlantic and HMCS Sackville.

The Board and ship's crew continued to work with and increase functional coordination and cooperation with the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic.

With regard to ship operations, the Board approved creation of a full-time Chief Bosun's Mate billet to ensure Sackville was maintained and operated in a 'seamanlike manner.' And among the growing number of volunteers we welcomed Halifax businessman Neil Black who will undertake fundraising and marketing activities on behalf of the Trust.

### **2003**

Three briefing books with input from historians and veterans of the Battle of the Atlantic were produced for the general use of Trustees and summer student ship's company and interpreters.

The Board approved "Standing Orders, Duties and Responsibilities and Terms of Reference" for all positions within CNMT and Sackville, developed in 2002.

An annual essay contest for high school students was established, coordinated by Gary Thain.

Board members continued discussions with government officials, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, the Armour Group and other heritage stakeholders with regard to the long-term development of the Halifax waterfront.

### **2004**

Fine-tuning Board governance and financial management was a major undertaking during the year. This was required to enhance the posture of the CNMT as it moves forward to ensure the capability of sustaining the Trust and Sackville in order to conduct a national fundraising campaign and participate in the long-term development of the Halifax waterfront. Judith Tamsett CA has been most supportive in helping to restructure financial affairs.

Several senior naval officers joined the Strategic Planning Group, including Ted Kelly, Lynn Mason and Jim King, and brought their extensive experience to bear in discussions concerning the past, present and potential future situations and options for the sustainment of CNMT and the Naval Memorial. The group recommended retaining professional expertise to carry out national fundraising and related initiatives. At this time, the Armour Group was awarded a contract for a feasibility concept for a Naval Heritage Centre (the Queen's Landing Project) involving Sackville..

Education outreach activities

continued as part of the Trust's program to reach and engage the younger generation, highlighted by conducting the first history essay contest with participation from Halifax area high school students.

A successful local fundraising event was the second annual golf tournament which not only generated revenue (to support the history essay contest) but also the addition of a number of members of the business community as new Trustees.

**In 2011**, having previously served as Chair of the CNMT for four years, Hugh MacNeil was asked by the Board and agreed to serve as Interim Chair for 2011-2012 following the resignation of the Chair, the late John Jay. During a critical period in the development of the CNMT and operation of HMCS Sackville he continued to advance planning for the long-term preservation of the ship, including consultation with the Waterfront Development Corporation (now Develop Nova Scotia), Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, other government agencies and the corporate sector along with strengthening membership and ensuring the viability of the Trust's Endowment Fund.

*This is the third in a series of articles coordinated by Len Canfield reflecting on the acquisition of HMCS Sackville by the CNMT and the individuals that have played a significant role in the operation of Canada's Naval Memorial over the years.*

# My Battle of the Atlantic

**This is the first of several articles with excerpts from 'My Battle of the Atlantic,' the memoirs of the late Don Bowman, a veteran of WW II, used with permission of his son Brian Bowman.**

As a teenager in the late 1930s I worked summers in my father's automotive wholesale business in Saskatoon, dusting the hundreds of parts bins, unloading tires from boxcars and generally acting as an errand boy. On Saturday afternoons after work I often accompanied one or two friends to the movie theatre. Newsreels at the time showed German Chancellor Adolph Hitler inspecting military formations or haranguing massive public gatherings.

When the ugly word "war" began to appear in daily news reports Canada's Reserve Army began recruiting. In the summer of 1939 I enlisted in a two week summer training camp at the Dundurn army base where my platoon floundered about the sand hills looking for an "enemy" platoon. That September I began engineering studies at the University of Saskatchewan and my close friend Murray Leddy opted for an arts degree. I vividly recall listening to one of Hitler's radio broadcasts even though I had no knowledge of the German language; the hair on the back of my neck moved.

The declaration of war came during my first days at university. It

would be a major influence on my life and career..

For the next two years our family and friends received the daily news of Hitler's blitzkrieg - "Lightning War." The continuous bad news was affecting my studies as well as my friend Murray.

es in World War One and was appalled at the thought of the confinement, the mud, the rats...and (remembering 'indoctrination' to the bayonet at summer camp) trying to rip out another man's guts. The Air Force was appealing but I was not confident I had the athletic skills to be a pilot.

So I chose the squeaky clean {I hoped} Navy.

Murray and I presented ourselves to the Naval Reserve division HMCS (His Majesty's Canadian Ship) Unicorn on Third Avenue north in Saskatoon. It was just a building but the fiction of it being a ship was vigorously maintained. Soon we were looking like sailors in "bell bottom"

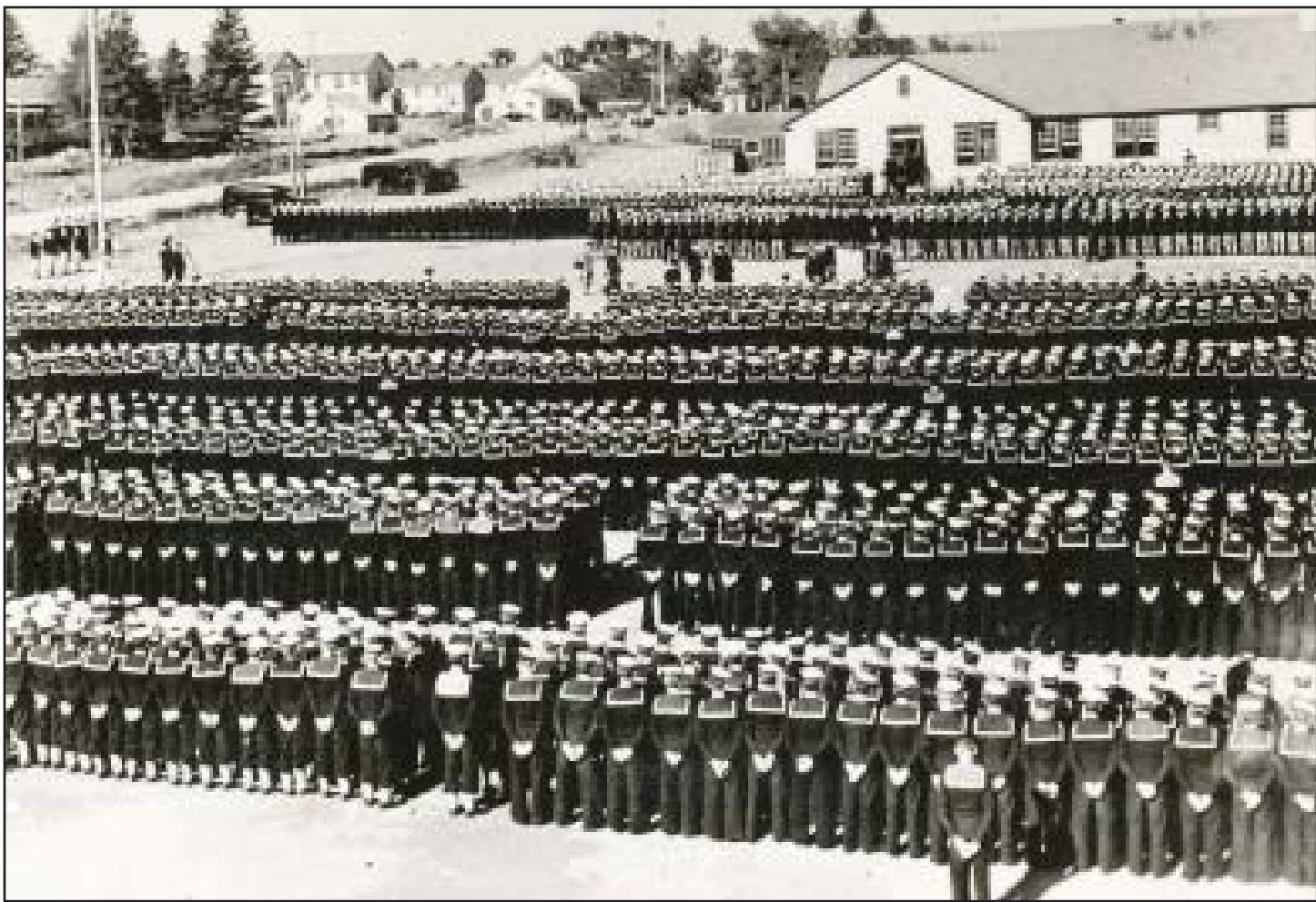
trousers and middy with the huge collar and learning when to salute, ranks, badges and such.

We were told that all new recruits received three months basic training at HMCS Cornwallis in Digby, Nova Scotia. Because we both had two years of university, if we completed basic training in good standing, we would be promoted to probationary sub-lieutenants and receive further training. A new class of recruits would be starting at Cornwallis in three weeks. In short order we were off to the East



It was obvious that to allow one man and one country to rule all of Europe and beyond was not good. The Federal Government was hinting that conscription was on the horizon. Murray and I agreed that if we volunteered we could choose which service to join. The moment came when we said "Let's do it".

I suggested joining the Navy and to my surprise Leddy's answer was "Good choice." My own choice came after considering both the Army and Air Force. I had read a great deal about life in the trench-



**HMCS Cornwallis training establishment during Second World War.**

Coast.

When it opened in 1942, HMCS Cornwallis was the largest naval training base in the world in both area and the number of trainees. The base carried the name of Admiral Sir William Cornwallis of the Royal Navy, a veteran of the Seven Years War and the Napoleon wars and a close friend of Admiral Horatio Nelson. Nearby is the historic Annapolis Royal, located about eight miles inside the "Digby Arm," a narrow bay extending about 18 miles parallel to the Bay of Fundy. The Town of Digby is just inside the mouth of the bay.

The Cornwallis trainees were housed in two storey "H" shaped buildings that were painted a dreary gray color. There were four dormitories in each building with 20

beds in each dorm. Meals were eaten in a separate mess hall. There was an aircraft hangar-sized building for calisthenics or drilling in foul weather. Another large building housed the gunnery school. Many smaller buildings had classrooms along with a chapel and a "sick bay".

The training day began with bugle calls at 6 am. A petty officer (PO) would sashay through the dormitory singing "Rise and shine, rise and shine. You've had your time. Let me have mine." The PO had a quick eye and a rough and ready shake for anyone who hadn't got the message. The first out of bed were the first in the washroom and first to the mess hall. The beds were spaced four feet apart not leaving much privacy to dress and undress.

Every mealtime there was a long line up outside the mess hall. Any one who attempted to cut into the line got rough treatment from those behind. The meals, served cafeteria style, were primarily meat and potatoes, well adapted to our active life style... nutritious, tasty and plentiful.

At 7 am the hands were assembled on the parade square for a half hour of "calisthenics," mostly upper body exercises, with lots of arm swinging, toe touching and running on the spot. In spite of a lot of grumbling it was a great stimulus for the drilling and class room activities that followed.

Much time was spent on learning to march in formations to create a team feeling and to respond instantly to an officer's command.

Each platoon had 30 men in three ranks in front was a sub lieutenant with a petty officer four paces behind. The parade marshal was a chief petty officer with a big voice. When he shouted "Quick March" 700 left feet moved one pace forward but not all foot movements were synchronized causing the platoon petty officer to become "annoyed."

Afternoons were spent in classrooms where lectures and the discipline indoctrination continued.

Training had many aspects. One day we were lined up in groups of 20 to be put through a chlorine gas attack. The instructor assured us the air in the chamber would be filled with real poison gas. We were issued grotesque looking gas masks covering the head and face with large goggle lenses and a tube that covered the nose and led to a canister. My group stumbled into the gas chamber because the masks restrict one's vision. Our instructions were to keep moving about in the chamber. I'm sure each of us, as we saw the yellowish gas fumes billowing into the chamber, was wondering "Is this thing going to work?" When we escaped 15 minutes later we were convinced they do. The gas masks went wherever we went until the end of the war.

Since this was a Navy training base we did get time on the water. The training was very basic. It began with learning to pull (row) a boat, in our case a whaler, a heavy, rugged sea boat with five 11-foot long oars, three on one side and two on the other.

The Bay of Fundy is world known for the huge rise and fall of the tides. Every time the tide changes, water from the bay pours in or out of the Digby Gut. The rise and fall of the tide can be as great as 28

feet. Pulling the whaler was similar to drilling on the parade square in developing a team feeling. The coxswain was a leading seaman. Our crew would pull for four hours along the shore, two hours out and two hours back. During my training I had several experiences that very clearly demonstrated the need to be knowledgeable about the rapid rise and fall of these tides.

During a week of training at the gun battery we received a basic knowledge of many of the guns in the battery. The four inch guns mounted on the forward deck of the corvettes had a crew of five and once again the theme in our training was teamwork. Each member of the gun crew learned the five tasks needed to fire the gun. The ammunition we used was not live but the weight and feel was real. The rapid fire pom-pom anti-aircraft gun aft was manned by one person but required a supply train of ammunition.

One morning our platoon petty officer told us: "Tomorrow, rain or shine we are going for a walk." It turned out to be a 25 mile route march. We had back packs and rifles; it was boring, hot, humid and seemed endless. But when the fine naval band struck up a tune it gave us a great surge of energy. We wore the heavy boots that had been issued when we arrived at Cornwallis and I'm convinced I never could have completed the march without them.

As we approached the end of our three months of basic training I had become comfortable wearing the uniform of a sailor and had thrived with the rigorous physical activity. I felt that our nondescript batch of trainees could make an important contribution to fighting the war.

The final "BIG" event to mark

the end of training was a parade inspection by an admiral scheduled for 1000 (10 am) and the parade was in place by 0945. We were given the order to stand easy. By 1030 the admiral had still not arrived. There was fidgeting and banter in the ranks and the petty officers were admonishing "Steady—stop moving about." As the wait increased some of our mates started to go down. They were revived by sick bay attendants, allowed 10 minutes rest and then put back on their feet. None were allowed to leave the parade square.

When the admiral arrived, and the band struck up the Colonel Bogey March, a wave of enthusiasm swept over the parade. We were no longer 700 trainees, we were 700 Royal Canadian Navy sailors and proud of it. We marched with precision and panache. Next day we disbanded and moved, each to whatever further training he had been allotted. But first, we had two weeks leave. And before I headed for the West Coast I had a very special commitment to keep.

*To be continued in the next issue...*

# Remembrance Services 2019



Life Member Dave Aspen of Barrie, ON continues to promote the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust and HMCS Sackville in his area. Dave, accompanied by Chief Petty Officer Dina Meaney of CFB Borden, braved the elements to lay a wreath on behalf of Sackville at the Remembrance Day service in Barrie.

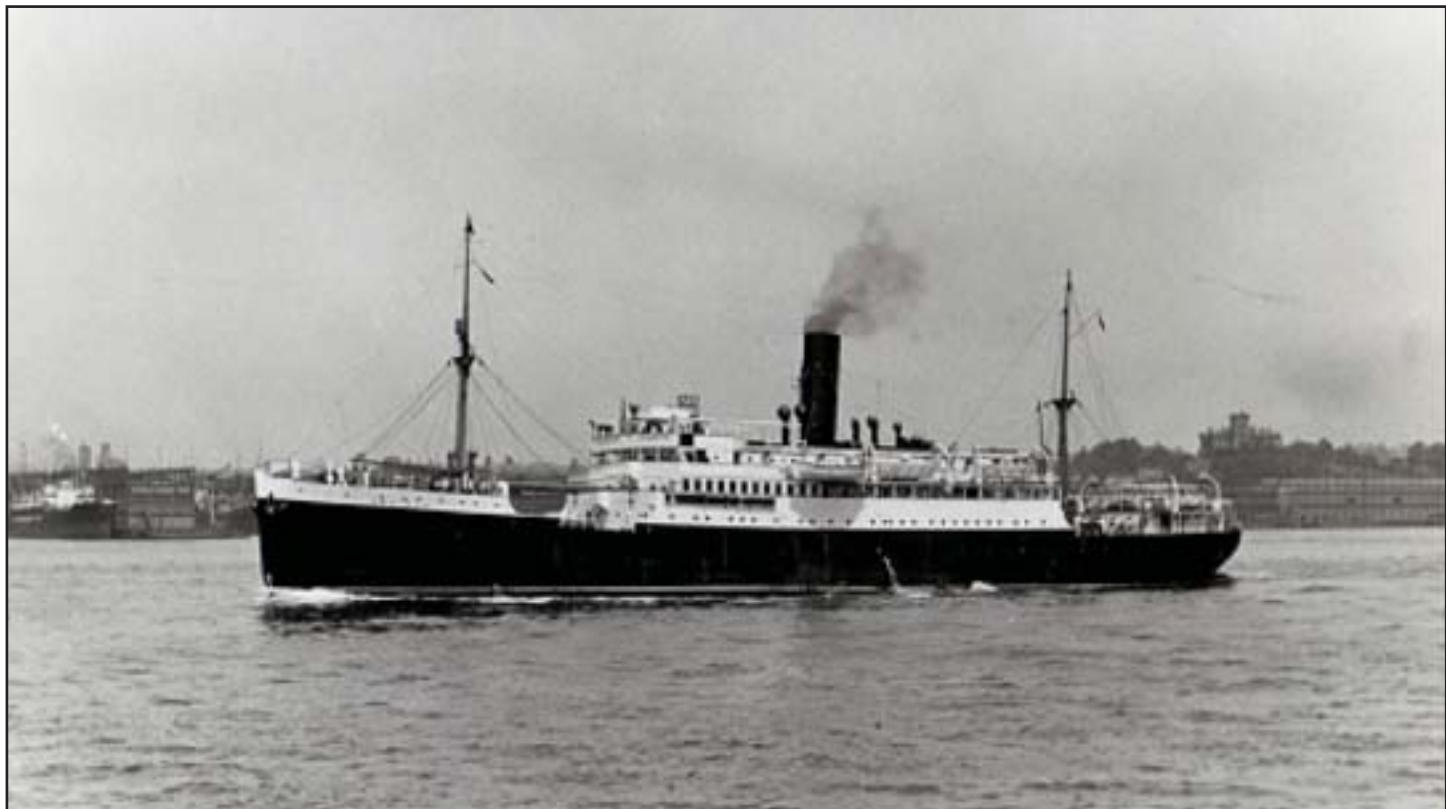
In Halifax, fine weather was the order of the day for services at The Sailors' Memorial in Point Pleasant Park at the entrance of Canada's "East Coast Port"...

(LS Woods photo)



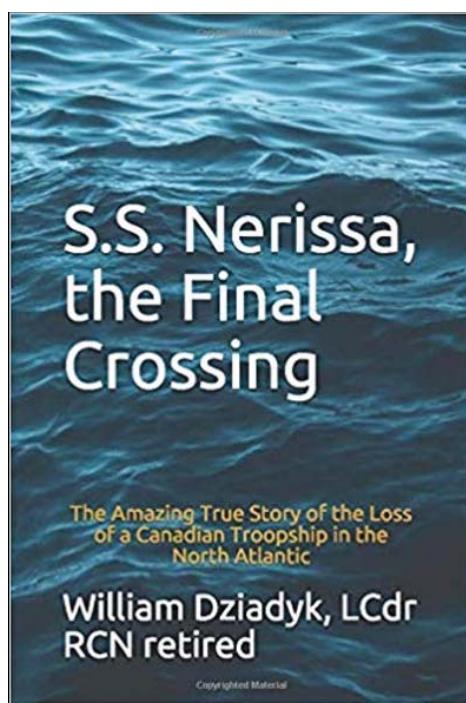
# S.S. Nerissa the Final Crossing

Book Review by: Doug Thomas



## 1SS Nerissa (pre-war)

This is the true story of the only loss due to enemy action of a troopship carrying Canadian troops in World War II. This well-researched book describes in considerable detail the British-registered passenger and cargo ship SS Nerissa. She was built in 1926 for the Newfoundland trade and then switched in the 1930s to the New York to Bermuda tourist run and also to the West Indies. The crew was composed of Americans and Newfoundlanders and managed by the British Furness Withy Line from 1929. Canadian Military Headquarters in London had a di-



**S.S. Nerissa,  
the Final Crossing,**  
by William Dziadyk, LCdr.  
RCN, Ret'd.  
BD Pro Inc., 2019 paperback  
9" x 6", 155 pages, photos,  
figures, tables, and end notes.  
Published 11 November 2019.  
\$29.95. Pu ISBN-13: 978-  
1704113821.  
Available at Amazon.ca

rect contracting relationship with Furness Withy Line and provided lists of Canadian military and civilian passengers for Trans-Atlantic crossings.

There is much good information about the organization of the troopships that had transported some 85,000 members of the Canadian army from the beginning of the war until mid-summer 1941. Canadian Navy, Air Force, and civilian personnel required transport across the Atlantic throughout the war for training, to join and re-join their ships and units, and to support the war effort in many ways.

In the early years of the war, a number of the largest passenger liners were employed to transport large numbers of troops, and they were usually convoyed across the Atlantic with a British battleship in support to provide security from attack by large German warships and armed merchant raiders. Medium-sized ships such as Nerissa with a good turn of speed (at least 15 knots) were sailed independently as they were as fast or faster than U-boats – considered the primary threat. SS Nerissa was torpedoed on the evening of 30 April, one

day short of her planned arrival in Liverpool, by U-552 - commanded by one of the most successful of the U-boat aces, Erich Topp. (Topp survived the war and became a rear-admiral in the Federal German Navy). “Abandon Ship” was ordered after the first hit, and the boats were being loaded when the second torpedo hit about six minutes later. This panicked those who were trying to board boats or launch rafts and pandemonium ensued.

Nerissa embarked a total of 291 people during this last trans Atlantic crossing. The table shown below, provides an indication of the mix, and their fate.

Part of the reason for the high casualty rate among passengers was that the torpedoes which sank Nerissa immediately killed most of the engineers on watch and in their mess decks on “C” deck: those engineers would have been responsible to safely lower the life boats at “Abandon Ship.” Unfortunately, a number of the lifeboats capsized while being lowered unevenly and others capsized. When HMS Veteran picked up the survivors the following morning, only two of the

six lifeboats were upright and one of those was flooded.

This well-researched book provides the reader with the experience of a 1941 Atlantic crossing, but like many such voyages early in the war tragedy struck. Circumstances were such that loss of life was unusually high; to quote Murphy’s Law: “if something can go wrong, it will.” That was the case with Nerissa’s Final Crossing. This fascinating story is told in a thorough and interesting manner. I highly recommend it.

Bill Dziadyk is a retired naval officer and member of the Naval Association of Canada living in Ottawa, and he has previously written articles about Nerissa and the need to have her wreck preserved for posterity as a war grave, as has been done with other ships lost in conflict. He decided to explore the topic more thoroughly in this book, which was published on Remembrance Day, 2019.

Highly Recommended.

		Embarked	Deceased	Survivors
Crew	Merchant Navy	105	81	24
Canadian Forces	RCN / Army	16 / 108	10 / 73	6 / 35
Allied Forces		42	26	16
Civilians		20	17	3
Total		291	207	84

# The Last Tot



**HMCS Arvida tot issue during WW II**

On March 31, 1972, the last tot of (Navy) rum was issued in the Royal Canadian Navy, indeed a sad day for most! A “tot” was two- and one-half ounces, or one half gill, of rum issued per man/ per day if he was marked “G” for grog on the rum list. Other marked designations were “T” for temperance and “UA” for underage. No tot for them!

The tot was a long-established tradition in both the Royal Navy and the RCN though quite controversial at times. Used as a daily socializer, trading or bartering medium, or a bonding through “sippers,” yours today for mine tomorrow...but it did occasionally contribute to some anti- social behaviour.

On the final day of issue in the RCN, aboard HMCS Annapolis, I happened to be the duty rum baron for our mess; and dutifully appeared before the officer of the day (OOD) and the issuing CPO with jug in hand to receive this last day bounty of 12 tots of “Nelson’s Blood.” I would issue the same in my mess. As I moved off with our jug, the OOD handed me a 40 ounce bottle of pussers (official issue) rum, “Tuck this away for yourself”. Under my jacket it went and I quickly removed myself to my mess.

As we had just returned to home port from a deployment, I found a customs officer sitting in our mess checking our customs forms, so I slid the 40 ouncer into my locker, turned and offered him my tot for the day which was gladly accepted.

The 40 ouncer stayed in my locker for some time before I ventured to transport it home where I taped the bottle and marked it well, “The Last Tot in the RCN” and dated it accordingly. I stored it in back of a cupboard with a few other bottles of choice.

A few months later my wife’s cousin called on a Sunday asking to borrow a bottle of anything.

Stores were closed, in-laws were visiting from Cape Breton and he had nothing in the house with which to entertain. “Help yourself,” said she. And we know which one he took. Later he remarked how much his visitors enjoyed the fine rum. (Not only was this guy a heavyweight boxer, he was one of Dartmouth’s finest. What could I say but, “Hope you enjoyed it”?)

Forgotten in the passing months, years, and decades, I recently received a visit from our cousin, in from the country on an errand. Said he, “Always remembered that bottle I “borrowed” that we enjoyed so much. Meant to replace it long ago, so here you are”, and handed me a 40 ounce bottle of fine single malt scotch, very much to my liking, --38 years later!!

Good things come to those who patiently wait.

**Anonymous** (do statute of limitations still apply?)

# Profile of Lt. Cdr Alan Easton

By: Carl Anderson



Alan Herbert Easton (1902-2001) was born in Ireland, and at age 15 entered the British merchant navy training establishment in Liverpool, HMS Conway. After two years at Conway he entered the British merchant navy where he served from 1919 to 1929. Easton sailed for Canadian Pacific Steamships and at age 24 became CP Ships' second youngest master mariner. In his 10 years with CP ships, Easton made upwards of 100 trans-Atlantic Crossings.

Despite his having risen to the top ranks of his profession, in 19 years of merchant navy service Easton developed an intense dislike of life at sea. He consequently left CP Ships and married in 1929, settling in Montreal where he joined the Bell Telephone Company.

When war broke out in Europe in September, 1939 Easton's distaste

for the mariner's life kept him from returning to sea. Nevertheless, as the Battle of the Atlantic intensified, Easton put aside his personal feelings and joined the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve, where he was commissioned in February 1940. Between March 1940 and February 1941 he was a training officer in HMCS Acadia, a training and patrol vessel based in Halifax. In 1941 he was a Sr. Watchkeeper in the Halifax-based C-Class light cruiser HMS Caradoc D60.

He was promoted to A/Lieutenant (Temp.) RCNR on 15 February 1941 (with seniority dated 15 February 1940) and received his first command on 18 May that year when he commissioned the RCN Flower Class corvette HMCS Baddeck K147. Following work ups in the St. Lawrence estuary and time spent patrolling off Halifax Bad-

deck was assigned to escort the Canadian National Steamships liner/troopship SS Lady Rodney between Québec and St. John's, Newfoundland, and subsequently to Jamaica. Engine problems forced Baddeck to abandon Lady Rodney on two occasions. The first, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, required her to return to her builders in Québec for repairs. The second occurred en route to Jamaica when Baddeck's continuing engine problems and the failure of her fresh water evaporator forced her to return to Halifax for further repairs.

Upon returning to service, Baddeck and four other RCN corvettes were assigned in October 1941 to escort the slow convoy SC-48 from St. John's to Liverpool. Nine of SC-48's 52 merchant vessels were sunk by enemy U-boats south of Iceland. HMCS Baddeck, her submarine detection equipment (asdic) out of service and still experiencing engine problems, diverted to Iceland to land survivors of the Norwegian ship Barfonn and to seek much needed repairs. After two idle months in Hvalfjord, Baddeck returned to Canada and was temporarily decommissioned to undergo a complete engine overhaul.

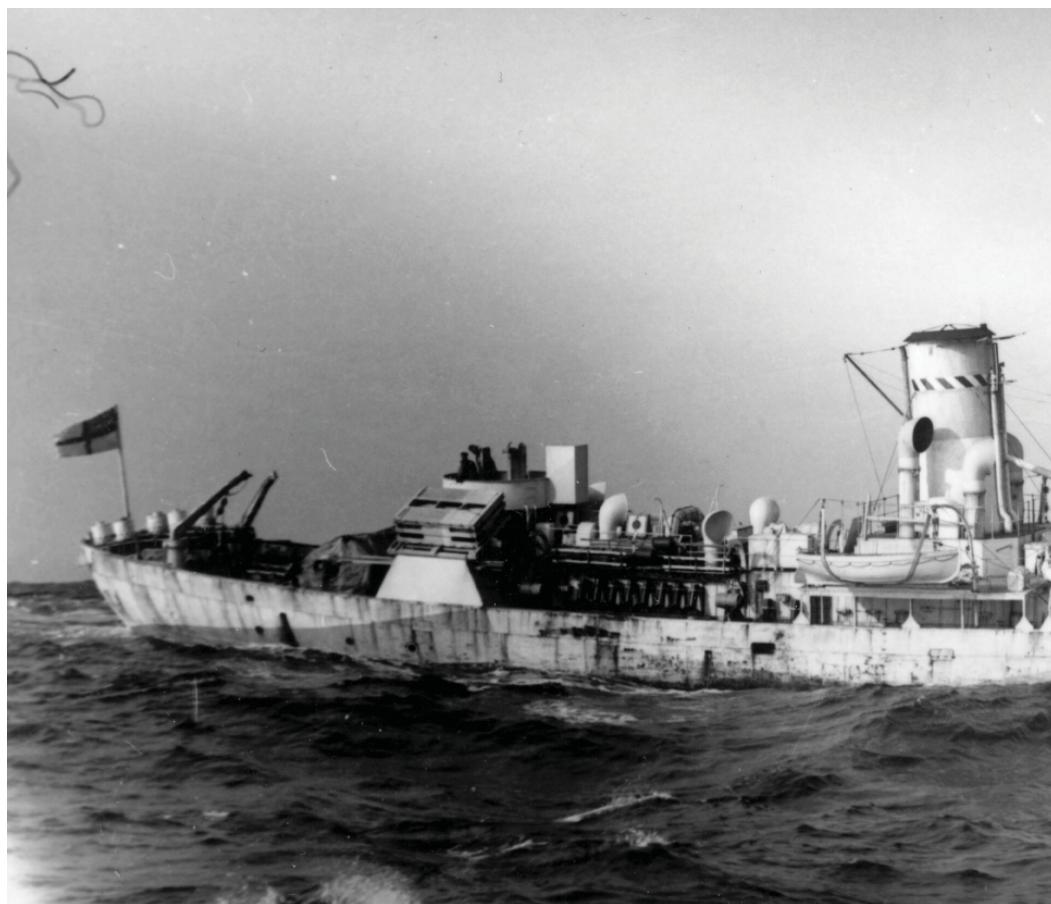
After leaving HMCS Baddeck, Easton was appointed a Lieutenant (Temp.) RCNR. In April 1942, he assumed command of the RCN corvette HMCS Sackville K181, which was at that time temporarily out of commission and unmanned.

Sackville re-commissioned in Halifax on 6 April and Baddeck's ship's company transferred to HMCS Sackville that day.

Following work-ups and anti-submarine (A/S) exercises at Halifax, Sackville escorted the British passenger liner S.S. Fort Townshend to St. John's, Newfoundland. Sackville then concluded her working up program with further A/S exercises off St. John's. The Navy's report on Sackville's war readiness concluded that her commanding officer "has given much time and thought to the A/S organisation and the ship has a good A/S team." Lt. Easton was judged to be 'quiet,' "but has a firm grip on the officers and men." The report concluded that HMCS Sackville, "after a few months running, will be an efficient fighting unit."

On 25 May 1942, HMCS Sackville joined Escort Group C-3 of the Mid-Ocean Escort Force, based in St. John's, Newfoundland. The other five warships in the group were the RCN River-class destroyers HMCS Saguenay D79 and Skeena D59, and the RCN corvettes HMCS Wetaskiwin K175, Galt K163 and Camrose K154. Group C-3's senior officer, Wetaskiwin's captain, charged his ships "normally to follow defensive tactics rather than offensive, however distasteful it may be to you, unless you come upon the enemy; then you must do your utmost to destroy him." The escort group's responsibility, he emphasized, was 'To insure the safe and timely arrival of the convoy at its destination.'

Between May and mid-December 1942 Group C3 escorted six eastbound and six westbound convoys across the North Atlantic. Under Easton's command Sackville spent nearly four of those



**HMCS Sackville at sea summer of 1942**

six months at sea as a close escort for an aggregate of 546 merchant ships, only four of which were lost to enemy torpedoes.

HMCS Sackville engaged the enemy during only one convoy, the westbound ON-115 which departed Liverpool on 24 July 1942 with forty-three merchantmen bound for Halifax, Boston, and New York.

Just after midnight on August 3rd, HMCS Sackville encountered a German submarine on the surface and attacked with a 4-inch shell, the gun flash of which temporarily blinded Easton. Illuminated by a star shell from Sackville, the submarine was seen starting to dive. Easton altered course to ram the U-boat but the corvette passed harmlessly over the fast submerging submarine. Depth charges were dropped immediately and Sackville regained A/S contact turned

as she steamed back across the disturbed water. More depth charges were dropped and soon the smell of diesel oil was evident. Suddenly the bow of the submarine broke the surface within yards of Sackville's stern where it was clearly seen by the depth charge handlers on her afterdeck. The sub rose out of the water at a steep angle exposing about a third of her hull. A depth charge finally exploded beneath the sub and it sank beneath the surface again.

Following that encounter HMCS Sackville resumed screening the convoy and two hours later sighted another submarine on the surface about 125 yards away. It crash dived and Sackville again dropped depth charges, but with no results.

Around noon the same day Sackville encountered a third U-boat on the surface. Sackville headed for



the target, which was crossing the corvette's track from right to left. Turning to port to bring her 4-inch gun to bear on the target, Sackville attacked with two 4-inch rounds, both her Vickers machine guns, and her Lewis gun. At a range of less than 200 feet, one of Sackville's explosive shells opened a large hole in the submarine's conning tower. As the submarine crashed dived Sackville kept up the attack with depth charges as passed over the U-boat.

Convoy ON 115 lost three ships to enemy submarines. One submarine was sunk by Skeena and Wetaskiwin, and Sackville had engaged three enemy submarines on the surface. She had been in commission under Lt. Easton's command for just four months.

13 August 1942 a Board of Inquiry concluded that HMCS Sackville

probably sank the first U-boat, did not damage the second, and "caused considerable damage to the conning tower of the third U-boat but probably did not sink it." Commanding Officer Lt. Alan Herbert Easton, RCNR (Temp), was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for "distinguished services before the enemy ... when a U-boat was sighted on the surface [and] he immediately shaped course to ram and through skilful handling of his ship and devotion to duty contributed to the almost certain destruction of one enemy U-boat and the probable damaging of another." A Distinguished Service Medal was awarded to one of Sackville's gunners, and five other seamen received Mention in Dispatches.

HMCS Sackville returned home to Halifax on 26 December 1942

after her last westbound convoy of the year. She proceeded to Liverpool NS in January 1943 for a two-month long refit, and on 10 April 1943 Lt. Easton relinquished command of HMCS Sackville.

In March 1943 Lt. Easton sought a posting ashore. He made his request to RCN headquarters in Ottawa, but it was denied on account of the acute shortage of qualified commanding officers.

Easton was given command of a larger ship, however, HMCS Matane K444. She was the first of Canada's new River Class frigates to be built on the east coast. She was expected to be launched at the end of May and commissioned in October 1943. Thus, between Sackville's return from escort duty in December 1942 and the expected commissioning of HMCS Matane, Lt. Easton had nearly ten months ashore in Halifax. He wrote in his 1963 memoir *50 North* that those months in Halifax, with his wife and young daughter, were for him the happiest time of the war.

*To be continued in the next issue...*

# The Last Flower: HMCS Sackville

By: Doug Thomas



Flower-Class corvettes of all Canadian Navy (RCN), Second World War renown the USN and USCG, and a were based on a British whale-catcher design (Smith Dock's Southern Pride) to meet the demand for a small, seaworthy and inexpensive escort vessel – particularly for work in coastal waters. Many were ordered in the early months of the war from shipyards in the UK and Canada, and they were soon employed in all areas, including blue water operations across the Atlantic.

A total of 269 corvettes were built and served in the UK's Royal Navy, the Roy-

al Canadian Navy (RCN), Second World War renown the USN and USCG, and a number of other navies that carried on the war against the Axis Powers after their nations surrendered, such as the Free French and Norwegian Navies. They also fought for the other side: four Flowers laid down for the French Navy were captured on the building slips in St. Nazaire as German forces over ran France in the Spring of 1940, and three of them were completed for service in the Kreigsmarine as coastal escorts. The USN was critically short of anti-subma-

rine resources, particularly along the Atlantic seaboard as its ships were deployed to the Pacific after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The corvette helped to fill this void, too: 15 corvettes built in Canada (in Collingwood, Midland, Kingston, and Quebec City) to British order were referred to as Patrol Gunboats (PG) in the USN. These PGs were modified with a different gun armament, usually a single 3-inch, 50-calibre (3"50) forward in place of the 4" gun, and another single 3"50 (as depicted in the accompany-

ing image of the USS Intensity) replacing the British and Canadian single 2-Pounder pom-pom AA gun aft.

It is difficult to count the total of corvettes that served in the war, or each navy in which they served, as there was a tangle of transfers and name changes in this very numerous class: for example HMS Privet was built in Quebec City for the Royal Navy and

transferred nine months later to the USN and re-named USS Prudent. USS Splendor was built in Kingston, Ont, transferred to the RN under lend-lease and commissioned as HMS Rosebay in July 1943, and then returned to the USN after the war – although none of the American Flowers were retained in service post-1945. The fact that 122 corvettes were

The fact that 122 corvettes were built in Canada and 123 were commissioned into the RCN is also confusing. The following table attempts to sort this out, but it does not address the many and complex transfers between the RN and USN of Canadian built corvettes.

	Canadian-Built	British-Built	Canadian-Built Exports to USA	Total
	107 Flower Class (including Revised and Increased Endurance versions)	4 Revised Flower Class; 12 Castle Class		
	15 Flower Class for the US Navy (Patrol Gunboat)	Castle Class were originally named for Castles in the UK; renamed for Canadian Towns on commissioning		
Built in Canada	107		15	122
Served in RCN	107	16*		123

\*These 16 modern corvettes were exchanged on a one-for-one basis for 16 Canadian-built Algerine-Class Fleet Minesweepers.

## Corvette Trivia

HMCS Sackville is the sole survivor of this once-numerous class. British Flower Class corvettes were named after flowers, such as HMS Pansy and HMS Geranium, but only 10 of the Canadian Flowers were so named, as they were laid-down for the RN in Canadian shipyards. The Brits courteously named them after Canadian wildflowers (plus Fennel, an herb that has a yellow flower), but they were manned by RCN crews and commissioned into the RCN in 1941, retaining such Flower names as Spikenard, Windflower, and Arrowhead – named for the flower but “adopted” by the town of Arrowhead, B.C. The British corvettes perpetuated the names of RN WW I Flower Class minesweeping sloops, but most Canadian corvettes were named for towns and cities, as were 60 out of

70 frigates that served in RCN. This was a popular decision, as many of the towns and cities established a warm and supportive relationship with “their” ship, supplying them comforts such as hand-knitted mittens, scarves and tuques and such entertainment items as radios, phonographs and pianos.

There has been much discussion of ship names – an important morale issue to their crews. It is routine to refer to the ship’s company by their ship’s names when they are fallen-in for divisions and other ceremonial occasions. I wonder whether the ship’s companies of HMS Pansy and HMS Poppy had a problem with being referred to as Poppies and Pansies?

On a more sombre note, 36 Flower Class corvettes were lost in the war, ten of them Canadian.

# Trust and Mess Events

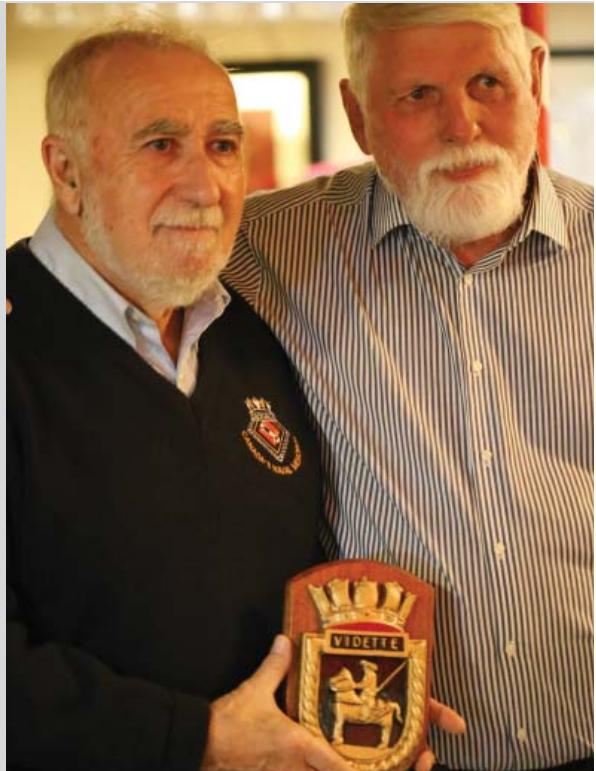
**HMCS Sackville's New Year's Day Levee** remains popular with Trustees, residents and out of province guests visiting in the area during the holiday season. Among those celebrating the New Year onboard Sackville were three generations of the McKee family: Life Trustee Ian McKee, left, of Halifax is shown with son Bruce, daughter-in-law Shelley and grandsons Ian and Simon who were visiting from British Columbia.

(Bill Gard photo)



## HMS Vidette

Joe Whitiker and his wife Kate visited HMCS Sackville 04 October and presented a ship's badge of HMS Vidette, his father's ship during WWII. Joe was hosted by Doug Thomas, who had been corresponding with him for many months prior to the visit. Vidette was a V&W Class destroyer completed in April 1918. She served in the RN for some months prior to the WWI armistice, and was very active during the Second World War as an Anti-Submarine escort: she was credited with the sinking, or participating in the sinking, of five U-boats between April 1943 and August 1944 – a remarkable record!





## The Naval Association of Canada Endowment Fund

**Fund** has contributed \$5,000 towards production of a video featuring HMCS Sackville, Canada's Naval Memorial and the pivotal Battle of the Atlantic. Bob Lancaster, left, vice president of the Nova Scotia Naval Association of Canada presents the cheque to Wendall Brown, Chair of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust during the ship's Christmas luncheon for members and guests. The flat screen version of a 360 degree surround screen video will be shown in the hemispheric theatre next to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic and Sackville Landing, in the ship's forward mess deck and at other public venues.

**(Ian Urquhart photo)**

**CNMT life member Vice Admiral Art McDonald, Commander RCN,** welcomes life member Commodore Josée Kurtz returning from commanding Standing Naval Maritime Group II (SNMG II)



# Membership Report

## Membership Update

“Welcome Aboard” to our newest members. The Trust had a good intake of new members in 2019 and it is hoped that the trend will continue in 2020, as the Royal Canadian Navy and the CNMT celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the end of the Battle of the Atlantic.

### Annual Members 2019

Laura Bohnert, Halifax, NS  
Bobbi-Lee Boudreau, Burton, NB  
Todd Brayman, Hammonds Plains, NS  
Scott Brousseau, Halifax, NS  
George Ching, Brampton, ON  
David Collins, Victoria, BC  
Ken Darcy, Dartmouth, NS  
Donald Ellis, Dartmouth, NS  
Craig Evans, Prospect, NS  
Zane Fanning, Lower Coverdale, NB  
Art Forward, Eastern Passage, NS  
Brad Forward, Elmsdale, NS  
Susan Goldberg, Middle Sackville, NS  
Kent Gregory, Halifax, NS  
Kunihiro Ito, Toronto, ON  
Gregory Jenner, Dartmouth, NS  
Kimberley Jenner, Dartmouth, NS  
C. Douglas Maginley, Mahone Bay, NS  
Michael McCluskey, Dartmouth, NS  
Glen Patrick Michiel, Prince George, BC  
C.J. Morrison, Putnam, IL.  
Jim Muckle, Chester Basin, NS  
Nancy Timbrell - Muckle, Chester Basin, NS  
Daniel Orwick, Elmsdale, NS  
Denis Pelletier, Dartmouth, NS  
Bruce Ramshaw, Edmonton,  
AB  
Clark Rowsell, Whitby, ON  
Roy Rowsell, Whitby, ON  
Anthony Schnare, Blandford, NS  
Derrick Shillington, Hammonds Plains, NS  
Stephen Vallis, Fall River, NS  
Ian Wheelband, Ashburn, ON

### Life Members 2019

Frans Boetes, Miami, Florida  
Steve Chard, Dorset, UK  
Alexander Cochrane, Waverley, NS  
D.J. Cochrane, Waverley, NS  
Linda Dean, Hamilton, ON  
Alfred Giles, Lawrencetown, NS  
Charles Goldberg, Middle Sackville, NS  
Joseph Lombardi, Mt. Pleasant, S. Carolina  
Les Mader, Orleans, ON  
Brian McCullough, Kanata, ON  
Leo McTaggart, Dartmouth, NS  
Rolle Monteith, Plymouth, UK  
Jeff Morrison, Fall River, NS  
Mark Mosher, Halifax, NS  
Karen Nighswander, Quathiaski Cove, BC  
Connor Overmars, Bedford, NS  
Claire Overmars, Bedford, NS  
John Thomson, Ottawa, ON  
Shelley Williamson, Dartmouth, NS  
Steven Williamson, Dartmouth, NS



# Glenora Distillery

Cape Breton, Nova Scotia



Glenora is the first Single Malt Whisky Distillery in North America. In tribute to HMCS SACKVILLE, Canada's Naval Memorial, Glenora has hand crafted an 18 year old Single Malt Whisky. Twenty-five dollars from the sale of each bottle will be donated to the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust.

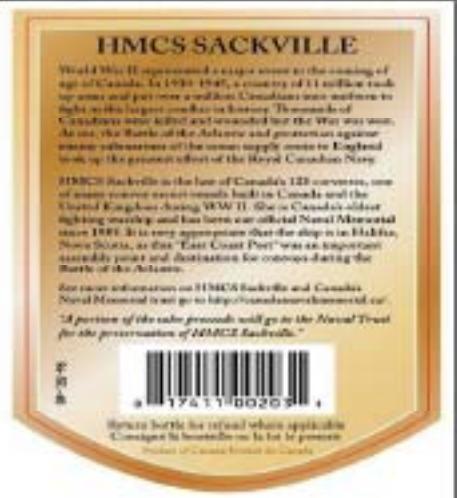
Tasting Notes to this fine product - Nose: Hints of Apple and Maple. Palate: Vanilla, Honey and Hazelnuts. Finish: Lingering sweetness.

Purchase information: \$125.00 per 750ml bottle plus shipping. To order or arrange pick up call 902-468-6516 Product can also be purchased directly at the corporate office:  
17 Murdock MacKay Court, Lower Sackville, NS, B4C 4G3.

Website: [www.glenoradistillery.com](http://www.glenoradistillery.com)



Photo Credits: Glenora Distillery, CNMT





Return Undeliverable  
Canadian Address To:  
HMCS Sackville  
P:O Box 99000 Station Forces  
Halifax NS B3K 5X5

