

Foreword

During recent discussions with the organization of Canada's Canadian Naval Memorial which most of us see as HMCS Sackville, it was determined that educating the general population of Canada as well as those in uniform is key in bringing to the forefront, the importance of maintaining Canada's Naval heritage in the form of HMCS Sackville.

So your first question may well be "Why is a stoker (engineer) Chief telling me all this?" In answer to that question, the following is provided. Since well before my entry into the Navy 30 years ago, studying the history of Canada's contributions in World War II has been a pastime for me. My father was a foot soldier in the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment participating in battles in Sicily, Italy and northern Europe. My uncle was a Signaller on HMC Ships; Stormont and Owen Sound to name but two participating in trans-Atlantic convoy escort duties. Finally, a close family friend flew Canso flying boats out of Gander on anti-submarine patrols in the Atlantic. You could say I received much education on all three branches of service from an early age! This has obviously tweaked a life long interest for me as well as for many others I know. In what I jokingly call a 'weak' moment but what is actually a true honour for me, I volunteered to give you this short but hopefully educational look at one of many chapters in Canadian naval history.



Introduction

“To the casual observer, World War II was won on land, but the key to victory was actually the Battle of the Atlantic. It was control of the seas that allowed the Allies to fight on the land in Europe and in the air.” This very true quote comes from Mac Johnston in his latest book “Corvettes Canada”.

A leading American authority answered when queried about the battle of the Atlantic, “Which Battle of the Atlantic are you concerned with? The one we had during World War II or the one coming up.” This comment was made in 1960 at the height of the Cold War between the US and USSR but still has relevance today. He went on further to say “The Atlantic lifeline was then, as now, the foundation of Western security and defence.”

“The Battle of the Atlantic was the dominating factor all through the War.....the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril” This comment was made by Winston Churchill in the post war years as he wrote his memoirs. He went on further to elaborate that not only did the convoys deliver war materials to fight the enemy but also, supplied the basic necessities of life to provide for the population of Great Britain. So, aside from foodstuffs, what did Canada produce that needed to be shipped to the front?

Canadian industry and more specifically, the Canadian people produced:

Directly war related:

- 4 destroyers;
- 70 frigates;
- 123 corvettes;
- 122 minesweepers;
- 398 Merchant vessels;
- Formed the “Park Steamship Company” so that all Canadian Merchant shipping fell under one administrative umbrella;
- 3,600 Specialized craft (Landing craft, Motor torpedo boats etc);
- 4,000 trucks each week;
- 450 armoured vehicles each week, and
- 4,000 military aircraft each year from Harvard trainers to Avro Lancaster bombers.

The Canadian government also allotted three quarters of a billion dollars in indirect support producing:

- ammunition;
- guns;
- radar sets;
- rifles;
- synthetic rubbers, and
- veneers which utilized that brand new invention; plastic to coat items for preservation.

For Canada, and the people of Canada, World War II, or more specifically, the Battle of the Atlantic began in the evening hours of September 3rd, 1939 with the sinking of the British passenger liner SS Athenia just north of Ireland at the hands of the German submarine U-30. Of the 1300 passengers, 113 lost their lives including 4 Canadians. One

of these, a 10-year-old girl from Hamilton Ontario named Margaret Hayworth would be touted symbolically as Canada's first war casualty. Though Canada was now officially on a war footing, it would be another week on September 10th, 1939 when a formal declaration of war would



SS Athenia (war-today.com)



U-30 (uboot.net)

come out of Ottawa.

Also on September 1st, Germany invaded Poland causing France and Britain to declare war on Germany by September 3rd. It is literally within hours of receiving the order to 'commence hostilities' that U-30's Captain made that fateful call.

At the outbreak of war, though expansion plans were in place, Canada's Navy comprised 13 vessels; six relatively modern destroyers*, five minesweepers and two training vessels with a standing strength of just 1,774 personnel. A further 1,912 were also available from the (RCNVR) Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve, (RCNR) Royal Canadian Navy Reserve which was made up of merchant seamen and finally the British Columbia Fisherman's Reserve.

**Skeena, Saguanay, Fraser, St Laurent, Restigouche and Ottawa. (Initially RN)*



HMCS Skeena (Esquimalt Military Museum)

On September 16th, 1939, less than a week after Canada's declaration of and entry into war, the first convoy; HX1 departed Halifax carrying war material and food. The 18 ships escorted by HMC ships Saguenay and St. Laurent would be the first of over 25, 000 merchant vessels that would sail the North Atlantic under RCN escort.



HMCS Algonquin (uboot.net)

Prewar planning saw the Canadian government order eight modern destroyer from the British of their successful 'Tribal' class. Due to production delays and higher priorities, only four were delivered to the RCN during the war with the last four being constructed in Canadian shipyards at war's end. The four wartime Tribals were HMC ships Haida, Huron, Iroquois and Athabaskan I.

Each of these ships was involved to some degree in every major operation in the Atlantic including the D Day landings and the sinking of the German Battle cruiser Scharnhorst.

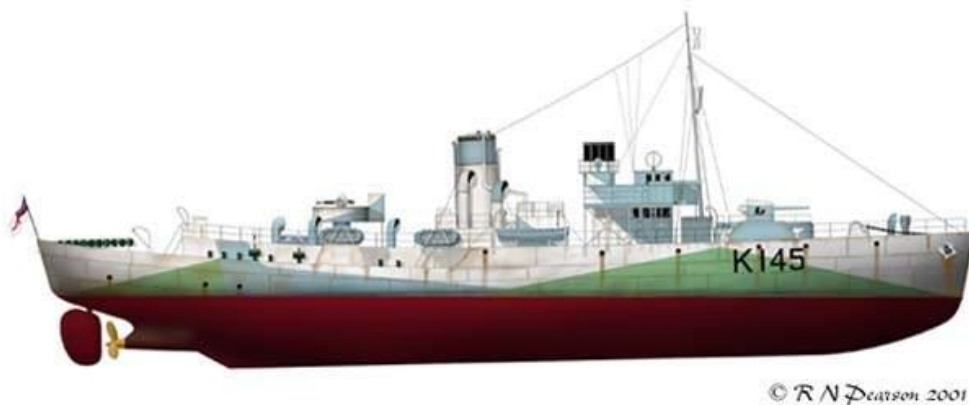
Haida is the only one left and stands as Canada's "fightingest ship" being preserved by Parks Canada in Hamilton, Ontario and Athabaskan's sinking in April 1944 is told in the book 'Unlucky Lady'. The last four Tribals built after the war were Athabaskan II, Micmac, Cayuga and Nootka.

In US President Roosevelt's and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's Lend Lease or "Ships for land" deal, the British Navy received 50 aging destroyers from the US Navy in return for land leases in British colonies. The RCN initially took over 6 but this was later increased to eight. It is not so much that the ships were old (HMCS Terra Nova sailed in support of Operation Desert Storm in 1991 at 37 years old), but that since the end of World War I in 1919, they had pretty much remained mothballed. This was likely the reason for Buxton being quickly pulled into Reserve as a Training vessel after her boilers blew in 1943. These vessels were referred to as the 'Town' class destroyers.

HMCS Niagara (naval-history.net)



Early on, a project was envisioned in England for a class of ship that could be built in small remote shipyards: the birth of the corvette. (Or as Winston Churchill called them, the 'cheap and nasties')



HMCS Arrowhead(1940) (CF Photo)

The initial 10 built were for the Royal Navy as the 'Flower' class but after being delivered to England by their Canadian crews, it was soon realized the British could not man them so turned over as RCN vessels were: HMC Ships Windflower, Trillium, Hepatica, Arrowhead, Snowberry, Eyebright, Mayflower, Spikenard, Fennel and Bittersweet.



Left: HMCS Snowberry
(Naval Museum of Alberta)

Right: HMCS Wetaskiwin

As Canadian corvettes started leaving their shipyards, it was quickly decided to name them after communities and the first group of seven launched from Canadian yards became HMC Ships Chambly, Orillia, Collingwood, Cobalt, Wetaskiwin, Albernie and Agassiz.

On going modifications continued throughout the war improving on the original design based on 'lessons learned' in the early stages of the Battle of the Atlantic. Generally, characteristics were as follows:

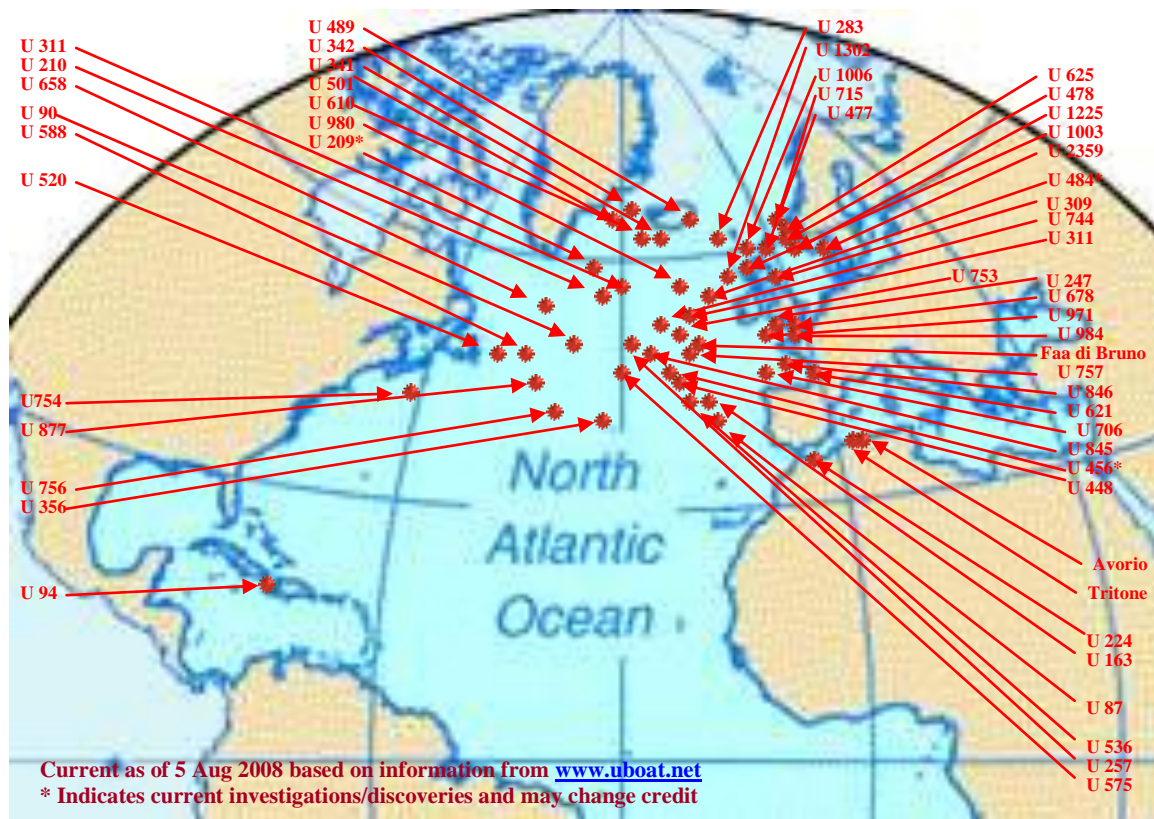
Displacement	950 and later 1010 tons
Length O/A	205 feet gradually increased to 251 feet
Breadth	33 feet
Machinery	2 boilers, 1 four cylinder triple expansion engine
Armament	-1 four inch gun -Various small calibre automatic weapons -2 (later 4) depth charge throwers -a small number with hedgehog
Speed	16 – 16.5 knots
Endurance	7,400 and later 10,000 nautical miles

Obviously, modifications were made depending on the timing and the immediate need. Some of these included minesweeping, Anti-aircraft pickets and shore bombardment support.

The crews on corvettes varied up to 120 but typically a crew would comprise 7 Officers and up to 90 enlisted men. Records from the German Navy indicate the typical RCN sailor to be an admirable yet formidable foe.

The Battle of the Atlantic

Was Canada's contribution to the Battle of the Atlantic pivotal? This statement could be argued aggressively either way. Was Canada's contribution instrumental in winning the Battle of the Atlantic? – Of this, there is no doubt.



In all, Canadian units of the RCN and RCAF destroyed 52 Axis submarines with 32 of these being credited in whole or in part to Canadian Naval vessels and 20 to RCAF oversea patrol aircraft based out of Halifax, St John's, Gander, Reykjavik and English bases. In just 10 days, Consolidated Canso aircraft of RCAF Squadron 162 based out of northern England sank 3 submarines and in 6 weeks, an escort Group comprising HMC Ships Kootenay, Ottawa and Chaudiere with HMS Statice also sank 3 submarines; 2 feats unmatched by the Allies in the Atlantic during World War II.

The price paid by the fledgling Royal Canadian Navy was fairly substantial with an approximate material loss of 10% and over 2100 casualties. Also lost were roughly 250 aircraft and 900 crewmembers from the Royal Canadian Air Force. Rarely included in statistics on the Battle of the Atlantic, is the cost to the Merchant Navy. In all 83 merchant vessels flagged and/or crewed by Canadians were lost with 1800 casualties.

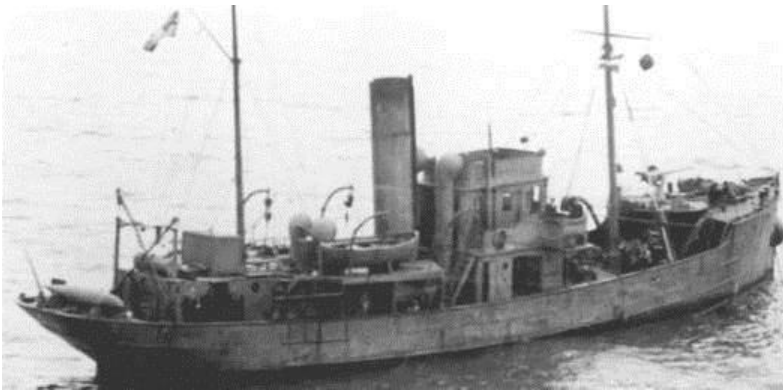
Vessels Lost

HMCS *Fraser*

On **June 25th, 1940**, the destroyers HMCS *Fraser* along with HMCS *Restigouche* were ordered to stand off the French coast in the Bay of Biscay to evacuate civilians caught in the mass exodus following the German invasion of France. In the melee, *Fraser* collided with the RN cruiser HMS *Calcutta* severing *Fraser* just forward of her bridge. *Fraser* sank along with 47 of her crew and 19 of *Calcutta*'s crew.



HMCS *Bras d'Or*



In the early morning hours of **October 19th, 1940**, the Auxiliary Minesweeper HMCS *Bras d'Or* and her crew of 40 simply disappeared during a rather nasty storm in the Gulf of St Lawrence. Speculation is that she sank due to damage suffered during a

grounding the day before combined with upper deck icing caused by freezing sleet.

HMCS *Margaree*

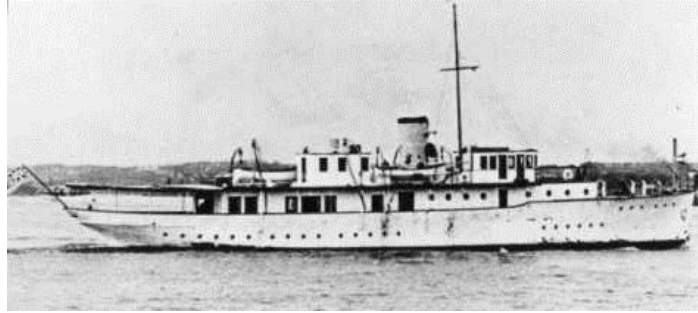
On the evening of **October 20th, 1940**, as the sole escort for a westbound convoy, the destroyer HMCS *Margaree* inexplicably turned into the path of the lead freighter while the convoy was 400 miles off the Irish coast. The freighter's bow cut *Margaree* in half at the bridge with the forward end sinking immediately and the stern section sinking overnight. Of the 142 crewmembers lost that night, ironically, 86 were survivors of *Fraser*'s sinking 4 months earlier.



HMCS *Otter*

On the morning of **March 26th, 1941**, the Armed Yacht HMCS *Otter*, while awaiting the arrival of a British submarine off Sambro Head mysteriously and very quickly burned to the water line. Though the bulk of the crew made it into the water and 22 survive, 19 more crewmembers

were lost or succumbed to exposure. It is later determined that a generator fire quickly ignited the wooden hulled vessel turning it into an inferno.



HMCS *Levis*

While escorting convoy SC-44 in the early morning of **September 19th, 1941**, the corvette HMCS *Levis* was struck by a torpedo, port side, forward of the bridge fired from U-74 off the east coast of Greenland. Survivors were picked up by sister ships HMCS *Mayflower* and HMCS *Agassiz*, but *Levis* lost 18 of her crew. Taken into tow by

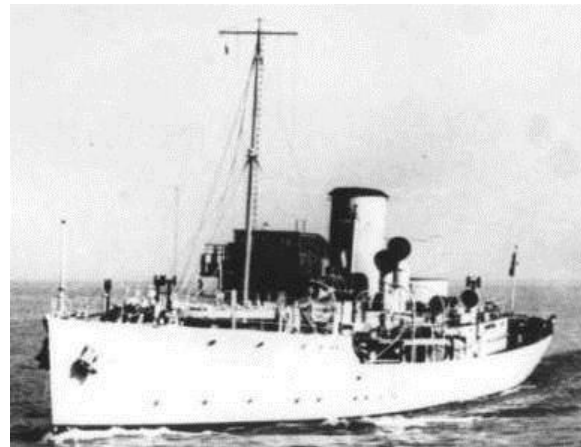


Levis sinking. Uniquely, this is one of the few photos of a corvette sinking. Generally there was insufficient time to get a camera to 'catch' the event on film. (hmcslevis.org)

Mayflower, she sank later that same afternoon. A River class frigate launched in Lauzon, PQ and commissioned in July 1944 would again carry the proud *Levis* name.

HMCS *Windflower*

While escorting convoy SC 58 the morning of **December 7th, 1941**, the corvette HMCS *Windflower* collided with the Dutch freighter *Zypenburg* in heavy fog off the Grand Banks. Though *Zypenburg* remained behind rescuing survivors, *Windflower* lost 23 of her crew.



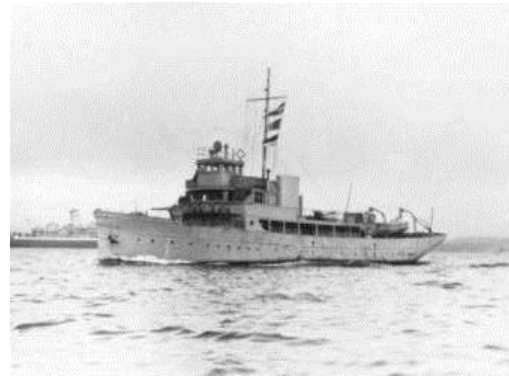
HMCS *Spikenard*



While escorting convoy SC 67, south of Iceland, late in the evening on **February 10th, 1942**, the corvette HMCS Spikenard and the Norwegian freighter Heina were both struck by torpedoes fired from U –136. Spikenard actually received two hits in quick succession, which caused her to sink in under 4 minutes. The loss was not discovered until the next morning and the RN corvette HMS Gentian found just 8 survivors.

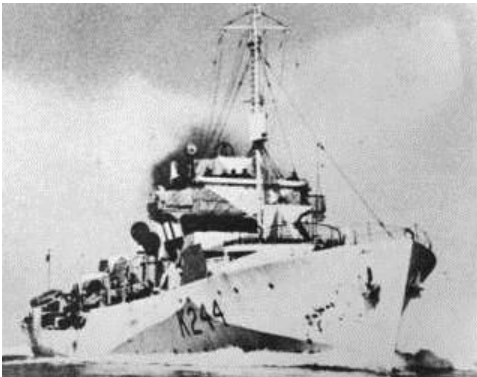
HMCS *Raccoon*

Just after midnight on **September 7th, 1942**, while escorting convoy QS 33 from Quebec City to Sydney, the Armed Yacht HMCS Raccoon disappeared after being hit by 2 torpedoes from U 165 near Cap des Rosiers on Quebec's Gaspé peninsula. The entire crew of 37 was never seen again. The loss of several more ships in the next few months led to the Canadian government closing the St Lawrence River to overseas shipping. From 1943 onwards, all further transportation was done by rail until war's end. The Canadian public was not made aware of the 'Battle of the St Lawrence' until after the war though local residents along the Quebec's south shore were constantly reminded.



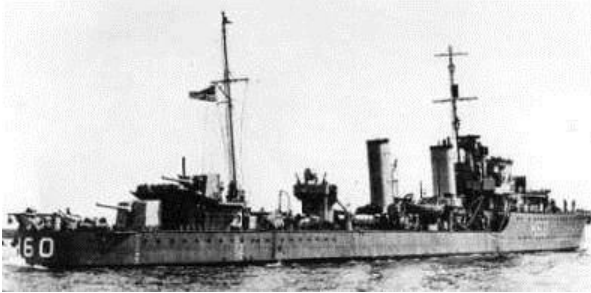
HMCS *Charlottetown*

At the morning watch changeover on **September 11th, 1942**, the corvette HMCS Charlottetown quickly sank after two torpedoes from U 517 punctured her starboard side. Charlottetown had been running ahead of convoy SQ 35 sailing from Quebec City to Sydney at the time and this whole spectacle took place right in front of the residents of Cap-Chat, Quebec. Miraculously, only ten of her crew were lost with the other 55 being picked up by her consort, the minesweeper HMCS Clayoquot. Ironically, over half of Charlottetown's casualties were due to her own depth charges exploding as she sank.



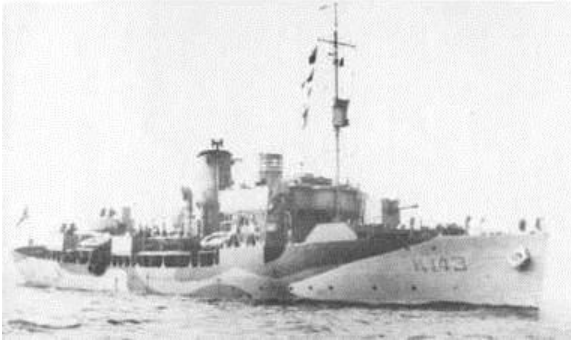
HMCS *Ottawa*

On the night of **September 13th, 1942** and just before turning over escort duties of convoy ON 127 in mid Atlantic, the destroyer HMCS *Ottawa* was hit in the bow by a torpedo fired by U91. Initially, there was some thought that the ship may be saved but roughly 15 minutes later, U 91 fire another torpedo into *Ottawa*, stbd side midship which cut the ship in half. Aside from 119 of her own crew, also lost were 6 RN and 22 merchant seaman picked up from sinking ships over the days leading up to *Ottawa*'s demise.



HMCS *Louisburg*

The corvette HMCS *Louisburg* carries the unique distinction of being the only RCN vessel lost to enemy aircraft. On the evening of **February 6th, 1943**, while escorting a convoy out of Gibraltar to carry supplies to the Allied armies fighting in North Africa, *Louisburg* was struck on her port side by a torpedo launched from marauding Italian aircraft. Only 48 of her crew of 88 were picked up with, once again *Louisburg*'s own depth charges killing many crewmembers in the water as she sank.



HMCS *Weyburn*

On the morning of **February 22nd, 1943**, shortly after taking up station on the port side of convoy MKS 8 taking supplies to North Africa, the corvette HMCS *Weyburn* struck a mine midship port side laid by U 118 a few weeks earlier. Though the initial inspection suggested the ship could be saved, several internal bulkheads gave way and she sank quickly. Still tethered to the RN destroyer HMS *Wivern* which had come alongside to take on casualties of the initial explosion, *Weyburn*'s own depth charges exploded leading to more casualties in the water and on *Wivern*'s upper decks. Eventually, *Wivern* was towed to Gibraltar with 68 members of *Weyburn*'s crew, 9 less than she had before the mine strike.



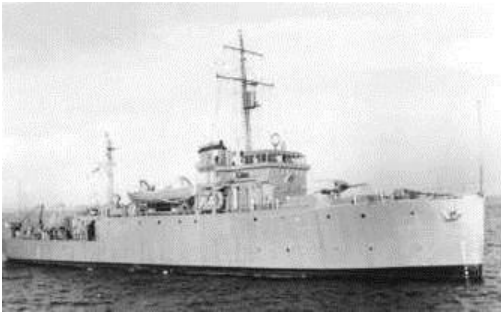
HMCS St. Croix

On the evening of **September 20th, 1943**, the destroyer HMCS St Croix became the first Allied victim of the new German torpedo; the GNAT (short for German Naval Acoustic Torpedo) fired by U 305 southeast of Greenland. By the time the convoy reached Liverpool, just one survivor of the crew of 149 survived after the RN frigate HMS Inchen, assigned to pick up survivors, was herself sunk two days later.



HMCS Chedebucto

Early on the morning of **October 21st, 1943**, the minesweeper HMCS Chedebucto collided with the British cable layer Lord Kelvin in heavy fog near Rimouski. Though only one crewmember of Chedebucto was lost, the incident brought to light the gravely serious training shortcomings and woefully inadequate experience held by many RCN officers and seaman as they are rushed into harms way.



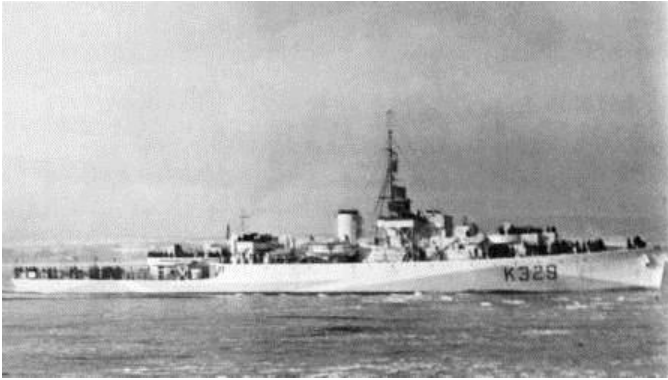
HMCS Athabaskan

On the night of **April 28th-29th, 1944**, the destroyers HMCS Haida and HMCS Athabaskan chased down two German destroyers patrolling the French coast near Brest France. Early in the morning on the 29th, a torpedo from one of the German ships struck Athabaskan's port side. Losing power and slowing, a second explosion, suspected to be Athabaskan's aft magazine, doomed the ship causing her to sink in under three minutes. Haida picked up 44 survivors but of the rest of the crew, 128 are lost and 86 more are taken prisoner.



HMCS Valleyfield

Late in the evening of **May 6th, 1944** after turning over westbound convoy ONM 243 to the Western Local Escort Group south of Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula, the frigate



HMCS Valleyfield was torpedoed by U 548, breaking in half, sinking in less than four minutes. Of the 125 men lost that night, it is suspected that nearly half of them made it off the ship but succumbed to exposure in the confusion as the remainder of the Escort Group divided their time between looking for survivors and hunting the now long gone U 548.

HMCS Regina



On the evening of **August 8th, 1944** as the lone escort of a re-supply convoy to the Normandy coast, the corvette, HMCS Regina was struck by an acoustic torpedo from U667 sinking, quite literally by eyewitness accounts, in seconds. The only survivors were the 63 men on the upper decks attending to the survivors of a ship in the convoy, which had just struck an underwater mine. In all, 30 of Regina's crewmembers were lost.

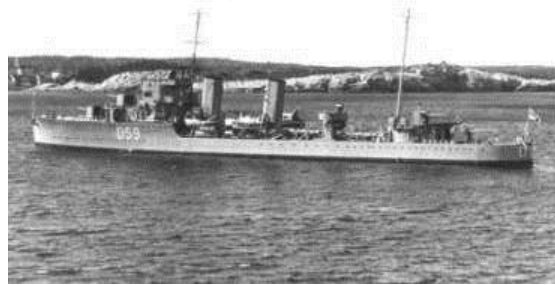
HMCS Alberni

Just after the lunchtime pipe "Hands to dinner" on **August 21st, 1944** and while transiting the English Channel near the Isle of Wight, the 'old' corvette HMCS Alberni was struck by an acoustic torpedo from U 480 on her port side aft. Sinking in less than 20 seconds, most of her off watch crew was lost; 59. For the survivors, 2 RN Motor Torpedo boats returning from a strike on German merchant shipping came across and rescued 31 survivors.



HMCS Skeena

While sitting out a storm at anchor off Iceland's rocky west coast on **October 25th, 1944**, the destroyer HMCS Skeena dragged her anchor grounding on the rocky bottom. Gale force winds of over 100 mph and confusion surrounding an 'Abandon Ship' order lead to the deaths of 15 of Skeena's crew.



HMCS Shawinigan

On the night of **November 24th, 1944** after escorting the passenger ferry Burgeo into Port-aux-Basques, the corvette HMCS Shawinigan was torpedoed and sunk by U 1228. Shawinigan's CO had opted to wait off the coast for Burgeo's departure the following morning so it was not until Burgeo's arrival back in Sydney two days later that the corvette was noticed missing. The entire crew of 91 was lost as the torpedo struck Shawinigan stern-on causing her to sink quickly.



HMCS Clayoquot

On **Christmas Eve 1944** after an inbound Liberty Ship reported striking a mine off Sambro Head, the minesweeper HMCS Clayoquot was sent out to investigate and in turn was struck in the stern by a torpedo from U 806. The ensuing explosion caused the loss of 8 of Clayoquot's crew. Amazingly, Clayoquot's CO LCdr Craig Campbel and the Captain of U 806 Klaus Hornbostel would go on to become life long friends after the war.



HMCS *Trentonian*



On the afternoon of **February 22nd, 1945**, while escorting convoy BTC 76 from Antwerp to the Thames estuary, the corvette HMCS Trentonian was struck aft on the stbd side by a torpedo fired from U 1004 with the loss of 6 crew. Though not the last RCN vessel, Trentonian would be the last corvette sunk during World War II.

HMCS *Guysborough*

Just after supertime on **March 17th, 1945** after a fuelling stop in the Azores, the minesweeper HMCS Guysborough was struck by a torpedo fired from U 878. With no injuries and damage confined to the stern area, Damage Control parties stepped into action and stopped the ingress of water even though the ship was dead in the water. Unfortunately, 45 minutes later, U 878 fired another torpedo into Guysborough causing her to sink in short order. Even still, only 2 crew were lost but in the 19 hours following until their rescue the next day, 49 more succumbed to their injuries or exposure.



HMCS *Esquimalt*

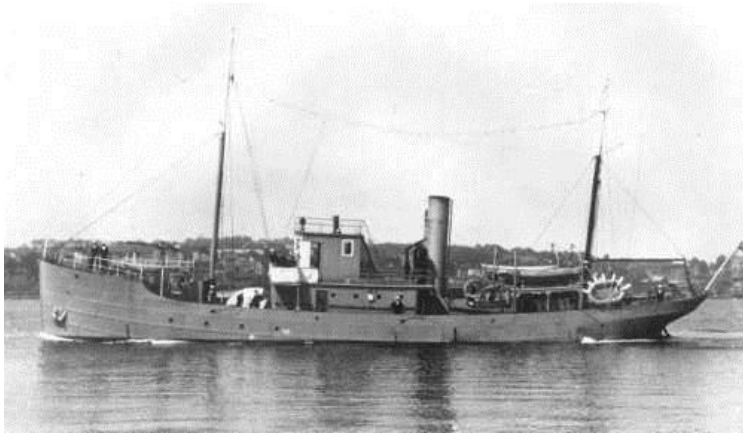
Late in the evening of **April 15th, 1945** while conducting minesweeping and anti submarine patrols off Halifax harbour, the minesweeper HMCS Esquimalt was torpedoed and sunk off Sambro Island by U 190 with the loss of 44 of her crew. Striking her stern on, the torpedo obliterated the entire aft end of the ship and it sank in less than 4 minutes. Though several aircraft over flew the area and two other minesweepers passed within 2 miles, it was only after being in the water over 6 hours that survivors were rescued by another minesweeper, HMCS Sarnia. Esquimalt has the dubious honour of being the last RCN vessel lost to enemy action in World War II. Ironically, less than one month later, on May 12th, U 190 would be escorted into Bays Bull, NL by HMC Ships Victroiville and Thorlock and on June 4th, 1945 into St Johns as a war prize.



Vessels deemed total losses

HMCS *Ypres*

On **May 12th, 1941** while guarding the submarine nets off Halifax harbour, the British battleship *Repulse* accidentally rammed the Battle class trawler HMCS *Ypres*. Though sunk, all of her crew survived.



HMCS *Adversus*



On **December 20th, 1941** after running aground during a blizzard off Liverpool, all of the crew of the ex RCMP Patrol vessel HMCS *Adversus* made it safely to shore but the vessel was lost.

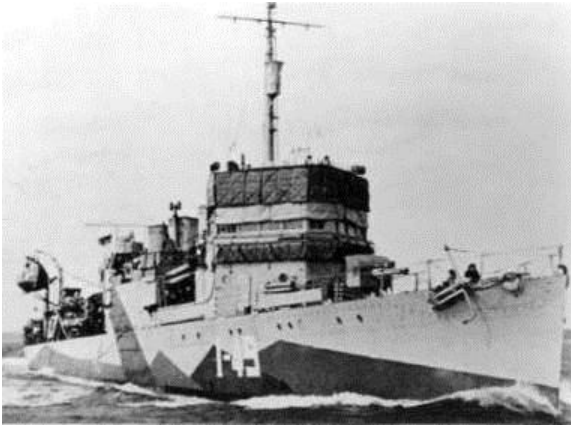
HMCS *Saguenay*

On November 15th, 1942 off Cape Race Newfoundland, the destroyer HMCS *Saguenay* was accidentally rammed by the Panamanian freighter *Azra* losing her stern when her depth charges exploded. The aft end of the ship was eventually sealed off and from October of 1943, the ship was utilized at Cornwallis as a training platform.



HMCS Columbia

On **February 25th, 1944**, the destroyer HMCS Columbia touched bottom off Motion Bay, Nfld during an extremely foggy transit. She was eventually towed to Liverpool, NS where she would live her life out as an ammunition hulk.



HMCS Chebogue

On **October 4th, 1944** after being torpedoed in the mid Atlantic by U 1227 and losing 7 of her crew, the frigate HMCS Chebogue made landfall near Wales but promptly sinks in a gale.



HMCS Magog



On **October 14th, 1944** off Pointe-des-Monts, Quebec, the frigate HMCS Magog lost 50 feet of her stern from a torpedo fired from U 1223. Her hulk was towed to Quebec City as scrap.

29th Motor Torpedo Boat Flotilla

In Ostende harbour, Belgium on **February 14th, 1945** at 4:30 in the afternoon a welders spark set the surface of the water ablaze where the 29th Motor Torpedo Boat Flotilla was based. Fire quickly engulfed the wooden vessels setting the whole base ablaze. By the evening, 12 Boats had been burned out and 60 sailors killed; 26 RCN and 35 RN. The Flotilla had effectively been wiped out and in March ceased to exist 'on the books'.



HMCS *Teme*

On **March 29th, 1945**, the frigate HMCS Teme was torpedoed by U 246 while escorting coastal convoy BTC 111 off Lands End. Losing 60 feet of her stern and four of her crew, she was towed to Falmouth, England and declared a war loss.



HMCS Teme (Public Archives Canada)

Note: All images from the preceding section from readyayeready.com unless otherwise indicated

So how large was Canada's Navy by the numbers? By VE Day in May of 1945, Canada boasted a 400 ship Navy with over 100, 000 personnel making it the Third largest Allied Navy next to the British Royal Navy and the United States Navy.

Cruiser

Ontario

Uganda

Escort Carrier

Nabob

Puncher

Armed Merchant Cruiser

Prince David

Prince Robert

Prince Henry

Destroyer

Algonquin	Annapolis
Assiniboine	Athabaskan*
Buxton*	Chaudiere
Columbia*	Fraser*
Gatineau	Haida
Hamilton	Huron
Iroquois	Kootenay
Margaree*	Niagara
Ottawa (1st)*	Ottawa (2nd)
Qu'appelle	Restigouche
Saguenay	St. Clair
St. Croix*	St. Francis
St. Laurent	Saskatchewan
Sioux	Skeena*

Frigate

Antigonish	Annan
Beacon Hill	Buckingham
Cap de la Madeleine	Cape Breton
Capilano	Carlplace
Charlottetown (2nd)	Chebogue*
Coaticook	Dunver
Eastview	Ettrick
Fort Erie	Glance Bay
Grou	Hallowell
Inch Aaron	Joliette
Jonquiere	Kirkland Lake
Kokanee	La Hulloise
Lanark	Lasalle
Lauzon	Levis (2nd)
Loch Achanalt	Loch Alvie
Loch Morlich	Longueuil
Magog	Matane
Meon	Monnow
Montreal	Nene
New Glasgow	New Waterford
Orkney	Outremont
Penetang	Port Colbourne
Poundmaker	Prestonian
Prince Rupert	Ribble
Royalmont	Runnymede
St. Catherines	Saint John
St. Pierre	St. Stephen
Ste. Therese	Seacliffe
Springhill	Stettler

Frigate (continued)

Stone Town	Stormont
Strathadam	Sussexvale
Swansea	Teme*
Thetford Mines	Toronto
Valleyfield*	Victoriaville
Waskesiu	Wentworth

Corvette

Agassiz	Alberni
Algoma	Amherst
Arnprior	Arrowhead
Arvida	Asbestos
Athol	Baddeck
Barrie	Battleford
Beauharnois	Belleville
Bittersweet	Bowmanville
Brandon	Brantford
Buctouche	Calgary
Camrose	Chambley
Charlottetown*	Chicoutimi
Chilliwack	Cobalt
Cobourg	Collingwood
Copper Cliff	Dauphin
Dawson	Drumheller
Dundas	Dunvegan
Edmunston	Eyebright
Fennel	Fergus
Forest Hill	Fredericton
Frontenac	Galt
Gifford	Guelph
Halifax	Hawksbury
Hepatica	Hespeler
Humberstone	Huntsville
Kamloops	Kamsack
Kenogami	Kincardine
Kitchener	Lachute
La Malbie	Leaside
Lethbridge	Levis*
Lindsay	Long Branch
Louisburg(1st)*	Louisburg(2nd)
Lunenburg	Matapedia
Mayflower	Merrittonia
Midland	Mimico
Moncton	Moose Jaw
Morden	Nanaimo

Corvette (continued)

Napanee	New Westminster
Norsyd	North Bay
Oakville	Orangeville
Orillia	Owen Sound
Parry Sound	Peterborough
Petrolia	Pictou
Port Arthur	Prescott
Quesnel	Regina*
Rimouski	Riviere du Loup
Rosthern	Sackville
St. Lamdbert	St. Thomas
Saskatoon	Shawinigan*
Shediac	Sherbrooke
Smiths Falls	Snowberry
Sorel	Spikenard*
Sterllarton	Strathroy
Sudbury	Summerside
The Pas	Thorlock
Tillsonburg	Timmins
Trail	Trentonian*
Trillium	Vancouver
Ville de Quebec	West York
Wetaskiwin	Weyburn*
Whitby	Windflower*
Woodstock	

Minesweeper

Adversus*	Bayfield
Bellechase	Blairemore
Border Cities	Bras d'Or*
Brockville	Burlington
Canso	Caroquet
Chedebucto*	Chignecto
Clayoquot*	Comox
Coquitlam	Courtnay
Cowichan	Cranbrook
Daerwood	Digby
Drummondville	Esquimalt*
Fort Frances	Fort William
Fundy	Gananoque
Gaspe	Georgian
Goderich	Granby
Grandmere	Guysborough*
Ingonish	Kalamalka
Kapuskasing	Kelowna

Minesweeper (continued)

Kenora	Kentville
Lachine	Lavalee
Llewellyn	Lloyd George
Lockeport	Mahone
Malpeque	Medicine Hat
Melville	Middlesex
Milltown	Minas
Miramichi	Mulgrave
New Lisgard	Nipigon
Nootka	Norande
Oshawa	Outarde
Portage	Port Hope
Quatsino	Quinte
Red Deer	Revelstoke
Rockcliff	Rossland
St. Boniface	St. Joseph
Sarnia	Sault Ste. Marie
Stratford	Swift Current
Thunder	Transcona
Trois Riviere	Truro
Ungava	Vegreville
Wallaceburg	Wasaga
Westmount	Winnipeg

Armed Yacht

Beaver	Caribou
Cougar	Elk
Grizzly	Husky
Lynx	Moose
Otter*	Raccoon*
Reindeer	Renard
Sans Peur	Vision
Wolf	

Armed Trawler

Anticosti	Baffin
Cailiff	Ironbound
Liscomb	Magdelan
Manitoulin	Miscou

Note:

This listing does not include vessels of the Canadian 29th Motor Torpedo Boat Flotilla* based out of Osten, Belgium nor the many auxiliary vessel pressed into service for coastal surveillance.

* **Indicates lost/damaged/ worn out**

Victoria Cross

During World War II, 16 Victoria Crosses were awarded to personnel in Canadian forces. Officially, only one of these went to a member of Canada's Navy.

The Victoria Cross was instituted in 1856 by HRM Queen Victoria to honour outstanding gallantry. In all, 94 of the over 1300 Victoria Crosses awarded have been to Canadians. Though the Battle of the Atlantic saw no VCs awarded, the individual acts of bravery are numerous in the Archives. No look at the Canadian Navy would be complete however without singling out 2 instances involving the exploits of Canadian sailors in far off lands.

Lt Robert Hampton Gray

November 2, 1917 – August 9, 1945

On August 9, 1945 in the closing days of the war, while carrying out a dive-bombing attack on the Japanese destroyer Amakusu, Lt Robert Hampton Gray's aircraft was hit and burst into flames dropping into Onagawa Bay near Tokyo, but not before one of his bombs struck, sinking the destroyer. For valour demonstrated in pressing his attack, he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross being the only member of the RCN to receive this award and the last recipient of the Victoria Cross in World War II. Ironically, six days following this action, the Japanese surrendered unconditionally. A memorial to Robert Hampton Gray exists at Onagawa Wan (Bay), just a short distance from where his plane crashed. This is the only memorial dedicated to a foreign soldier on Japanese soil.



Artist Brian Witham

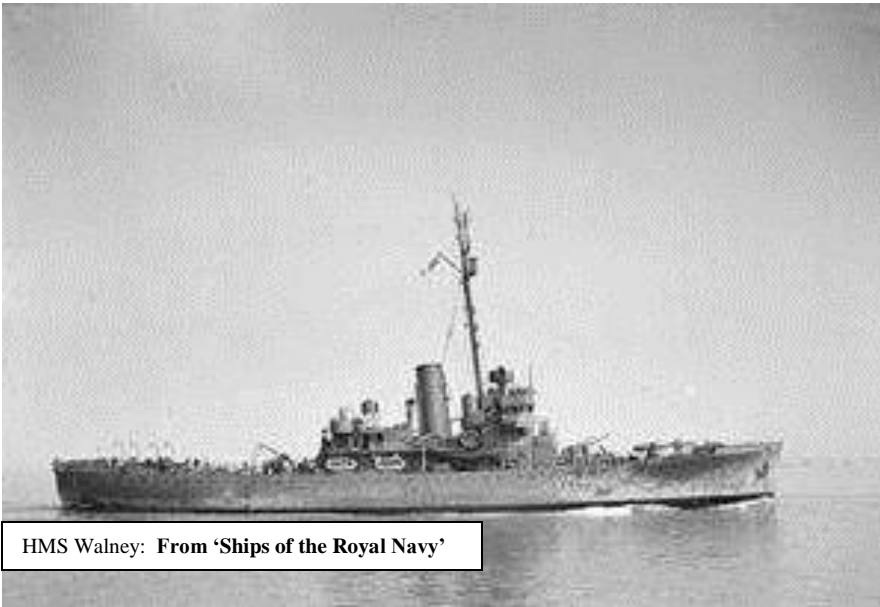
Captain Frederick Thornton Peters

September 17, 1889 – November 13, 1942

I said earlier, the 'official book' says the RCN was awarded one Victoria Cross. However, Canadian born (but in the Royal Navy) Captain Frederick Thornton Peters from Charlottetown PEI was assigned to lead an expedition into Oran, Algeria in order to seize Vichy French warships at anchorage there is part of a bigger plan: Operation TORCH; the Allied landings in North Africa, commencing in the early hours of November 8, 1942. As Commanding Officer of HMS Walney, one of two cutters assigned to drop off assault teams, Capt Peters was confident, as was every one else in the force, that the Vichy French forces would present but a token resistance...or so they believed. Though Capt Peters drove Walney straight for her pre-arranged target, vicious fire from both ashore and the Vichy Naval vessels caused Walney to founder in the harbour. With the cutter completely engulfed in flames and murderous fire still pouring in from all sides, Captain Peters rounded up all the survivors he could find and got them into the water, making it to shore. The second vessel, HMS Hartland fared no better being singled out by the French gunners after Walney's demise. Captured by French police, Peters and his men were freed by elements of the US 5th Army two days later. Ironically, he was killed when the Sunderland flying boat transferring him and the survivors of the two assault vessels back to England crashes off Plymouth November 13, 1942. There were no survivors nor was any wreckage ever found.



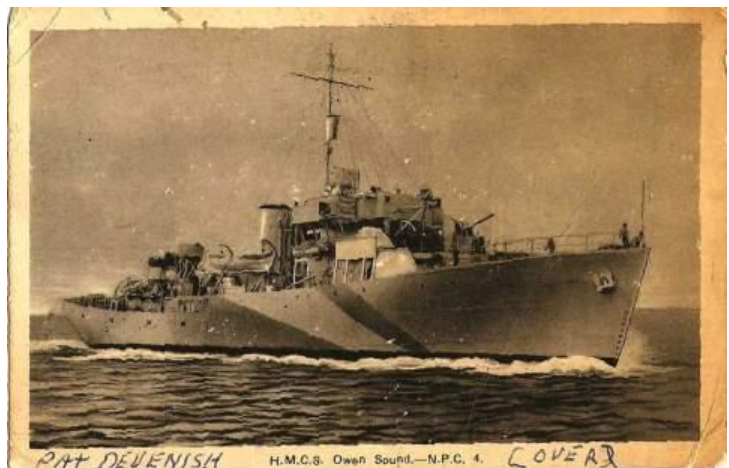
From John Swettenham's 'Valiant Men'



HMS Walney: From 'Ships of the Royal Navy'

As mentioned previously, during World War II, my uncle was a signalman on several frigates, but spent the bulk of his time on the corvette HMCS Owen Sound. He was present to witness many of the horrors of the war in the Atlantic including the depth charging and subsequent sinking of U-845. In later life, he did not talk much about his time during the war and lived a relatively quiet life selling life insurance and real estate in Central Ontario until his passing a few years ago. He was active in his community and was a regular at minor league hockey games at the local Bobcaygeon Community Centre. Also during World War II, my own father was in a 3" mortar platoon in the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, part of the 1st Canadian Division, part of the British 8th Army under General Bernard Montgomery. Dad fought through the bitterness of Sicily, Italy including the Battle for Ortona, finally culminating with Northern Europe late in the war. He was wounded on several occasions and in fact carried some German shrapnel to his grave 10 years ago. He talked often of his escapades though in his later years the enthusiasm waned considerably. He did many things; starting an Oakville, Ontario taxi business, operating the Canadian subsidiary of what would become Greyhound Bus Lines, ran a golf course and finally sold real estate as well. He was active in all aspects of his own and his community's life to the very end. The point is; two differing outcomes from two very similar and horrifying experiences. Yet sibling love remains:

This is a postcard sent to dad from my uncle (yes you guessed it) Pat at the height of the conflict. These are the kind of items which almost put you in the story.



"Hello Eb:

Not such a bad looking craft eh?..swell ship-swell craft I should say and swell crew. Everything fine here. Letters being sent regular. As for you, keep writing. Lots of luck. Pat"

Circa late 1943

Notes:

On land (8th Army) – In Jul 43, the Allies invaded Sicily, securing the island in mid – Aug. Following the invasion of the Italian mainland in Sept 43 and even though Italian forces surrendered Sept 7/43, the fight there against the German Army would last until the closing months of the war. The Italian campaign was climaxed for Canadian forces during Christmas 1943 at the Battle for Ortona. Such was the carnage that the battle was given the ominous moniker “Little Stalingrad”.

In the Atlantic – Though the “Happy times” for the German U-boat fleets had passed, wholesale slaughter was still occurring on the Atlantic convoy routes. This was also the period of time when the German submarines introduced the use of the deadly acoustic torpedo. Torpedo firings were no longer hit or miss. Though OWEN SOUND was new to Uncle Pat (commissioned in Collingwood, Ont 17 Nov 43), he would learn the ropes and go on to later serve on the frigates Stormont and Stettler as well. This postcard was likely sent around Christmas 1943 as Owen Sound prepared for crew Work Ups.

HMCS Sackville

HMCS Sackville was built by St John Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company being completed in May of 1941, commissioning into the RCN December 30th 1941 being named for the community of Sackville, New Brunswick. She spent her entire wartime career as part of MOEF (Mid Ocean Escort Force) Escort Groups One, Two and Three headquartered out of St Johns, Newfoundland and Londonderry, Northern Ireland.



HMCS Sackville shortly after commissioning in early 1942
(navy.forces.gc.ca)

In late July of 1942 as part of the Escort group to westbound convoy ON 115, Sackville was witness to the sinking of U-588 by HMC Ships Skeena and Wetaskiwin. She was also involved in two actions during this same deployment receiving credit for a ‘probable’ kill of a U boat and one ‘damaged’.

In September of 1943, HMCS Sackville was once again part of an Escort Group for the two combined westbound convoys ON 202 and ONS 18. This ill fated convoy received the

attention of a U boat Wolfpack with no less than nineteen submarines. Along with several Merchant ships, four of the escorts were torpedoed and sunk: HMCS St Croix and the Royal Navy Vessels HMS Lagan, Polyanthus and Inchen. During this same action, an explosion close aboard caused severe damage to one of Sackville’s two boilers. Even after a refit in Galveston, Texas early in 1944, Sackville’s damage was serious enough to cause her to revert to auxiliary status. Even in her handicapped state she still carried out restricted patrols off Halifax until late 1944.

Following the war, she was employed in a variety of taskings and though manned by a civilian crew, remained under control of the Federal government. Throughout her long service life, she served as a training ship, a loop layer, depot ship, and an oceanographic research vessel before finally being turned over to the Canadian Naval Corvette Trust which later became the present Canadian Naval memorial Trust.

In May of 1983, Sackville was dedicated as the Canadian Naval Memorial and just in time for the 75th Anniversary of the Canadian Navy in 1985, she showed her

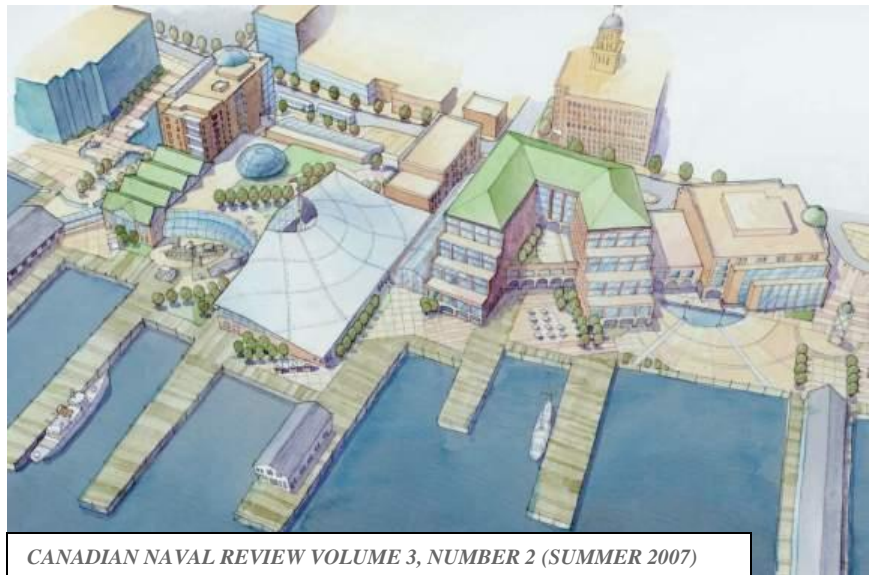


renewed self in her 1944 appearance.

Sackville today remains the only one left of 269 Flower class corvettes built for the Navies of the Canada, United States, Great Britain, Free French and Poland to name but a few, and in tribute to their potential longevity, two remained in service with the Dominican Navy (ex-HMCS Lachute and Louisburg II) until the early 1980s!

The hope is to make Sackville the centre-piece of a revamped Maritime Museum of the Atlantic on the Halifax waterfront. A daring and bold endeavour but if we are to maintain this key piece of history; a testament to the efforts of tens of thousands of Canadians, then the onus is on all of us.

Our mandate should be to support the efforts of the Canadian Naval Memorial to retain HMCS Sackville - the last 'Flower' class corvette...anywhere. If we all agree, then the onus is on us to ensure this monument to Naval history is preserved: This is **our** Vimy Ridge.



Recommended reading for the plan for “Battle of the Atlantic” Hall:
<http://naval.review.cfps.dal.ca/archive/public/vol3num2art12.pdf>

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