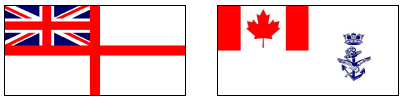
Salute to the Navy's Centennial

Post Second World War – A Violent Peace



Following World War II, the Royal Canadian Navy saw a dramatic reduction in size and by the end of 1946 had one aircraft carrier, two cruisers, two destroyers, a frigate, one minesweeper, and a former U-Boat. This paltry force was entirely inadequate for even a defence and training force, and a number of ships were brought out of retirement and given major refits. This process was accelerated by the onset of the Korean War in 1950 and the decision to send ships of the RCN to take part in that conflict.

Korean War

On July 12, 1950 the Canadian destroyers, HMCS *Cayuga, Athabaskan* and *Sioux*, were dispatched to Korean waters, under the command of Captain Jeffry Brock, to serve under United Nations Command. The capital of South Korea had been captured by the North Koreans and in September these ships participated in diversionary actions, mine clearance and coastal bombardment during the invasion at Inchon, the port of Seoul.

In December 1950, following the intervention of the Chinese, the destroyers played a crucial role in the evacuation of American troops cut off in the Chinnampo area. Captain Brock led his destroyers with one Australian and one US destroyer up the hazardous, mine-infested passage to Chinnampo some 32 kilometres up-river to cover the evacuation. When the troops were safely evacuated the destroyers bombarded the port shattering railway lines and dock installations and destroying huge stocks of abandoned material.

In mid-January 1951, Canadian destroyers themselves came under enemy fire for the first time in the Korean conflict when they bombarded the port of Inchon which was again in enemy hands. As HMC Ships *Cayuga* and *Nootka* were leaving Inchon harbour the enemy opened fire upon them. The ships silenced the shore batteries with their 4 inch guns.

From the CWM Collection: Trainbusting. HMCS *Crusader* wins the UN trainbusting championship. April 15, 1953, east coast of Korea. Watercolour by David Landry. CWM 19860128-001

During the war, five other Canadian ships would also serve with the Canadian Destroyer Division, Far East, in the Korean campaign – HMCS *Nootka*, *Iroquois*, *Huron*, *Haida* and *Crusader*. The badges of all eight Canadian ships are on display in Gallery 4 In all 3,621 officers and ratings served and 130,000 shells were fired from Canadian ships at the North Korean coastal railroad and at shore-based enemy installations. Of 28 enemy trains destroyed by UN ships Canada destroyed 8, of which *Crusader* claimed 4. Artifacts on display in Gallery 4 include fragments of a North Korean shell which exploded close to *Nootka*, and a naval turret mounting twin high-angle 4-inch guns.

Sixty-two RCN personnel received decorations in addition to the standard medals

Gallery 4: Model of HMCS *Mackenzie,* a Mackenzie Class destroyer. CWM 19660074-017

awarded to all Canadians who served during the Korean War, which were the Canada Korea Medal and the Korean War Medal. On display in Gallery 4 is the medals group of CPO McKinley, which includes the Korean medals.

Transition Period

Following the Korean War and until 1990, the Canadian Navy's role became one of preparing for a war that never happened. It was a period that saw the replacement of the World War II vintage ships with modern anti-submarine warfare (ASW) vessels; the disappearance of the aircraft carrier from the navy's inventory; of limited budgets for naval forces; and, the replacement of the Royal Canadian Navy by the naval component of the Canadian Forces.

The Cadillacs

The St. Laurent class destroyer escort served the RCN, and later the Canadian Forces, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s. This was the first major class of warship entirely designed and built in Canada with seven ships being commissioned between 1955 and 1957. The need for this class came about in 1949 when Canada joined NATO and the Cold War was in its infancy.

The RCN was assigned responsibility for anti-submarine warfare and for controlling sea space in the western North Atlantic. The rounded deck-edge forward was adopted to prevent ice forming during operations in harsh Canadian conditions. They were built to counter nuclear, biological and chemical attack conditions, which led to a design with a rounded hull, a continuous main deck, and the addition of a pre-wetting system to wash away contaminants. The living spaces on the ship were part of a "citadel" which could be sealed off to prevent contamination of the crew. The ships were sometimes referred to as "Cadillacs" for their relatively luxurious crew compartments

Three other follow-on classes were built and the St Laurent class was extensively refitted to include advances in anti submarine warfare including variable depth sonar; the ASROC anti-submarine weapon; and, in some cases, the addition of a helicopter flight deck with its advanced "Beartrap" helicopter recovery system. A total of 21 of these ships were built and they remained in service until the mid to late 1990s. A detailed model of HMCS *Mackenzie* on display in Gallery 4 shows many of the advances incorporated into these ships.

The *Maggie* and The *Bonnie*

The Majestic Class Light Fleet Carrier HMCS *Magnificent*, previously on loan from the RN, was commissioned in the RCN in 1948. Known by all as the *Maggie,* she took part in the Coronation Review at Spithead in 1953 and in 1956 carried Canadian army personnel and vehicles to Port Said as part of the First United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF 1).

HMCS *Bonaventure*, Canada's last aircraft carrier, was commissioned in the RCN in 1957 to replace the *Maggie*. Named after Bonaventure Island, a bird sanctuary in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the navy's new flagship, affectionately known as the *Bonnie,* carried 34 aircraft in a mix of *Banshee* jet fighters, Grumman *Tracker* ASW aircraft and Sikorsky HO4S (*Horse*) helicopters. In spite of the short flight deck the

Salute to the Navy's Centennial

Bonaventure was able, by 1958 to conduct around-the-clock sustained operations, keeping four Trackers and two HO4S's in the air at all times. This made the Royal Canadian Navy the only one in the world at the time, other than the US Navy, capable of conducting around-the-clock air operations for sustained periods.

Former Chief of the Defence Staff and long-time Friend of the CWM, the late Admiral Robert Falls, flew off the deck of the *Bonnie* as Commander (Flying) during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and later became the first captain of the carrier to renew his deck landing qualification on CS2F Tracker aircraft.

In 1963 the *Bonaventure* returned to Canada from Gibraltar to transport Canadian troops to Famagusta as part of Canada's contingent to the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). In 1966 the carrier docked in Quebec for a mid-life refit that took 18 months and cost $11 million. After the 1968 unification of the Canadian Forces, and amid howls of protest, the *Bonaventure* was decommissioned on 3 July 1970 and scrapped in Taiwan in 1971.

The Cuban Missile Crisis

The single biggest operational event for the Canadian Navy during this period occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 when ships of the RCN joined the United States Navy in its blockade of Cuba to prevent the landing of Soviet missiles on the island. The RCN responded quickly and effectively to the US imposed blockade and ordered all naval forces in the region to their war stations. This crucial juncture of the Cold War and Canada's participation in it is detailed in Gallery 4.

From RCN to MARCOM

Perhaps the biggest crisis for the navy during this period was the political decision to first integrate and then unify Canada's three military services into a single service. This decision, implemented in 1968, did away with the Royal Canadian Navy and replaced it with Maritime Command, the naval component of the Canadian Forces, and bell bottoms were replaced with "distinctive environmental uniforms." After a difficult period of readjustment and bitterness in some quarters, a sort of Canadian compromise has been reached – the naval blue uniform has returned and that of Cdr William Kerr is proudly on display in Gallery 4.

Gallery 4. Turret mounting twin four-inch high-angle guns. CWM 18770068-001

The service is referred to as the Navy; and, the benefits of economy of scale of unifying support services have been realised.

The First Gulf War

In August 1990 the destroyers HMCS *Terra Nova* and *Athabaskan* were deployed to join the US-led coalition forces in the Persian Gulf together with the supply ship HMCS *Protecteur*. Long-time Friend, then Cmdre "Dusty Miller commanded an Allied squadron and has described those operations in his book "The Persian Excursion". HMCS *Huron* deployed later and arrived in Kuwait after hostilities had ceased.

The Navy Today

As the 1990's approached, the ships built in the 1950s were long past their useful life and two new classes of ships entered the navy's inventory – the *Halifax* Class Patrol Frigate and the *Kingston* Class Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels. A model of the former and a picture of one of the latter in Gallery 4 illustrate some of the advances in naval construction

Salute to the Navy's Centennial

Gallery 4. Model of HMCS *Toronto*, a Halifax Class Patrol Frigate. CWM 20020197-001

and warfare that have been incorporated into these modern vessels.

The Halifax Class frigate HMCS *Toronto*, a model of which is also on display in Gallery 4, is an example of Canada's current naval fleet of 33 warships. She, along with other ships of the fleet, sails the seven seas and the world's oceans and specifically she has been deployed in the Adriatic, Mediterranean, Arabian and Red Seas and the Persian Gulf.

Gallery 4 of the Canadian War Museum pays tribute to the men and women of today's modern Canadian Navy who continue to carry on in the tradition of their RCN forebears in the defence of Canada's territory and vital interests.

Hearts of Oak All

This fourth supplement to The *Torch* brings to an end the Friends' salute to the Canadian Navy's Centennial. We have not, of course, attempted to write a condensed version of Canada's naval history but, rather, to throw the spot-light on some of the many navy-related artifacts in the War Museum's collection and displays that reflect the evolution of the Navy.

Many, but not all, of the crew who researched, assembled, corrected, and published the Supplements in the *Torch* and on the web are former members of the silent service and thanks are extended to each of them:
Bill Aikman; Ted Barrett; Violet Batkin; Mike Bedford; Mike Braham; Pam Brunt; Trevor Clayton; Alec Douglas; Bob Fowler; Larry Gray; David Holmes; Chris Hughes; Mike Koch; Nelson Langevin; Howard Mansfield; Bob Margeson; Bill Reed; Ted Ronberg; Susan Ross; Theresa Schonwandt; Howard Stutt; Fred Turnbull; and Vic Vaivads.

Corrections to Naval Supplement 3

Mr David Munro, who served in her, kindly pointed out a number of errors in the article on HMCS *Prince Robert* in Supplement 3. She was a former Canadian National coastal liner, and not an ex-Canadian Pacific ship as noted. HMS *Awatea,* should have been identified as His Majesty's Transport (HMT), rather than the HMS reserved for warships. The repatriation of the POWs from Hong Kong was not the primary mission of the *Prince Robert* on that occasion, however, it is the element of the mission highlighted in the museum. Finally, the POWS were returned to Esquimalt, not Vancouver.

Apologies for these oversights.

The Naval Centennial on the FCWM Web Site

On the web site, click on "The Navy's Centennial" button (left-hand navigation bar) for additional related information, including a photo gallery and personal stories (some with audio files).

Clicking on "Publications" (left-hand navigation bar) and then "Facts and Research" displays a list of FCWM-sponsored research papers and facts sheets. Note the fact sheet on HMCS *Bonaventure*.

www.friends-amis.org

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