

Researched and Written by: Capt (N) (Ret'd) M. Braham

Edited By: Trevor Clayton

Origin and Civilian Service: Canadian Government Ship (CGS) *Canada* was launched at the Vickers, Sons & Maxim shipyard in Barrow-in-Furness, England, in 1904.

Upon delivery, CGS *Canada* became the flagship for the Fisheries Protection Service of Canada.

She saw extensive use as a training vessel for the Fisheries Protection Service. She was also used as the first ship to train fishermen to become members of Canada's naval militia, before the existence of a Canadian naval service.

Her participation in Royal Navy fleet exercises in 1905 is considered by some to be the beginning of Canada's naval activity.

On 4 May 1910, the *Naval Service Act* was passed. The original official title of the navy was 'Naval Service of Canada' but its name was changed to Royal Canadian Navy on 30 January 1911. However, it was not until 29 August that the use of "Royal" was permitted by King George V.

Pending acquisition of the two cruisers *Niobe* and *Rainbow* from the British Admiralty, the Government of Canada sought to begin training officers and crew for naval service. Without a naval academy, Canada looked to its Fisheries Protection Service to train its officers and men.

Thus, CGS *Canada* became Canada's first naval training ship.

HMCS *Canada*: Following the outbreak of the First World War CGS *Canada* was officially transferred to the Royal Canadian

Navy (RCN). She underwent a refit to become a naval patrol ship which saw her forecastle raised and the Maxim guns for fisheries patrol use replaced with two 12-pounder and two 3-pounder naval guns. She was commissioned as HMCS *Canada* in 1915 and served on the Atlantic coast.



HMCS *Canada*

On 6 December 1917, she was at HMC Dockyard in Halifax Harbour during the Halifax Explosion. She suffered minor damage and one crew member was seriously injured. The crew was sent ashore to lend assistance to the shattered city.

HMCS *Canada* was decommissioned in November 1919 and resumed her former civilian fisheries patrol duties as CGS *Canada* before being retired from government service in 1920.

Post-government service: In 1920, CGS *Canada* was offered for sale at a price of \$25,000. When no one purchased her, she was laid-up in Halifax.

After four years of neglect she was sold to Florida real estate entrepreneur Barron Gift Collier, Sr. Who renamed her MV *Queen of Nassau* and pressed her into

service shuttling passengers between Miami and Nassau.

Unfortunately, this was a service for which she was poorly equipped, lacking comfortable overnight accommodations for the island cruise, as well as air conditioning. Passengers rapidly lost interest in the service, and once again the ship sat idle and rusting for 18 months in Biscayne Bay.

Collier announced that some Mexican investors were interested in purchasing the ship for service in the Gulf of Mexico in June 1926. The ship left Miami on 30 June 1926 for Tampa, Florida, to undergo a final inspection before the sale. After stopping twice in the Straits of Florida due to problems with her boilers, she began taking on water on 2 July 1926. The 18-person crew abandoned ship and the vessel slipped to a watery grave off Islamorada.

Recreational divers discovered the wreck in 2001. The vessel is in remarkably good condition, lying intact in 230 feet of water.

General Characteristics of HMCS *Canada*

Displacement: 557 tonnes

Length: 206 ft.

Beam: 25 ft.

Draught: 13 ft.

Max. Speed: 22 knots

Complement: 60

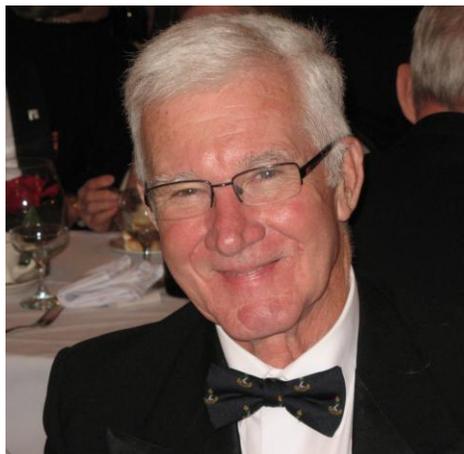
Armament: 2 x 12 pdr. Guns

2 x 3 pdr. guns

References:

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMCS_Canada
2. http://www.uncw.edu/nurc/Queen_of_Nassau.pdf
3. K. Macpherson & J. Burgess, *The Ships of Canada's Naval Forces 1910-1981*, Collins Publishers, 1981

Captain (N) (Ret'd) M. Braham, CD



Mike Braham is a graduate of the Royal Military College (1965) and a former naval officer and senior official with DND. He has an abiding interest in military history.