

ARGONAUTA



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ARGONAUTA

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Editorial

by Erika Behrisch



Hwæt!

What better word to begin this issue of *Argonauta* than the Old English announcement that a tale is about to be told? It seems especially apt during the blizzard in which I write; the word has always conjured up for me the image of thanes crowding together, full of mead and meat, feeling safe inside a warm, cozy sanctuary while the storm rages outside. I love the idea of those rough Old English sailors and warriors, raucous at table, falling quiet and turning their attention to a story.

The word came to mind, actually, because the stories in this issue of *Argo* remind me of my favourite Old English poem, *The Wanderer*. Maybe it's winter, maybe it's the darkness, but there's a bleak edge to each of them that makes the stories that they tell profound. Lyndon Kirkley's transcription of part of Frank Baker's diary from the Halifax Explosion chronicles Baker's incredible eyewitness experience of the Explosion and the days that followed, in which he helped rescue the wounded and keep the harbour running during wartime; Derek Waller's account of the publicity performance of a U-boat surrender ceremony calls our attention to how historical moments are choreographed, and that sometimes a fact is really a façade; Jan Drent's article on the Court Martial trials for homosexual behaviour aboard the training ship *Stadacona* in the 1920s reveals the sad consequences of entrenched prejudice and tradition. These stories are vastly different in their topics, but equally focused in their scope and strong in their message. In each we see imperfect people trying to make decisions in difficult circumstances, attempting to see through the smoke of the moment to what lies ahead. We see, too, loneliness, loss, isolation, exile. They don't always get it right, and not everyone survives.

You know how tough it is to take
sorrow as a fellow-traveller
for one who has few companions:
the exile's path grips him, not gold-set gems,
an icy spirit-locker, not earth's splendour.
He recalls friendship and riches,
how in his youth the gold-giver
got him used to gifts and feasting
—such joys fade away.

And so we push forward, perhaps tentatively, into the mist. There is a promise of Spring, though, and new companionship; embedded in the memory of what has gone before is the hope that it might be so again. The CFP for our 2022 conference in this issue brings with it the anticipation of new ideas, vibrant conversations, and tales well told. I look forward to hearing your stories.

WMP,
Erika

President's Corner

by Michael Moir

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January brings a sense of renewal with the hope that the challenges of the previous year are behind us and that better days lie ahead. As Sam McLean's recent Members Notices have pointed out, it is also a time to renew our membership in the Society. I strongly encourage you to act upon Sam's reminder, renew using the online form or surface mail, consider making a donation to our worthy cause, and convince a friend or colleague to join as a new member. There is strength in numbers and there is much work to do.

I often think back to an episode of TVO's *The Agenda* that was broadcast on 20 February 2014 when Steve Paikin, its host, interviewed Rose George about her book, *Ninety Percent of Everything: The Invisible Industry That Puts Clothes on Your Back, Gas in Your Car, and Food on Your Plate*. As noted in the show's summary, "Ships are growing larger and larger, and yet they take up less and less space in our imagination" (<https://www.tvo.org/video/curing-the-sea-blind>). The discussion was joined by representatives of the Maritime Foundation, the International Chamber of Shipping (shipowners), and the Canadian national coordinator of the International Transport Workers Federation (seafarers). Maritime affairs were prominent in the minds of Canadians and Britons during the mid-20th century, but peacetime, the transfer of shipbuilding and shipowning to other countries, and major changes in port operations with the arrival of containers led to falling employment in the maritime sector and a decline in the public's awareness of its importance to trade and development. Shipping was largely out of sight and out of mind for Canadians despite the great majority of its imports and exports being moved by boats.

Not much has changed since that episode first aired, particularly with Canada focused on the pandemic for the last two years. Maritime issues, however, are due for resurgence. Ship procurement for naval purposes and coastal patrol will raise questions about cost and domestic capacity for design, construction, and repair, particularly when submarines are added to the mix in the coming years. Arctic sovereignty and international relations will take on a greater sense of urgency in debates of public policy. Climate change and the pandemic have highlighted how supply chains can be seriously disrupted by natural forces, particularly since "ninety percent of everything" still moves by ship.

Democracies are best served by a citizenry that is aware of how we arrived at these situations and can make informed decisions about the future. This is where your membership can contribute to the public good by supporting the work of an international community of researchers who present at our conferences and share their insights through *Argonauta* and *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord*. Your dues also allow the Society to offer prizes and other support to students and early career researchers to encourage a new generation of inquiring minds to study maritime topics through a wide spectrum of lenses, such as history, environmental studies, literature, political science, sociology, and other disciplines. To paraphrase Rose George, nautical research is "ninety percent of everything." I urge you to join in this important campaign against "sea blindness" by renewing your membership in the Society.

Dealing with “Unnatural Offences” in the RCN in 1920: A Case Study

By Jan Drent



The way the naval chain of command handled a messy episode involving a Boy Seaman and sexual acts with older sailors on the west coast in 1920 is a rare look at how homosexuality was seen in the RCN at the time. Four sailors serving in HMCS *Stadacona* were eventually tried by Court Martial for “Acts of Gross Indecency With Another Male.” The narrative which follows is based on a contemporary file in the Maritime Museum of British Columbia Archives.

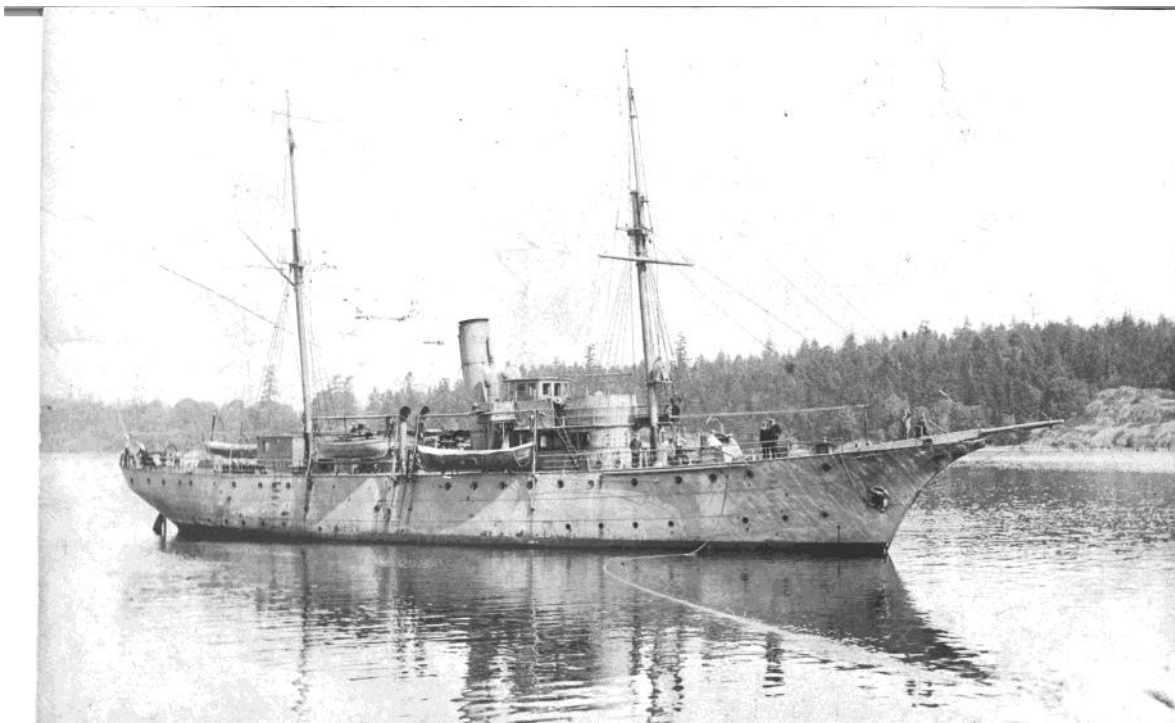


Figure 1: Auxiliary Patrol Vessel HMCS STADACONA in Esquimalt 1919. Note stubby gun mounting to left of officers on forecastle. STADACONA looks well travelled after a four-month voyage from Halifax which included several weeks in San Francisco having rudder replaced after it was lost in heavy weather off California. During its seven months of naval service on the west coast STADACONA was employed taking VIPS including Admiral Jellicoe along the long BC coastline. Transferred to Fisheries Patrol Service March 31, 1920, sold 1924. Image: Maritime Museum of British Columbia.

The Ship and its Crew

Stadacona was an elegant former steam-powered yacht 60m in length designated as an Auxiliary Patrol Vessel. It had arrived from the east coast with three Battle class trawlers in July 1919. During the voyage from Halifax Admiral Kingsmill, the Director of the Naval Service, had written to Captain E.H. Martin, the senior officer on the west coast, to say that decisions about the post-war Fisheries Protection Service for which the trawlers were earmarked were still pending; there was also uncertainty about the future of *Stadacona*.² Originally built as a luxury yacht for an American businessman, *Stadacona* had been purchased for the RCN in 1915 and armed with two guns: a 10cm (4 inch) mounting forward and a 12-pounder gun aft. Once on the west coast, the *Stadacona* took the Lieutenant

Governor on a cruise to visit coastal ports in September, carried Admiral Jellicoe in November as he gathered information for his recommendations to the government about naval defence north to Prince Rupert, and took the new Canadian Air Board to locations on the Strait of Georgia in early December. In early 1920, *Stadacona's* crew was four officers and 54 ratings.³ Five of the ratings were Boy Seamen, the traditional junior-most naval rank given to youths 15 and over who would become Ordinary Seamen when they turned 18.⁴ All of the officers and most of the crew were Royal Naval Canadian Volunteer Reserve (RNCVR) members enrolled during the war. There were also a few Permanent Force RCN men.

The Complaint, the Investigation, and the Fallout

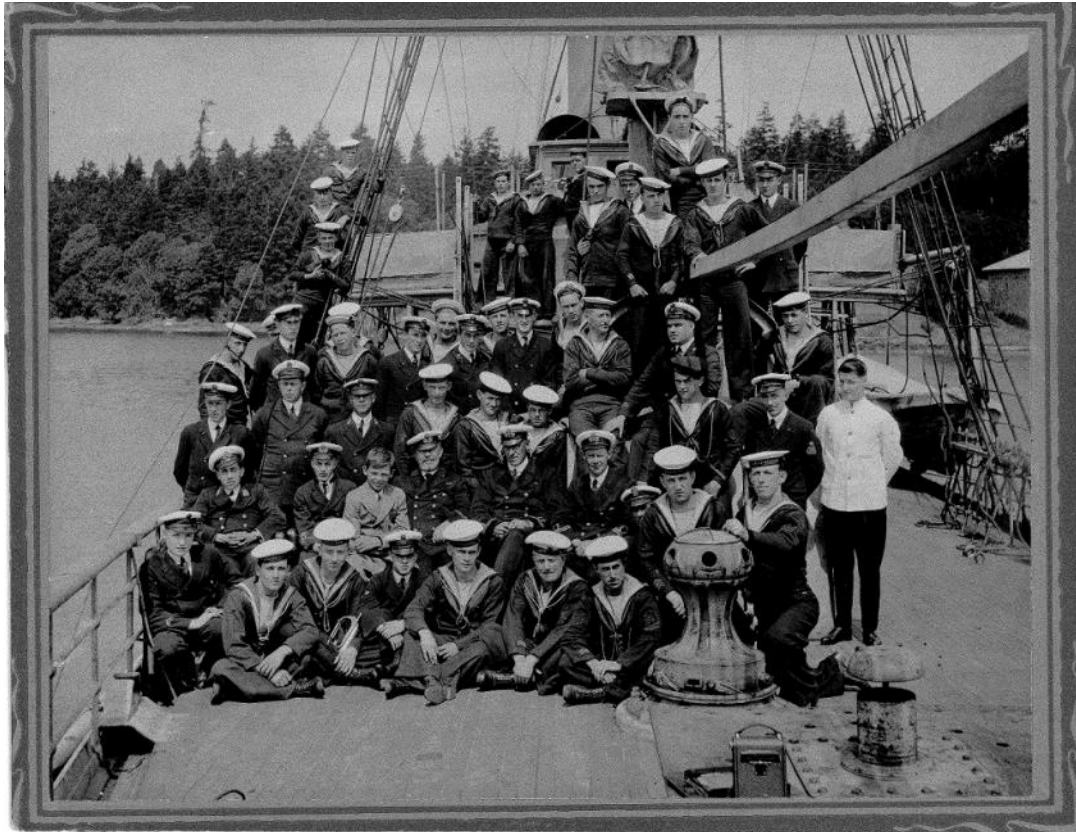


Figure 2: HMCS STADACONA Crew after Arrival on West Coast July 1919. Lad in suit in second row sitting between two officers presumably someone's son or nephew. Image: Maritime Museum of British Columbia.

On 15 January 2020, one of *Stadacona's* officers, Mate Anaclet LeBlanc, heard a complaint from Boy Seaman W.O. Carter that three older shipmates owed him money for sexual acts. At the time, the age of consent was 14 and all homosexual acts were illegal. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant A.F. Thomas, RNCVR, reported the complaint to Captain Martin, who promptly referred the Boy Seaman to the dockyard Sick Bay for assessment. On 21 January Captain Martin reported to Admiral Kingsmill by a message to be decoded by the Admiral's Flag Lieutenant that the dockyard surgeon had found Boy Seaman Carter "of weak mentality and unlikely to make a good seaman." Martin had notified Carter's father and sent him home to Victoria with the official designation of "Services No Longer Required" (SNLR). Captain Martin went on to report, "The guilt of the three men named by the boy appears known to the ship's company but direct evidence lacking." He requested approval to discharge the three accused men SNLR and proposed how they could be replaced. Admiral Kingsmill's reaction was sharp and immediate. He replied on 22 January: "Department strongly disapproves of action taken in sending home the accuser. The accused should have been given opportunity to clear themselves. Under the circumstances

forward full report of evidence obtained at investigation.” A Court of Inquiry met on 23 January under Commander Edward A.E. Nixon, RCN, the Commander in Charge of the Royal Naval College of Canada (RNCC) that had come to Esquimalt after the Halifax Explosion of 1917. One of its three members was Lieutenant G.C. Jones, RCN, also serving at the Naval College and a future Chief of the Naval Staff.

By the time the Inquiry convened, a fourth crewmember had been accused in a written statement by another sailor. The Inquiry learned that Carter was owed small sums by shipmates for sexual acts, for selling items of uniform and jewelry, and for doing various tasks such as washing messdeck dishes. W.O. Carter explained that his list included three sexual acts, priced at \$1.00 each. At the time, RCN Boy Seamen were paid 50 cents a day.⁵ Mate LeBlanc had become suspicious of homosexual behaviour after he observed that Carter was “always alone,” and had observed him being rebuffed by a shipmate whom he asked to pay money owed. Mate LeBlanc took the Boy Seaman aside on 15 January and asked about the list of debts owed to him by shipmates that he carried.

The Inquiry’s transcript shows that the Board confined itself to short questions about what had happened and recorded only brief answers. The sexual acts took place while the ship was in Esquimalt. They happened privately in the pilot house, stokehold, and toilet, and publicly in a messdeck with approximately 18-20 witnesses. Carter testified that the onlookers to the public act were laughing. Three of the four sailors denied having committed sexual acts. Although Carter believed that he was owed money for the sex acts, the Inquiry did not probe whether any of the encounters were consensual. Its findings described them all as assaults.

A Signalman admitted to committing a sexual act with Carter in the pilothouse. A single witness testified about the messdeck incident; this was a junior stoker on “unfriendly terms” with the assaulter, a Leading Stoker. This witness also named a possible second witness, who (unsurprisingly) said he had never seen indecent behaviour in the messdeck, just “fooling around,” and pleaded inability to remember who else had been present. At the request of the Inquiry, the Commanding Officer mustered the Boy Seamen and younger hands to see whether Carter could recognize anyone who had observed the messdeck assault, but without success. The Inquiry produced accusations by Carter against four men, a confession by one of them, and a witness to one of the incidents. It apparently did not try to investigate whether sexual acts with young sailors were commonplace more generally in the messdeck.

After hearing evidence, the Board of Inquiry concluded that “there is no doubt that indecent behaviour took place on board *Stadacona*.” It recommended that charges of indecent assault brought by Boy Seaman Carter against four sailors should be investigated by a court martial where evidence would be heard under oath. Admiral Kingsmill ordered a court martial and in the same message directed that steps be “taken immediately to prevent such a state of affairs commanding officer and executive officer STADACONA must be made to understand their responsibilities.”

The court martial was held on 24 February with Captain Martin as President. Commander Nixon and Lieutenant G.C. Jones were also members, along with two other commanders. The record at the Maritime Museum of BC contains only the verdicts. A Leading Stoker and a Signalman were found guilty of “gross indecency with another male” and sentenced to six months of hard labour followed by dismissal with disgrace. The fact that the two convictions involved more than Carter’s recollections—in one case the Signalman had admitted committing a sexual act to the Court of Inquiry, and in the other a witness had come forward—underlines how the finding of guilty required a high level of proof. The sentences were served at Oakalla Prison Farm in Burnaby, on BC’s lower mainland. Two Stokers

Second Class were found not guilty. Captain Martin reported the outcome to Naval Service HQ: "Consider undesirable to retain the acquitted in service and request authority to offer both free discharges. If they do not desire discharge submit both be drafted to Halifax immediately." Both men elected discharge four days after the Court Martial. The Maritime Museum of BC file does not include what happened to the unfortunate Boy Seaman Carter. Admiral Kingsmill involved himself in follow-up actions after the Court Martial. Six-day training cruises for Royal Naval College of Canada cadets were planned for *Stadacona* between March and May. The Admiral sent a message on 12 March before the first cruise, directing that the cadets were to be kept entirely segregated from the general ship's company. He was disappointed that the Court Martial had not included an opinion on the state of discipline in *Stadacona*, ordered a copy of the ship's orders about Boy Seamen be forwarded to him, and wrote, "Am of opinion gross neglect of duty through ignorance of ordinary precautions is apparent."⁶ *Stadacona* was paid off as a naval vessel on 31 March 1920, with most of the crew transferring to the Fisheries Protection Service,⁷ and was sold in 1924. The Royal Naval College of Canada was closed by the Mackenzie King government in 1922.

A sad history

Societal attitudes about homosexuality in Canada at the time were similar to those in Britain and, given the strong influence of Royal Navy culture on the RCN during its formative years, the case involving Boy Seaman Carter can be seen in the context of how the RN dealt with homosexual activity at the time. The RCN disciplinary system and administrative orders were those of the Royal Navy: the British Naval Discipline Act of 1866, and the guidance in the *King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions* (KR&AI) would apply to the RCN until late in the Second World War.⁸ Moreover, the attitudes of the senior officers involved in the Inquiry and Court Martial had been shaped by their lengthy service in the Royal Navy: 38 years for Admiral Charles Kingsmill, 36 for Captain Edward Martin, and 18 for Commander Edward Eckersall Nixon.⁹ British historian Matthew Seligmann, who has examined social reforms in the RN in the years between 1900 and 1915, writes that the "naval authorities had traditionally adopted an even more stringent line than the civil ones when it came to punishing homosexual behaviour."¹⁰ Successful prosecutions were, however, extremely rare. A high level of proof was required for successful court martial prosecutions. Instead, the administrative measure of discharging men Services No Longer Required "provided an effective means of dealing informally with the problem (as perceived) of 'unnatural vice'.....this was frequently the route taken when dealing with cases of homosexual behaviour....Given the ease with which this could be done and the contrast between this and the difficulties of a trial, it is hardly to be wondered that there were so few sodomy cases brought to court martial."¹¹ In the case of Boy Seaman Carter, this path was Captain Martin's plan. Admiral Kingsmill appears to have reacted negatively, however, because he felt that due process had not been followed.

Although homosexuality was considered a serious offence, Seligmann notes that the Admiralty had a "relaxed, blind-eye approach to suppressing homosexuality.... the Edwardian Navy, while intrinsically hostile to homosexuality in a theoretical sense and at an institutional level, was not an organization taking any active measures to suppress it."¹² American historian Christopher McKee, who examined the RN lower deck between 1900 and 1945, makes the same point: "Homosexual encounters were a serious offense in the navy's disciplinary code—a court-martial offense, with detention to barracks or dismissal awaiting the convicted defendant. But there is strong evidence that, so long as the encounters were between consenting adult sailors, many of those in authority would just as soon avoid knowledge of them."¹³ It is notable that, despite the inclination for turning a "blind-eye," "sexual offences" still accounted for 13.9% of all court martial charges against RN lower deck members during the First World War, second only to "Violence (against superior)" at 22.5%, and much less common than "Drinking offence" (4.2%).

The story of four homosexual encounters in HMCS *Stadacona* just after the First World War typifies how the RN and RCN dealt with such cases. All four sailors accused were discharged from naval service, with two first serving prison sentences—and the fate of their unfortunate accuser remains unknown.

Endnotes

1. Court of Inquiry W.O. Carter Boy MMBC HMCS STADACONA AE 17-3-3 1920.
2. General Instructions MMBC HMCS STADCONA AE 17-1-1 1919.
3. Complement 1919/1920. MMBC HMCS STADACONA AE 17-3-2.
4. Eric Brown, "A Boy Seaman in the King's Service William Miles, RNCVR," *Canadian Military History*, Volume 23, Issue 1 (2014), 3. At the time youths could enlist as Boy Seaman starting at age 15 and a half. The Royal Navy normally placed Boy Seamen in large ships where they could be segregated into separate messdecks presided over by selected Leading Seamen. In some capital ships they had their own bathrooms. In the small ship RCN of 1919/20 this was not practicable. Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly, "Rum, Bum & the Lash: Some Thoughts on the Problems of Homosexuality in the Royal Navy," *RUSI Journal*, February 1996, 55.
5. Eric Brown, 3.
6. Use by Royal Naval College, MMBC HMCS STADACONA AE 17-3-4 1920 and Discipline, AE 17-1-2
7. The RNCC cruises were continued after *Stadacona's* change of status. Mate LeBlanc was transferred to become the Second Officer. Lieutenant A.F. Thomas and his First Lieutenant were demobilized. MMBC HMCS STADACONA AE 17-1-3 1920 Paying Off and Recommissioning as F.P. Ship.
8. Commander Anthony German, *The Sea Is at Our Gates* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 26. KR & AI were supplemented by Canadian regulations until 1945 when "The King's Regulations and Instructions for the Royal Canadian Navy" were issued. Gilbert Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada, Volume II*, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952), 435. I am grateful to Dr Roger Sarty for this reference.
9. Circumstances involved two officers in this case who strongly influenced the RCN's formative years. Admiral Kingsmill was Director of the Marine Service starting in 1908 and then from 1910 Director of the Naval Service until 1921. Commander Nixon was "the driving force" in the RNCC throughout its 12- year existence. Several senior officers acknowledged his strong influence on their early development 50 years after passing out of the Naval College. William Hines, "The Royal Naval College of Canada, 1911-22", *Swords and Covenants*, (London: Croom Helm, 1976. 164-90.
10. Matthew Seligmann *Rum, Sodomy, Prayers and the Lash Revisited. Winston Churchill and Social Reform in the Royal Navy, 1900-1915*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 63.
11. Seligmann, 68
12. Seligmann, 70 & 71
13. Christopher McKee, *Sober Men and True Sailor Lives in the Royal Navy 1900-1945*, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 193.

Bio

Commodore Jan Drent had a 36-year career in the RCN, commanding three warships and serving abroad on exchange with the Royal Navy, at the Canadian Embassy in Moscow, and NATO HQ in Brussels. Since retiring in Victoria he has done community volunteer work including with the Maritime Museum of BC, and has contributed to *The Northern Mariner* and *Argonauta*. Hobbies include languages, sailing and walking.

Editors Note:

The Maritime Museum of British Columbia, whose archives were the source of material for Jan's article, are hosting a landmark exhibition in May 2022: **Queer at Sea: Tales from the 2SLGBTQ+ Community**. They are also soliciting first-hand artefacts from the community, including stories, videos, photographs, and more. For more information, please visit the website: [Queer at Sea: Tales from the 2SLGBTQ+ Community | The Maritime Museum of British Columbia](#)

A Glimpse into the WWI Diary of Frank Baker

Lyndon L. Kirkley



A few years ago, I was asked to give an address at the centenary commemoration of the Halifax Explosion. The event was being hosted by the Lt. Governor of Nova Scotia, and taking place in Halifax's downtown public library. I was a history student in Halifax at the time, and one of the organizers asked if I would provide a historical background for the ceremony.

On the night of the commemoration, 21 November 2017, I stood backstage in the Halifax Central Library auditorium. In my hands was something special: the World War One diary of Frank Baker, one of the only known eyewitness accounts of the Halifax explosion. The diary had been found in a sock drawer, in Australia, just a year earlier. That night I would be reading it in public for the first time.

At the time, I was starting my final year of history at Dalhousie University. Earlier in the year, while looking for a fourth-year thesis topic, I had come across this remarkable resource. My roommate, who worked at one of the museums in Halifax, showed me a transcript of Baker's diary. I was told that the typed transcript was not to be shared, and that the original diary was held at the Dartmouth Heritage Museum. It had been recently donated to the museum by descendants of Frank Baker.

Frank Baker served during the First World War as a port inspector, stationed aboard the *Berthier* and later the *Acadia* (which still floats in Halifax harbour). Baker and his crew inspected ships for suspicious cargo before they entered the Halifax basin. His diary—a daily log of the things he did during the day—contains not only a breathtaking description of the chaos that unfolded during the Halifax Explosion on the morning of 6 December, but also opens a window to his thoughts about the disaster.

Frank's diary tells a lot more than just the events of the explosion; the diary offers a glimpse of what life was like in Halifax before and after. It is a very human account of the event. You can see it even in the way Frank wrote his entries: before the explosion, Frank's diary entries were short and perfunctory. He wrote his longest entry on 6 December, the day of the explosion. For weeks after, his entries were longer, more descriptive of what was around him, and more expressive of his personal thoughts and feelings. Weeks after the explosion, his entries got shorter again, back to their brief daily log. The entries themselves are an indication of life adjusting to a new kind of normal.

The entries in Frank Baker's diary start in October 1917 and describe details about his daily work inspecting ships as they came and went through Halifax Harbour. Most of the entries are only three or four sentences long, with minor details about the ship or ships he and his coworkers inspected that day. Between the coming and going of ships in the Harbour, Frank occasionally wrote about new friends he made in Halifax. He even went out on a few dates with a girlfriend from Dartmouth. While the First World War was raging away in Europe, you get a feeling from Frank's diary that wherever the wartime fighting was, it was somewhere far away, and not an immediate part of each day. More immediate in Frank's day-to-day were the ships inspected with "no cause for complaint" (27 Oct), or days when he and his crew wielded brushes, scrubbers, and their "immortal paintbrush" to keep their port inspection ship in top shape.

This all changed on 6 December 1917. Frank wrote his longest entry that day, the day of the explosion. He described the homeless, the missing, the broken houses, and the horrible freezing weather that shuttered Halifax in the days after 6 December. All around him, Halifax stood in shock. Military police cordoned off parts of the city. Investigators held a surviving crewmember of the *Imo* on suspicion of sabotage (16 Dec). City officials began proceedings for an official investigation. During all this, Frank was duty bound to the *Acadia*, until, at last, on 12 December, he took time away from the ship to seek out friends of his from whom he had heard no news since the explosion.

The explosion took its toll, but life went on in Halifax. In the days after Christmas, almost four weeks after the catastrophe, Frank's entries fell back into a seasonal rhythm: "We are naturally feeling the effects of Christmas today and the prospects of settling down seriously to work does not quite agree with us. Once more we have to wield the everlasting paint brush, and it is with faint hearts, to say [nothing] of unsteady hands that we go wearily to our task" (27 Dec). In the days that followed, the entries returned to short, routine descriptions of his daily work and the ships that passed through the harbour.

The last entry in Frank's diary could have been his first. On 14 January 1918, he was "once again in the engine room wielding the immortal [paint] brush... Applying the second coat we finish for the day at 3.30pm" (14 Jan).

A diary like this lets history speak for itself. Would it not be wonderful if school children and history students had this diary to teach them about the Halifax Explosion? After the address I gave in 2017 for the centennial commemoration, a man came up to me with his two children and asked where he could find a copy of the diary. I didn't know what to tell him. My copy was given to me "in secret" at the time, out of consideration for the family who had donated the diary to the Dartmouth Heritage Museum, and there was no public copy available. Perhaps there is a way to make the entire transcription public. Would it not enrich the minds and imaginations of so many students and interested readers? What I remember learning in school about the Halifax Explosion was that it was the largest non-nuclear man-made explosion in history. This diary reminds me that, among the rubble of the explosion, it was also a very human experience.

What follows is a selection of entries from the Baker diary. The diary contains daily entries from 9 October 1917 to 14 January 1918. Spelling is as it appears in the transcription, and not necessarily as it appears in the original diary. Because of this, typos have been corrected in [square brackets]. To my knowledge, there is still no publicly available copy of the diary or transcript. Omitted entries are marked with ***.

Images of the original diary, as well as a brief synopsis of its history, are on a site hosted by the [Dartmouth Heritage Museum](#).

THE WORLD WAR ONE DIARY OF FRANK HERBERT BAKER (b. 1897 – d. 1977)

1917

Tuesday October 9th

We have five ships in for examination today names as follows—

"Flandres"

"Comte de Flandre"

Belgian merchant vessels—

“Solveig”
“Scogland”
“Bratsburg”

Norwegian vessels working for the Belgian Relief Commission—

The Ceylon and Dutch merchant vessel journeying to the Dutch East Indies. These keep us busily employed for the whole of the day. The Belgian Relief ships are quickly disposed of but the Dutchman gets a more severe examination, as there being so much fraternity between the capitalist classes of Holland and Germany it is thought that these people assist Germany to a large extent, hence the necessity for so strict a searching. We have all had to work very hard today and are very glad to return to the Berthier at 6pm.

Friday October 12th

Today we board an ex Red Star Liner, now the “Gothland” owned by the Belgian Government and working for the Belgian Relief Commission. This is a large ship and for a merchant ship it takes us quite a long time to examine her. She is loaded with flour and grain and is homeward bound. Her crew consists principally of Belgian soldiers who were wounded in the early stages of the war and a few Dutch seamen. She is however, found to be quite in order and is allowed to proceed.

Saturday October 20th

We board the “Mauwee” this morning. She is an American vessel working for the Belgian Relief Commission, or at least supposed to be doing so, but the vessel is evidently a suspicious number and the Captain and his retinue of Turks come aboard with us. A thorough search, however reveals nothing in the [way] of contraband but on examining passports, one of the crew is found to be travelling under a false one, but he will [not] explain how he obtained it. He is however, found to be a deserter from the army and he is taken on board a [tug] and handed over to the military authorities.

Saturday October 27th

We have two ships in for examination today namely the “Imo” a Norwegian merchantman working for the Belgian Relief Commission and the “Escout” a Belgian vessel. Both are carrying cargoes of foodstuffs to the Belgian Relief Depot in Rotterdam. There being no cause for complaint, both proceed the same evening. We proceed ashore at 5.46 where we meet friends from the “Calgarian” an auxiliary cruiser now in port from Portsmouth. We are pleased to meet many old friends, who did their training at the Crystal Palace and spend a very pleasant evening with them. The flag ship “Levithan” being away the “Roxburgh” and the “Antrim” are here in her stead.

Tuesday October 30th

There are no ships for us to search today, so taking advantage of the fine morning, we lower a boat and have a good pull around the basin. This comes as a pleasant change, as it has been some little time since we have done any boat pulling, having had a good row round, we return about 12 noon with splendid appetites for dinner to which we do ample justice. We proceed again with the boat pulling after dinner having had a thoroughly enjoyable days sport.

Saturday November 3rd

Today is a liner day for us. The liner on this occasion being the "Bergensfford" of the Norwegian America Line. She is a magnificent vessel and she is crowded with passengers, every berth being occupied, there being some 1,300 passengers on board altogether. Our captain and all his retinue, lady searchers, private detectives etc are with us and we split up into various groups, some to examine the engine room, firemen etc., others to examine boats, chart rooms, state rooms, dining and smoking rooms, holds, chain lockers etc., while the captain and his party are busily verifying the passports of the passengers. We work very hard all day and it is 7.30pm before we return to the Berthier.

Sunday November 4th

We again board the "Bergensfford" today and we thoroughly examine the cabins of the passengers, having finished these, we go through all the baggage, this is some job there being some 1,500 trunks in all. Useful information as regards the working of the German Secret Service is given us by an American lady and gentleman who are working for the American Government and have been through Germany during the period of war. We finish the examination of the baggage at 6pm and as everything is found to comply with the regulations, she is allowed to proceed, she getting under way about 6.30 and is soon pushing out to sea again.

Monday November 5th

The morning opens with a very rough sea making it very bad for us as there are 10 ships in all to be examined. We split into 2 parties to get through this work. One party going aboard the tiny "Trusty", while the other goes on a small harbour boat the "Tanner". We on the Tanner have a very rough time owing to the state of the weather she is pitching and rolling cruelly sometimes to an extent of 15 degrees. All the ships we have to examine are Belgian Relief vessels with the exception of the "Sagarfoos" which is Danish. The names of the Belgian vessels are as follows—"Leige", "Tunisie", "Courland", "Adolf Deppe", the "Ministre de Swet de Neur". This presents a hard day's programme for us and we commence at 9am. The heavy seas hamper our operations some what but we work on steadily all day and we finish the whole bunch at 6pm. We are all very tired and are glad to get back to the "Berthier" where we do justice to a good feed. The rough weather is still continuing and all make a point of turning in early except the poor unfortunate watchman.

Friday November 23rd

Today is a "liner" day for us, which means a long, hard days work. We board the Danish liner "Hellig Olav" at 9am and carry on with a search of the engine room, firemen's quarters, engineers, boats, chart room etc., also thoroughly strafing the crew's quarters. She has

about 900 passengers on board and after the officers have examined their passports we search the passenger's cabins. This takes us a long time and although we work hard it is 7.30pm before we finish and we are glad to get back to the Berthier. It being too late to go ashore, everyone turns in early being well tired from the days work.

Saturday November 24th

We visit the "Hellig Olav" again today where we examine a few "suspects" baggage—two passengers travelling 3rd class are thought to be members of the Dutch Secret [Service]. They are travelling under Swedish passports and one is a supposed lunatic, while her partner is her devoted nurse. They are given a thorough strafing by our Tec but as nothing can be proved against them they are released. We finish the liner in the early afternoon and from there proceed to the "Villemues" a Danish merchantman bound with a general cargo of foodstuffs for Iceland, she eventually proves herself in order and is allowed to proceed.

Sunday November 25th

Today we board the "Bergensfford" this is a liner and mail boat running for the Norwegian America line. She has 1,900 passengers aboard voyaging from New York to Bergen. The passengers are principally Swedes, Americans, and Norwegians. But the German Consul from China is on board with all his retinue. China having broken relations with Germany, the German Consul is no longer desired in China, so they are travelling back to Germany via New York. They have already been strafed at New York by the American authorities, but they get another strafing at the hands of our Captain who stringently examines their passports. We complete the search of the ship in general by 6pm, but the passengers passports have not all been examined until 8pm when we return to the Guard ship.

Tuesday December 4th

Today we leave our happy home of the [last] few months, the good old "Berthier". We rise early and pack all our kit which has grown somewhat during our sojourn on this side of the Atlantic. We work hard until 10.30am, when all is ready for the transfer. We pack all our kit on the tug "Trusty" and with a goodbye to the "Berthier" proceed to the "Acadia". This is a much larger ship than the "Berthier" she being more suitable as an Examination Ship during the winter months. We get our kit on board and then fall to a rough and ready dinner. After dinner we have two ships to examine, namely the "Kentucky" a Danish vessel and the "Sygra" a Norwegian merchant vessel, both are loaded and homeward bound. Having finished these we return to the "Acadia" where we are given our sleeping accommodation and get our kit stowed away in our lockers. It is about 11pm when we get settled and we are glad to turn into our hammocks, having had a very hard days work.

Wednesday December 5th

There are four ships to be examined today, namely the "Bratsburg", "Olaf Kyrne", "Noruega" and "Eole". The first three are Norwegian ships, but the two former are running for the Belgian Relief Commission. The latter one is a French vessel, also running for Belgian Relief. We examine two in the forenoon and two in the afternoon, but all are found to comply with the regulations and allowed to proceed.

Thursday December 6th

We turn out of our hammocks at 6.30am and lash up and stow in the usual way, we fall in on the upper deck at 7am and disperse to cleaning stations, busying ourselves scrubbing decks etc until 8am when we "cease fire" for breakfast. The "Acadia" being run on strictly naval lines, we clean ourselves and fall in again at 9am. There are no ships in for examination today, so we again proceed to cleaning stations and had just drawn soap and powder and the necessary utensils for cleaning paint work when the most awful explosion I ever heard or want to hear again occurred. The first thud shook the ship from [stem] to stern and the second one seemed to spin us all around, landing some under the gun carriage and others flying in all directions all over the deck. Our first impression was that we were being attacked by submarines, and we all rushed for the upper deck, where we saw a veritable mountain of smoke of a yellowish hue and huge pieces of iron were flying all around us. A shower of shrapnel passed over the Forecastle, shattering the glass in the engine room and chart room to smithereens, which came crashing down into the alleyways. It was the greatest miracle in the world that we were not all killed. God only knows how we escaped. The fires all burst out on to the floor of the stokehold and it was a marvel that the stokers were not burned to death, but all of them escaped injury as did all the other of the ships company. A tug was alongside us at the time and part of her side was torn completely out and three of the crew were injured, one of them getting a piece of flesh weighing nearly 2 pounds torn off his leg. A hail of shrapnel descended about 20 yards from the ship, this came with such force that had it struck us we should certainly have all been lost, it was so terrific. This was the last of the explosion, the whole of which had taken place inside of five minutes. We were fully impressed by the time that we were being attacked by submarines and we were expecting our turn to come at any moment. Then came a lull of a few minutes and when the smoke had cleared sufficiently, we saw clearly what had happened. Two ships were in collision, one a merchant vessel and the other an ammunition transport loaded with high explosive. It had blown completely up, wrecking 5 large vessels at the same time. One ship had been hurled wholesale for a distance of about 400 [yards], dashing it close to the shore a total wreck with dead bodies battered and smashed lying all around in disorder. Fires broke out on ships all around and hundreds of small crafts had been blown to hell and the sea presented an awful scene of debris and wreckage. Our doctor attended to the wounded men on the tug as quickly as possible and we laid them on [stretchers] in a motor board and took them to hospital. The scene ashore was even worse. The N.W. part of Halifax was in total ruins and fires were springing up all over the city. Part of the railway was completely demolished and everywhere were dead and dying among the ruins. When we arrived at the hospital, the windows were all blown out and the wards were two feet deep in water owing to all the pipes having burst. We had to return to our ship as quickly as possible, as we are Guard Ship and responsible for the safety of the other vessels in harbour. From the ship the scene was one of utter desolation, what a few hours before had been beautiful vessels, were now terrible wrecks, their crews all dead and bodies, arms, etc were floating around in the water. During the afternoon we received a call for help from the "Eole" the crew having mutinied, we went aboard and after considerable difficulty succeeded in restoring order. Returning again to the "Acadia" we quickly got hurried tea and proceeded ashore. Here the scene was absolutely indescribable, the town was literally ablaze, the dry dock and dockyard buildings completely demolished and everywhere wounded and dead. The theatres and suitable buildings were all turned into hospitals or shelters for the accommodation of the homeless. Naval and Military pickets were patrolling the streets endeavouring to keep order. Poor little kiddies homeless, their parents having perished were crying piteously and anxious relatives were inquiring for their dear ones. We visited the part where the fires were at [their] worst, and it is beyond me to describe the absolute terror of the situation. For miles around nothing but a flaming inferno, charred bodies being dragged from the debris and those poor devils who were left still lingering were piled into motor wagons and conveyed to one of the improvised hospitals. We returned to our ship at 11pm sick at heart with the appalling misery with which

the city abounded. The glare from the fires lighting the harbour up like day, on the other side of the bay, the little town of Dartmouth was also in flames on sea and land nothing but misery, death and destruction. Looking out on the flaming city from our ship, I cannot help but marvel that we escaped sharing the fate of thousands of souls in this terrible catastrophe.

Friday December 7th

We have got settled down to the routine of the "Acadia" by this time and we proceed to the usual cleaning stations before breakfast. Our Commander goes to Harbour Authorities in the forenoon and tries to get the harbour closed for a short time so as to enable us to go ashore and give a little assistance, but it is considered impossible to close the harbour, consequently we have to remain on board. A strong blizzard blows all day, driving the snow full force up against the ship. The thermometer registers zero and the upper deck is dangerous it being an inch thick in ice. The fog lifts occasionally and for short intervals we can see the smouldering ruins of Halifax. We learn the details of the disaster during the day which briefly seems to be that the "Mont Blanc" a French transport was proceeding through the narrows towards Bedford Basin, at the same time a Belgian Relief vessel "Imo" was proceeding through the narrows towards the open sea. Eye witnesses say that the "Imo" violated the laws of navigation, which resulted in her colliding with the "Mont Blanc". The "Mont Blanc" was carrying a hold cargo of Tri Nitrol Toluene, a most powerful explosive and a deck cargo of Gasoline, the impact appears to have set the gasoline alight. The crews of both ships realizing their peril abandoned their respective ships, making for the Dartmouth shore in their boats. The "Mont Blanc's" crew reached the shore, but the "Imo's" boat was still in the stream when the explosion occurred. The "Imo's" crew was killed instantly, but that of the "Mont Blanc" escaped with only one casualty. Why the Imo's pilot should have disregarded the laws of navigation no one will ever know as both he and the captain are among the list of dead. One other suggestion is that his steering gear may have given way, rendering the Pilot unable to steer the vessel, but this does not seem to have been so from the eye witnesses' stories. The Halifax press today strongly emphasizes the probability of German intrigue, but there is no evidence at present to support the theory, if bribery had been the cause, the executioners evidently met with their just reward.

Saturday December 8th

Shore leave is stopped from today until the Naval casualty lists have been completed, this is expected to take some little time, but our Commander intercedes for several of the Canadians who have relatives ashore, with the result that they are given special passes. They return at night, some of them having found their relatives, but other poor fellows have lost everything, house, wife, children and friends. It is for these fellows that we feel deeply, but some of them still hold out hope of hearing of their friends ere long. There being no ships in to examine, we take advantage of the opportunity of giving our quarters a coat of paint, but none of us are in a good mood for work, our hearts being heavy for the terrible happenings of the past few days.

Sunday December 9th

A storm has been raging during the night and at 5am we are all called out to stand by the winch, our cable having slipped and we threaten to breakaway. A ship loaded with explosives is anchored near by and our Commander is afraid of us smashing into it, but the cable is soon put to right and when daylight dawns we find we have shifted but very little. We have one ship to examine in the forenoon namely the "Lagarfoss" a Danish vessel bound from New York to Iceland with a cargo of foodstuffs, but she is found to be in order and we get finished by dinner time. Today is Sunday so the rest of the day is our own, but we cannot

go ashore. News comes to hand during the day of the terrible loss of life caused by the explosion, which is feared to be even greater than originally estimated. The gun from the "Mont Blanc" was found in an Indian camp 3 miles inland, which gives one some idea of the terrible nature of the explosions. The northern part of Dartmouth is reported in absolute ruins and I fear the worst has happened to my friends, who lived in that vicinity. My mind dwells constantly on the awful nature of the events of the past few days and my heart bleeds for the poor innocent women and children who have suffered so terribly.

Monday December 10th

Rough weather still continues, it freezes hard all day and the snow falls thick and heavy. The Naval Control Office having suffered considerable damage by the explosion, new quarters have had to be found at the Post Office and part of the search party go down to assist in the removal. They report the dockyard to be in a terrible state. On their return, the dry dock being completely in ruins, all the Naval Offices and stores are damaged badly, besides the terrible loss of small ships, which were in dock at the time of the explosion. The relief committee have done splendid work but there are still a large number of people homeless. Tents and temporary shelters are being erected as quickly as possible for these people, but the exceptionally cold weather makes their position severe indeed. Terrible stories continue to be published of the awful state of affairs on the day of the explosion. The shock is said to have caused premature birth in a number of cases of pregnant women. A number of confinements are said to have [taken] place in the open streets, the necessary assistance being given in some cases by lads of the Army Medical Corps, with the aid of bootlaces. Owing to having run out of fresh provisions and being unable to obtain supplies from the city, we are forced to fall back on emergency rations and such dry provisions as are in the store. These being chiefly ships biscuits and tinned meats, but foodstuffs are being sent into the city as fast as possible, so we expect to get supplies in a few days. During the forenoon we have one ship to examine namely the "Leopold II", this ship was 140 miles out at sea when the explosion occurred and they report having heard it quite plainly. She is light and proceeding to Montreal for cargo and she is found to be in order. After dinner we continue the work of the previous day painting our sleeping quarters and we have to spend the night aboard as leave is still suspended.

Tuesday December 11th

Today opens very cold. The thermometer being but a few degrees above zero. There has been a heavy fall of snow during the night which has frozen to the deck, so we are busily engaged during the forenoon in cleaning the decks. We have one ship to examine in the afternoon namely the "Ranerfford" a Norwegian merchant vessel. She has a general cargo and is bound for Christiania. About 2 hours is spent on examining the ship which is eventually found to be in order. We get exceptionally rough weather during the whole of the day which develops into a veritable gale towards evening. A Relief ship arrives today from Boston to assist in the work of caring for the injured and homeless people of Halifax.

Wednesday December 12th

There are no ships in for examination today so we are busily engaged in painting the engine room companion way. The isolation comes to an end and we are allowed ashore in the evening and I get away as soon as possible and make my way by the ferry to Dartmouth to try and ascertain the whereabouts of my friends of whom I have had no news since the explosion. As their part of the town is well in the devastated area I am naturally very anxious about them. Arriving there about 6.30pm I make my way through the ruins to Hester Street where their home or rather what is left of it is. This was much more difficult than I had anticipated, as the country was very difficult to [traverse] owing to the wreckage and the

snow. All the popular landmarks were destroyed and I lost my way several times, but after struggling for about an hour and a quarter I succeeded in reaching what was formerly Hester Street. The first block of houses I approached were absolutely razed to the ground and other buildings were partially wrecked, so I had little hope of finding them. When I at length came to the wreckage of their former home, the front part of their home was in a dilapidated state, but on investigating the back of the building I found that it was not in so bad a state as I had first anticipated. A glimmer of light shone through the shattered windows. Almost unconsciously I knocked at the door and to my surprise it was opened and I was pleased to find myself confronted by one of the family. I stepped inside and soon learned that all the family were safe. [Their] escape was indeed a miraculous one as the house was completely wrecked except for the kitchen and dining room which appeared to be intact. I was overjoyed at finding them safe and they were very cheerful under the circumstances. This was the only family in the street that escaped without injury, which was indeed a miracle. I was sorry to learn that one of the daughter's friends with whom I was well acquainted had been killed, as were also her parents. The only one escaping being a crippled brother. I retraced my footsteps to the ferry with a light heart knowing that all were safe, as they had been so very good to me and the suspense of the last few days had been terrible.

Sunday December 16th

Today being Sunday only the very essential work in the ships is done and the day is our own after about 9.30 as a general rule. We had however, just got cleaned up when we had the order to change into working rig and we had to go out in a tug and take up the telegraph cable which ran from the ex Guard Ship "Gulnane" to the Naval Control Office. This work is none too pleasant under the best of circumstances and it is all the more difficult today owing to the exceptionally cold weather. Still we manage to hoist it all inboard by noon and after dinner we have to coil it all down. This takes us about an hour and we are all glad when it is finished and to get down below as it is very cold. I go ashore at 5.45 and go to the church at St Pauls, one of the few churches in Halifax in which it is possible to hold a service, they all having been so terribly shattered owing to the explosion. The enquiry into the great disaster still continues and we get a full report of the Captain of the Mont Blanc evidence which seems to give one the impression that the "Imo" was at fault.

Monday December 17th

We are busily engaged in [painting] today, all the ships interior coming under the [paint] brush and by this time we are making some headway with the work. The ship looking considerably cleaner than when we came to her. All the unidentified dead are buried today and the search still goes on among the ruins. Dead bodies and charred fragments still being found. One of the crew who was saved from the "Imo" tries to escape from the hospital and he is placed under arrest as it is thought he is a Secret Service agent of Germany. The latest evidence in the enquiry is that of Pilot Hayes, who was piloting the "Mont Blanc" at the time of the collision, who [asserts] that there was something very erratic going on aboard the "Imo" at the time of the collision and for which he did not hold the dead pilot responsible.

Tuesday December 18th

Today our Captain comes aboard to inspect the ship. He visits various parts of the ship accompanied by the Commander and Chief Petty Officer. After a thorough inspection of everything and everyone he expresses himself well satisfied with the cleanliness of the ship. He is also making an effort to get us transferred to the Canadian Navy owing to the ship

being Canadian and all the signal men and Quarter Masters all belonging to the Canadian Service. It is thought only fair for us to be transferred in order to get the benefits of the Canadian Service. We are given an afternoon's make and [mend] by the Captain owing to him being so well pleased with the cleanliness of the ship.

Wednesday December 19th

Today I am busy cleaning out the Fore Peak in readiness for a supply of paint stuffs. This arrives during the afternoon and we are busily engaged stowing it away. The inquiry into the great disaster still continues and some conflicting evidence is given by the various witnesses. This latter evidence gives one the impression that the "Mont Blanc" was to blame owing to excessive speed and departing from her course, but the evidence is so conflicting that it is impossible to judge with any accuracy.

Sunday December 23rd

We have a ship to examine today namely the "Kapana" a Norwegian merchant vessel. Consequently we forego the usual Sunday routine and proceed to search the Norwegian ship, she however is light and bound for New York for cargo. They have had a very rough passage across, it taking them 20 days from Christiania to Halifax owing to the adverse weather. Some little consternation is caused by what at first is thought to be a bomb, which has been placed on board the tug "Trusty" which had taken the search party to board the vessel. Investigation however proves it to be an appliance used for destroying mines at sea. It was found under a seat on the tug and had a match been thrown on the deck and ignited it, it would certainly have been sufficient to have blown us all up. Fortunately this did not happen, but how it got there is at present a mystery and the matter is taken up by the shore authorities.

Monday December 24th

There are no ships in for examination today, so we occupy ourselves in cleaning up for tomorrow which will be Xmas Day. We have a good time on board in the evening keeping Christmas Eve in excellent style. The rule as regards lights out is ignored for once and we finish singing the last carol as the clock is approaching 2am.

Tuesday December 25th

Today is Xmas Day and it is a general holiday, as far as it is possible for the ships company, of course watches have to be kept and someone has to be at work in the engine room in order to keep things going, but only the very essential work is done and as many as possible make it a holiday. Owing to extreme pressure being placed on the cooks in order to cope with the Xmas delicacies, I am asked to give assistance in the Galley during the morning. I am soon busy helping to stuff the turkeys, which I may say we were surprised to get and helping the cooks in a general way. It is a happy [crowd] that sits down to dinner, which is in every way excellent and to which we do full justice. We get a good supply of fruit, nuts, chocolates etc and the Officers provide us with whiskey, port wine, cigars and cigarettes, also soft drink for the few abstainers among us and with selections on the gramophone, we spend the afternoon in a very home like way. Conversation naturally turns to home, where most of us have been used to spending our Xmas'. Home is a great subject with servicemen and there are many words spoken by the fellows today which will live long in my memory. Having done full justice to an excellent tea, the majority of us proceed ashore. I spend a most enjoyable evening myself at the Y.M.C.A. where a social evening is held for men from

overseas. I return aboard at 11.30pm having had a far better Xmas that I had [ever] anticipated on board ship. Before turning in stories are told of where we have spent our previous Xmas' and the general hope is expressed that we shall have finished with war and be safely home again before the festive season comes round again.

Wednesday December 26th

We have one ship to examine today namely the "Drammensford" a Norwegian vessel. We complete the search of this vessel by dinner time and being Boxing Day we make the rest of the day a holiday and enjoy ourselves in a similar manner to yesterday.

Thursday December 27th

We are naturally feeling the effects of Christmas today and the prospects of settling down seriously to work does not quite agree with us. Once more we have to wield the everlasting paint brush, and it is with faint hearts, to say [nothing] of unsteady hands that we go wearily to our task. We have to pack up our painting utensils however at dinner time as the "Salonica" a Norwegian merchant vessel has arrived and we proceed to her after dinner. She has come from Bergen and is proceeding to New York. She is without cargo, which makes her examination much easier and we complete the search in time to return to the "Acadia" before tea.

Monday December 31st

Today is the last day of the year. The cold weather still continues although not quite so rough. We have a ship to examine in the forenoon the "Falkuand" a Norwegian merchantman. She arrives here from Baltimore with a general cargo and is homeward bound. Today is pay day which we all welcome as we all are [about] "spun out" by the end of the month and we receive our due portion of the finance of the state during the afternoon. Tonight is New Years Eve and we keep it up in good style having a good sing song, disregarding all orders as to lights out as on Christmas Eve. We keep it up until we see the New Year in ringing sixteen bells at 12 midnight, as is the custom in the Navy, eight for the old year and eight for the new.

Tuesday January 1st 1918

Today is New Years day. This is my second spent in the Navy. There has been a heavy fall of snow during the night which has frozen [hard] to the deck. Consequently, we have a hard mornings work cleaning the upper deck. The sun breaks out lovely during the morning and it is several degrees warmer than yesterday, a really handsome day for this time of the year. Today passes much the same as the others, there are no celebrations and we enter the New Year scarcely knowing we have done so.

Saturday January 12th

We get a rest from the painting today, having a general cleanup around the ship—sleeping quarters, mess deck etc. We pack up at 11.30am and I get ashore at 1.30pm. I go over to Dartmouth and visit the Indian Reserve Camp or rather what remains of it as it suffered badly in the explosion. After this accompanied by a girl friend I visit the lakes and the spot where the gun from the "Mont Blanc" landed, returning to her home for tea. We go over to

Halifax in the evening to a picture show, but it is anything but an enjoyable journey back as it has been raining, afterwards freezing sharply, making it very slippery underfoot. We reach the girls home at 10pm and taking a hasty departure I just manage to catch the boat back to the ship at 11pm.

Sunday January 13th

Very little work to do today, we get most of the day to ourselves. I go ashore at 5.45pm to church, afterwards spending a short time in the Y.M.C.A. returning to the Liberty boat at 10pm.

Monday January 14th

We are back once again in the engine room wielding the immortal [paint] brush. We finish the first coat of paint, it has been a hard job, but the worst is over and we are looking forward to a little easier time. Applying the second coat we finish for the day at 3.30pm.

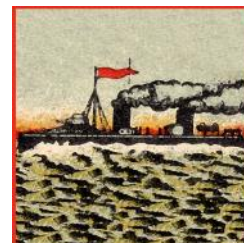
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Bio

Lyndon Kirkley has an honours BA in history from Dalhousie University, and a MA in history from the University of Ottawa. He has a deep interest in Canadian history, culture, and education. He works as an Administrative Assistant for the Parks Canada Agency. He also co-produces a youtube podcast called "Lycaenum," which focuses on history and politics.

Operation “Commonwealth”: The Ceremonial Surrender of U-Boats at Lisahally on 14 May 1945

By Air Commodore Derek Waller RAF (Ret'd)



All ships, including U-boats, proceeded up river to Lisahally. Hesperous, Thetford Mines, USS Paine, followed by eight U-boats. (1)

Introduction

On Tuesday 15 May 1945, an article in the London *Times* newspaper reported that

Admiral Sir Max K Horton, C-in-C Western Approaches, at Londonderry last night received the surrender of eight U-boats which had been escorted from Loch Eriboll in Scotland.

As the U-boats drew alongside the jetty they were watched by the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Sir Basil Brooke, Admiral Sir Max Horton, and officers of high rank of the allied services. Admiral Horton and Sir Basil Brooke boarded one of the submarines. (2)

This public, multi-national surrender ceremony to mark the successful end of the anti-U-boat war in the North Atlantic, at which HMCS *Thetford Mines* represented the Royal Canadian Navy, and which took place at the Royal Navy base at Lisahally in Lough Foyle, N. Ireland, was in fact a staged event, because each of the eight U-boats had already surrendered at sea to the Royal Navy on 9 and 10 May before arriving at Loch Eriboll in the far north-west of Scotland between 10 and 12 May. From there they had been escorted to Loch Alsh, near Skye on the west coast of Scotland, for the removal of torpedoes and some of their crews, and they were on their way to temporary storage at Lisahally to await Allied decisions as to their final disposal.

The C-in-C Western Approaches' Operation Order

At midday on 12 May, the Naval Officer in Charge (NOIC) at Loch Alsh had advised the Commander-in-Chief Western Approaches (C-in-C WA):

Following U-boats available to sail for Lisahally p.m. 13 May.

U-1305, U-1009, U-1105, U-1058, U-826, U-293. Two others may also be ready. (3)

It was this information that gave rise to the idea of a formal surrender ceremony at Lisahally. The prospect of the simultaneous arrival of eight U-boats so quickly after the end of the war was too good a spectacle to miss, and it provided an ideal opportunity for Admiral Sir Max Horton to stage a major publicity event to celebrate the end of the Battle of the Atlantic.

The C-in-C, therefore, quickly ordered more than a dozen representative vessels to Loch Alsh to form the escort force for the movement of the eight U-boats to Lisahally, and on the evening of 12 May, he issued the formal instructions for what he called “Operation Commonwealth”:

1. *Eight U-boats are to be sailed from Loch Alsh northabout Skye to Lisahally, Lough Foyle. Sailing is to be adjusted so that U-boats pass Foyle Buoy at 1300B/14 May*
2. *The escort under the command of Commander R A Currie (S.O. 14 EG in Hesperus) is to consist of Hesperus, Havelock, USS Paine, HMCS Thetford Mines, FS Commandant Drogou, 5 ships of 31 EG, Bentley, 1 ship of 5 EG (name to be reported), A/S trawler Guardsman and rescue ship Goodwin.*
3. *Aircraft will co-operate for photographic purposes.*
4. *From time of passing Foyle Buoy, Cdre (D) WA is requested to take control of movements and to arrange pilotage and berthing of all vessels.*
5. *Movements of escorts on completion will be signalled separately.*
6. *Codeword 'Commonwealth'. (3)*

The Escort Force

The detailed make-up of the escort force was not clearly defined in the "Operation Commonwealth" instruction, but during the night of 12 May and the morning of 13 May, 13 ships assembled in Loch Alsh preparatory to escorting the eight U-boats to Lisahally. As a result, the escort force comprised 11 warships and two support vessels:

- HMS *Hesperous* and HMS *Havelock* of the 14th Escort Group
- HMS *Bentley* of the 1st Escort Group
- HMS *Keats* of the 5th Escort Group
- HMS *Berkeley Castle*, HMS *Dumbarton Castle*, HMS *Lancaster Castle*, and HMS *Hadleigh Castle* of the 31st Escort Group. (It was originally expected that five ships from this Escort Group would participate in "Operation Commonwealth." However, after the Group was instructed to proceed to Loch Alsh, HMS *Carisbrooke Castle* developed engine trouble and was detached to Greenock for repairs.)
- USS *Robert I. Paine*, HMCS *Thetford Mines*, and the Free French corvette FS *Commandant Drogou*
- The convoy rescue ship RS *Goodwin* and the rescue trawler HMS *Guardsman*

The Transit to Lisahally

On the afternoon on Sunday 13 May, the entire force of escorts and U-boats departed Loch Alsh for the transit to Lisahally. It was separated into three divisions:

- Four Castle Class corvettes of the 31st Escort Group escorting *U-293*, *U-802*, *U-826* and *U-1109*
- HMS *Hesperous*, HMS *Havelock*, HMS *Bentley*, HMCS *Thetford Mines*, HMS *Keats*, USS *Robert I. Paine*, and FS *Commandant Drogou* escorting *U-1058*, *U-1105*, *U-1109*, and *U-1305*, with HMS *Keats* being the last to leave Loch Alsh in company with *U-1109*

- The convoy rescue ship RS *Goodwin* and the rescue trawler HMS *Guardsman*

The weather in the vicinity of Skye was particularly bad, and a south-westerly gale impeded progress during the evening and night of 13 May to such an extent that the rescue trawler HMS *Guardsman* could not keep up with the other groups and had to return to Greenock. Nevertheless, once all the other ships had passed the Skerryvore reef 12 miles to the south-west of the island of Tiree, the gale abated and the escort force and the eight U-boats were re-organized into a formation in preparation for a photographic aircraft.

The lead ship of the formation was the British destroyer HMS *Hesperous*. To its starboard was the Canadian frigate HMCS *Thetford Mines* together with *U-293*, *U-802*, *U-826*, and *U-1009*, and to its port was the American destroyer-escort USS *Robert I. Paine* with *U-1058*, *U-1105*, *U-1109*, and *U-1305*. The remaining escort vessels were spread out to port, starboard and astern of the lead ships and their submarine charges.

At 06:00 on 14 May, just to the west of Scotland, three representative aircraft of RAF Coastal Command, comprising a Liberator from a squadron based in Northern Ireland, a "Leigh-Light" Wellington from a squadron based in the Hebrides, and a Sunderland from a squadron based in Northern Ireland, rendezvoused with the force and provided close escort, with the aircraft circling the convoy, photographing, and staying with it before breaking off as it reached the coast of Northern Ireland.

As soon as the photography was completed, the force was able to increase speed, and the whole convoy arrived at the Foyle Buoy, at the entrance to the Lough, at 14:00 on 14 May.

Arrival at Lisahally

The eight U-boats, all flying the White Ensign, were each manned by a German steaming crew of three officers and 12 men under the supervision of a small RN party and, as they sailed up Lough Foyle towards Lisahally in the late afternoon of 14 May, they were led by the three warships representing the Royal Navy (HMS *Hesperous*), the Royal Canadian Navy (HMCS *Thetford Mines*) and the US Navy (USS *Robert I. Paine*).

As recorded by Lieutenant Commander J. A. R. Allan, RCNVR, in his Report of Proceedings of HMCS *Thetford Mines*,

On arrival at Loch Foyle buoy, Hesperous proceeded in. Thetford Mines and USS Paine brought their respective divisions up river to pilot station.

1524: All ships, including U-boats, proceeded up river to Lisahally. Hesperous, Thetford Mines, USS Paine, followed by eight U-boats, five cables apart.

1650: Piped C-in-C WA and cheered ship.

1704: Secured alongside "H" berth, Lisahally. (1)

The Formal Surrender Ceremony

When the U-boats had all secured alongside the quay at Lisahally, their Commanding Officers, led by Oberleutnant Klaus Hilgendorf, the CO of *U-1009*, made a formal token surrender to Admiral Horton on behalf of the whole German U-boat fleet.

In addition to Admiral Horton and the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, the official party at Lisahally included representatives of the Royal Canadian Navy and the US Navy, plus per-

sonnel from Lisahally itself (HMS *Ferret*), RNAS Eglinton (HMS *Gannet*), RNAS Maydown (HMS *Shrike*), RAF Ballykelly, and the Army in Northern Ireland. There was also a representative from the Irish Defence Forces, Colonel Dan Bryan, whose presence was an acknowledgement of the assistance given by the Irish Government in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Conclusion

“Commonwealth” was a small short-notice post-war operation which, based on already-planned arrangements, was successfully completed during the course of 12, 13 and 14 May 1945. It was designed solely for public relations and it handily achieved its aim.

The only major risk was the weather and, although this had a slight adverse impact overnight on 13 May, it created no significant hold-up as far as timing was concerned, with the whole force arriving at the Lough Foyle Buoy only one hour after originally envisaged.

According to Commander R. A. Currie, RN, who was the Senior Officer (SO) in the 14th Escort Group, as set out in HMS *Hesperous*' Record of Proceedings for the period 2 to 18 May 1945,

I consider that credit is due to the officers of the Armed Guards who were confined almost continually for 24 hours to the conning tower of a submarine. Few had ever been in a submarine before, and during the period of heavy weather the conning towers were almost continuously washing down. Their supervision of the station keeping was commendable throughout. (4)

He also went on to praise the ceremony itself:

The parade at Lisahally was most impressive and HMS Hesperous greatly appreciated the honour of leading the ceremonial surrender of the U-boats. (4)

Finally, as set out in HMS *Berkeley Castle*'s Record of Proceedings for the period 19 April to 14 May 1945, Commander N. W. Duck, RN, who was the SO in the 31st Escort Group, observed in respect of his Group's participation in the operation, that

This privilege was very much appreciated by the Group; at last the dogs of war were allowed to see the rabbits they had been searching for so ardently. (5)

In retrospect, the one slightly unfortunate result of this staged ceremony, which was given extensive press coverage, was the long-held but incorrect belief that some or even all of the eight U-boats actually surrendered directly in Lough Foyle. Rather, they had all surrendered at sea almost a week earlier, and had already been processed in both Loch Eriboll and Loch Alsh before arriving at Lisahally in Lough Foyle on 14 May 1945.

Arundel, W. Sussex
[the.wallers@btinternet.com]

October 2021

Specific Sources

1. Directorate of History & Heritage, Department of National Defence, Ottawa, Canada. Report of Proceedings, HMCS *Thetford Mines*. 19 May 1945.

2. The London *Times*. 15 May 1945.
 3. TNA Kew: ADM 199/2317. Admiralty War Diary. May 1945.
 4. TNA Kew: ADM 217/794. Report of Proceedings, HMS *Hesperous*. 2 to 18 May 1945.
 5. TNA Kew: ADM 217/792. Report of Proceedings, HMS *Berkeley Castle*. 19 April to 14 May 1945.
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We encourage you to join us on Facebook (now over 600 followers) and Twitter where we post links to interesting articles and announcements from around the internet. Our social media channels are where you will find time sensitive notices that are not suitable for publishing here in the *Argonauta*.

Canadian Nautical Research Society/Société canadienne pour la recherche nautique

Annual Conference, 18-19 August 2022

Ports and Harbours: the Convergence of Water, Land, and Humanity



Call for Papers

In response to the rising tide of the pandemic, the CNRS/Scrn will find refuge from the viral storm in the virtual harbour of video conferencing software for an online conference on Thursday and Friday, 18-19 August 2022. We invite proposals for twenty-minute presentations devoted to ports and harbours, those places where human activity interacts with rivers, lakes, and oceans. Topics could include but are not limited to the following:

- Involvement of Indigenous Peoples with waterfronts and waterways
- Public works that reshape shorelines and create watercourses to accommodate navigation, commerce, industry, recreation, and residential communities through dredging and constructing breakwaters, docks, quays, canals, and locks
- Port operations, including planning, technologies for intermodal cargo handling, stevedoring, and security
- Shipowners, shipping companies, and the businesses that support their vessels
- Waterfront industries, such as shipbuilding and ship breaking, salvage and ship repair, and storage of cargo with a toxic legacy such as petrochemicals and coal
- Waterfronts at war: the impact of military requirements for defence, coastal patrols by sea and air, convoys, and troop transportation
- Waterfronts as places of quarantine and disease management
- The redevelopment of commercial and industrial waterfront properties for residential and recreational purposes, including environmental remediation of land and water, naturalization of hard edges, and opportunities for archaeological discoveries
- Maritime labour and the services that sustain their bodies and souls

Proposals on other maritime topics from all time periods are also welcome. We invite interdisciplinary and interprofessional proposals from speakers who will contribute to the diversification of our discussions and community. Presenters must be members of the CNRS/Scrn by the time of the conference. Memberships are available at rates starting at \$30 CAD, \$25 CAD for students and early career researchers. Please visit https://www.cnrs-scrn.org/membership/index_e.html.

Submissions should be sent to Michael Moir, conference moderator, at mmoir@yorku.ca, and should include the presenter's name, institutional or professional affiliation (optional), title of the presentation, an abstract of 250 words or less, and a biographical note of 100 words or less. The deadline for submissions is Sunday, 20 March 2022.

Canadian Nautical Research Society/Société canadienne pour la recherche nautique



Call for Nominations

Your Society needs you. Membership counts, but serving on Council is a terrific way to participate in the decisions that are needed to ensure we will remain an effective force in preserving maritime history by and about Canadians.

As Chair of the Nominating Committee, I am looking for your help in suggesting names of potential new councillors to join the terrific group on our Executive (see the verso of the front cover of *Argonauta* for a list of those now serving / there is an opening for one Councillor). However, we continually are facing the challenge of renewal in the senior leadership positions and need to develop a group of younger people willing to step forward and “take up the torch”. If you are interested in Executive service in the long term, let me know. Also feel free to contact any other Executive members just to chat about issues or to find out what sort of duties are involved.

The by-law information pertaining to nominating Officers and Councillors at large is shown below, and the elections will be at the Annual General Meeting.

NOMINATING OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY AND COUNCILLORS AT LARGE

37. There will be a nominating committee. Normally the past president will chair this committee with such other members as may be appointed by council. No officer or councillor or member standing for election or re-election may be a member of this committee. The nominating committee will nominate one candidate for each position to be filled at the next annual general meeting.

38. Members may also propose the names of candidates in writing and with the signatures of three members. All proposals must include a written undertaking by the nominee to accept the position if elected. If such suggestions are not accepted by the nominating committee for incorporation within their report, the nominations not so included must be forwarded by the nominating committee to the annual general meeting in addition to their report, for the purpose of conducting an election for the contested positions. The chair of the nominating committee will close the nominating list, which will include the proposals of the nominating committee and other proposals by members not later than 30 days prior to the annual general meeting.

39. A call for nominations shall be included in the January issue of *Argonauta* each year. Such notice must include the date on which nominations will close, to whom the nominations must be forwarded, and the date of the annual general meeting at which the nominating committee report will be received, or, if necessary, and election will be held.

40. Nominations from the floor are permitted at the annual general meeting only if there would otherwise be a vacancy for a position.

41. The council may fill any vacancy not filled by election at the annual general meeting in accordance with section 68, (Vacancy in Office).

Please send your nominations to the CNRS Nominating Committee, care of myself at richard.gimblett@me.com by 01 August 2022.

Richard H. Gimblett
Past President

***Argonauta*'s new feature: "All Aboard!"**



Argonauta is the membership quarterly of the CNRS, and as editor I am hoping to introduce a new regular feature that showcases what you, the CNRS members, are up to. I hope to include material you send me about your nautical activities, from any and all angles: what you're working on, what adventures you've had (recently or otherwise), stories that have risen to the surface because of something you've read—in *Argo*, *TNM*, or elsewhere. If you've visited a museum with a good naval history section, I'd love to hear about it; if you've sleuthed out the biography of a nautical painting, legend, or personality, please do share your findings. The *Argo* is what we make it, and we're all on board together.

There is no minimum length that your article has to be in order to be considered. It just needs to be your own experience, nautically related, and something you'd like to share. If you have something you'd like to contribute, or have any questions about the submissions process, please send it to CNRS-Argo@cnrs-scrn.org

I look forward to hearing from you!
Erika



***The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* Update**

Peter Kikkert, Editor

A very Happy New Year to all of you. I am happy to report that *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* 31, no. 3 (2021) is in the final stages of production and will be published by the end of January. The issue features Chris Madsen's article, "Rear Admiral Henry John May and the Royal Navy War Course, 1900-1904," Gordon Smith's unpublished piece, "This was not the time for this type of 1890 imperialism": Cryolite, Control, and Canada-US Relations over Greenland, 1940" (edited and introduced by P. Whitney Lackenbauer), and Megan Hamilton's document commentary, "Writing the History of the Dieppe Raid: The British-Canadian Historical Liaison Relationship in Five Documents."

The fourth issue of 2021 is also well underway and consists of articles presented at the society's conference, *Canada's Pacific Gateway: Past, Present, and Future*. If you listened to a presentation and wanted more information, this is your chance! Read all the articles when *The Northern Mariner* 31, no. 4 is published in February.

Moving forward, we aim to get the journal up to speed this year, with issues coming out on time in the spring, summer, fall, and winter. To help with this endeavour, if you have an article that you think is a good fit for the journal, please submit [online](#) or by email at cnrstnmeditor@cncrs-scrn.org.

Last summer, we launched the journal on the digital content and distribution platform provided by York Digital Journals (YDJ). If you have not yet taken a look at the new site, you can find it at <https://tnm.journals.yorku.ca/>. This platform facilitates citation tracking (which is becoming more important for academic promotion) and allows us to track readership data, web usage statistics, and other impact measures. By posting the journal on this new platform and on the Canadian Nautical Research Society's website, we are, hopefully, casting a wide net that will draw in the most readers.

I would also like to highlight our second digital Author Q & A, which will feature Frank Blazich and Stanley Adamiak (who published articles in *TNM* 31, no. 2). These events are essentially nights of virtual conversation, which allow readers to ask questions, make comments, and acquire additional information from the authors. The first Author Q&A, which was held in September, provided some very interesting discussion and debate. We are still working to lock down the date for the next session but are aiming for the end of January. Please stay tuned.

One last note: we are working to make *The Northern Mariner* an attractive destination for early career scholars and graduate students, particularly those looking for their first academic publication. We are committed to recruiting submissions from new authors within this group, but also to guiding them through the entire publication process in a more in-depth manner than may be required by an experienced author. If you know someone who might be interested and whose work fits well with the CNRS, please encourage them to submit.

Finally, I would like to thank the individuals who were willing to share their time and assistance as I took over as editor last year. I would like to thank my predecessor, Bill Glover, for his willingness to share advice and editing tips—he has left big shoes to fill. I very much appreciate the assistance and

guidance provided by editorial board members Roger Sarty and Richard Gimblett, book review editor Faye Kert, and CNRS president, Michael Moir. Without the patience and guidance of production editor, Walter Lewis, I would have been adrift. And a huge thanks to all of you, our readers, for your continued support. I hope you enjoy the next issues!

All the best,
Peter

Argonauta Guidelines for Prospective Authors

Argonauta aims to publish articles of interest to the wider community of maritime research enthusiasts. We are open to considering articles of any length and style, including research articles that fall outside the boundaries of conventional academic publishing (in terms of length or subject-matter), memoirs, humour, reviews of exhibits, descriptions of new archival acquisitions, and outstanding student papers. We also publish debates and discussions about changes in maritime history and its future. We encourage submissions in French and assure our authors that all French submissions will be edited for style by a well-qualified Francophone. Articles accepted for publication should be easily understood by interested non-experts.

For those producing specialized, original academic work, we direct your attention to *The Northern Mariner*, a peer-reviewed journal appropriate for longer, in-depth analytical works also managed by the Canadian Nautical Research Society.

Except with proper names or in quotations, we follow standard Canadian spelling. Thus, the Canadian Department of Defence and the American Department of Defense may both be correct in context.

For ship names, only the first letter of the names of Royal Canadian Navy ships and submarines is capitalized, and the name appears in italics. For example:

Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Protecteur*
Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Preserver*
Class of ship/submarine: *Victoria*-class submarines (not VICTORIA Class submarines)
Former HMCS *Fraser* rather than Ex-*Fraser*
Foreign ships and submarines:
 USS *Enterprise*
 HMS *Victory*
 HMAS *Canberra* 3

Following current industry standard, ships are considered gender-neutral.

Although *Argonauta* is not formally peer-reviewed, the editors carefully review and edit each and every article. Authors must be receptive to working with the editors on any revisions they deem necessary before publication; the editors reserve the right to make small formatting, stylistic, and grammatical changes as they see fit once articles are accepted for publication.

Articles should conform to the following structural guidelines:

All submissions should be in Word format, utilizing Arial 12 pt. Please use endnotes rather than footnotes. All endnotes should be numbered from 1 consecutively to the highest or last number, without any repeating of numbers. We strongly encourage the use of online links to relevant websites and the inclusion of bibliographies to assist the younger generation of emerging scholars.

Each image must be accompanied by a caption describing it and crediting the source, and indicating where the original is held. Images will not be reproduced without this information. Authors are responsible to ensure that they have copyright permission for any images, artwork, or other protected materials they utilize. We ask that every author submit a written statement to that effect. Please indicate clearly where in the text each image should go.

All authors are also responsible to ensure that they are familiar with plagiarism and that they properly credit all sources they use. *Argonauta* recommends that authors consult Royal Military College's website on academic integrity and ethical standards at this link: <https://www.rmcc-cmrc.ca/en/registrars-office/academic-regulations#ai>

We encourage our authors to acknowledge all assistance provided to them, including thanking librarians, archivists, and colleagues if relevant sources, advice or help were provided. Editors are not responsible for monitoring these matters.

With each submission, please include a brief (5-7 sentence maximum) biography.



The Canadian Nautical Research Society

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CNRS membership supports the multi-disciplinary study of maritime, marine and naval subjects in and about Canada. Members receive:

- ☛ *The Northern Mariner / Le Marin du nord*, a quarterly refereed open access journal dedicated to publishing research and writing about all aspects of maritime history of the northern hemisphere. It publishes book reviews, articles and research notes on merchant shipping, navies, maritime labour, marine archaeology, maritime societies and the like.
- ☛ *Argonauta*, a quarterly on-line newsletter, which publishes articles, opinions, news and information about maritime history and fellow members.
- ☛ An Annual General Meeting and Conference located in maritime-minded locations, where possible with our U.S. colleagues in the North American Society for Oceanic History (NASOH).
- ☛ Affiliation with the International Commission of Maritime History (ICMH).

Membership is by calendar year and is an exceptional value at \$70 for individuals, \$25 for students, \$45 for Early Career R or \$95 for institutions. Please add \$10 for international postage and handling. Members of the North American Society for Oceanic History (NASOH) may join the Canadian Nautical Research Society for the reduced rate of \$35 per year. Digital Membership does not include a printed copy of *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du nord*. Individuals or groups interested in furthering the work of the CNRS may wish to take one of several other categories of patronage, each of which includes all the benefits of belonging to the Society. CNRS is a registered charity and all donations to the Society are automatically acknowledged with a tax receipt. Should you wish to renew on-line, go to: www.cnrs-scrn.org

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