“To make all levels of Government and the general public clearly aware of the vital need for, and value of adequate and effective Maritime security forces to protect and further the interests of Canada.” (Branch Constitution, Article III.)

HMCS Labrador
And the Canadian Navy’s Arctic Adventure

HMCS Labrador in 1955. See the cover story starting on Page 4.
From the President
By Richard Gimblett

Dear Branch Members,

Penning my final column as President naturally presents an opportunity to survey my extended term, but in the course of going down that path I would like also to unburden myself of some thoughts on the nature of volunteering and sharing the load. It has been my distinct honour as well as pleasure to serve you for these past three years, and I am grateful for the support that so many of you have shown me in so many ways. I had no idea my term would be such a dynamic one; indeed, when I assumed the watch from Heather Armstrong all indications were for smooth sailing and maintaining a steady bearing along the established track. Almost immediately, however, a number of signs began appearing that all was not well in the Good Ship Ottawa Branch – none of this the result of a bad turnover, I hasten to add.

By now the litany will be familiar to you, of the combination of declining membership as too many of our mates crossed the bar, just as many of the costs of doing business started to rise, revealing what we thought was a manageable membership “problem” actually to be a “crisis”. You will be equally familiar with the response we have been able to fashion to the issue, as what started as a Branch renewal program provided timely support for other plans developing at the National level for a more general revitalization of the Association. But it is critical to recognize that response has been equal parts good fortune and good management – good fortune that Russ Fowler came along looking for an Organizational Consulting Project to meet his MBA requirements just as we began to grapple with the problem, and good management that I had the assistance of a Board of Directors with such a wealth of experience and common sense to help implement the way ahead for renewal and to get our financial house in order.

That brings me to the more specific point I wish to make – too much of the general work of the Branch depends upon the efforts of too few of the same faces. Many of these folks who make up your Board of Directors are busy with other activities.

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elsewhere in their lives, which means we are now perilously close to suffering from the different problem of “volunteer fatigue”. Again, fortune has smiled upon us with fresh faces appearing to fill some of the more urgently arising spots, and at the AGM you will be asked to confirm the transfer of the responsibilities of Secretary from Richard Mayne to Denny Boyle and of Membership Director from John Bell to Eric Deslauriers, in addition to some re-shuffling of other Director duties. But opportunities exist in a variety of other positions, and I am struck that your Board has to work too hard recruiting people to fill slots that become open.

My personal experience in engagement with NOAC makes me only too aware that these remarks are aimed less at those senior to me, who have done more than their share of providing a fine-running ship to ride along in, and more at my peers, who I beseech to get more involved. Bruce Hayes and Heather worked me for the longest while to get more involved, but my personal circumstances prevented me from being too active, as attending soccer games or driving kids to piano and ballet lessons always seemed to coincide with the Monday evening meetings. But when the girls suddenly were all grown up, I finally came out for one of those Monday nights, which led to another, and another. I discovered they were not just a great opportunity to hear speakers on a range of subjects, but were also a good way to reinforce my sense of the Navy as “family” – something that seems to have disappeared to the daily pressures of working in a cubicle. Former mere acquaintances became good friends, and when I was asked to join the Board in one of its previous shuffles I had no reason to say “no”. In part it was a natural way to contribute something back to an organization that had enriched my life. Another part of me asked myself, “just how hard can it be?” Indeed, it has not been (well, except for that membership crisis) because as sea-going officers we learned to excel at routinely handling much more complexity. But the trick is to share the load.

So in signing off the log as I turnover the watch to Bob Bush, I tip my hat again to all my friends who have served before and especially to those continuing on the Board, knowing you will support Bob in his term as President through the adventures ahead. And to my peers – there are more than a hundred of you on the membership list – I extend the challenge to get more involved. Come out on the Monday nights, get to know the organization, and find some way to contribute. You will find a good number of friends you never knew you had but have been there all along.

Yours aye,

Rich

Ed. Note. Mr. President: You have the Ottawa Branch’s sincere appreciation for a job well done through some “interesting times”. Your legacy will live on.

From the Editor’s Desk
By Richard Archer

As many of you know, I was planning to make the theme of this edition the current state-of-play and prognosis for NOAC’s efforts towards renewing itself. This will be a major element of both the Ottawa Branch’s and NOAC’s National AGMs in May. It’s a very worthy cause as we find ways to reinvigorate our association and make it attractive and useful to a wide range of retired mariners.

However, once I took off my Ottawa Board hat and replaced it with my National Executive Director hat, I realized that my sitrep on NOAC renewal was better published for national consumption in Starshell. So that’s where you’ll see it. As National Executive Director, I look forward to the usual cogent feedback from Ottawa Branch.

In the mean time, enjoy this edition of Soundings!
Canada’s Arctic Archipelago is the largest group of islands in the world. Yet, its geography is unfamiliar to most Canadians and despite its strategic importance it remains an enigma to the rest of the world. The area stretches across 70 degrees of longitude from Cape Chidley, Labrador’s most northern point, to the Yukon-Alaska border; a great circle distance of just over 2,000 miles. The southern coastal island group of: Baffin, Somerset, Prince of Wales, King William, Victoria, Banks and some smaller islands, is divided from the northern Queen Elizabeth Islands by Lancaster Sound, Barrow Strait, Viscount Melville Sound and McClure Strait. These waterways form the main axis of the long sought after Northwest Passage which is the principal east-west route through the Arctic Archipelago.

Beginning in the sixteenth century explorers took nearly four centuries to find the Northwest Passage in their search of a shorter trade route from Europe to China and India. However, after the existence of the Northwest Passage was confirmed early in the twentieth century Canada showed little interest in the northern waterway traversing its Arctic frontier. It wasn’t until well after the Second World War that the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) showed any interest in the Arctic when it finally sent its first icebreaker, HMCS Labrador, on four epic voyages into the Northwest Passage.

The lusty British privateer, Martin Frobisher, was the earliest explorer to search for a north-west route to Cathy, as it was then known. Between 1560 and 1578 Frobisher convinced English merchants and British royalty to finance three voyages but he never got farther than the bay that bears his name on the southern tip of Baffin Island. In 1819, Sir William Parry’s expedition marked the first European ships to enter the Arctic Archipelago through Lancaster Sound and reach 113 degrees west longitude near Melville Island. Parry’s incredible voyage was recognized by naming the Lancaster Sound, Barrow Strait and Melville Sound section of the Northwest Passage the “Parry Channel”; it also qualified him for the £5,000 prize offered by the Board of Longitude as the first vessel to cross the 110th meridian at northern latitudes. Perry’s ships, Hecla and Griper became trapped in the winter ice and were the first Royal Navy ships to winter in the Canadian Arctic. Perhaps the most notable arctic expedition was that of Sir John Franklin whose ships Erebus and Terror became frozen in the ice in 1848 near King William Island where all 129 members of the expedition died. British mariners searched for Franklin for the next 15 years without success, but in doing so a much larger area of the Arctic was explored and mapped. By the right of discovery, the Arctic islands became British possessions. In 1850, Captain Robert McClure approached the Arctic Archipelago from the west after passing through the Bering Strait and the Beaufort Sea. He immediately discovered Prince of Wales Strait between Banks Island and Victoria Island, but his ship became trapped in the winter ice. Undaunted, he continued to explore eastward by sledge and linked up with the position reached by Parry on his west bound voyage. This was the last piece of the puzzle that confirmed the existence of the long sought after Northwest Passage. McClure and his crew were awarded the £10,000 prize for finding the Passage.

In 1880, the British saw no commercial value in the Arctic and turned over all her North American possessions...
including the Arctic islands, but not Newfoundland, to the young Dominion of Canada with Confederation in 1867. However, it wasn’t until 1905 that Roald Amundsen and his Norwegian crew of seven became the first to navigate the entire length of the Northwest Passage. Amundsen set off in 1903 in the 47-ton herring fisher, Gjoa, to locate the North Magnetic Pole and to navigate the southern coastal route of the Northwest Passage. He entered Lancaster Sound then turned south through Peel Sound and spent two winters in Gjoa Haven on King William Island near the Magnetic North Pole. He spent a third winter in the western Arctic before exiting the coastal route along the Canadian mainland to the east of present day Inuvik.

By 1900 American whalers were becoming more and more active in the Arctic and there was concern in Canada that the U.S. might try to take the over the islands. As in previous events in Canadian history fear of American action triggered an interest in sovereignty over the Arctic islands. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries, L.P. Brodeur who played a key role in establishing the Canadian navy, was the driving force in upholding northern sovereignty; ensuring a Canadian presence was maintained with regular expeditions and patrols. Between 1904 and 1911 the Canadian Coast Guard Ship (CGS) Arctic, commanded by Captain Bernier, made several voyages and brought back a wealth of information including valuable surveying in the arctic islands. In 1908, CGS Arctic lay in McClure Sound beyond Parry’s farthest point in 1819 and ice-free water stretched as far ahead as Bernier could see. Had he followed the open water, Bernier might have been the first to navigate the Northwest Passage in a single season. But he had no instructions to proceed through the Northwest Passage and he turned back to Winter Harbour to lay up for the season. Bernier was a prodigious surveyor and built up a wealth of Arctic navigation. On Dominion Day (1 July) 1909, he planted a plaque on Melville Island asserting Canadian sovereignty over “the whole of the Arctic Archipelago lying north of America from longitude 60 West to longitude 141 West” at the Yukon-Alaska border.

Captain Bernier made one more voyage after the First World War and other mariners continued the yearly patrols until 1940. The RCMP patrolled the islands and channels each year with small vessels and sled-dogs. During the Second World War Canada agreed to the American building of the Northwest Staging Route, a series of 13 airfields, between Edmonton, Alberta and Snag, Yukon to ferry lend-lease aircraft from the U.S. to Russia through Alaska. As a counter to the increased American presence in the north the RCMP vessel St. Roch embarked on a historic sovereignty voyage through the Northwest Passage that took two years. It left Vancouver in June 1940, and after spending two winters frozen in the ice, finally docked at Halifax on 11 October 1942. It was the second ship to navigate the Passage, and the first to go from west to east. In 1944, St. Roch returned to Vancouver by way of the more northerly Parry Channel route of the Northwest Passage cutting the transit time down to just 86 days. Today, the St. Roch is a Canadian national heritage site at the Vancouver Maritime Museum.

After the Second World War Canada, as a consequence of geography, became a buffer between the two Cold War antagonists; Canada and the United States faced the Soviet Union across the Arctic Ocean. Suddenly, the Arctic gained unprecedented strategic importance in the world. However, the RCN was slow to recognize the new significance of the Arctic; Vice Admiral Jones, Chief of Naval Staff, declined to participate in starting the Canada/U.S. Joint Experimental Station for cold weather work at Churchill Manitoba. And in 1946, the RCN refused to join the large U.S. Navy Arctic exercise “Nanook”. The next year Admiral Reid advised against getting into Arctic operations; stating that naval ships weren’t designed to sail in ice-infested waters. Not appreciating the strategic importance of the Arctic as recognized by the U.S. Navy, he declined to send the RCN north to explore the capabilities of Canadian warships in the northern waters. Reid didn’t even send representation to join the U.S. Navy in
building more Arctic weather stations in 1947.

If the admirals weren’t looking north, the Prime Minister was. Mackenzie King perked the Navy’s interest in the Arctic by refusing to keep HMCS Warrior, the first of two aircraft carriers intended for the RCN, because it wasn’t winterized for the North Atlantic let alone Arctic operations. But he did agree to one carrier if it could be used in the Arctic. According to the Royal Navy, HMCS Magnificent was “arcticized” with an acceptable heating system and upper-deck machinery engineered for cold weather. In 1948, Magnificent sailed into Hudson Strait as far as Wakeham Bay, now Kangiqsujuaq QC, but like any other aircraft carrier of the day she was highly unsuited for the Arctic.

A naval presence in the Arctic required an ice capable ship. Therefore in early 1949, the RCN gained approval for the construction of HMCS Labrador for northern operations. Ironically, the U.S. Navy provided the technical details which were based on their “Wind” class icebreaker. Labrador’s Captain-designate, Captain Owen Robertson, spent two years with the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard before his ship was commissioned, learning the intricacies of navigating in the Arctic. Feedback from Robertson’s Arctic experience resulted in Labrador receiving a hangar and an enlarged flight deck for three helicopters as well as big improvements over the U.S. Navy’s communications and radar, and superior living and recreation quarters. She was modified to include then state-of-the-art scientific equipment changing her from a purely military patrol vessel to a self-sufficient explorer with an elaborately-equipped laboratory and hospital. Labrador was also a transport, rescue ship and school. Because icebreakers have a round bottom to work in ice they have an extraordinary roll in open seas, therefore, Labrador was fitted with retractable stabilizing fins. She had a deep 30-foot draft with large screws tucked well below to avoid the chunks of ice that would cascade down her hull. HMCS Labrador was designed as a conventional icebreaker with the ability to drive forward so that her bow mounted the ice then using her weight to break it downwards. Another technique was to roll the ship from side to side by pumping water into her heeling tanks at an impressive 40,000 gallons per minute; similar tanks were fitted for trimming fore and aft. Her six diesel electric engines were capable of delivering 10,000 shaft horsepower to drive her 6,900 ton displacement at a maximum speed of 16 knots (30 km/h).

HMCS Labrador was commissioned in Sorel Quebec, on 8 July 1954. She had just two weeks to sail to Halifax, test and calibrate all her complex equipment, store and provision for three months. She embarked 80 tons of coal for the RCMP detachment at Alexandria Fiord and flew on her three helicopters, a Piasecki HUP-3 and two Bell HTL’s, before setting sail for the summer season in the Arctic. In 1954, Canada’s Navy was finally in the Arctic and, notwithstanding the sparse RCMP patrols; Canada’s Arctic waters were no longer the sole domain of the U.S. Navy.

At the end of July, Captain Robertson sailed Labrador up Lancaster Sound and anchored off Resolute Bay, Cornwallis Island. The ship’s company conducted surveys and set up beacons to open the harbour at Resolute so that the airfield, weather and scientific stations could be resupplied by

Three Vertol (Piasecki) Model PD-18, known to the RCN as HUP-3s, flew with RCN VU-33 Squadron between May, 1954 and January, 1964. Number 51-16623 displays its Navy designator as well as the Naval Ensign and now resides in Ottawa’s Canadian War Museum.
heavy ships. Supply tasks took Labrador back to Baffin Bay and northward through Kane Basin to deliver RCMP Special Constable Ariak and family with 17 dogs and the 80 tons of coal to Alexandria Fiord. Labrador returned to the Parry Channel and continued west where she rendezvoused with her American sister ships, Northwind and Burton Island off Melville Island. This marked the first time naval vessels from east and west met in the Arctic. The three ships surveyed, collected hydrographic, oceanographic and scientific data through Prince of Wales Strait and into the Beaufort Sea. During the last week of September, Labrador passed through Bering Strait into the Pacific Ocean and became the first warship or large ship of any description to sail the entire length of the Northwest Passage. She sailed on to Esquimalt and home to Halifax via the Panama Canal, making Labrador second only the RCMP’s St. Roch to circumnavigate North America. More importantly, Labrador had proved to be the finest Arctic vessel in the Western world with a ship’s company that was ready for any challenge the North could offer. The value of Labrador’s two Bell HTL and the HUP-3 helicopters was quickly recognized when 45 miles of surveying was completed in four days compared to 10 miles being surveyed in 18 days using the previous laborious method of a land-based tracked vehicle. The helicopters were also used to locate suitable sites for positioning beacons, mail delivery and medical missions. The most important were the ice reconnaissance missions where the helicopters would scout ahead of the ship providing navigational guidance around the ice floes in the waters ahead. Lieutenants John Laurie and “Duke” Muncaster, pilots of the two HTL’s, enjoyed the unique flying opportunity to demonstrate the helicopters’ versatility in the Arctic environment. They each flew four to five trips per day and between 23 July and 20 September each accumulated nearly 70 hours flying time. The HUP-3, one of three acquired specifically for HMCS Labrador, provided a heavy lift (900 pound / 408 kg) capability and was used to lift heavy radar navigation beacons ashore for oceanographic and hydrographic surveys and to support marine biology and ice physics research and a host of other Defence Research Board activities.
Many naval authorities had doubts about the ability to operate helicopters from small ships in open ocean conditions.

However, Labrador proved that a stabilized vessel, a helicopter with good deck handling equipment and a capable crew made flying operations from a small ship entirely feasible. The small team of highly qualified aircraft maintenance personnel supervised by Chief Petty Officers Shorten and Turner set the standard for technical support for small-ship helicopter operations. During Labrador's subsequent summer excursions to the Arctic in 1955, 1956 and 1957, the concept of helicopter operations was expanded and refined. These cruises provided a cadre of experienced pilots and technicians who were instrumental in pioneering the development of the “Beartrap” and the operation of large ASW helicopters from small destroyers.

With the advent of Soviet intercontinental bombers capable of delivering atomic bombs via the polar region the Arctic gained even more strategic importance. In 1955, Canada and the United States started to build the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line; initially a chain of 22 radar stations that eventually grew to 63 sites, stretching from Alaska along the Canadian Arctic mainland coast and islands to Baffin Island. The gigantic task of sea lifting materials and equipment fell to the U.S. Navy’s Military Sea Transport Service. With her previous year of hard Arctic experience, Labrador was Canada’s sole vessel capable of contributing to the northern sealift. As the only ship flying the Canadian flag, her lone representation of Canada in Canadian Arctic waters was no mere token. Labrador was placed under U.S. Navy operational control, but Captain Robertson was given command of the U.S. Navy’s Eastern Arctic Task Group of 23 ships. Robertson’s job was to chart and clear the approaches to beaches in the Foxe Basin area of the eastern Arctic so that enormous loads of equipment and materials for the new DEW line sites could be taken ashore by landing craft.

In 1956, Labrador, under the command of Captain T.C. Pullen, returned to the eastern DEW line. Similar to the previous year Labrador helped to prepare the way for 95 ships to land 250,000 tons of dry cargo and three million barrels of fuel at the various radar sites. Pullen noted that the Americans had operated thin-skinned ships in all areas of the Arctic, thus gaining valuable knowledge. They had done more pioneering, surveying, charting, oceanography and exploring in Canada’s northern waters than in all the previous years of history combined. Canada and her Navy had much to learn. Besides her sealift duties, Labrador’s crew made major revisions to ten charts and produced 12 completely new ones which opened numerous Arctic channels and harbours to deep draft ships. During the 1956 and 1957 seasons in the Arctic, Labrador navigated and charted Bellot Strait for the first time, discovered a deep channel into Frobisher Bay, and surveyed and erected beacons around Foxe Basin that opened a huge area of the eastern Arctic for safe navigation.

In 1958, as a cost reduction measure the RCN had to choose between an icebreaker and more ASW destroyers for NATO. Consequently, HMCS Labrador was paid off and turned over to the Department of Transport where she served for 29 years before being sold for scrap in 1987. Labrador, in her four short years with the navy, contributed more to science, hydrography and oceanography in the Canadian Arctic than any other single ship in the twentieth century. Additionally,
Labrador paved the way for submarines to make submerged transits of the Arctic under the polar ice. In 1958, USS Nautilus made the first underwater transit of the Arctic Ocean by submerging in the Barrow Sea, north of Alaska, sailing northward to the North Pole and surfacing east of Greenland. Then in 1960, the USS Seadragon made the first submerged transit of Canada’s Northwest Passage by sailing under the ice through Parry Channel and McClure Strait; ironically, Labrador’s first Captain, Commodore Owen Robertson, was aboard. Once clear of the Strait, Seadragon turned north and surfaced in a polynya a mile from the North Pole.

The loss of HMCS Labrador forced the RCN to withdraw from the Canadian Arctic and to lose the ability to expand on its hard-won wealth of northern knowledge and operating experience. The RCN also lost the opportunity to exchange information with the U.S. Navy. With no information to trade the RCN had to rely on the good graces of its southern neighbour for advances in Arctic science and submarine operations under the polar ice. But most importantly, Canada’s Navy surrendered its sole surface capability to uphold Canadian sovereignty in its northern maritime frontier.

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Sailor Helped Risky Arctic Mission Pay Off for Canada

The 1954 voyage through the Northwest Passage by HMCS Labrador was charted by the intrepid Irvine, writes Andrew Duffy

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OTTAWA - In 1954, a secretive Royal Canadian Navy mission through the Northwest Passage depended on a tall, Scottish sailor to see it safely through uncharted waters.
consequences of failure, like the fruits of success, could be immense," Mr. Whitby wrote in his account of the mission, published in the Spring, 2006 edition of Canadian Naval Review. The worst-case scenario, Mr. Whitby said, would have seen the Canadian ship towed to safety by a U.S. icebreaker.

The intrepid Lieut. Irvine, however, applied all of his skill to make sure the Labrador made history for all the right reasons. He would board a 36-foot survey boat, the Pogo - it was named for a popular cartoon character of the time - to take depth soundings at critical points in Labrador's journey. The work was dangerous, especially since the Pogo was a light, aluminum-hulled launch that pitched badly in high seas. (Engineers had concluded a steel hull was too heavy since the Pogo had to be raised and lowered from its berth aboard Labrador.)

Historian Eric Fernberg described the Pogo as a "tough little boat" in a 1996 volume of Canadian Military History. The boat is now the property of the Canadian War Museum. "When one considers that the aluminum hull was only an eighth of an inch thick, any type of contact put the five-man crew at risk," Mr. Fernberg wrote. "Faced with the dangers of unexpected rocks, ice floes and occasional gales, the crew of the Pogo took depth soundings, reconnoitred shorelines, investigated possible harbour sites and gathered other vital information for Arctic navigation."

When the ice became heavy, the Labrador had to batter its way through. "At times, progress was measured by yards as we rammed and backed and rammed again," Lieut. Irvine would later write in his book about the mission, The Ice Was All Between. The Labrador completed the Northwest Passage in September 1954 and news of its accomplishment was then made known to the world. Seventeen reporters met the ship when it docked in Esquimalt, B.C. For Lieut. Irvine, the voyage launched what would prove a lifetime fascination with the Arctic. After his retirement from the navy in 1970, Lieut. Irvine operated a consulting practice as an Arctic specialist, then served for 10 years in the Canadian Coast Guard, managing Arctic affairs.

Even into his 70s, he made regular voyages to the Arctic as an ice master aboard cruise ships navigating the Northwest Passage. "He loved the wildness of the place," said his long-time friend, Len Forrest, 78, of Ottawa.

Lieut. Irvine spent much of his life at sea. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1924, the son of a Lloyd's of London marine insurance adjuster, he decided as a young boy that he wanted to be a sailor. "The sea leads you places - and it always gave him a chance to do new things and explore new things," said his son, Geoffrey.

Thomas Irvine won a scholarship to the Thames Nautical Training College at the age of 15, and graduated two years later into the middle of the Second World War. He served as a midshipman in the Royal Naval Reserve on the cruisers HMS Newcastle and HMS Mauritius; the latter took part in the naval bombardment of Sicily.

He was appointed sub-lieutenant and served on HMS Lancaster Castle, which accompanied supply convoys to Russia. He completed his war service as a lieutenant on HMS Zest, a destroyer that patrolled the waters of northwest Europe.

After the war, Lieut. Irvine qualified as a navy hydrographic surveyor and later joined the British Merchant Navy before moving to Canada. He married a Canadian, Rosemary Grier, and together they raised two children, Geoffrey and Victoria. Geoffrey said his father always stressed three things: "He said, 'Guide all your affairs with integrity; fear no man; and always give to those less fortunate than yourself.'" His father, he said, was a man of enormous character: honest, kind, humorous, but like many Scots, not particularly emotive.

Mr. Forrest said his friend loved to read, discuss books and tell stories. He would regularly meet on Fridays with a group of old sailors at the Mayflower Pub. "He was a Scot, a sailor and a most admirable friend," said Mr. Forrest. "He was a laughing fellow rover."
From Sub-Lieutenant Down – Part 12
By Ted White

Fond memories of our formative years as young officers can be characterized in the great numbers of minor, mostly humorous incidents, that we all lived through, by merely going the ‘nothing ventured–nothing gained’ route. Herein are selected vignettes from the fifty’s, reflecting our life and times.

"Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday."

Short Vignettes from Remember When...

First: Shore Patrol in San Juan

1955 and Maggie alongside in San Juan. Mr. Dolly Gray, the Mids on board ‘Sage,’ proposed that since the ship had decided to provide a jeep carrying nightly shore patrol presence, there should be one Mid as part of the four-man contingent. I was the first Mid drafted to join this motley crew, which consisted of a driver, the Chief Painter (with brand-new squeaky boots), Mr. Gray and this humble and concerned Mid.

Some sort of cumbersome hand held portable radio was placed in my charge, we set out on a leisurely drive towards, what seemed, was a more up-scale residential section of town, with pleasant sea views. I questioned why we were not positioning ourselves closer to a potential field of action, you know, in the sleazy night club district and was met by a stern glance and response from Mr. Gray, indicating that our radio reception would be better in this area, in the event of an urgent call.

Some four quiet hours later, almost with the conviction that we would be returning to the ship, we received a broken call that some sailors and marines had entered into a physical discussion at this so and so club. Dispatcher led us to the on site altercation zone. It was a bad scene...with some foreign nationals on the deck, having been physically removed from the inside assembly. It appeared that the Canadian participation had everything in control in the interior of the establishment.

The Chief Painter was the first to modify his responsibilities for entering the inner sanctum as his new boots were too tight, thereby restricting his ability for pursuit with truncheon in hand. I truly tried to find some rationale to fortify my hesitancy to participate. I dropped the bulky portable radio and it, as well, started squawking. Mr. Gray grabbed same, and ordered a strategic retreat to another back street.

He attempted to contact the radio dispatcher, but to no avail, and immediately ordered a strategic withdrawal to the ship, reporting on arrival that he had been unable to call in back-up, an ill-conceived presumption as there was none available.

 Needless to relate that subsequent shore patrol requirements were left to our hosts, the US Navy and its pros, who do this sort of thing....

Second: April 1st, 1956. The Elephant at Whale Island

Any Sub-Lt of that era, will tell you of classic happenings in Whale Island History (HMS Excellent). The parade square of well-drained gravel where no parade was ever cancelled.

Well, it was a sloppy spring parade day. That brutal English wet spring chill that just seemed to eat through Commonwealth officers’ bones with calculating cruelty. As usual, we formed up and fell in behind the Drill Shed, senior classes leading. One class, this day, was their occasion of graduating. It is to be noted that commencing 0800 to 1600 on week days, all officers under training had to salute all Petty Officer training staffs, ostensibly to improve their officer like demeanour. Misdemeanours were corrected on the spot, the worst of which culminated with doubling your class around the island. Off you went with your class, the other staffs in buildings around the island road were informed of your oncoming presence.

A training staff CPO would wait until you had passed by his location with your class in tow. Suddenly, a Gunnery Branch
CPO’s booming voice would be heard, "Officer in charge of that class, report to me Sir!"

Always remember to halt your class first, turn about, and report to the CPO on the double. Some had forgotten to do so and lost their class into the horizon. (There was always a well-entrenched sense of humour by all involved).

Well, it seems that every graduating class would try to outdo all other classes with an original graduating day skit. It had to be original or you were punished.

This day, the classes had formed up and were ready to be ordered onto the parade square. At the precise co-ordinated moment the CPO gatekeepers on the bridge had to place a call to the Officer-of-the-Day, reporting that two Sub-Lieutenants with darkened faces accompanied by an animal groom were requesting entry onto the island, with particular reference to the fact that these officers were sitting astride a fair sized elephant.

The OOD, morning tea in hand, comfortably seated in the Wardroom, said something as follows;

“Good morning Chief, now please repeat your message, what! An elephant!........are you sure?..........Oh by Jove, I see .....April Fools Day.....good try Chief. Of course, let the beast proceed, good morning Chief---good show, nice try.”

Following in sequence behind the last Division on came the elephant to the chagrin--mostly grin--of Commander G.

You will understand that a Clyde Beatty Circus spring training camp had been mounted in Southsea Common, next to Portsmouth. The graduating Gunnery School class had passed a heavy hat to rent one of the lords of the jungle for their graduating skit. Subsequently, not long after, all future planned endeavours were to be cancelled because Commander G’s intelligence became privy to a forthcoming skit involving a bi-wing aircraft. S

Entertainment News – Annual Spring Reception 8 June 2009
By Ken Lait

As our thoughts turn to opening the cottages, launching the boats, golf and relaxing in the sun at home instead of 3000km south, it is time to enjoy a final chat with colleagues and spouses before we all go our separate ways for the summer. The NOAC Ottawa Branch Annual Spring Reception has been delayed one week to accommodate our members who must travel to North Vancouver for the NOAC National Annual General Meeting.

The Reception will be held in the Main Lounge of HMCS BYTOWN on 8 June 2009, from 1700 to 1930.

There will be the traditional sandwiches, seafood mirrors, vegetable trays, sweets, tea and coffee provided by the Branch. The bar will be open on a cash basis. I am also sure that Fred Herrndorf will bring his Sea Cadet Bursary box in case you have any spare change you would like to put to this worthy cause. We hope to see you all there. S

Ben Finds a New Home

You may recall a television news item a month or so ago concerning the 1½ month-old puppy Ben, who had been badly abused by a child in Gatineau who thought it would be fun to cut off one of Ben’s paws with a pair of scissors. Ben suffered for weeks afterwards without any veterinary attention.

Seeing the suffering, someone actually stole the dog and his siblings and placed them with the West Quebec SPC. Ben received immediate medical aid, but if he was not to be put down, Ben had to have his leg amputated at the shoulder, to ensure he wouldn’t fall on the stump causing more problems and pain, and also to allow proper muscular development for a three-legged dog.

But this story has a happy ending. Ben was placed with a foster family who nursed him back to good health and spirits.
Then the time came to place him with a permanent owner. Who should step forward but a member of NOAC Ottawa Branch, someone who wishes to remain anonymous. After some final stair training, Ben took up residency in his new home the last week of February.

Ben is now happy and thriving. As to the identity of the new owner, well some day you might see someone you recognize out with a three-legged, mostly black Labrador. If you do, pet or play with the hero of this story, Ben. Then go up to the owner, pat him on the back and say “Bravo Zulu”.

**Canadian Naval Air Group (CNAG)**
By Gord Moyer

CNAG Swordfish Chapter in Vancouver hosted the annual CNAG Reunion over the October Thanksgiving weekend. It was well attended by members from across Canada. The Richmond Sea Cadet Corps, 195 Bicknell RCSCC, paraded a Colour Party, Guard and Band. Bud MacLean, Hampton Gray VC Chapter, was designated as the official Reviewing Officer. While he inspected the Guard, the Colour Party was inspected by National Chairman Peter Milsom, and the Band by Ted Forman, President of Ottawa’s Hampton Gray VC Chapter.

The National Directors meeting, held in conjunction with the Reunion, discussed the future of CNAG post-2010, including the proposal made by the Royal Canadian Legion for an “umbrella” group. As with other Veterans Groups, whose members are from a group that existed only for a specific period, membership is declining. It is proposed that individual Chapters will continue to meet in a social setting, without a National Chapter post-2010.

At recent meetings of the Hampton Gray VC Chapter, Captain Peter Steel, RN, Naval and Air Adviser, British Defence Liaison Staff, and Captain Steven Luce, USN, Naval Attaché, Embassy of the United States of America, both Naval Aviators, were presented with memberships in CNAG, as Honorary Chapter Members.

This year the HGVC Chapter has taken on the organizing of the Annual **Naval Aviators Rendezvous**, which will be held in the Crowsnest, Bytown Naval Officers Mess. It will take place **Wednesday May 13th, noon until 2 PM**. As in past years all those who have served in Naval Air or in the carriers, destroyers, or in other support, would be most welcome to attend. A small expense fee will be collected at the door.

The **2009 Reunion** will be hosted by **Sea King Chapter, Trenton, September 18th to 20th**. Those who have served in Naval Air or in support in the carriers and destroyers are welcome to attend.

Anyone wishing information about CNAG or Hampton Gray VC Chapter activities can contact:

gord.moyer@sympatico.ca 613-824-0555.
Battle of Atlantic 2009
By Pat Barnhouse

The National Battle of Atlantic ceremony for 2009 will take place at the National War Memorial, Sunday May 3rd. Special recognition this year will be given to remembering the HMCS Kootenay explosion, which occurred 40 years ago this fall. All NOAC members are encouraged to attend, and are particularly urged to take part as a participant by joining the veterans’ contingent. This group forms up on Sparks Street at approximately 1020 and marches directly to the War Memorial. At the War Memorial adequate seating will be provided for all members of the veterans’ marching group. There is no fixed rule on dress, but beret with old RCN cap badge (miniature) and medals are suggested.

Following the service, there is a reception for all in the Government Conference Centre.

For those not choosing to march, there is seating provided at the War Memorial, and any identification as a veteran (medals, retired ID card) should gain admission. An associated event, which has not been widely attended by NOAC members in the past is the Spring Ball (The Battle of Atlantic Social Event) which is to be held this year on Friday May 1st at the Delta Hotel starting at 1830. Tickets are $75 per person and are available from Karen Foubert at (613)761-1093 or e-mail boa_ball@travel-net.com.

Little Known U.S. Naval History
Provided by Hal Gillis

The U.S.S. Constitution (Old Ironsides), as a combat vessel carried 48,600 gallons of fresh water for her crew of 475 officers and men. This was sufficient to last six months of sustained operations at sea. She carried no evaporators (i.e. fresh water distillers!).

However, let it be noted that according to her ship’s log, ‘On July 27, 1798, the U.S.S. Constitution sailed from Boston with a full complement of 475 officers and men, 48,600 gallons of fresh water, 7,400 cannon shot, 11,600 pounds of black powder and 79,400 gallons of rum.’ Her mission: ‘To destroy and harass English shipping.’

Making Jamaica on 6 October, she took on 826 pounds of flour and 68,300 gallons of rum.

Then she headed for the Azores, arriving there 12 November. She provisioned with 550 pounds of beef and 64,300 gallons of Portuguese wine.

On 18 November, she set sail for England. In the ensuing days she defeated five British men-of-war and captured and scuttled 12 English merchant ships, salvaging only the rum aboard each.

By 26 January, her powder and shot were exhausted. Nevertheless, although unarmed she made a night raid up the Firth of Clyde in Scotland. Her landing party captured a whisky distillery and transferred 40,000 gallons of single malt Scotch aboard by dawn. Then she headed home.

The U.S.S. Constitution arrived in Boston on 20 February, 1799, with no cannon shot, no food, no powder, no rum, no wine, no whisky, and 38,600 gallons of water. GO NAVY!

HMCS ONONDAGA Museum

The ONONDAGA submarine museum will be open to the public beginning June 13th, 2009 at Pointe-au-Père near Rimouski, QC. The schedule for the 2009 season is as follows: From June 13th to August 31st - 9 AM to 6 PM; from September 1st to October 12th - 9 AM to 5 PM. Organized groups can visit at anytime throughout the year. The admission fee for a submarine visit will be $12 for adults 16 years old or over, $8 for children between the ages of 8 and 15, and free for children below 8 years old.

In addition to the submarine visit, you can also add a visit of the Father’s Point
Lighthouse and a visit of the Empress of Ireland museum.

The combined admission fee will be $20 for adults 16 years old or over, $15 for children between the ages of 8 and 15, and free for children below 8 years old. There will be special admission fees for groups of 15 persons or more. It should be noted that access will be restricted due to confined space and there could be delays in accessing the submarine.

HMCS ONONDAGA was on active duty from 1967 to 2000. As soon as you enter, you will discover how life was for sixty or so submariners, living underwater and confined in a steel tube about 90 metres long. You will be able to examine complex mechanical systems and to find out about the technologies used for underwater detection. An audio-guiding system will assist you in discovering the secrets of this fascinating and unknown world. It will also be possible to pretend that you are a submariner by extending your visit to an evening onboard and staying overnight in one of the bunks.

Please note: There might still be surface oil on some of the equipment. Be careful! There will be no compensation for soiled clothing. Space onboard is confined. You cannot wear backpacks during your visit. Children must always be under the supervision of an adult.

This information will soon be posted in English on the museum’s website. In the meantime, here is the link to the French version:
http://www.shmp.qc.ca/montezabord.htm

SALTY DIPS VOLUME 10
By Gord Edwards

Now that the Centennial Edition of Salty Dips, Volume 9, is finished, there is a feeling that it is now over and complete, all the while knowing that there is still lots of history out there unsaid. Well, Volume 9 is a great success, my two articles notwithstanding. I personally bought 10 hard cover copies, mostly for gifts but I have also loaned to others, some not navy, and they couldn’t put it down. A great piece of history and the Salty Dips team led by Merv Cameron did a great job.

And now where do we go from here? It is my view that there is room for one more volume, and my idea would be to capture a lot of humour and stories about other aspects that heretofore have been passed around at bars and in wardrooms and messdecks, but never really documented. We all recall hard days at sea, long hours, time away from home, but we also remember all the fun along the way.

Just one example of a story that has not really been told would be the story of Rum over the years. Everyone knows that there are some incredible tales associated with rum issue, and the many ways that sailors, otherwise honest, would find ways to acquire rum from the system in devious ways they considered entirely honest and fair game. I personally know several, and there must be a lot more out there. This could surely be an entire chapter.

And all those foreign ports with all those shenanigans, I can recall bicycle rallies in such as Portsmouth and Rotterdam, essentially a pub crawl on wheels. Many things stolen late at night when it seemed like a good idea at the time, only to be sheepishly returned the next day, often in better condition than when taken, sailors being like that.

Accordingly, I propose ONE more volume, perhaps with the by-line “And we had a lot of fun along the way”, and perhaps called either SECURE or PIPE DOWN.

The Salty Dips Committee has recruited most of the story-tellers to get the dips that make up nine very successful volumes. I think it is time for the Branch membership to come forward with the stories the Salty Dips Committee has not been able to turn up. I know the stories are out there!
Ex-CO of HMCS Ottawa Awarded US Meritorious Medal

Reported by Darlene Blakeley, Navy Editor
The Maple Leaf, 3 December, 2008

On November 18th 2008, at the US Embassy in Ottawa, US Naval Attaché Captain Steve Luce presented Captain(N) Darren Hawco, CF, with the US Meritorious Service Medal. The award recognizes Capt(N) Hawco’s actions and contributions while he was a commander in command of HMCS Ottawa, participating in the activities of Combined Task Forces 150 and 152 deployed with Commander, US Fifth Fleet in Middle Eastern waters. In particular, the citation refers to his “exceptional tactical prowess, inspirational leadership and profound devotion to mission accomplishment in the execution of maritime security operations.” It goes on to recognize that his “brilliant operational acumen included a high visibility boarding operation against a vessel suspected of trafficking international terrorists, and crucial escort duties for a damaged US submarine transiting the treacherous Straits of Hormuz. His exhaustive efforts greatly improved maritime security and raised the bar for coalition operations.”

We in the Ottawa Branch NOAC congratulate Darren on this award and acknowledge with pride the credit he has brought to the Canadian Navy.

Speaker of the Senate Becomes Honorary Navy Captain

Reported by Darlene Blakeley, Navy Editor, The Maple Leaf, 28 January, 2009

Speaker of the Senate Noël Kinsella has been recognized as an Honorary Navy Captain. Being raised in Saint John, NB, Senator Kinsella has maritime roots, but his military career was a brief stint as an army truck driver. After that he embarked on a successful career in academics and politics. He now gets to wear the naval uniform.

Honorary Captains bridge the gap between the military and civilian communities, representing areas of influence as diverse as politics, business, journalism and the arts. They have a dual role: first to strengthen the Navy’s ties to Canadian communities; and second, to promote a better understanding in those communities of maritime defence issues.

Current Honorary Captains are:

Jim Balsillie  Steven Point
Sonja Bata    Hugh Segal
Myra Freeman  Cedric Steele
Ron Joyce     Vic Suthren
Noël Kinsella Moïse Tousignant
Lyall Scott   Bill Wilson
Patricia Lang

Address by the Canadian Naval Technical History Association

Ottawa Branch President Dr. Richard Gimblett presents a copy of Salty Dips Vol. 9 to RAdm (Ret’d) Mike Saker after his address to the Branch members on the subject of the Canadian Defence Industrial Base as an element in the Canadian Naval Technical History project.
UP PERISCOPE
By George Kolisnek

Chinese Navy Deployment to the Indian Ocean

This is a significant point for Chinese Naval history and may be the beginning of a gradual growth in capability and confidence that will ultimately lead to a true blue-water navy capable of power projection further and further abroad. There are three developments that are of particular interest in supporting this assessment.

In December 2008 China deployed two of its most modern missile destroyers, Luyang II Class ships Wuhan and Haikou, along with an oiler to the Gulf of Aden for the purpose of protecting merchant ships from piracy. Since arriving in January the Chinese ships have responded to calls for help on two occasions and reportedly both times scared off potential attempts to board merchant ships. The Chinese Navy ships have not joined the international task force operating in the area, but according to press reports have shared shipping traffic information with other ships in the region. They are due to return to China in either late April or early May, and the Chinese Navy has announced that they will be replaced by three other ships and that this deployment will be maintained as an ongoing commitment.

In the South China Sea the USA and China continue their dispute of recent events concerning confrontation between the USNS Impeccable, one of five ocean surveillance ships, and Chinese commercial fishing vessels. The USNS Impeccable (T-AGOS 23) uses its array of both passive and active low frequency sonar arrays to detect and track submarines and was operating in the open ocean region 75 miles south of Hainan Island from where the Chinese Navy conducts submarine operations. Chinese sensitivity concerning submarine operations is apparent, but their decision to challenge the USN’s ability to conduct surveillance operations in the South China Sea, outside of what are Chinese territorial waters, is a sign of their confidence in pursuing regional dominance in the area. It is most likely that this incident will result in a mutual agreement between the US and China concerning Prevention of Incidents at Sea, similar to one the US and NATO had with the former USSR during the Cold War. However, it should be remembered that these types of agreements are always subject to interpretation under shifting political relationships and are therefore sometimes less than effective. Given the Chinese government’s history of reacting to perceived slights and the US’s stance in pursuing freedom of the seas, this type of incident is likely to occur frequently as the Chinese Navy stretches its sea legs.

Two Type 052C (NATO codename: Luyang-II) 7,000 T air defence guided missile destroyers have been built by Jiangnan Shipyard of Shanghai. They have an indigenously-developed four-array multifunction phased array radar (PAR) similar to the Aegis AN/SPY-1, and are armed with the indigenous HQ-9 air defence missile system, and YingJi-62 (C-602) anti-ship cruise
Finally, there is increasing talk by Chinese news agencies and government officials about the Chinese Navy acquiring aircraft carriers. There has been much speculation on this subject over the past decade, but that speculation was for the most part generated by western naval analysts. Over the past few months some senior Chinese military and naval officers have openly expressed their views that there is a need for China to have aircraft carriers if they are to be a first-rate power. There are reports of Chinese discussions with Russia concerning the purchase of carrier-capable aircraft and the technologies and techniques required to build aircraft carriers in Chinese shipyards. This increasing Chinese openness about the need for aircraft carriers marks the beginning of a significant phase in Chinese naval development.

Other Intel From Defense Technology International Feb 09
Contributed by Richard Archer

New South Korean Frigate

South Korea will start building the first of six 3,100-ton FFX-1 frigates this year, a project that will move its defense industry up the value chain from shipbuilding to system integration.

The FFX-1 will be the first major South Korean warship with locally-developed sensors and combat system. The FFX-1 and follow-on FFX-II and FFX-III will form the backbone of South Korea’s three regional fleets.

The regional fleets defend home waters, especially the western sea border with North Korea, which saw bloody skirmishes in 1999 and 2002.

The FFX-1 will carry one 5-in.62 calibre gun (a Mk45 Mod 4 produced under license from BAE), with this larger gun able to be used for shore bombardment within a land-attack mission among others.

Additionally, the ship carries eight SSM 700K (sea Star) anti-ship missiles, plus RAM and Goalkeeper point air defence systems. A multi-beam 3D radar is under development. Finally, the ship will have a helicopter landing deck and hangar, to accommodate, probably, the Westland Super Lynx already in inventory.

High-Speed Transport

The Navy/Army Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV) program looks like it is going full ahead. Variants of this vessel have proven successful during the past decade in operations by the USN, the Army and the Marine Corps for a variety of missions. The idea for JHSV came from the high-speed wave-piercing catamaran ferries now in service around the world. The services have experimented with versions of these vessels and found that they meet a number of mission requirements, notably in the rapid transport of troops and materiel.

Since 2001, the Marine Corps has operated the MV Westpac Express, a former high-speed civilian ferry built by Austal, Ltd., of Australia, to transport personnel and equipment around the Pacific. The 331-ft vessel has a relatively shallow draft of 12.5 ft. and 32,000 sq. ft. of cargo space. It can reach 35 kts while loaded, and 41 kts without a payload, and deploy a battalion with vehicles and equipment in a single trip. Undertaking the same mission with a C-130 would take 14-17 flights and require far more logistical planning and expense.

The Navy and Army contracted to build a JHSV for US $185 M with Austal in November, for delivery in 2012. Options for up to nine ships by 2013 are in the works. Crew of the JHSV is expected to be 41.
HMCS CARLETON News
By SLt Julie Harris, Public Affair Officer, HMCS CARLETON. julie@julieharris.ca

Junior Officers from Across Canada Join for Some Professional Development.
By A/SLt Marc Crivicich

HMCS CARLETON hosted the Junior Officer Professional Development Symposium held in Ottawa over a period of three days, from the 27th of February and to the 1st of March 2009. This event brought 110 Junior Officers from as far west as HMCS SASKATOON, to as far east as HMCS CABOT. Joining them as well, were many senior and flag officers – providing a good mix of guest speakers and military occupation-specific training.

Presentations focused on a variety of topics, beginning with Commodore Gardam discussion on ‘Risk Management from a Command Perspective’, Commodore Gagliardi on ‘Leadership Development’, Captain (Navy) Donovan on ‘Training and Mentoring’, Commander Henault on ‘Intelligence MOS to the Naval Reserve’ and finally, Lieutenant Colonel Vahey on ‘Death and Casualty Support’. Further value was added as the officers split up into their own military occupation (MARS, INT, LOG, PAO) to expand on their knowledge and discuss current issues and trends with their own field experts and senior officers. The Junior Officers’ Professional Development Symposium is not a new idea, but rather the culmination of widespread interest in engaging in national professional development. Deemed a momentous success as the speakers were incredibly engaging, and their varied subject matter fascinating. It offered a rare forum for junior officers from across the country to gather and train together in a cross-occupational and national professional development environment. Even the social aspects of the weekend played a significant role in reviving some of the deep history and traditions that are often swept aside in our contemporary Navy, particularly within the Naval Reserve.

It is hoped that similar endeavours be undertaken to revive what has once been an important facet of officer training, a true gathering of diversified knowledge and experience.

Temporary Digs for HMCS CARLETON
By PO1 M. B. Violini

On March 19th 2008, several of the roof trusses in HMCS CARLETON’s main drill hall failed due to excessive snow load. Immediately, the Drill Hall was vacated and all material and equipment relocated to various locations. Unfortunately, this incident left two Reserve units, 30th Field Artillery Regiment and HMCS CARLETON (400 personnel), as well as three cadet corps without proper training facilities. Luckily, approval was obtained for temporary facilities, including a sprung shelter and several trailers, to be purchased to accommodate the requirements for space. These temporary facilities will provide 950 square meters of office, storage and training space to 30th Field Artillery Regiment and HMCS CARLETON. It is planned to use these temporary facilities for approximately four years, until plans to relocate 30th Field to CFB Uplands and to permanently replace HMCS CARLETON’s building come to fruition as early as 2012. Though currently on reduced drill and classroom training, the two units will enjoy the benefits of successfully completing the current training season and be able to properly plan for the 2009/2010
The trailer installation was completed by the end of January 2009, as well as the site preparation for the installation of the Sprung shelter. It is expected that the installation of the “Sprung” shelter as well as the demolition of the main drill deck will be completed by April 2009. The Commanding Officers of the two units are very optimistic that planning for the next season will not be further hindered and normal operations can commence very shortly. It is felt throughout the units, that the trailers and Sprung shelter will certainly have a positive impact on training, retention, and recruitment of members.

The Computer Swallowed Grandma
Contributed by Sid Dobing
C&POs Association
The Bulletin

The computer swallowed Grandma.
Yes, honestly it’s true!
She pressed “control” and “enter”
And Disappeared from view.
It devoured her completely,
The thought makes me squirm.
She must have caught a virus
Or been eaten by a worm.
I’ve searched through the recycle bin
And files of every kind;
I’ve even used the Internet,
But nothing did I find.
In desperation, I told Google
My searches to refine.
The reply from there was negative,
Not a thing was found “online”.
So, if inside your “Inbox”,
My Grandma you should see,
Please “Copy”, “Scan” and “Paste” her
And send her back to me.

REMEMBER
By Pat Barnhouse

Active Members

Thomas Arthur Irvine, Lieutenant Commander, CD, RCN(Ret’d). In Ottawa 27 Oct 08 at 84. (See article page 9.)
Edward Stanley Mitchell, Constructor Commander, CD, RCN(Ret’d). In Ottawa 01Feb 09 at 82.
Victor Hosmer Skinner, Commander(MAd), CD*, RCN(Ret’d). In Ottawa 29 Nov 08 at 90.

Others Known to Members

Margery Jean Allen (néé Milne), Lieutenant(SB), WRCNS(Ret’d). In Ottawa 24 Nov 08 at 86.
Robert Joseph Bachand, Commander(S), CD, RCN(Ret’d). In Ottawa 31 Mar 09 at 81.
John Harrison Cleveland, Paymaster Lieutenant Commander, RCNVR(Ret’d). In Toronto (first NOAC National President and long-time Dunrobin resident) 28 Dec 08 at 95.
Francis Joseph Graves, Lieutenant Commander(S), CD, RCN(Ret’d). In Ottawa 18 Dec 08 at 81.
James McLeod Hendry, Lieutenant Commander(SB), RCNVR(Ret’d). In Ottawa 29 Jan 09 at 89.
Robert William Joseph Humble, Lieutenant Commander(SB), RCNVR(Ret’d). In Alexandria, ON 21 Oct 08 at 84.
John Evan Paterson Lancaster, Lieutenant, RCNVR(Ret’d). In Ottawa 05 Oct 08 at 91.
John Gordon William MacKenzie, Lieutenant Commander, CD, RCN(R)(Ret’d). In Brockville 09 Dec 08 at 82.
Donald MacGregor Street, Lieutenant(S), CD, RCN(Ret’d). In Barriefield 13 Feb 09 at 82.
**Full Power Trial**  
By Richard Archer

Did I ever tell you the story of the time I was involved in a full power trial directly across the English Channel in zero visibility? I was the Operations Officer of HMCS *Saskatchewan* and the year was 1970. The Captain was Neil “Chesty” Norton and the XO was Alec Bajkov. On board we had most of the crew of HMCS *Kootenay*, which the year before had experienced a devastating explosion and fire during a full power trial in the western approaches to the Channel, 40 years ago this fall. Only the *Kootenay*’s engineering department had been dispersed. Other than the new engineers, I was one of the few new officers in the wardroom, having relieved Bob Munday after I had a stint as Operations Room Officer in HMCS *Bonaventure*. I joined *Saskatchewan* in Esquimalt and brought her around through the Panama Canal to Halifax.

Chesty Norton was then single, so he volunteered the ship for everything. That year included 5 months as STANAVFORLANT command ship carrying COMSTAVFORLANT, Canadian Commodore Douglas Boyle…but that’s another story.

Earlier in the year we were deployed with a Canadian Task Group to European waters, on a trip that included Exercise Cosy Boom off the approaches to the Straits of Gibraltar, and visits to Gibraltar, Nice in France and Portsmouth, UK.

After leaving Gib and crossing the Bay of Biscay enroute Portsmouth, just as we approached the Brest Peninsula the Captain came on the blower and announced a full power trial to take us north across the Channel and into Portsmouth. This was apparently something he had cooked up with the task group commander and the ship’s Engineer Officer, but he wanted it to be a surprise to the rest of the ship’s company, which included me, the Operations Officer.

By his time I had ceased my operations room watches and was standing regular one-in-three OOW rotation on the bridge. With the trial just started, I showed up for my noon to 4 pm afternoon watch. I had heard the ship’s whistle blowing, but I was shocked to look out the bridge windows to see that we were in thick fog, but still tearing across the Channel at top speed. Regardless, I took over.

The first thing I did was to ensure that we stood a proper lookout. I briefed the two lookouts on the bridge wings, but of course realized that they weren’t going to see anything, and because of the wind noise they also weren’t going to hear any other ship whistles. I made sure the sailor heading to the fog dodger position in the eyes of the ship reported to the bridge first so that I could brief him too. But the fog was so thick the fog dodger was often lost to view.

The Channel was full of the usual heavy traffic, but it was all going so slowly, I just gently slalomed around them. And in any case, except for the occasional ferry we were going 90 degrees to the normal traffic flows, which made it a little easier. When not looking at the radar, I strained my eyes looking ahead through the windows, dreading the sight of a black hull suddenly appearing. I repeatedly but silently rehearsed my “full speed astern both engines!”...as if it would do any good.

But where were the Captain and XO in all this? It turned out that they spent most of the trial down on the plates in both the engine and boiler rooms. In fact, all of the ex-*Kootenay* officers took their turns down there. After the *Kootenay* trauma, I felt this was a demonstration of great bravery.

We arrived off Portsmouth in the dog watches, but because of the fog the authorities had closed the port. We duly anchored in the Solent, but stayed in sea watches. I closed down my blind pilotage team in the ops room, gave instructions to the petty officer about what I wanted with respect to contact reporting in the lack of visibility, and climbed to the bridge to take my 8 pm to midnight first watch. But I should have been paying more attention. Now I look back on it, the radar plotters and technicians, the signalmen, the bosuns, all seemed to be twitchy and wild-eyed. The emotional disturbance should have been evident. But in any case, I myself was...
blithely unaffected – just another crazy day in the navy.

The first watch was interesting to say the least. The captain had allowed some off-duty sailors to go ashore, and we had trouble getting the boat back. Luckily we had new-fangled walkie-talkies we had acquired from Radio Shack using ship’s welfare funds, and were able to guide it to the ship. But the crew members who were ashore now couldn’t get back to the ship, and they were put up in the naval base’s brig.

According to the international rule of the road of the day, while at anchor in low visibility we had to ring a bell in the fore-part of ship in addition to sounding the ship’s whistle. The bell had been rigged next to the fog dodger at the bow, but this meant it had to be continuously manned to be rung every couple of minutes. I moved the bell to the bridge wing, assessing that that was forward enough. But this was a mistake, as now one of the bridge watch, often me, had to ring the bell, and it was deafening.

But that wasn’t the main trouble. As the watch progressed I started to receive more and more calls from below asking for such things as the presence of the coxswain and medical help. It turned out that much of the crew, particularly the NCOs, had decided to drink away their fears. Fights had ensued.

The next morning I had the 8 am to noon morning watch. This was largely uneventful except that the naval base tried to return our wayward sailors on board a harbour utility vessel. On radar I could see the vessel exiting slowly from the harbour mouth and buoy-hopping the outbound channel. I was able to give him some air control-type directions and got him and his cargo safely to the ship, and then back into the harbour.

But while this was going on, the captain had called for ship’s divisions on the quarterdeck. Later I put together the plot. After the Kootenay, Chesty had been told by doctors that many of his crew would be subject to what is now called post-traumatic stress disorder, and that in combat they could therefore be unreliable. This was reinforced by the suicide of the sub-lieutenant who had been the first to don his scuba gear and go below after the fire was extinguished. Consequently, Chesty had agreed with the task group commander that he would conduct another full power trial in much the same sea area as the Kootenay explosion. The idea was to weed out those suffering from PTSD.

Well he got his wish. A small number of senior NCOs failed to show up for divisions. Later that morning the rest of the task group arrived and anchored. The task group commander repaired on board, and that afternoon he held a summary trial, where the delinquent NCOs were dismissed their ship and sent home.

A sad day. But of course one wonders now whether the missing of divisions was less of a matter of PTSD and more a matter of just too much alcohol. Who knows.
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**Membership**

Annual Dues Payable January 1st Annually:

- Ordinary & Associate Members
  - Local: $70.00
  - Out-of-Town: $60.00
  - Serving Officers: $35.00

“Out-of-town” is defined as residing more than 40km “as the crow flies” from HMCS Bynown.

Membership includes a membership Directory, delivery of *Starshell* and *Soundings*, and other mailings throughout the year. Our Members reside across Canada, in the United States, and overseas.

**Fellow Members of NOAC Ottawa Branch**

Your Membership Chair needs recruiters! Our Branch is slowly diminishing, as of this time we number **about 360**, but we are still the largest of the lot.

The difficulty is that your Membership Chair does not know the majority of the people on the lists; hence there is no personal approach.

Full details respecting membership are available on our Website:

[www.noac.ottawa.on.ca](http://www.noac.ottawa.on.ca)

**Membership Directory**

A Directory is enclosed with each issue as an aid to our membership. However, its accuracy depends on how we are advised about errors, changes and additions. We now have most members who are on the Internet and with whom the Branch can communicate with ease -- a magnificent medium for the rapid movement of information. Think about it! Please advise your Membership Chair, **John Bell**, (soon to be **Eric Deslauriers**) of changes to your email address. When messages are bounced you are removed from the network.

**Soundings**

This newsletter was founded in 1982. It is published twice a year, normally in May and November, reporting on NOAC Ottawa Branch programs and activities, trends and other matters of interest to its members. It is posted on the branch web site.

The Editor is solely responsible for the contents. Items from *Soundings* may be reproduced by other publications providing credit is given to *Soundings*, NOAC Ottawa Branch, or any by-lined author.

Contributions, input, feedback, ideas, anecdotes, naval signals, trivia, reminiscences, humour, salty dips, good and bad news items, comments and letters to the Editor are welcome and invited.

Contributions by telephone, mail, fax, email, CD or disk are welcome. Electronic files should be converted to Word 97 format before transmission to the Editor. Please remove all automatic formatting!

*Soundings* returns in November 2009. Please send contributions to the Editor by September 30th, 2009.

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