

November 3, 2007

This is the Sixth Section of the manuscript "Radio Stations Common? Not This Kind"  
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## **DISTRESS COMMUNICATIONS**

The first known shipwreck in the Halifax area that involved a system of marine communications occurred in November 1797 when the frigate TRIBUNE was wrecked in the harbour entrance. This occurred off York Redoubt and news of this along with a request for help from the Dockyard, was communicated by the signal staff at the redoubt. This is the first indication we have of the date the Duke of Kent erected this famous signal station. Since that time all marine distress incidents around this coast have involved these communications stations in one way or another, but it is no longer possible to record all the incidents that have been assisted.

This distress aspect of this type of communication has been such an important part of the operation of these stations, that it is impossible to record anything of the history of marine communications without describing a few. A list of known shipwrecks will only provide fuel for the imagination. It will give the date and with this slight bit of knowledge, you can only assume what took place at the nearest stations.

When the number of ships involved is realized, you have to admit that a request for assistance in one form or another is rare, but they do happen and will continue to take place as long as human beings are out in ships. Ships are better constructed today and the crews are fewer in number and better educated. Ships no longer have the steering or propeller problems they had a few decades ago. At that, the operators were handling at least three requests per week of direct assistance in one form or another when the station closed in 1996. A sick crewmember, physical injury, or an engine problem seemed to be the majority of the trouble. This is all handled via satellite, if the incident occurred any distance from the coast, since the station closed.

There had been hundreds of shipwrecks around this coast by the time the first wireless stations were erected. Many involved small sailing vessels and naturally some of these were assisted in one form or another after these stations went into service, but the poor quality of logging fails to mention any. Any participation must have appeared in the messages handled, which were only logged by number. There is no record of the actual messages.

## **ABERDEEN VDG**

The next distress, I will record, was one of our own Coast Guard Ships. At least she would have been a Canadian Coast Guard Ship (CCGS) in today's terminology. Then she was known simply as a Canadian Government Ship or a Dominion Government Steamer. On Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1923, the ABERDEEN departed Yarmouth in thick fog, bound for an inspection tour with J. C. Chesley, Marine Agent, Saint John, P. F. Morrison, Engineer, Saint John, and John Kelley, Superintendent of Lighthouses, on board.

The ABERDEEN had been built at Paisley, Scotland, in 1894. She was 180 feet long, 674 gross tons, and carried a crew of forty-five men. She was under the command of Captain Loran B. Kinney, and Fred Hill was her wireless operator.

At about one PM the ABERDEEN was approaching Black Ledge about one mile and a quarter from Seal Island. As her speed was being reduced in order to take soundings of the water depth, her lookout spotted something ahead. ABERDEEN's engines were reversed immediately to full speed astern but she struck the wreck of the trawler SNIPE, which had been lost in June of 1922. This collision ripped a hole about twenty-five feet long from the forward hatch to the after part of the vessel. She filled immediately and settled on the ledge at 1:15 PM.

Al Smith was on duty at Cape Sable VCU at the time Fred sent his SOS from VDG (ABERDEEN). Al notified the proper authorities and a sister ship, the LAURENTIAN (call sign CGC) departed Saint John immediately to assist along with the ACADIA (call sign VDT) which was at Halifax, and the ARLEUX (call sign CFL) which was at Briar Island.

ABERDEEN had been using call code "AB" prior to 1912. This was not MAB as one would assume but ABD according to a 1912 list of these calls as provided by Laval Desbiens. The "D" suffix may have meant Dominion as in Dominion Government Steamer if it meant anything.

The ABERDEEN had about 500 bags of cement that was to be used at the Cape Sable Light on board, and there were many drums of carbide forward that caused much concern to those on board when the water entered the ship. About twenty-five crewmembers went ashore to the Seal Island Light Station, by the ABERDEEN's boats, and the remainder remained with the vessel to assist the tug C D belonging to Hugh Cann and Son, in salvaging as much of the wreck as they could.

The ABERDEEN was considered one of the best ships in the government fleet at the time and just prior to the accident had been given a good refit, and was in excellent condition. Those aboard were fortunate she settled on the ledge, because had she slid off this ledge there would have been little chance of any surviving the incident. The ABERDEEN had been based at Saint John since 1913.

## **RAIFUKU MARU JRF**

Al Smith was transferred from Cape Sable VCU to Camperdown VCS and was on duty from six AM until noon of April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1925. At about 8:30 AM he received a distress call from the Japanese freighter RAIFUKU MARU with call sign JRF.

Captain Hikota Izeki in command of the RAIFUKU MARU had sailed on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1925, from Boston with a full cargo of wheat bound for Hamburg, Germany. The RAIFUKU MARU had been built in 1918 by Kawasaki Dockyard Company Limited and was registered in the port of Kobe, Japan. She was a steel screw steamer with the dimensions of 385 feet in length, 51 feet in breadth, a depth of 36 feet, making her gross tonnage 5857 tons and a net tonnage of 4259 tons. Kokusai Kisen Kabushiki Kaisha in Japan was her owner. This was before the amalgamation of the wireless and flag call signs and her flag call was RFBQ.

When the RAIFUKU MARU departed Boston she had on board a total complement of thirty-eight men, including Captain Izeki and twenty-nine year old wireless operator Masao Hiwatari. Mr. Hiwatari had lived for a time in the United States and was fairly proficient in the English language. His wife and baby son were at his home in Tokyo. He had been a wireless operator for only a few months, having graduated from the Meguro Wireless Telegraph Communication Training Institution, which is now known as the National Electric Communications College, in 1924.

Masao Hiwatari's wireless station JRF was manufactured by An'naka Electric Company, which is now one of the largest manufacturers of electronics in Japan (now called Anritsu Electric Company Limited). This was a three frequency transmitting installation, capable of transmitting on 300, 600, and 800 meters. Both the main and auxiliary installations were of the quenched gap spark type, the main having a power of seven kilowatts input, and the auxiliary having a power of 0.5 kilowatts input. This power was measured at the input to the motor generator.

Shortly after the RAIFUKU MARU cleared the port of Boston, she ran into the worst storm recorded for the month of April 1925, and was soon in trouble. Having sailed with a number of cargoes of wheat, I know like the others who have hauled it, that it must be held in the ship so that it is unable to shift in any way. Wheat is a lot like water and will run in about the same way. If such a cargo breaks loose in the hold of a ship it will run from side to side with the ease of water. It will run or shift to one side of the ship and this shift in weight distribution will prevent the ship from righting herself from the initial roll that caused the shift. Another bad feature of wheat, making it a much worse cargo than water, is that if the wheat gets wet it will swell and will burst anything including the ship. Just exactly what took place in RAIFUKU MARU is not clear but she was soon in serious trouble and the only weather observations on record, for that area, are those taken by the staff of Sable Island VCT. These indicate this storm commenced as a force four-easterly at one AM on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Getting caught in one of these storms off this coast is bad enough when everything is as it should be. When it is not, whoever is in such a position is in serious trouble.

When Al Smith received Masao Hiwatari's SOS call it was also received by the White Star Liner HOMERIC. A sister ship of REPUBLIC and TITANIC. The closest coast station is always the controlling station, so Al cleared everyone off 600 meters (500-kHz) and took charge of the communications. This was done by transmitting QRT (stop transmitting) SOS, and sent a cold shiver up the spine of all that heard it. HOMERIC at the time of receiving this SOS was seventy miles from the RAIFUKU MARU.

Captain Roberts in HOMERIC was advised and he immediately altered course and ordered his Chief Engineer to give HOMERIC all the speed he could. It must have been one merry old ride because the HOMERIC crew managed twenty knots in covering the seventy miles and put themselves alongside, as close as they could, to RAIFUKU MARU. A quick look into HOMERIC making this trip would have been most interesting. The crew up forward must have felt as though they were in the head of a jackhammer rather than the foc'sul of their ship, as she hammered her way through each sea. In the engine room, each engineer would have been hanging on with one eye fixed on every gauge he had, and the other eye on every safety valve which would have been rattling as though ready to blow at any instant. The stokers in the stoke hold of HOMERIC, a spoon fed coal burner, would have looked like a bunch of mad black fools as they madly shoveled coal into her fire boxes. Up on her bridge you could have heard a pin drop, as possibly more than one quartermaster held her on a steady arrow-straight course. Captain Roberts and his mates would have been hanging on in dead silence, listening to every squeak and rattle, and fixed on each and every sea, for the first possible sign of over doing it. The cooks in her galley would have been up to their usual tricks, cursing everything in general and all the while doing their best to keep things in a normal working routine, yelling among themselves to be heard above the rattling and banging from their drawers and cupboards of utensils.

In HOMERIC's wireless room, the Chief Wireless Operator would have been wrapped in a death grip with his legs around his chair, each and every pop of static sounding like a rifle crack in his headphones. All the time logging every bit of Morse heard, with one hand hovering close to his large brass transmitting key ready to acknowledge anything instantly. All the while his main Spark Transmitter would have been roaring away totally ignored by everyone, even when they came in for an up-date on any new developments.

Just as HOMERIC reached RAIFUKU MARU Masao Hiwatari made his last transmission:

“NOW VERY DANGER COME QUICK”.

The RAIFUKU MARU crew had tried to get off in their boats, but failed. All their boats were smashed from the high seas when they tried to launch them and were lost.

Captain Roberts laid the HOMERIC alongside RAIFUKU MARU as close as he could. He found her with a list of thirty degrees and quite unmanageable. There was nothing the HOMERIC crew could do to rescue the crew of the RAIFUKU MARU. HOMERIC would have only carried a small amount of oil for lubricating and would have been unable to pump any great amount of oil on the water to help quiet the sea. The sea would have been mountainous after a storm of such force had been in the area for such a long time.

Shortly after HOMERIC arrived, having done everything possible to assist them she watched RAIFUKU MARU sink with all thirty-eight men still on board. It must have been one of the worst experiences for each and every crewmember on HOMERIC. HOMERIC remained in the area for awhile hoping to pick up survivors, but none could be found.

At 11:15 AM Al Smith at Camperdown VCS received the following message from Captain Roberts:

“OBSERVED STEAMER RAIFUKU MARU SINK IN LAT 4143N LONG 6139W  
REGRET UNABLE TO SAVE ANY LIVES”.

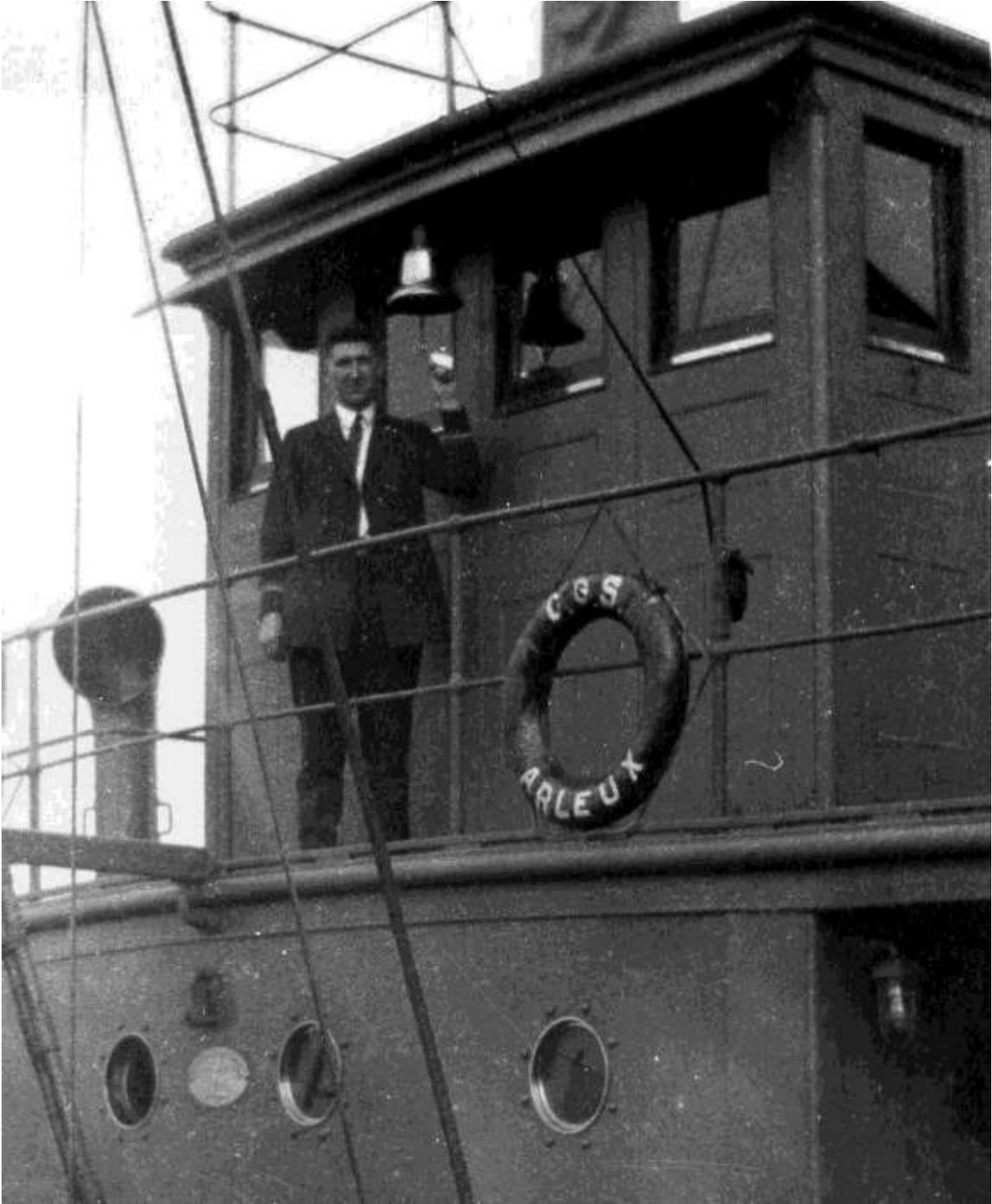
The British steamer KING ALEXANDER was also in the vicinity but was unable to participate and unable to reach RAIFUKU MARU. The Canadian Government Ship ARLEUX with call sign CFL was alongside at Halifax on Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1925, and left immediately and remained in the area searching for bodies, returning Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1925, she was unable to locate any bodies or wreckage from RAIFUKU MARU. I was unable to locate the ARLEUX's log. This would have been interesting, if nothing else it would have given an accurate description of the weather and sea conditions she experienced.



*Acme Newspictures Inc.*

This is the SS RAIFUKU MARU sinking with all hands.

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*Warren E. Hagar*

This is Wireless Operator Warren Hagar ringing the ship's bell on ARLEUX in 1926.

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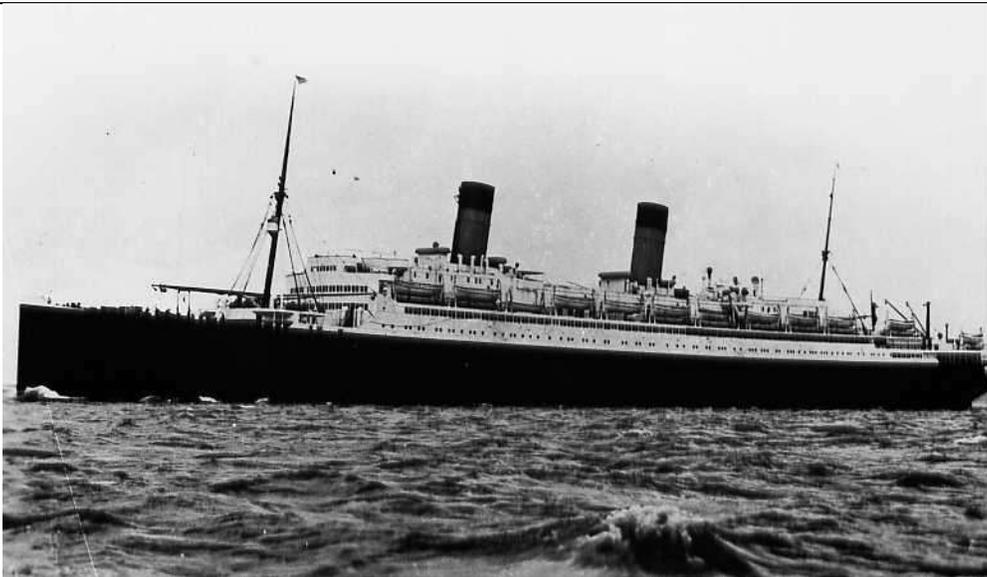


*Warren E. Hagar*

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### CGS ARLEUX

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*World Ship Society*

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### HOMERIC

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When news of this disaster broke in Japan, the Japanese press gave it wide coverage blaming the loss of their seamen on racial prejudice. This I find impossible to believe. HOMERIC was a passenger liner of 34,356 tons, and her crew would have contained some of the finest seamen in the world. How Captain Roberts could have elevated himself to such a position and still hold racial prejudice as part of his makeup, would be rather hard to believe. Besides, at this time all the mates under Captain Roberts would have held Extra Master Mariners Certificates. This certificate was the highest of all marine certificates and was mandatory for a position of junior mate in these passenger liners. I am convinced that all possible was done in the attempt to rescue these seamen.

According to the Japanese press articles I was able to locate on this incident, they were blaming racial prejudice on reports from the HOMERIC passengers after they landed in New York a few days later. Passengers, on most anything, can perform some amazing feats after they have been safely landed back on terra firma. If the truth of the matter were known, I feel confident there was more racial prejudice in any one of the passengers in HOMERIC, at the scene and during their mad race, than there was among all the crew.

This press coverage did some interesting things in Japan. It prompted the Empress and Emperor of Japan, to express their sympathy publicly and to provide a three hundred-yen allotment to the bereaved of each and every crewmember. It also prompted the Japanese Seamen's Union to hold special meetings at Kobe,

making it known that more should be done to secure the rescue of seamen and the better construction of vessels on an international basis. They also made an appeal to world opinion to ignore racial prejudice by all seamen at the scene of a shipwreck. These latter records from this meeting are still on the records of the Japanese Seamen's Union.

I have been unable to locate either Masao Hiwatari's son or widow, but if I ever had to pick a super hero, Masao Hiwatari would be at the top of my list. During the three and one half-hours Al Smith communicated and listened to him, he never made a mistake in Morse code nor did he ask for a repeat. Under such impossible conditions, it is hard to believe, and certainly proves he must have been one fine operator, and must have had nerves of steel.

The part which disturbed me on learning racial prejudice was thought by some to have played a part in the outcome of this incident was that ten years later another Japanese ship, the ENGLAND MARU with call sign JAGD, performed amazing seamanship in the rescue of British and Canadian seamen. They rescued several men, making two trips, from the wreck of the British freighter BERWINDLEA with call sign GTFW that was lost on Dead Man's Rock in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. They did this in an open thirty-foot boat that had no engine and was rowed by the Japanese seamen naked to the waist. This was done in very cold weather and water conditions from the weather side of the wreck, on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1935. At one point Japanese Bosun Okabe used himself as a fender to protect the boat. This smashed seven of his ribs and nearly killed him, but he saved the boat. The Japanese boat crew landed the half-frozen survivors on board the Canadian tug FOUNDATION FRANKLIN with call sign VGJQ. She had been trying to salvage BERWINDLEA. This incident is recorded in Farley Mowat's book Grey Seas Under.

It is a shame history has to show us that such could take place, and that good seamen could be accused of racial prejudice after doing all possible, merely because they were not successful. At least I am convinced that all possible was done. As has been said many times, the impossible just takes longer and in this case time ran out and there was "no longer".

## **CANADIAN GOVERNMENT MERCHANT MARINE (CGMM)**

We Canadians have had several fleets throughout our history, but for some reason have not been able to hang on to them. After World War I we had the best known of these fleets, the Canadian Government Merchant Marine (CGMM), owned and operated by the Canadian Government. The Company was incorporated in 1918 and took delivery of its first ship CANADIAN VOYAGEUR in 1919. These ships were a wartime construction project and this fleet became known outside the country in many shipping circles as the "Rat Line". The reason for this title was the house flag flown by this fleet. A Beaver in the canton or hoist of a flag resembled a Rat to most anyone outside this country.

Shortly after forming this company regular schedules were set up between the United Kingdom, the West Indies, Australia, South America, and in the Canadian home trade. The last of this grand undertaking terminated in 1936 when the runs to Australia and New Zealand were discontinued and the remaining ships were sold. I have often wondered if our general attitude towards these things is not the main reason for their demise rather than economic or political conditions. Apparently no one knows the answer for certain. Every so often we hear talk of forming yet another of these fleets.

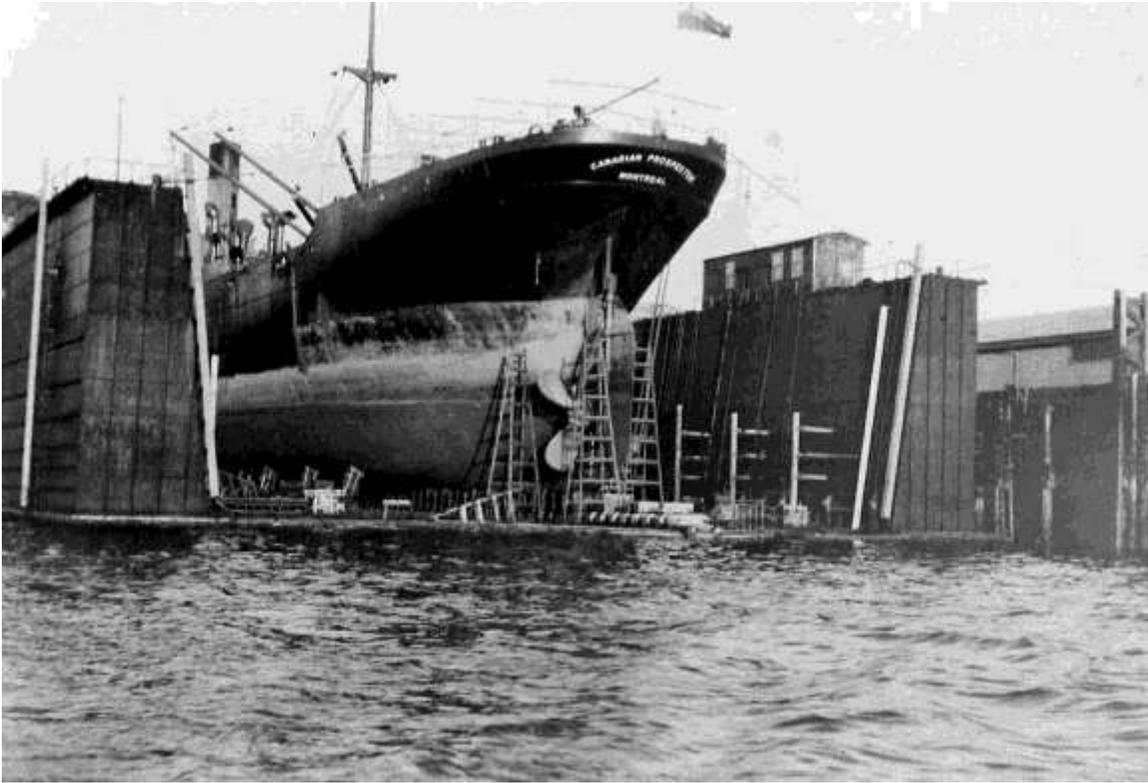
The CGMM fleet contained sixty ships and the last one was delivered to the Company in 1921. One of these ships is well worth mentioning. CANADIAN RAIDER built in 1920 was not scrapped until 1976 after reliable service for a span of fifty-six years. This record proves we can build them. CANADIAN RAIDER terminated her career as the Spanish ANTONIO DE SATRUSTEGIN with call sign EANB, and held two other names, MARI DOLORES and TENAX, during her lengthy career.

The Canadian Government Merchant Marine (CGMM) fleet 1923:

| Flag | Radio | Name |
|------|-------|------|
|------|-------|------|

|      |      |                      |
|------|------|----------------------|
| TPNM | XWD  | CANADIAN ADVENTURER  |
| TPMB | XWG  | CANADIAN AVIATOR     |
| TPRD | XWY  | CANADIAN BEAVER      |
| ---- | VGLT | CANADIAN BRITISHER   |
| TPVN | VGKM | CANADIAN CARRIER     |
| TQGP | VGLY | CANADIAN CHALLENGER  |
| TQFC | VGJW | CANADIAN COASTER     |
| TQDW | VGJL | CANADIAN COMMANDER   |
| TPVJ | VGLX | CANADIAN CONQUEROR   |
| TQHC | VGLZ | CANADIAN CONSTRUCTOR |
| TQGR | VGNB | CANADIAN CRUISER     |
| TQFW | VGLQ | CANADIAN ENGINEER    |
| TQDB | VGBQ | CANADIAN EXPLORER    |
| TPRC | XWX  | CANADIAN FARMER      |
| TQDN | VGBM | CANADIAN FISHER      |
| TQDP | VGBT | CANADIAN FORESTER    |
| TQFL | VGDF | CANADIAN FREIGHTER   |
| TPMK | XWE  | CANADIAN GUNNER      |
| TQFH | VGBZ | CANADIAN HARVESTER   |
| TPVQ | VGDC | CANADIAN HIGHLANDER  |
| TPSG | VGBX | CANADIAN HUNTER      |
| TPQC | XWQ  | CANADIAN IMPORTER    |
| TPQF | XWT  | CANADIAN INVENTER    |
| TQPF | VGJX | CANADIAN LEADER      |
| TQGN | VGLS | CANADIAN LOGGER      |
| TPWS | VGBF | CANADIAN MARINER     |
| TPLB | XVZ  | CANADIAN MILLER      |
| TPRB | XWV  | CANADIAN MINER       |
| TPMB | XWJ  | CANADIAN NAVIGATOR   |
| TPRJ | VGLB | CANADIAN PATHFINDER  |
| TPFR | CKT  | CANADIAN PIONEER     |
| TPNQ | XWP  | CANADIAN PLANTER     |

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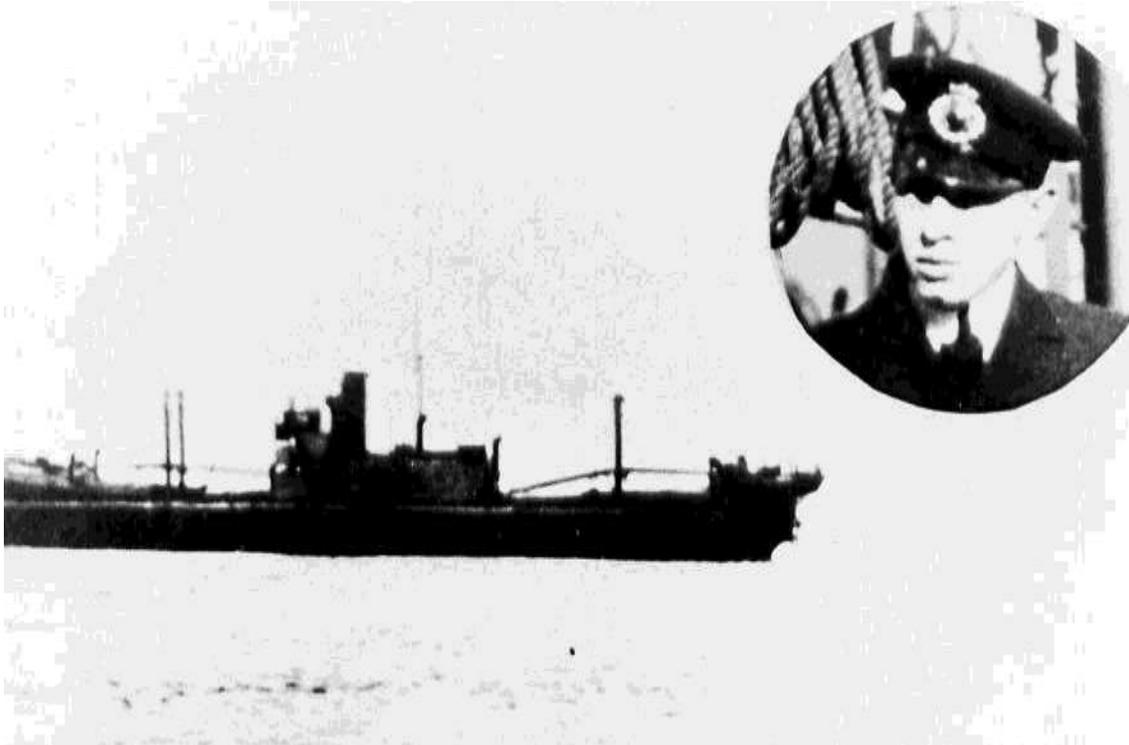
*Public Archives Canada PA-96167*

This is the CANADIAN PROSPECTOR with international call sign VGPC.

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|      |     |                     |
|------|-----|---------------------|
| TPQH | XWU | CANADIAN PROSPECTOR |
| TPNR | XWN | CANADIAN RAIDER     |
| TPNJ | XWO | CANADIAN RANCHER    |
| TPGL | XVF | CANADIAN RANGER     |

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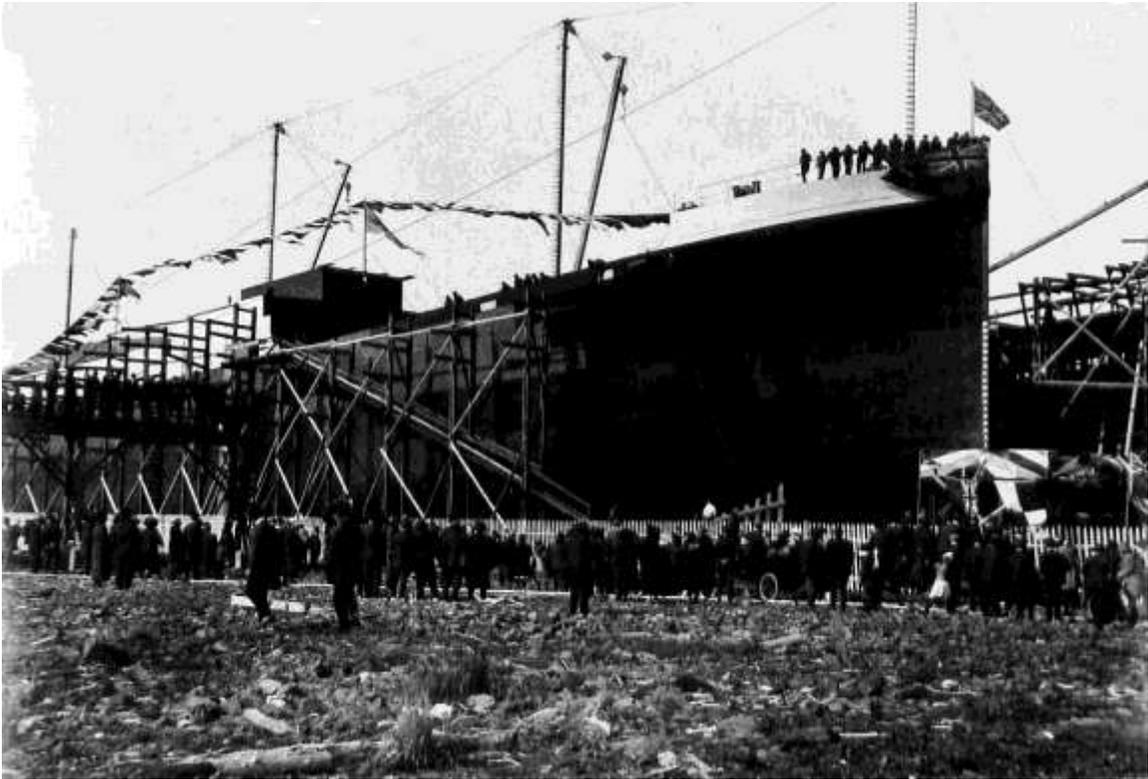
*Cyp Ferland*

This is the CANADIAN RECRUIT with Wireless Operator Cyp Ferland insert, 1919, and CANADIAN RECRUIT is not on this list

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|      |      |                 |
|------|------|-----------------|
| TQDB | VGDZ | CANADIAN ROVER  |
| TPSD | ---- | CANADIAN RUNNER |
| TPKC | XVR  | CANADIAN SAILOR |
| TQBD | VGBK | CANADIAN SAPPER |

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*Public Archives Canada PA-96112*

This is the CANADIAN SCOTTISH built at Prince Rupert, British Columbia in 1921. It looks like launching day with the crowd that has gathered.

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|      |      |                      |
|------|------|----------------------|
| TQGC | VGDK | CANADIAN SCOTTISH    |
| TPNK | XWK  | CANADIAN SEALER      |
| TPJG | XVS  | CANADIAN SEIGNEUR    |
| TPMV | XWI  | CANADIAN SETTLER     |
| TPJQ | XVU  | CANADIAN SIGNALLER   |
| TPWK | VGBW | CANADIAN SKIRMISHER  |
| TPMQ | XWH  | CANADIAN SOWER       |
| TPMW | XWM  | CANADIAN SPINNER     |
| TQBR | VGJT | CANADIAN SQUATTER    |
| TPJF | XVP  | CANADIAN TRADER      |
| TPWM | VGBY | CANADIAN TRANSPORTER |
| TPNW | VGNC | CANADIAN TRAPPER     |
| TQDV | VGBC | CANADIAN TRAVELLER   |
| TPHG | XVN  | CANADIAN TROOPER     |
| TPSR | VGBP | CANADIAN VICTOR      |
| TPGD | XVM  | CANADIAN VOLUNTEER   |
| TPFQ | CKS  | CANADIAN VOYAGEUR    |
| TPFN | XVA  | CANADIAN WARRIOR     |
| TQBD | VGDB | CANADIAN WINNER      |
| HWNC | VDZ  | SHEBA                |

As can be seen this makes a total of sixty-two ships counting SHEBA. This fleet must have lost CANADIAN RUNNER and CANADIAN RECRUIT early in its history because they do not appear in the 1923 List of Radio Stations. You will note that the changing to a four character Radio Call Sign and the combining of the Radio and Flag Call Signs did not come easy. It took a period of over a decade to accomplish this. The four-letter Radio Call Sign came first in the early 1920's, and this call sign was to

become the standard call sign for ships after the many conventions that were held around 1933. You will also note duplicates in the Flag Call Signs; i.e. CANADIAN WINNER/CANADIAN SAPPER, and CANADIAN NAVIGATOR/CANADIAN AVIATOR. Since these are the actual records, these calls are accurate – “Hey, you are using my call sign”. “No I’m not, you’re using mine”. How this came about and how it terminated would be rather interesting.

These ships had Marconi Wireless Telegraphy Company (now Canadian Marconi Company) stations, and all the operators were employed by MWTC. All had four transmit frequencies, 300, 450, 600, and 800 meters. They were not listed with the amount of power available. They were listed with the range in miles. That was the practice at the time. Some were listed as 200 miles, the majority 250 miles, and a few at 300 miles, meaning there must have been three distinct power outputs or for some reason the rigging of their antenna lowered or raised this figure.

SHEBA with radio call sign VDZ was an interesting vessel. She was part of the Canadian Government Merchant Marine but her station was operated differently. It was under the authority of the Department of Marine and Fisheries. From this arrangement it was discovered after some time, that her operator was being paid twice, from the two sources. He refused to give up one-half of the money he had been paid, claiming he was paid for services rendered. From the detail I could learn on this bit of choice information, he did not pay back this money and this involved a court case of some description. This particular operator retired as the top executive officer of a large Canadian company. Many of these operators were to go on to become top executives in one field or another. One of these started out as an operator in the old GYPSUM PRINCE (built 1927) and became an Admiral in the Royal Canadian Navy, Admiral Bill Christie.

In addition to this sixty ship CGMM fleet, there were another 189 ships carrying operators, listed in this 1923 List of Canadian Radio Stations. The International Call Sign Blocks allotted to Canada at the time were:

CFAA – CFZZ  
CHAA – CHZZ  
CJAA – CKZZ  
GTPA – GTSZ  
GTVA – GTZZ  
VAAA – VGZZ  
XVAA – XWZZ

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*Captain John H. Campbell*

This is John H. Campbell on the left and Bill Snailham.  
Bill was Wireless Operator of SS LENGAN in 1927

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## **MARITIME FISH AND NATIONAL FISH**

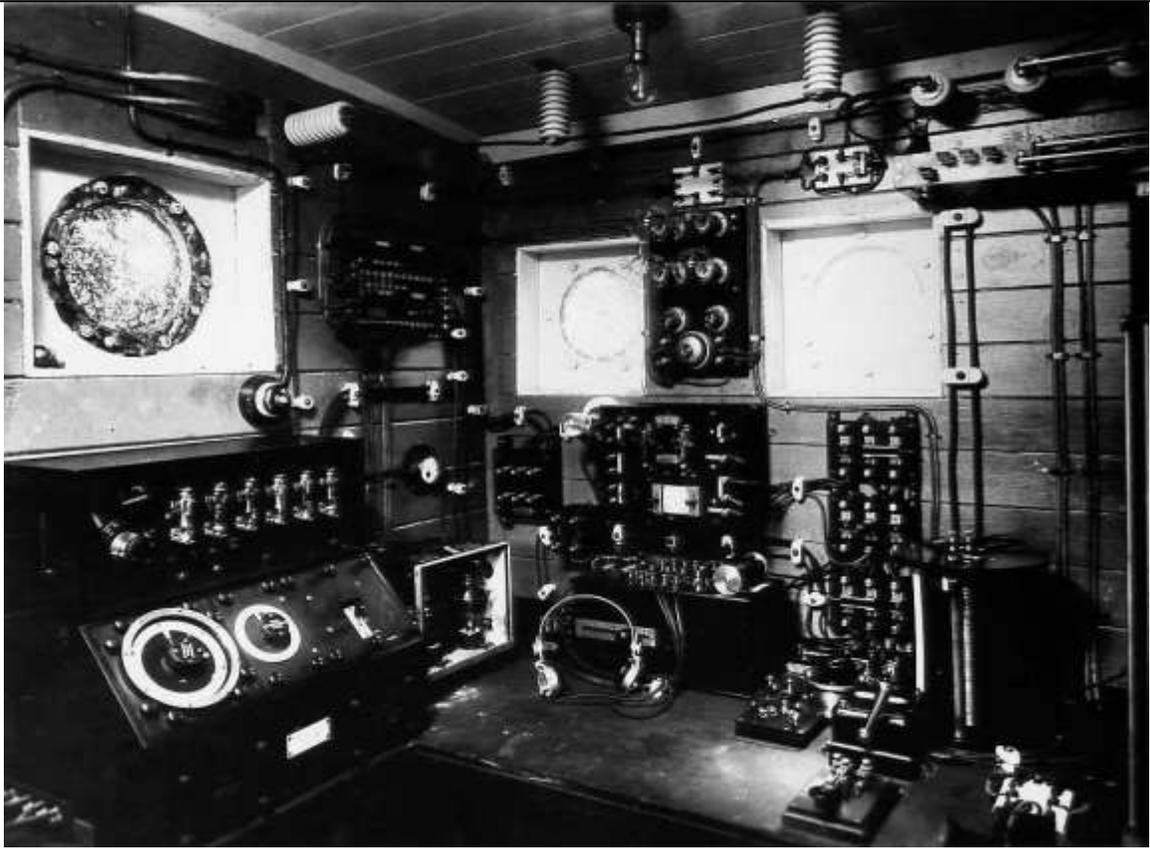
Prior to World War II Maritime Fish and National Fish were the predecessors of what became National Sea Products Limited. All their larger vessels carried wireless stations and carried operators. Many an operator obtained his start around this coast in one of these ships. Their wireless stations were leased from Canadian Marconi. This was the practice for most ships back then. The operators for this fleet were employees of Maritime Fish or National Fish.

The purpose of the operator on these large fishing vessels was to maintain contact with the shore office via telegram and to obtain bearings from the direction-finding stations ashore in order for the Captain to obtain a good fix on his position. It was normal for the operator to obtain these bearings first thing each morning, whenever they got a good catch, and for any other reason. With these Canadian Fishing Vessels were often several British fishing vessels chartered by Maritime Fish and National Fish and many American vessels. The coast station operator would take many of these bearings, as many as forty or more, during the normal working shift of one of the operators.

ST. CUTHBERT was a fishing vessel that came from Fleetwood, Lancashire, England, in 1930. Her wireless operator on the trip over was Jack Maher. Jack retired as the Technical Station Manager of VCS, turning the station over to Gus Crewe, in July 1970.

ST. CUTHBERT was twenty-nine days in crossing the Atlantic to Nova Scotia. Her wireless room consisted of a cramped little cubbyhole that contained both the equipment and the operator's living space, a bunk for sleeping. Her wireless equipment consisted of a ¼ kilowatt quenched gap spark transmitter and the receiver was a two-tube oscillating detector. This would not reach all the way across the Atlantic, or either side from mid-Atlantic, but Jack was able to contact a passenger liner somewhere around mid-Atlantic. This liner gave him their position and notified Cape Race VCE of their position. Of course Jack received the enervating message in return that most of us have received at one time or another during our careers at sea. VCE had the passenger liner advise Jack that they were ten days overdue. You can be

pounding to pieces trying to get somewhere close to schedule, and always there is someone to advise you that you are adrift, which normally is the only reason you contacted them in the first place. ST. CUTHBERT arrived okay, her crew ravenous as they had been without solid food for two days.



*The Marconi International Marine Communications Company Limited*

This is the wireless room on the British Trawler KING'S GREY. A typical fishing vessel installation of the 1920's and much the same as those fitted in Canadian fishing vessels.

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27586 *The Marconi International Marine Communications Company Limited*

The steam carrier CAESAR, owned by Hellyer's Steam Fishing Company Limited, Hull, United Kingdom, was the first fishing vessel ever to have wireless equipment on board. She was fitted in June 1913 by the Marconi Marine Company, which, at the same time installed wireless equipment on board the trawler OTHELLO, also owned by Hellyer's.



S63745 *The Marconi International Marine Communications Company Limited – Picture by courtesy of 'Wireless World'*

A group of those concerned in the installation in 1913 of the first wireless equipment ever to be fitted on board a fishing vessel. This was the carrier CAESAR, owned by Hellyer's Steam Fishing co., Ltd., of Hull, England.

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It is hard for one to fully appreciate the feeling we have had in earning our Certificate of Proficiency in Radio and then learning that we were to report as Radio Officer in a ship. Earning our certificates is probably the hardest and most rewarding thing most of us have ever done. Shortly after this, on learning you are going to be a Radio Officer in a ship, all by yourself, with all the memories of the Radio School Instructor fresh in your mind. Stating how the crew is relying on you, and you alone, to notify the world of their possible distress, all the stories you have read and heard of the glamour and excitement of ships sailing to far-off ports, - can one imagine a more exciting moment?

When I heard I had been chosen Radio Officer for the BOUNTY, a square-rigged sailing vessel built and used for filming the movie Mutiny on the Bounty, I had just received my second class certificate from Radio College of Canada. Although I had served as a radio operator in three naval frigates prior to this, I was most excited. Because of the publicity given this vessel, the telephone directory had a colour picture of her on the cover. As I received confirmation of my position as radio officer I was looking at her picture just underneath the phone. I did not hang up the telephone on termination of the call – merely tossed it into the air and yelled.

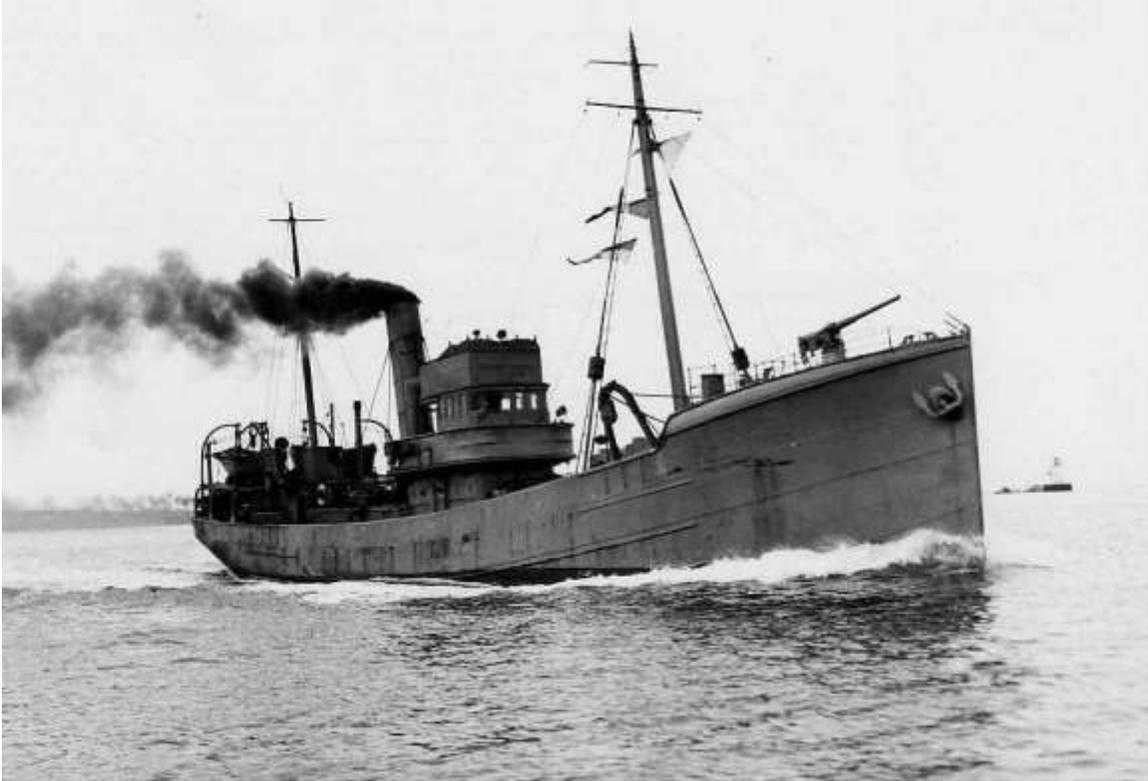
Of all the fellows starting out, I do believe the one I know who got off to the poorest start was Walter H. Wooding. Walt received his second class certificate, and while waiting for a job taught radio at the Johnson's Radio School on Hollis Street in Halifax. He was notified that he was to report to VIERNOE as her Radio Officer, and like most of us became very excited about it. It made no difference that the vessel was a fishing trawler.

At the time Walt had an old Model T Ford car. He had stripped this down and made it into a "run-around-bug". This vehicle had to be started by cranking the engine with a crank. The night before he was to sail he went down to the radio school for the evening. When he left to return home, in his excitement, he advanced the spark on the old Model T too far. This caused the engine to "back fire" when he cranked it. This back-firing broke Walt's right wrist, but he managed to sail on time complete with his wrist in a cast, and managed to transmit Morse code with the wrist until he learned to send with his left hand.

Walt was later transferred to one of the sister vessels, and this proved an interesting experience. The previous operator had been fired for drinking and when he learned he had been fired, he went back aboard and put the spark transmitter out of tune. Walt was at sea before he realized this, and had one heck of a time getting this transmitter to work.

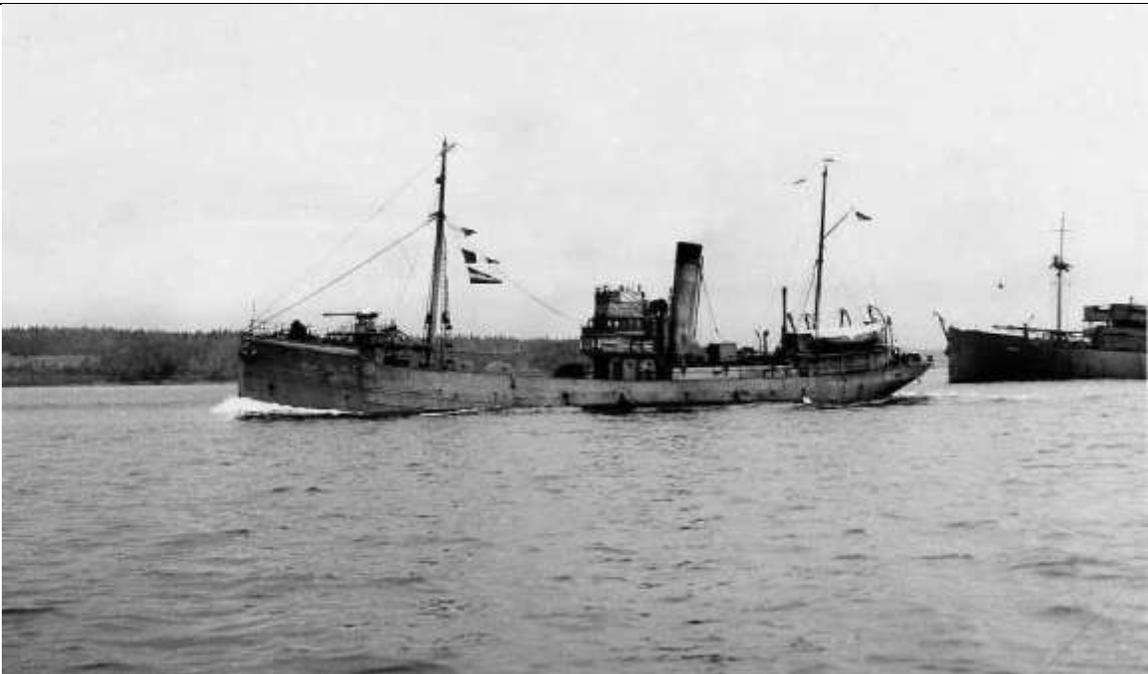
Shortly after this Walt joined a "rum-runner" and then crossed over to the Department of Marine and Fisheries, as a National Revenue Preventive Service operator and RCMP Marine Section operator. From there he was transferred to Camperdown VCS and spent time at this station around 1938.

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*Public Archives Canada S-85*

HMCS VENOSTA



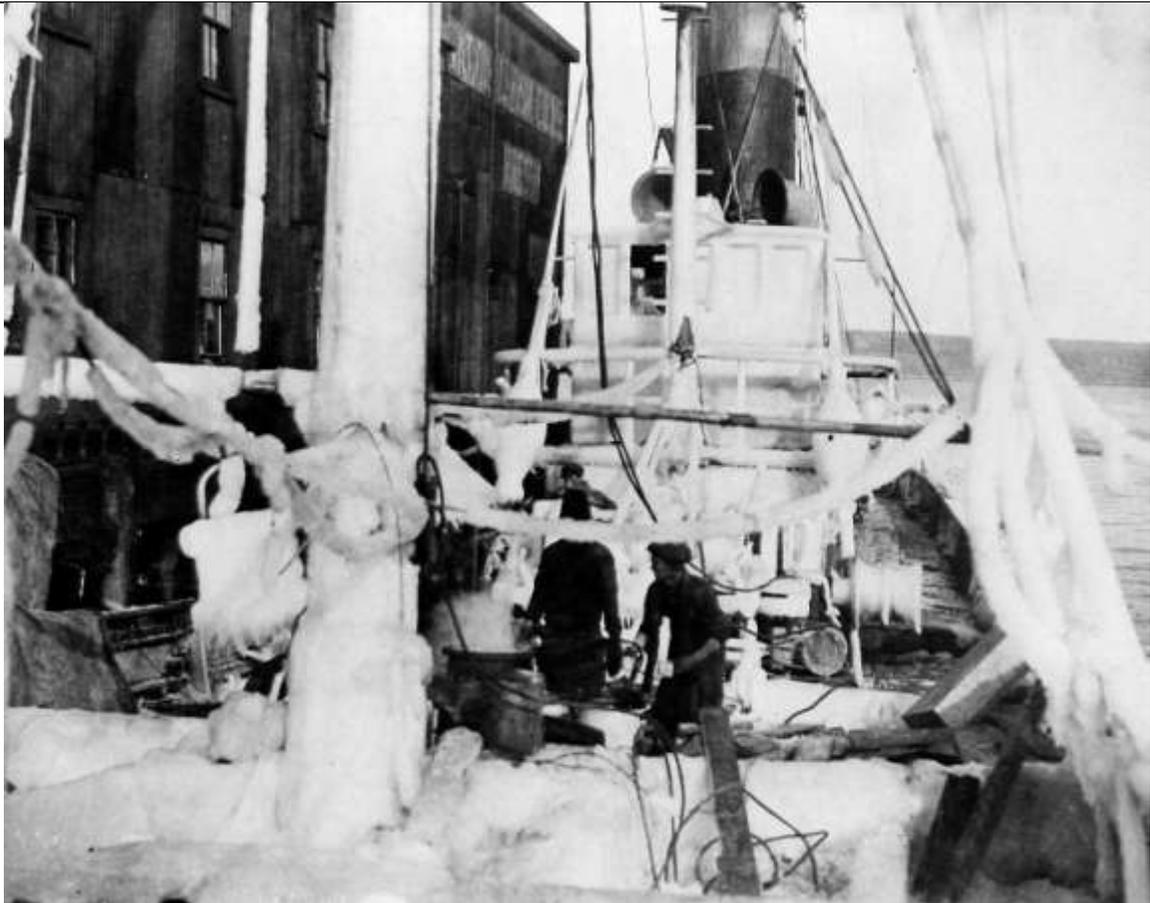
*Public Archives Canada S-45*

HMCS VIERNOE



*Clyde Thornhill*

This is some of the VIERNOE crew in 1946 with the mate Clint Thompson in the center and Ellison Thornhill on the far right.



*Nova Scotia Museum*

This is the only photograph of the Steam Trawler GOOD HOPE that I have found.



*Nova Scotia Museum*

FV LEMBERG

Three of these fishing vessels became naval vessels during World War II. HMCS VENOSTA and HMCS VIERNOE were minesweepers from October 1939 until January 1941. From June 1941 until January 1942 they were Gate Vessels at Sydney, Nova Scotia. To enable friendly vessels to enter the port, the job of these ships was to open and close the gates in the nets strung across Sydney harbour to prevent enemy submarines from entering. They were returned to Maritime Fish and National Fish in January 1942.

HMCS RAYON D'OR was a minesweeper loop-layer from 1944 until 1945. No doubt you are familiar with the type of vessel known as a minesweeper and know her duties, but a loop-layer is a vessel that lays a system of electric cables on the sea floor. These cables are connected to instruments ashore and are calibrated to indicate the presence of a vessel when it comes within a certain distance of these cables.

Patrick Falvey was Radio Officer for ten days in the fishing trawler CAPE AGULHAS during 1940. Her radio station consisted of the Marconi MST-MSA receivers and had only the one transmitter, the "Bird Cage Affair" with an output of 50 watts. It was identical to the larger transmitter with the 100 watts output.

Known Canadian Fishing Vessels fitted with wireless between World War I and World War II:

| Flag | Radio | Name      | Year and Place built       |
|------|-------|-----------|----------------------------|
| TVHR | ----  | GOOD HOPE | 1903 Hull, England         |
| ---- | VGJF  | LEMBERG   | 1914 Shelby, Great Britain |

|      |      |              |   |
|------|------|--------------|---|
| JMLB | VGZJ | ST. CUTHBERT | 1915 Shelby, Great Britain  |
| ---- | VGNW | VIERNOE      | 1914 Shelby, Great Britain  |
| ---- | VGCS | VENOSTA      | 1917 Shelby, Great Britain  |
| ---- | VGfJ | RAYON D'OR   | 1912 Beverley, Great Britain  |
| ---- | VOBV | CAPE AGULHAS | 1919 Shelby, Great Britain  |
| ---- | VXRJ | CAPE AGULHAS | Registry changed from St. John's, Newfoundland, to<br>Halifax, Nova Scotia. |

GOOD HOPE was sunk at 11:50 AM on Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1929, after being in collision with the Norwegian passenger liner STRAVANGER FJORD, in the approaches to Halifax harbour. I believe her wireless operator at the time was the late Jim Rogers, who retired as Regional Superintendent Radio Regulations, Edmonton Region, but I was unable to learn the full detail of this. No lives were lost in this incident.

LEMBURG stranded on Sable Island, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1937, and became a total loss.

ST. CUTHBERT was sold to Warren Transportation Company Limited, Belize, British Honduras, on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1936, and sailed for that country never to return.

CAPE AGULHAS grounded and sank Halifax approaches, on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1956.

VIERNOE, VENOSTA, and RAYON D'OR were laid up on the Dartmouth side of Halifax harbour. What exactly became of them I do not know but quite likely cannibalized for their steel from time to time, until nothing was left.

Thanks to Clyde Thornhill I was able to obtain some photographs of the fishing on board CAPE AGULHAS. Clyde was the Bosun in the vessel from 1940 until 1952.



*Clyde Thornhill*

This is some of the crew in CAPE AGULHAS, Elios on the far left, Captain Frank Green, Chief Engineer Frank Green, Jr., Cook Bill Riggs and Deck Hand Max Dodge.



*Clyde Thornhill*

This is the crew on CAPE AGULHAS with Clyde Thornhill in the back row on the far left.



*Clyde Thornhill*

The man in the top bunk is unknown, Tom White in the bottom bunk and Ernie Thornhill. Ernie saved the CAPE AGULHAS crew when she went ashore one time by running a Breeches Buoy up on the beach. This incident happened several years before CAPE AGULHAS was lost. Ernie went to another vessel, the RAYON D'OR, and was hit with a block in an accident and was killed.



*Clyde Thornhill*

This is bringing the buoy on board the CAPE AGULHAS.



*Clyde Thornhill*

This is the net coming on board with Nelson Williams on the far left, the man in the middle is unknown and Bill Dollard from Canso on the far right.



*Clyde Thornhill*

This is the net when it first came up on the water with 20,000 of fish.



*Clyde Thornhill*

This is the net coming in on board with the 20,000 of fish off Sable Island, Nova Scotia.



*Clyde Thornhill*

The net with the 20,000 of fish has been emptied.



*Clyde Thornhill*

This is another view of the 20,000 of fish on board. The winch that operates the net is in the foreground and it was Bosun Clyde Thornhill's job to operate this winch.



*Clyde Thornhill*

The crew in CAPE AGULHAS is cleaning, washing and stowing the fish they caught in the holds.

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*Warren E. Hagar*

This is a Portuguese Fishing Schooner on the Grand Banks in 1930. Many will remember the Portuguese fishing fleet from their use of a Cootie Key to transmit radiotelegraph.

## **RUM RUNNING**

Prohibition got a good foothold in the United States after a number of years and a lot of work from various groups. After 1919 it was illegal to make, buy, transport, sell, and about anything else, one could think of regarding beer, gin, rum, whiskey, and wine. This may have sounded good to the group's who worked hard for it, but those who wanted to drink liquor were going to drink regardless, and the time known as the rum-running era was given birth. This proved a most colourful part of the history of that century.

Looking back at the history of this rum-running era, the thing that fascinates me was that it came to an end. Everyone was having a grand old time making money at it, including those against it, who were making money holding lectures against the subject and receiving very good fees for participating in these gatherings. Those doing the rum running were anyone and everyone. Those in charge of the rum running, apparently in a lot of cases, were also the ones in charge of trying to stop it.

Boats of all types and sizes, either took to running liquor or were on the other side, that of trying to prevent it. The islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon (French possessions) on the south coast of Newfoundland, and the islands of the West Indies, were the major ports on the Atlantic coast where liquor was loaded. There was also liquor being manufactured in this country for export. The majority of this was shipped in vessels that should not have returned for months, but returned to port a few hours after leaving. With all the Customs Officials in on the racket, what more could one expect? Looking at the records left, you will find everything in order. Anything that might hold something against anyone has merely been left blank. Any signatures were nothing more than unintelligible scrawls. The crews of the rum running vessels were definitely breaking the law. To say they were criminals would be stretching the term criminal to the limit. One has to realize that especially during the depression, which became world wide during this era, a job of any description was very hard to find. Most of these men were glad to have the work in order to make an income of some description. Quite often they did the rum running until they were able to find work on one of the patrol vessels. This was true with the wireless operators and a number of them got their start in the "rum runners" and then crossed over to the government side.

All the coast stations handled messages from the "rum runners" that had licensed wireless stations. The messages transmitted were coded and copies of these messages were given to the government officials. It was not long until the government officials broke their codes and were able to "read the mail".

Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, was one of the larger rum running ports and a center for a good portion of the rum running activity, and a certain individual there made a good living installing wireless stations for the rum running vessels. These stations were illegal and communicated with illegal coast stations. The authorities complained in the press that they were never able to find these illegal coast stations. A typical example was one station at Saint John, New Brunswick. The Manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia in Saint John approached the Officer in Charge of Saint John Radio VAR, wanting to know if he would consider taking on a part time job, transmitting messages to the rum runners. He stated he was not interested but would mention the job to his operators. One of them jumped at the opportunity. That meant the individual from

Yarmouth went to Saint John and installed a station in the attic of the home of this operator. Therefore this operator was communicating with the patrol vessels during his normal working hours and communicating with the "rum runners" during his hours off. An excellent set-up and no wonder the authorities could not find the illegal coast stations.

A common procedure for the illegal stations in ships to contact these illegal coast stations was the use of three letters. In order to describe this I will use my initials, S G R. The ship would send the letter S three times, then DE the separation signal, and then the letter G three times. The coast station would answer the ship with G three times, DE, and the letter R three times. That way both would know they were communicating with the proper station. The only way a preventive authority could be involved is if he had obtained this prearranged three-letter code.

Naturally many ingenious gimmicks, many of them are now memories, found a use for communications between these stations. The best of these rum-running vessels were small and very fast and in most cases better equipped than the patrol vessels. They relied mainly on speed in order to outrun the patrol vessel. The policy was for the larger vessels to lie off the coasts of either Canada or the United States, just outside the International boundaries, with their cargoes of illicit booze and discharge this to smaller faster vessels that would take it ashore. A favourite of the larger vessels was the schooner. Many of these schooners had their masts removed and were fitted with large engines, making them fast and very low in the water. This made them harder to see from a distance. The larger ones were fitted with a direction finder. Shortly after the coastal direction finders entered service these D/F's were scaled down and fitted into ships. The smaller boats used one of the most ingenious navigational aids found. This ingenious navigational aid cost practically nothing to build but was sold by an individual in Halifax for around one hundred dollars. This was fitted in the small fast "rum runners". It consisted of about six inches of pipe and contained nothing more than a condenser with the necessary pieces of wire to hook it up. This would act like a small spark transmitter. All the engines in use during this era used gasoline and when this unit was fitted into the coil lead of the electrical circuit of the engine it worked very well. Those operating these units knew the engine revolutions necessary for this thing to create a good signal (racket) on the D/F frequencies. Thereby the small pick-up vessel just sat in the water creating this racket while the loaded vessel sailed down to it, from the D/F bearings taken on this signal.

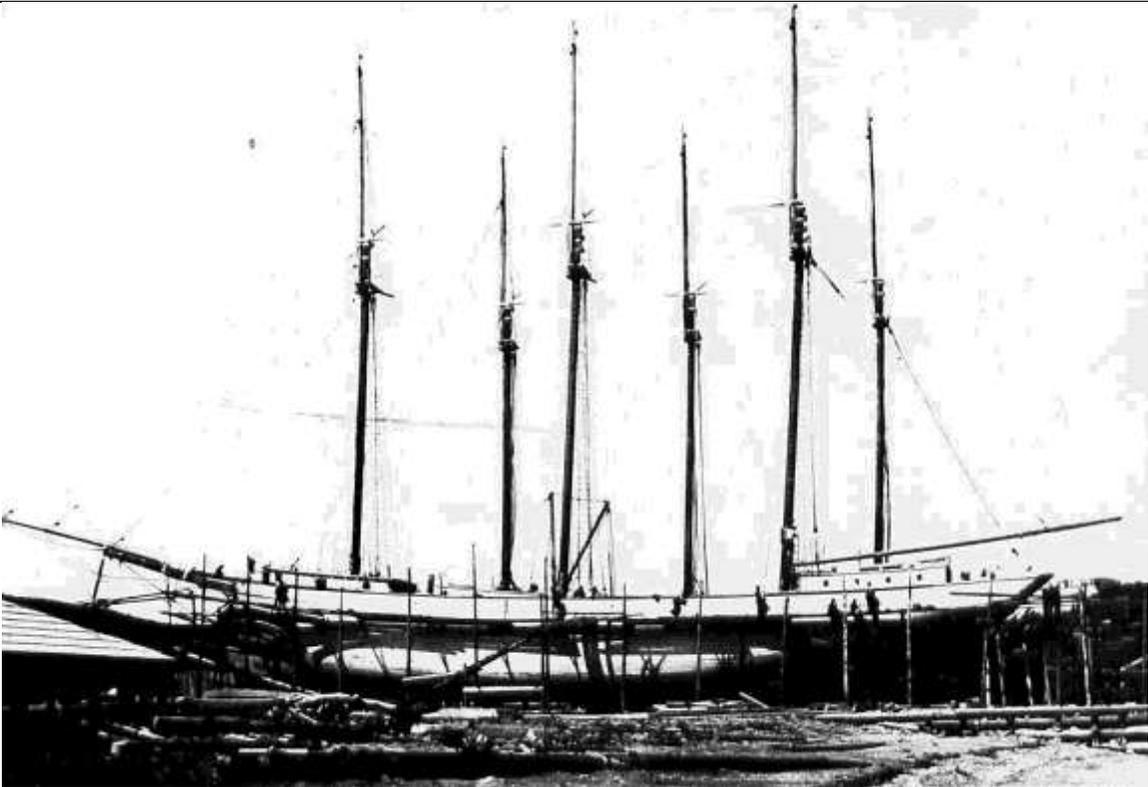
The first sailing ship to be fitted with wireless in Canada was one of the famous Canadian tern schooners, so numerous around the turn of the century. The word tern comes from the Latin word Terni. Terni means three for three masts and is not named for the bird which is quite popular in this area. This schooner was the VINCENT A. WHITE that was built at Alma, New Brunswick, in 1918. She was registered in Parrsboro, Nova Scotia.

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*A. K. Smith VE1BY*

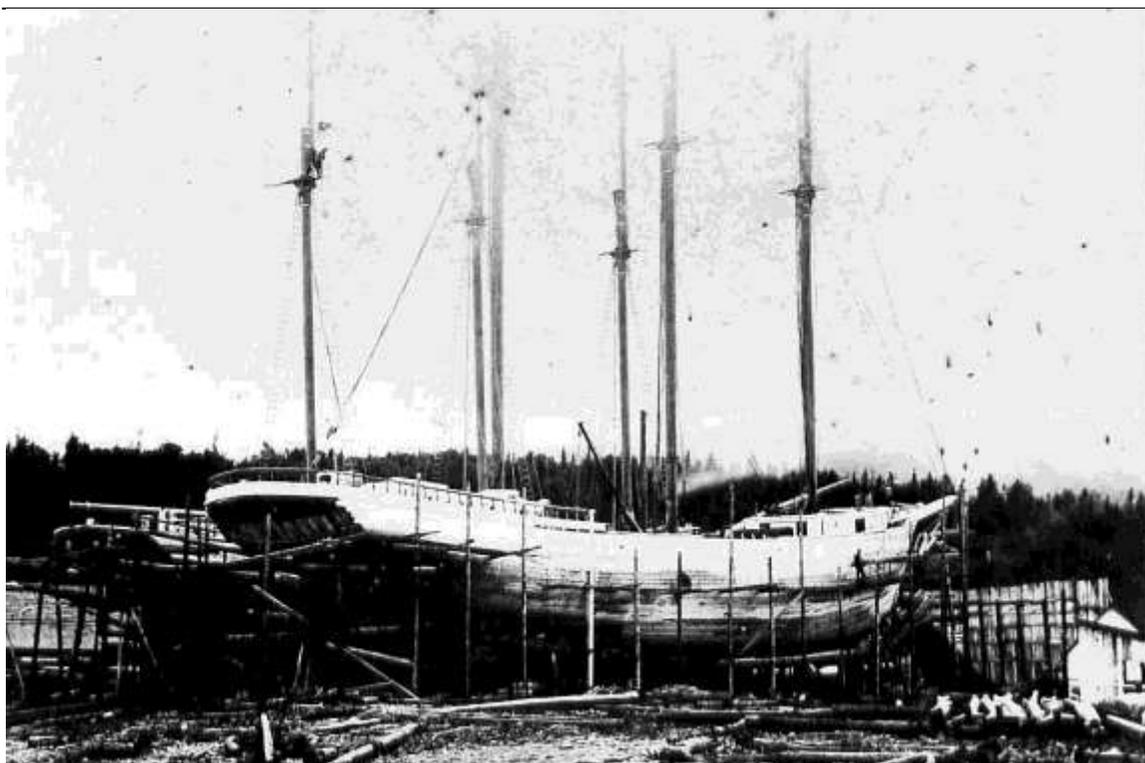
This is Wireless Operator Al Smith on the left with First Mate, Captain Olsen, at sea on the SV VINCENT A. WHITE, April 1922 on a voyage from Halifax to Glasgow, Scotland.



*New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, New Brunswick*

This is the VINCENT A. WHITE and another vessel, both under construction at Alma, New Brunswick.

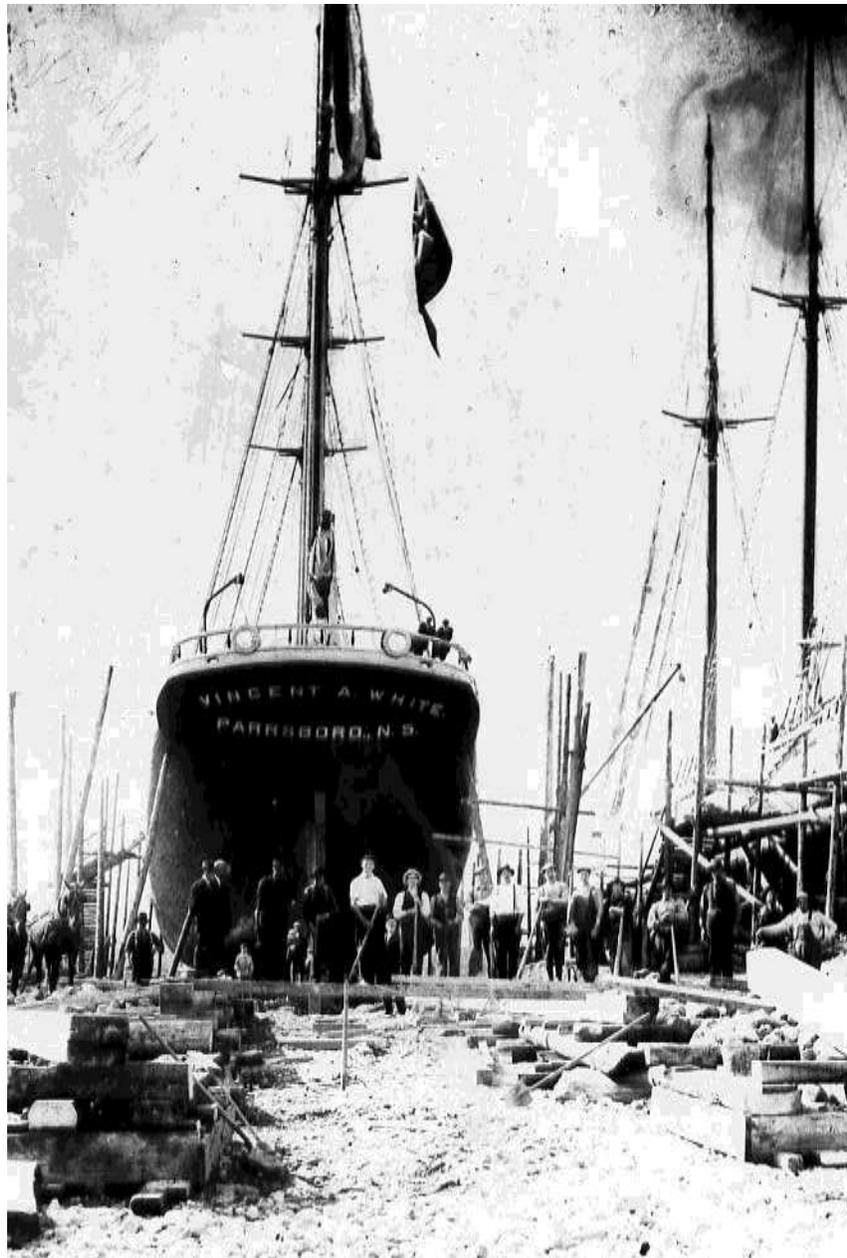
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*New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, New Brunswick*

This is the VINCENT A. WHITE and another vessel under construction at Alma, New Brunswick.

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*New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, New Brunswick*

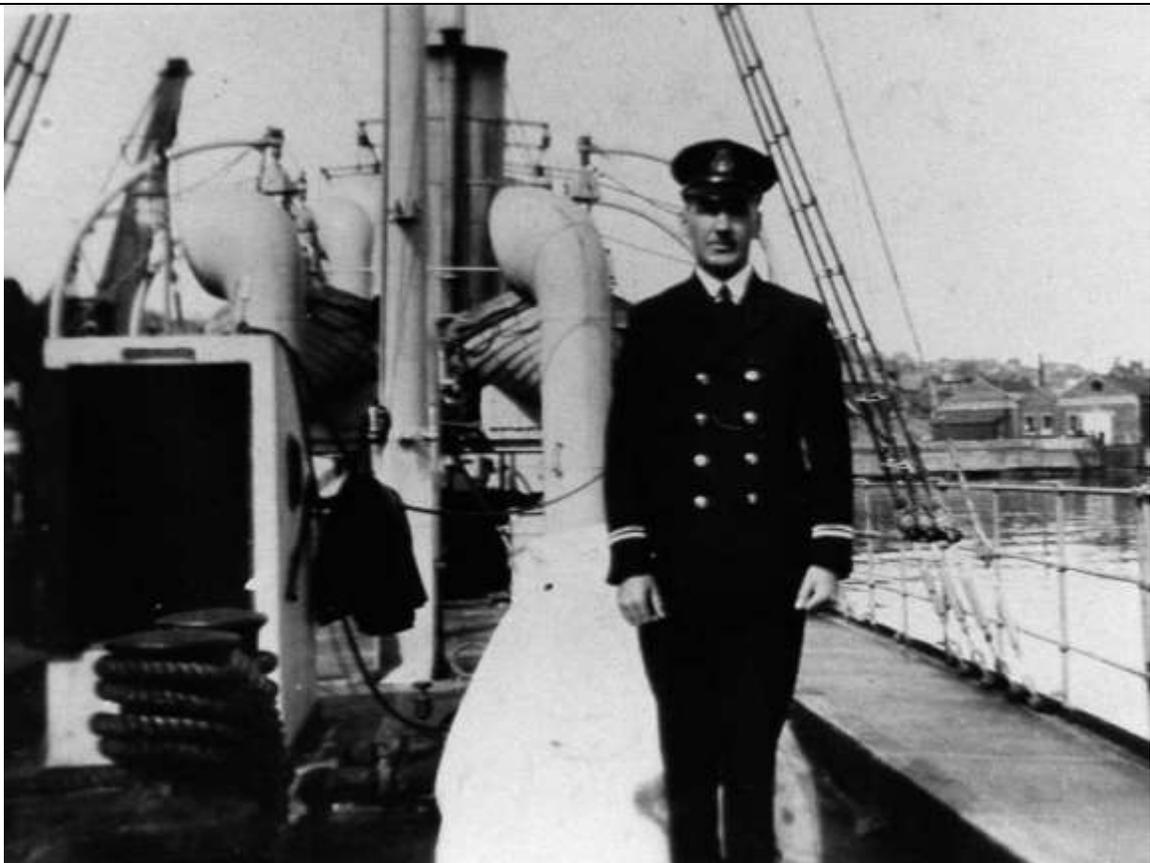
They are getting ready to launch the VINCENT A. WHITE, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918.

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Her first wireless operator was Alfred K. Smith and he and the gentleman from Yarmouth, installed an illicit station in her in April 1922. This station consisted of a 1-1/2 inch spark coil transmitter and a carborundum crystal receiver. It was installed in Al's cabin, which was with the officer's quarters in the after house of the schooner. The aerial was the standard long wire strung between the main and mizzenmast, with the lead-in running down the mizzen stays. Right after this installation at Saint John, she made a voyage to Halifax and then on to Glasgow, Scotland. VINCENT A. WHITE remained a wind-powered schooner and was not altered by removing her masts and installing an engine. She was launched on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918, and was assigned flag call TNLC. On January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1926, she changed her name to ESTONIA and her port of registry to Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. I was unable to locate any further information on her communication equipment after that date. This illicit station was licensed just prior to the name change, with call sign VGCN, as a receiving station only. This schooner had a most remarkable and fascinating career, if one could ever learn the full detail. As the ESTONIA she was definitely doing

more Rum-running, than the legal trades of lumber and salt cargoes so common to these schooners. In 1926 she was under the command of Captain Spurgeon Geldert of Lunenburg. He is probably best known as the mate under Captain Angus Walters in the famous BLUENOSE. On October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1935, ESTONIA made her final voyage. She sailed from Turk's Island, West Indies, and encountered a heavy storm, losing her sails and rudder, and was abandoned in a sinking condition. The Norwegian tanker S.S. SOUTH AMERICA rescued her ten man crew, but I have no idea how SOUTH AMERICA found her. By this time the VGCN call sign was assigned to a Police Launch belonging to the British Columbia Provincial Police. Whether or not the wireless station had been removed or used in this rescue is not known.

There were a number of vessels classed as patrol vessels. These belonged to the National Revenue Preventive Service of the Canadian Government, a branch of the Customs Department. A number of them were of Ottawa design. In other words, they were fairly good boats but for the most part were only given sufficient power to enable them to maintain a speed of about half that of the rum-running vessels. The few patrol vessels that could work up a fairly good speed were pretty well restricted to a mundane life of that of a personal yacht for certain government officials. This way the "rum runners" were given a little better chance at not getting caught. One of these vessels was the MARGARET that was built at Southampton, England, and delivered to Customs in Halifax in April 1914. She was immediately taken over by the Navy for the war and returned to Customs at the close of the war. She was assigned wireless call sign VDW and the station was listed as having a range of 150 miles. It was the typical station of the day containing only three transmitting frequencies 300, 600, and 800 meters. MARGARET is the only Custom's vessel listed in the Official List Radio Stations of Canada for July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1923. Shortly after this date two more vessels, the BAYHOUND and PREVENTOR, were added to the fleet.



*C. C. Foster VE1AMF*

This is Jack Sugden Wireless Operator in the Customs Patrol Vessel PREVENTOR.

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At this time most countries started to assign four letter radio call signs to their ships. Canada was to do the same and some interesting facts come forth, which make little if any sense. BAYHOUND and

PREVENTOR were assigned CGPJ and CGPK respectively. A quick glance at the three prefixes of these calls will tell a lot, CGP-Canadian Government Police. In other words if the rum-running operator remembered those three letters he could then do a lot with his direction finder. If a buddy happened to be around with a direction finder and communications on one of their illicit radios, nothing more need be said. They knew the exact position of these ships from periodic D/F bearings. Assigning these distinctive prefixes definitely did something to the ego of the bureaucrat who authorized them, but there is no sense behind them.

The only other Customs Patrol Vessel fitted with wireless, on which I could find information, turned out to be the most interesting of the lot. Her official name was PATROL BOAT NO. 4 and she was assigned call sign CGPN. Most not only knew her by her former name STUMBLE INN, but they continued to call her by that name. This vessel started out as a World War I Submarine Chaser, but was built a bit late for the war. Somehow she took up the interesting job of running rum, and while doing this, she had the misfortune of being caught. She then became a patrol vessel. The wireless room was also the wireless operator's home, a bunk amongst his equipment that consisted of a cubbyhole at the best. Cec Foster was her wireless operator for a time while she was a patrol vessel.

There were 440 of these boats, which were built and operated by the United States Navy, in service during World War I on both sides of the Atlantic. 121 crossed the Atlantic Ocean under their own power. The loss of two enemy submarines was credited to these boats. Since I have a special interest in boats of this size and type, I found the detail on these most interesting. They were 110 feet in length overall, and had a full displacement of 75 tons. They not only were equipped with wireless during World War I but they shocked many that came near and heard them talking to each other over a primitive radiotelephone. Radiotelephone then, for all intents and purposes, was some distance in the future. Their main propulsion was fascinating. They had three 220 horsepower (at 500 revolutions per minute) main engines and were direct-coupled to three 39-inch propellers having a 57-1/2 inch pitch. The most fascinating part of this detail to me was that these engines were air started and were reversed by air. Each main engine was connected to an individual air compressor. All these boats were equipped with a 10 horsepower gasoline engine with a 4-1/2 kilowatt generator on one end, and a three-inch bilge and fire pump on the other. PATROL BOAT NO 4 must have been a welcome addition to the Custom's fleet. She should have managed nine knots on one engine, ten and one-half knots on two engines, and twelve knots on all three. One would have to agree she was an interesting little vessel. This detail is recorded in the book *Maverick Navy* by Alexander W. Moffat, Captain, USNR (Ret.).

A few of the government patrol vessels managed to fire a shot or two at a rum runner, but this was very rare. If these vessels did have a gun which could handle ammunition that was available, no doubt the crews were only allowed one shot a month, and would have to purchase any additional rounds out of their own pockets. Several patrol boat skippers were told to get out of the way, in more colourful terms, from just behind the business end of a shotgun. Granted a few people got hurt, but on the whole the majority on both sides of the law, thoroughly enjoyed their experiences.

The four Custom's Patrol Vessels that carried wireless operators operating in this area:

|      |                  |
|------|------------------|
| VDW  | MARGARET         |
| CGPJ | BAYHOUND         |
| CGPK | PREVENTOR        |
| CGPN | PATROL BOAT NO 4 |

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*Captain John H. Campbell*

This is Gordon MacDonald, Pictou, Nova Scotia and Captain J. H. Campbell in 1928. Gordon MacDonald with the bowler hat is Wireless Operator in SS DAGHELD

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*Captain John H. Campbell*

This is Radio Operator George Lowe about 1930.

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## ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE MARINE SECTION

Although the Customs Service probably felt they were doing their duty and convincing their superiors that they were, better heads were to prevail and take up the job of trying to clean up this mess once and for all. This gave birth to one of the finest and most fascinating fleets to operate under the Canadian flag. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1932, the Marine Section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police went into service and took over all the duties of the Custom's Patrol Vessels.

The men in this new organization wore a uniform not unlike the old naval uniforms worn by the Royal Canadian Navy. There were minor differences between the two uniforms. The Cap Tallies read MARINE RCMP SECTION and the large collars on the RCMP uniform had one ½ inch wide white stripe, instead of the Navy's three narrow white stripes. The ranks held by both units were the same and the only difference between the Chief Petty Officer, and Officer's uniform, was the Cap Badge which was the same Cap Badge worn in the Navy with the addition of the letters RCMP across the center of the badge. The Marine Section of the RCMP was permitted to wear moustaches, whereas the Navy members were not. This made for a few interesting incidents between the two units. Many a Navy Officer was to be taken up short for bawling out a man with a moustache to learn on closer examination that he was not navy.

It should be noted that the famous RCMP vessel, the RCMP ST. ROCH that had call sign VGSR, was not a member of the Marine Section. She was a special-built supply vessel constructed in 1928 and remained with "G" Division, the division by which she was built and operated. "G" Division is that section of the Mounted Police that controls their activities in the north. The north is the Yukon Territory, the North West Territories and now the territory of Nunavut that was formed from a section of the North West Territories on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999.



*Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

This is the RCMP ST. ROCH with international call sign VGSR and Commanding Officer Henry Larsen in the insert.

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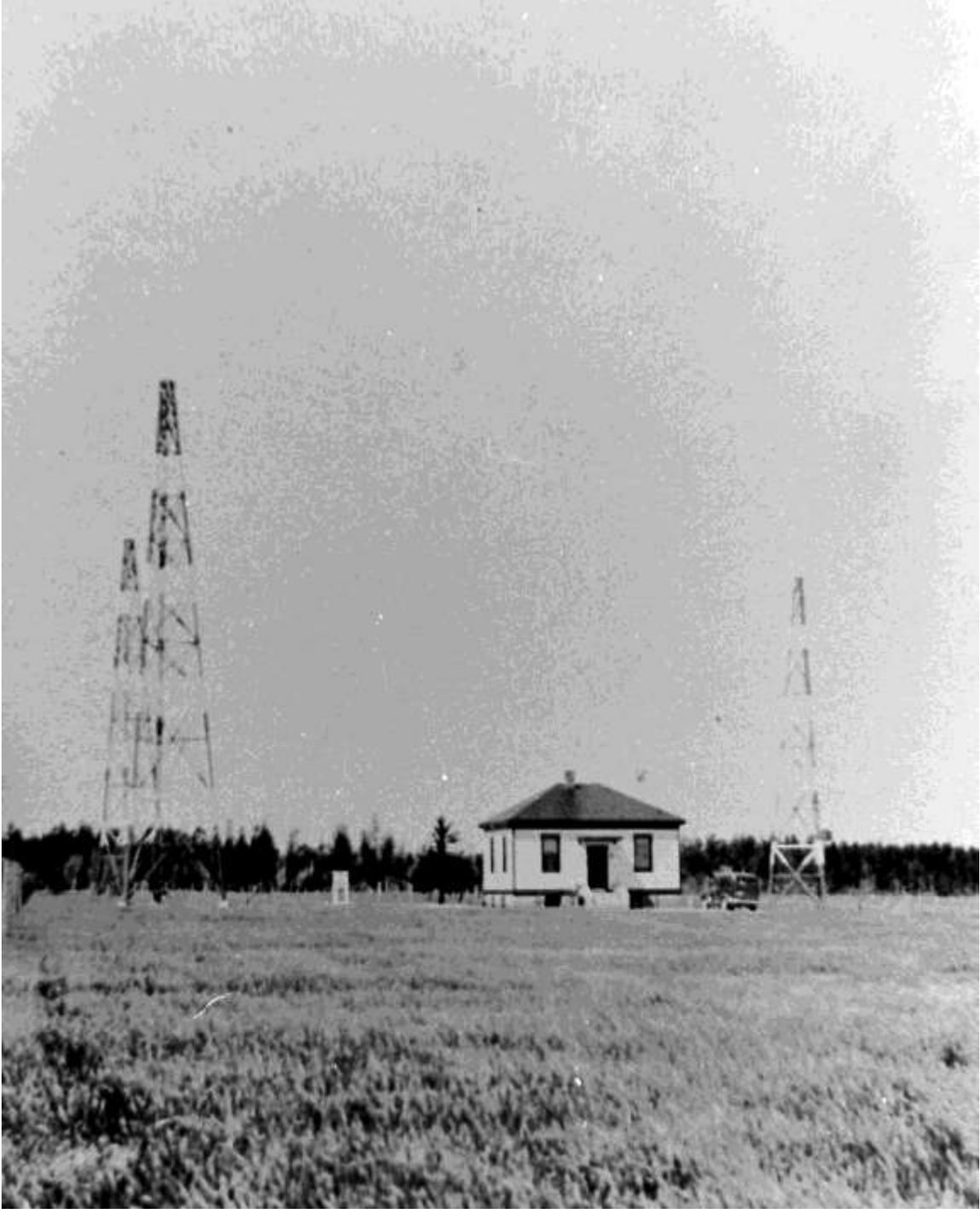
## **SHEDIAC VFU**

About the time the Marine Section was formed advances had been made in Aircraft design to the point that a flying boat service was commenced between North America and Europe. One site chosen for these aircraft was Shediac, New Brunswick, because it had the least fog in this area. These flying boats carried radio operators who communicated with ground stations via radiotelegraph, and these operators were carried until the jet aircraft of the early 1960's made them impractical. The majority of these radio operators were absorbed within the aircraft organizations in another capacity. This was another most interesting portion of the history of radiotelegraph and the operators that were involved in its operation.

A station for communication with these aircraft was opened at Shediac with call sign VFU. Reay Bridger, at one time, was Officer in Charge at this station and told me while there he sweated from sheer fear that one day he would have to sit in on the aircraft circuits for another operator. He claimed these flying operators sent such fast clear code he knew he would never be able to keep up with them.

While radio station VFU was in service at Shediac, none of the aircraft communicating through the station was Canadian. Canada's Trans-Atlantic service did not begin until July 1943, when Trans Canada Airlines commenced this service with Lancastrian aircraft. The Lancastrian aircraft were replaced with North Stars in 1947. These two were the only types of aircraft owned by this company that became Air Canada that carried Flight Radio Operators. They carried these operators for just ten years until the position was eliminated in 1953. Communications was maintained with the pilot or first officer by radiotelephone on the domestic routes flown by this organization, including those flown prior to their carrying their first passenger in the spring of 1939. The Lancastrian Aircraft was the famous four-engine Avro Lancaster Bomber converted for carrying passengers.

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*Warren E. Hagar*

This is Shediac Aeradio VFU at Shediac, New Brunswick.

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*Air Canada 45426*

This is the cockpit of a North Star Aircraft with the seats removed. The Captain sat on the front left, the First Officer on the front right, with the Flight Engineer just behind the First Officer. The Radio Officer sat just behind the Captain and a portion of his operating desk can be seen in the photograph.

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*Air Canada 2256*

This is Trans Canada Airlines North Star CF-TFB.



*Public Archives Canada PA-61649*

This is Avro Lancastrian Aircraft CF-CMW of Trans Canada Airlines in August 1946.



*Air Canada X20365*

This is William Lucas operating the Radio Station in a Trans Canada Airlines Lancastrian Aircraft in September 1945.

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*Bill Stempel WIBBJ Greenwich, Connecticut*

Sikorsky VS-44 Flying Boat

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Large Aircraft on scheduled flights used their actual registration for a call sign, and not a flight number as they do today. All Canadian aircraft had registrations beginning with CF followed by a three-letter suffix, and this has recently been changed to the prefix C with a four-letter suffix. The prefix of the four-letter suffix has a letter from Canada's CFA-CKZ block of international call signs. Three actual Lancastrian registrations/call signs I located were CF-CMT, CF-CMS, and CF-CMW, so these aircraft were issued registrations/call signs from that area of the letters available to Canada. When the North Star, a Canadian built/modified DC-4, joined Trans Canada Airlines, they were issued these registration letters from CF-TEA to CF-TFZ.

The United States uses the letter N as a prefix followed by a number of digits or a combination of digits and letters as the suffix for their aircraft registration identifications. But their aircraft radio call signs in radiotelegraphy were five letters that became the standard identification for aircraft. In other words, three letter radio call signs were coast/ground stations, four letters were ships, and five letters were aircraft. The American Aircraft call signs had the prefix KH from their international block of call sign allotments. The only exception to this that I have found was Howard Hughes. Mr. Hughes had the money and political pull to have his aircraft assigned KHRH. HRH were his initials and this call sign was assigned to his aircraft in 1938 when he and his crew of four flew around the world in 3 days 19 hours. KHRH was a four-letter ship's call sign. The British aircraft are the letter G with a four-letter suffix, the French, the letter F with a four-letter suffix. As can be seen all had a five letter call sign that was used as the radiotelegraph call sign. But the most colourful of these calls were the Italian call signs that had the prefix I and the four letter suffix normally spelled an English word such as I-LADY, I-LOVE, I-LUCY, and so on. At least during the 1950's when the last of these flying "Sparkers" were using Gander Airport with call sign VOAC, the oddball ground station with the four letter call sign rather than the normal three assigned to the other stations around the world.

## **SHEDIAC BRIDGE VDS**

Close to VFU Shediac, New Brunswick, was located another station with call sign VDS. This VDS station was for communication with the RCMP Marine Section Vessels and was located at Shediac Bridge, New Brunswick. VDS would communicate with any RCMP vessel and then pass any message traffic collected to another station located in the Dockyard at Halifax. The call sign of this Halifax station was VDH, believe it or not, another of the many mysteries within our allotment of call signs. The letter S is three dots

in Morse code and the letter H is four dots. With lots of static this must have been somewhat of a nightmare. Luckily these stations were not very close and any confusion would have been reduced because of this. The frequency used for this inter-station communication was around 3,000 kHz. There is also a possibility that VDH Halifax was the remnant of VAA Halifax, although I have been unable to prove this suspicion.

I have found another RCMP station in operation in 1936 in this area. This station was located outside Moncton, New Brunswick and held call sign VFM. I have heard no mention of this station working the Marine Section vessels so assume this station was for the use of the Land Divisions only. This station is mentioned on page 94 of the October, 1936 issue of the amateur radio publication QST. The amateur radio operators attending the Moncton Amateur Radio Hamfest were given a tour of this station. One will probably never know if this station could communicate with stations VDS and VDH.

This meant that these RCMP vessels normally communicated with these two stations, VDS and VDH, but used the regular coast stations from time to time. They always used their international call signs, but the majority of their messages were in code. They would often obtain their positions, during weather conditions of low visibility or for any reason, by requesting that radio bearings be taken from their transmissions. They normally operated under "black out" during the hours of darkness and did not show any lights. As can be seen a radio operator in a "rum runner" with a direction finder would be a welcome asset. Even one with a good receiver, because during the period this radio direction finding service was provided by coast stations it was known as QTF from the International List of Q Signals. QTF means: The position of your station according to the bearings taken by the direction-finding stations I control was --- Latitude --- Longitude. QTF? Would be the interrogative of this statement, both are well known by any radio operators in all of the world's languages.

This RCMP fleet was also of Ottawa design. Although the Marine Section did a fairly good job of curbing rum-running, having worked closely with the United States Coast Guard, it was World War II that actually put a stop to it, and the fact some States repealed prohibition in 1936. When war was declared in 1939 the Marine Section, including both ships and personnel, was taken over by either the Royal Canadian Navy or the Marine Section of the Royal Canadian Air Force, as were the rumrunners, including a lot of the men who operated the rum running vessels. One thing rum running did accomplish was to make excellent seamen of the men involved.

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*Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

This is RCMP LAURIER that became HMCS LAURIER on the outbreak of World War II.

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The late Ed Hartling was one of the RCMP Marine operators during this period, and when war was declared he was the wireless operator in RCMP MACDONALD on Canada's West Coast. MACDONALD was new at the time and a very nice vessel. Her interior including the furniture was of oak wood and she was fitted with a standard Marconi station of the period with the Marconi LTT4 as the main transmitter. The identical twin sister of RCMP MACDONALD was the RCMP LAURIER with call sign CGPC, and was also constructed in 1939. Her radio installation was identical. LAURIER became HMCS LAURIER at the outbreak of the war and Norman Hinde was one of her first naval operators. She retained her RCMP Radio Station but used the standard naval two letter coded calls which were changed regularly. Norm said her station was the standard Marconi station of the period. The Main Transmitter was the LTT4, the Main Receiver the National HRO, and the Marconi MF/DF (MDF5). Norm sailed in LAURIER from October 1939 until early 1940.

Ed Hartling was absorbed in the Royal Canadian Navy as a Chief Petty Officer, the rank he held in the Marine Section. This meant only two changes, both in appearance, he had to shave off his moustache and remove the RCMP from his Cap Badge. The Navy must have been quite happy to acquire Ed, because they sent him to HMCS ST. HYACINTHE, in the province of Quebec (the naval radio school of the time), as an instructor. He remained at this post throughout the war teaching thirteen classes in radio operations and was returned to his RCMP career on completion.

The RCMP ST. ROCH remained with the RCMP throughout the war, and made a number of her famous voyages during that time. All of the RCMP vessels fitted with wireless, including ST. ROCH, were fitted with continuous wave equipment. Not one of these vessels ever used spark equipment. Most of these ships were capable of transmitting as high as the six-megahertz marine radiotelegraph frequencies.

The RCMP Marine Section had fifteen vessels equipped with radio and carried radio operators. They were:

CGPC LAURIER  
CGPD ACADIAN  
CGPF MACDONALD  
CGPL FLEUR DE LIS  
CGPQ INTERCEPTOR  
CGPR MADAWASKA  
CGPS CHALEUR  
CGPT SCATARIE  
CGPV ULNA  
CGPW ALACHASSE  
CGPX ADVERSUS  
CGPY CAPTOR  
CGPZ DETECTOR  
CGSJ ARRESTEUR  
CGSR FRENCH

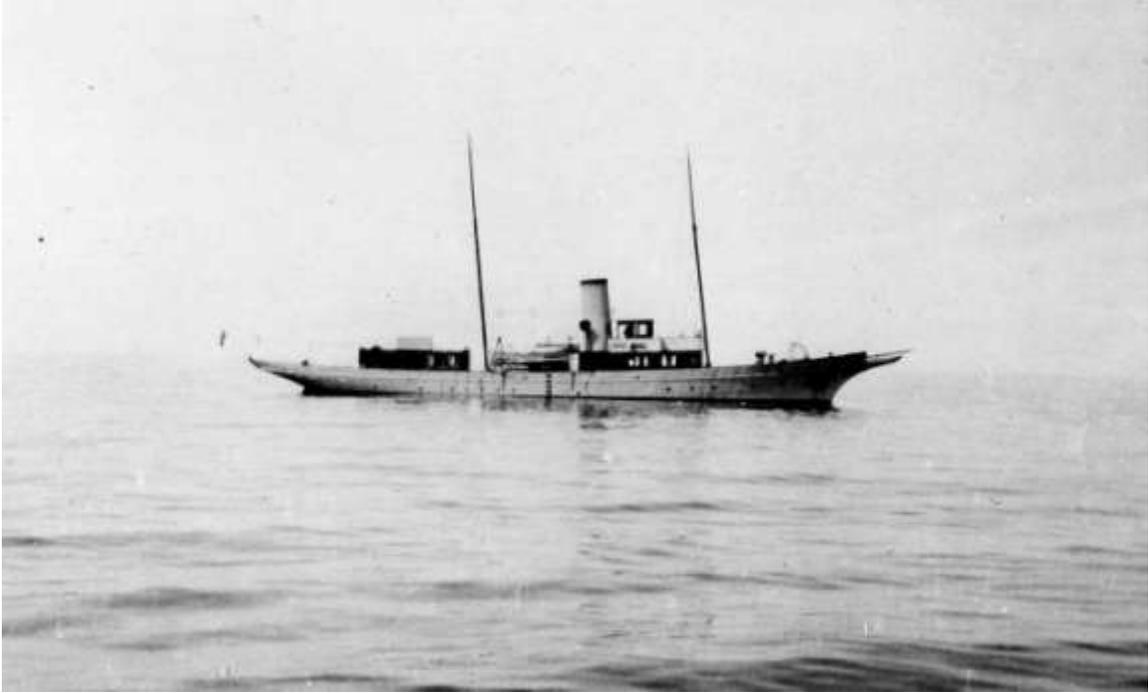
As can be seen the “rum runner” had to keep an ear open for only the two, FRENCH and ARRESTEUR that did not have a CGP prefix, but at that they were so similar there was no problem. Note the similarity in the FRENCH and ST. ROCH (VGSR) call signs. Most of these vessels were equipped with Canadian Marconi stations although I was told ARRESTEUR and DETECTOR had stations built from a kit of some description by the first operator. The main transmitters were tuned to the standard frequencies of 300, 600, and 800 meters. Some, if not all, were capable of transmitting as high as six megahertz as mentioned. I believe the Marconi LTT4 was capable of going that high in frequency, possibly with some slight modification.



*Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

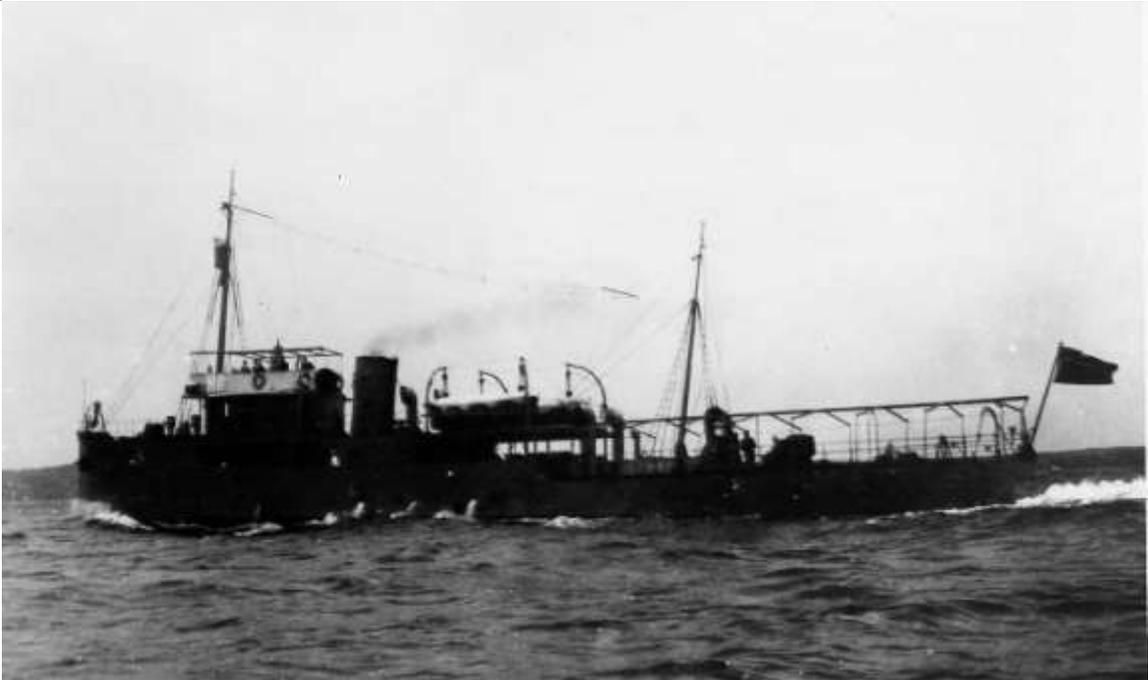
This is RCMP FRENCH “Making Her Number”. The four flags in a vertical line are read from the top to the bottom C G S R.

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*Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

RCMP ULNA



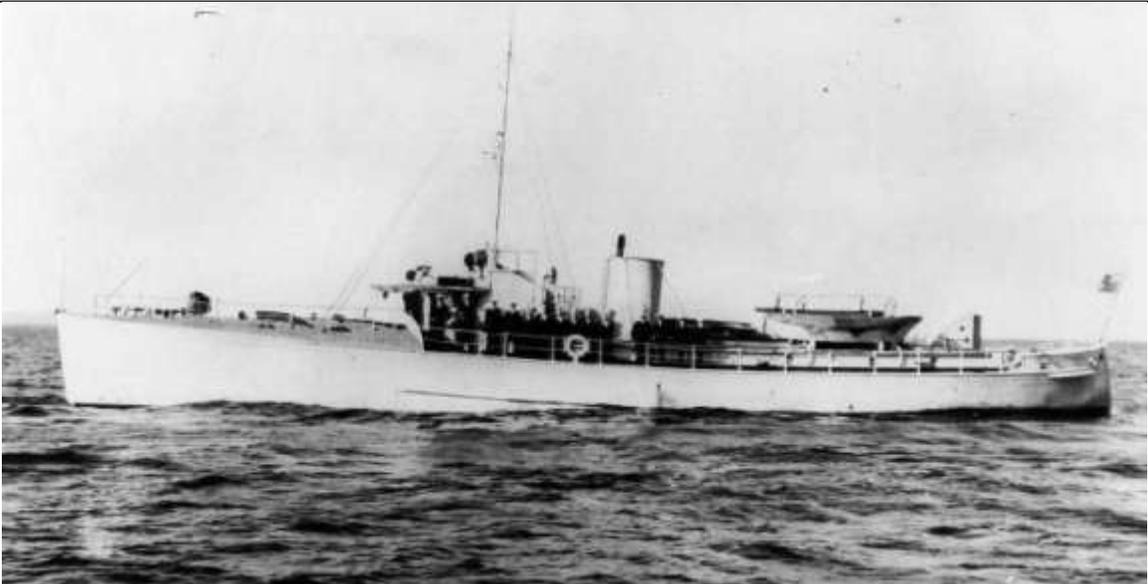
*Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2300*

RCMP FLEUR DE LIS



*Royal Canadian Mounted Police 5719*

RCMP MACDONALD



*Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

RCMP ALACHASSE



*Royal Canadian Mounted Police 1150*

RCMP ADVERSUS



*Royal Canadian Mounted Police 501*

RCMP MADAWASKA



*Royal Canadian Mounted Police 162-4*

This is RCMP ACADIAN and one can see the naval type uniform.

## **KENKERRY**



*C. R. Spracklin*

Wreck of the KENKERRY 1935

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*C. R. Spracklin*

Wreck of the KENKERRY 1935

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*C. R. Spracklin*

Wreck of the KENKERRY 1935

---



*Albert Welcher*

This is the presentation of Awards to those involved in the rescue of the KENKERRY crew. Left to right: Marg Martin (?), C. D. Howe, Gus Fleming, (woman unknown) Gordon B. Isnor, Dan Martin, Lou Fleming (Gus Fleming's brother), (3 unknown back row), Tom Welcher, (2 unknown back row), Albert Billard, Pat Fleming, and (the prominent person unknown).

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In October 1934, Mr. A. W. Robertson, Cardiff, Wales, signed on the British six thousand ton freighter KENKERRY as her wireless operator. In those days wireless operators referred to their equipment as a fraction of a kilowatt in power. Therefore his station was to be a ¼ kilowatt Siemens Brothers Spark Station, with call sign GFYB. It contained only three frequencies that of 800, 705, and 600 meters – 375, 425, and 500 kilohertz respectively. This station also contained an emergency set, separate from the ship's source of power, known as a "Jury Set". This was Mr. Robertson's first trip to sea and according to him was going to be his last.

KENKERRY's Captain, Duncan Milne, was already a fourteen-month veteran of voyages with the KENKERRY. Shortly after wireless operator Robertson joined the ship they sailed to Greece, Egypt, and around the Mediterranean to Spain. They then went to Havana, Cuba, up to Newport News, Virginia, and back to Havana. From Havana they were to sail in ballast to Halifax and take on a load of wheat for Britain.

Four months after leaving Britain in October 1934, the KENKERRY was proceeding into Halifax on Thursday evening January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1935. A short time before she entered the approaches to the harbour, a severe blizzard set in reducing the visibility to one hundred yards. Because of the vessels reduced speed, being in ballast, and from the severe snowstorm, she became stranded on Black Rock Point, close to the village of Portuguese Cove.

Within minutes of striking Black Rock the KENKERRY's engine room flooded to the point there was no electricity to run the wireless station. Robertson had to send SOS on his Jury Set that was received by C.R. "Sprack" Spracklin at Chebucto VAV. Because of all the static created from this storm, Sprack was unable to determine the sense of Robertson's signal. He did manage to obtain a bearing, but in obtaining the sense you determine from which direction the signal is coming, either the actual bearing or the reciprocal of this

bearing. This, plus the storm, delayed reaching the vessel. Searchers scoured the coast as far as Sambro. Mr. Hildred Purcell in company with Everett Purcell, from Portuguese Cove, found the vessel. The storm was so severe that it took a horse and sleigh with a Halifax Herald news reporter, three and one-half hours to reach the scene.

The late Charlie Williams (an operator at Chebucto VAV) and Sprack went down to the wreck. Sprack was sure, as sure could be, that they were in for a good dressing down for not being able to do a better job with the radio bearing. This was not to be, and in appreciation for the service they provided they were given a bottle. When Charlie and Sprack arrived on the scene, the crew was trying to place a line ashore from the bow of the vessel with no visible success. Charlie managed to inform the twenty-nine men on the vessel, using Morse code with a flashlight, to send the line from the bridge and not the bow. This was then accomplished, but there was no steam for the winches. The crew on the vessel by this time was so cold that they could not pull this line taut. Second Officer Stanley Davis was the first to attempt to get ashore with the line for the Breeches Buoy. The line was so slack that when he made this attempt, he became buried in the record high sea that prevented the use of boats and had to be pulled back on board by the crew on KENKERRY. Patrick O'Day, an experienced seaman on KENKERRY, was the next to attempt the arduous crossing to land. He managed to pull himself hand over hand through the seas until those ashore could grab him, and then pass him from man to man up on to dry land. The line was then made fast for the Breeches Buoy. The second and third ones ashore were the two youngest crewmembers aboard, two fifteen-year old boy apprentices, William Dumble from Plymouth, England, and Jim Keornan from Dublin, Ireland.



*A. W. "Bert" Hawling*

This is Bert Hawling's dog Cleo guarding his torch that is known as a flashlight in our world. These flashlights were very popular back then and were definitely the first "walkie talkies". One can see the key on the top of the light for transmitting Morse code. This is probably the type of flashlight Charlie Williams was using on this night.

The Captain, Duncan Milne, and the Chief Engineer, J. Dove, decided to remain on board the wreck until daylight although no one knows exactly why. Possibly the Captain felt a tug or some boat from Halifax would be able to reach the wreck, but they were prevented from even finding it because of the storm. The next morning at dawn the Chief Engineer came ashore leaving the Captain to depart, as we are told tradition dictates, as the last one off. When you are the last one off such an arrangement as the Breeches Buoy, you have to cut the line holding the buoy to the ship then pull yourself over. The Captain did this but never made it to shore. Many of those present felt he did not try as hard as he could have, but this was during the great depression when a Captain's berth was nearly impossible to find. Many Captains were

sailing as plain seamen in ships, and those Captains felt they were fortunate to have a job. Captain Milne's body was never recovered, and his was the only life lost.

Pieces of KENKERRY were to be seen where she struck on Black Rock Point for many years after this disaster. I was unable to locate Mr. Robertson so can add no further detail on the communications involved during this incident.

## **REOPENING CAMPERDOWN VCS**

When the Chebucto Direction Finding Station VAV was constructed in 1917 during the war the buildings were of a temporary nature. Shortly after the Camperdown VCS station closed and this service was moved over to Chebucto as a combined coast and direction finding station, it became apparent that the buildings were reaching the end of their useful life and would need replacing. Various tests were made on both these sites which proved that not only were some of the buildings on the old Camperdown site in better condition, but that site was a better direction finding site than the Chebucto Head location. A new radio operation building was constructed in 1934 on the old Camperdown site.

The original Marconi station contained two houses, one for the officer in charge and his family, and the other was a double house capable of housing two of the operators and their families. These two homes had been built facing a north south direction, but their foundations had been constructed with poor quality concrete and with very poor drainage. New foundations were constructed with good drainage and the houses were moved on to these, facing an east-west direction. Actually these two homes had been built by a government subsidy, in 1912, for the Marconi Company.

On July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1935, the VAV call sign became redundant and the old VCS call went back on the air from the original site. This new station provided the coast and direction finding services that had been provided at Chebucto VAV. The new radio operations building was a typical installation of that era and living accommodation was provided on the upper story of the two-story building for any single operators on the staff.

Some of the equipment was moved from the Chebucto site over to the Camperdown site. The landline telegraph was a minor change and the old "CD" call returned to its original home. The British Admiralty RR Regenerative Receiver was moved over but soon replaced with another regenerative receiver and later with a Marconi MST Receiver. The Marconi 4KVA Transmitter that had been in use at Chebucto was moved over, and a Marconi 100-watt emergency transmitter was provided as a backup. This emergency transmitter never worked the best but was somewhat better than nothing. The British Marconi Direction Finder at Chebucto was up-graded with newer equipment. This newer equipment contained a tube, believed to be a V24, which required a lot of voltage to operate. This unit was converted, removing this tube, and was moved over to the new station containing peanut tubes.

The Signal Station moved back to Camperdown and into the old Duke of Kent's Signal Station that was now nearly a century and a half old. The three signalmen, John E. Spears, John Wilkie, and Dan Martin were not long in setting up the service back on its home ground.

The late Thomas E. Appleton states in his book "Usque Ad Mare" a history of the Canadian Coast Guard and Marine Services on page 86 that Mr. O. G. V. Spain was the commander of the Canadian Marine Service. He was in charge of the licensing of Canadian Coast Stations. I had found some reports signed by Mr. Spain that prove this statement to be correct.

In Appendix K of Canadian Warship Names by David J. Freeman he states that Camperdown was established on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1914. I have been trying to understand this date because both Mr. Bridger and Mr. Spracklin stated that the Army was in charge at Camperdown during World War I and the Navy in charge during World War II. I now believe Mr. Bridger and Mr. Spracklin meant the visual Signal Station because the Camperdown Marconi wireless station remained with the Marconi organization from 1904 until 1926.

The following is what I had written over twenty years before the publication of Canadian Warship Names. I found this information in an old brief history of the Camperdown radio station. "Since 1915, when the Canadian Government had taken over these Canadian Coast Stations, they had been operated by the Department of Naval Service." I do not agree with that statement because the naval service did not operate this station. This station was operated by civilian employees of the Canadian Marconi Company under licence with the Canadian government. I would agree that the licencing of these stations had been changed from the Canadian Marine Service to the Department of Naval Service. I continued on to say that in 1922 this changed to the Department of Marine and Fisheries. 1936 was to see another change. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1936, the proclamation of the Department of Transport Act was made. This meant that as far as federal jurisdiction was concerned, all agencies of transportation within the country came under this new department meaning all these coast stations were now owned and operated by the Department of Transport. Other than the new title nothing was altered within these stations and they continued as before.

This World War I description of this station gets more confusing when one reads the description of Charles Peter Edwards recorded by Thomas E. Appleton at the bottom of Page 86 in *Usque Ad Mare*. He states that Mr. Edwards with the Wireless Telegraphy Branch transferred to the Department of Naval Service in 1910 and he held naval rank. Mr. Appleton goes on to state that telecommunications became the responsibility of the Air Services Branch of the Department of Transport in 1936 and its head was Lieutenant Commander C. P. Edwards.

It is unlikely that we will ever learn the exact detail that took place although I believe the operation was Marconi and the licencing was with the Department of Naval Service during World War I. I would like to record here that all the former operators I interviewed years ago that knew Mr. C. P. Edwards had no use for the man. He apparently would do anything to elevate himself another notch up the bureaucratic ladder.

In 1938 the aerials at Camperdown station were badly damaged by freezing rain. The Head Rigger for the Department of Transport at this time was the late Robert Lake. Bob was quite a character and always ready for a practical joke. In 1938 he was doing an overhaul of the aerials at VCS when the Chief Engineer at Headquarters, a Mr. Robinson, came around to see how he was making out. It was not long before a difference of opinion resulted with Lake up the mast and Robinson below. All of a sudden the paint bucket came down all over Robinson, accidentally of course.

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*C. R. Spracklin*

The house on the left is for the Officer in Charge, the operators housing is the double house on the right, Camperdown, Nova Scotia, looking northeast.

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*C. R. Spracklin*

The Chebucto Head Lighthouse is in the distance as seen from the Signal Tower Platform at Camperdown, Nova Scotia. Jack Brooman's house on left front and Jack married Agnes Gallagher. The Portuguese Cove School House is in the centre foreground.



*C. R. Spracklin*

This is the Radio Station and the Signal Station Camperdown one year after this, the second radio station opened in 1935.



*C. R. Spracklin*

This is Portuguese Cove as seen from Camperdown Hill.

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*C. R. Spracklin*

This is looking north towards Halifax from Camperdown.



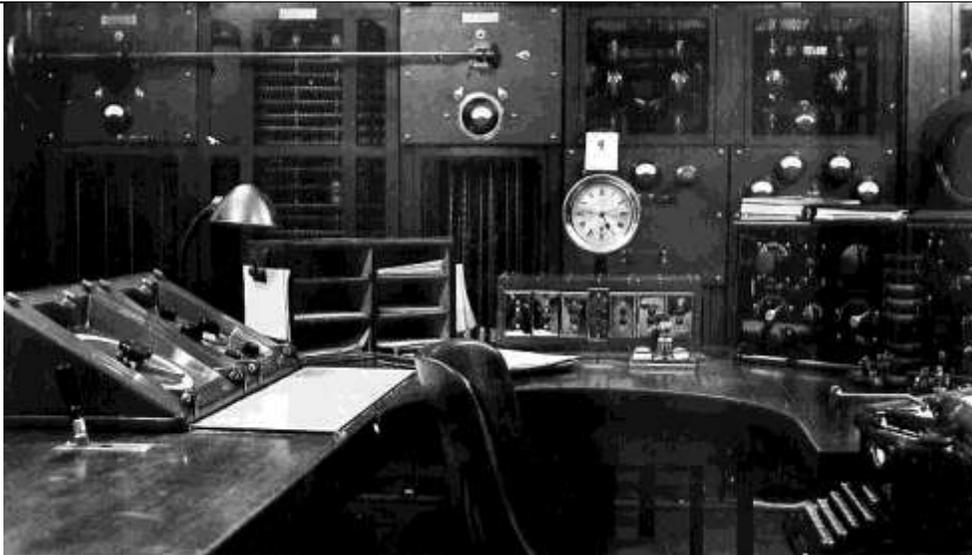
*W. H. Wooding*

This is the Operations Building Camperdown Radio VCS 1938 and Lawrence Martin's house and barn are down in back.



*Walter Wooding*

This is Charlie Williams at the operating position Camperdown Radio VCS 1938.



*C. R. Spracklin*

This is the operating position at Camperdown Radio VCS from 1935 until 1939.



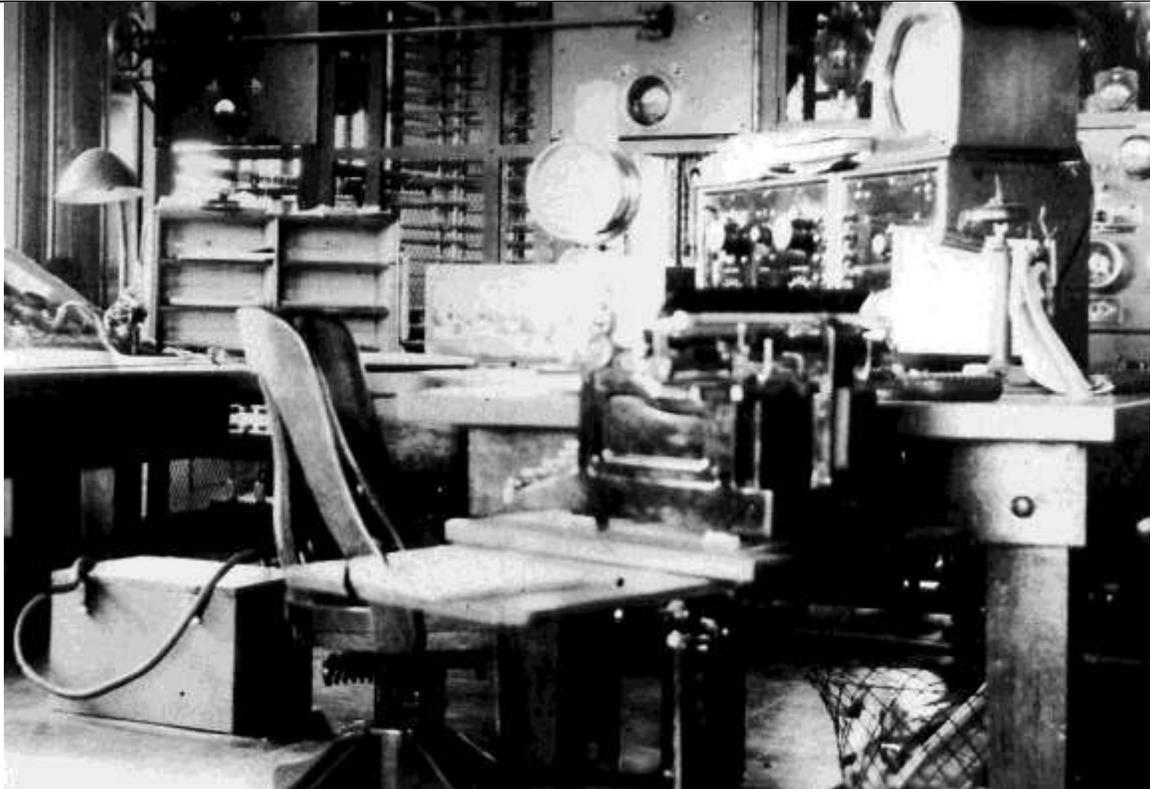
*W. H. Wooding*

This is the Camperdown Radio VCS Operations Building in 1938.



*W. H. Wooding*

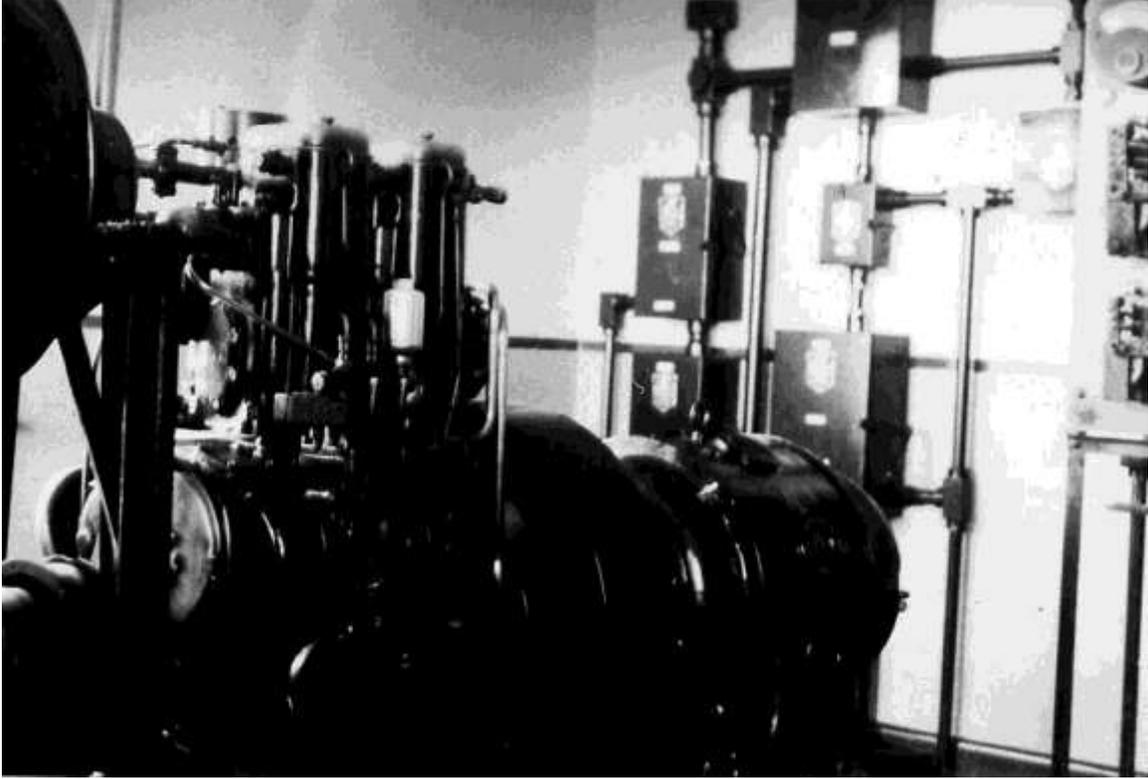
This is Bill Baker operating Camperdown Radio VCS in 1938.



*W. H. Wooding*

This is the operating position at Camperdown Radio VCS on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

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*Walter Wooding VE3WW ex VE1ET*

This is the Camperdown Emergency Generator in 1938.



*W. H. Wooding VE3WW ex VE1ET*

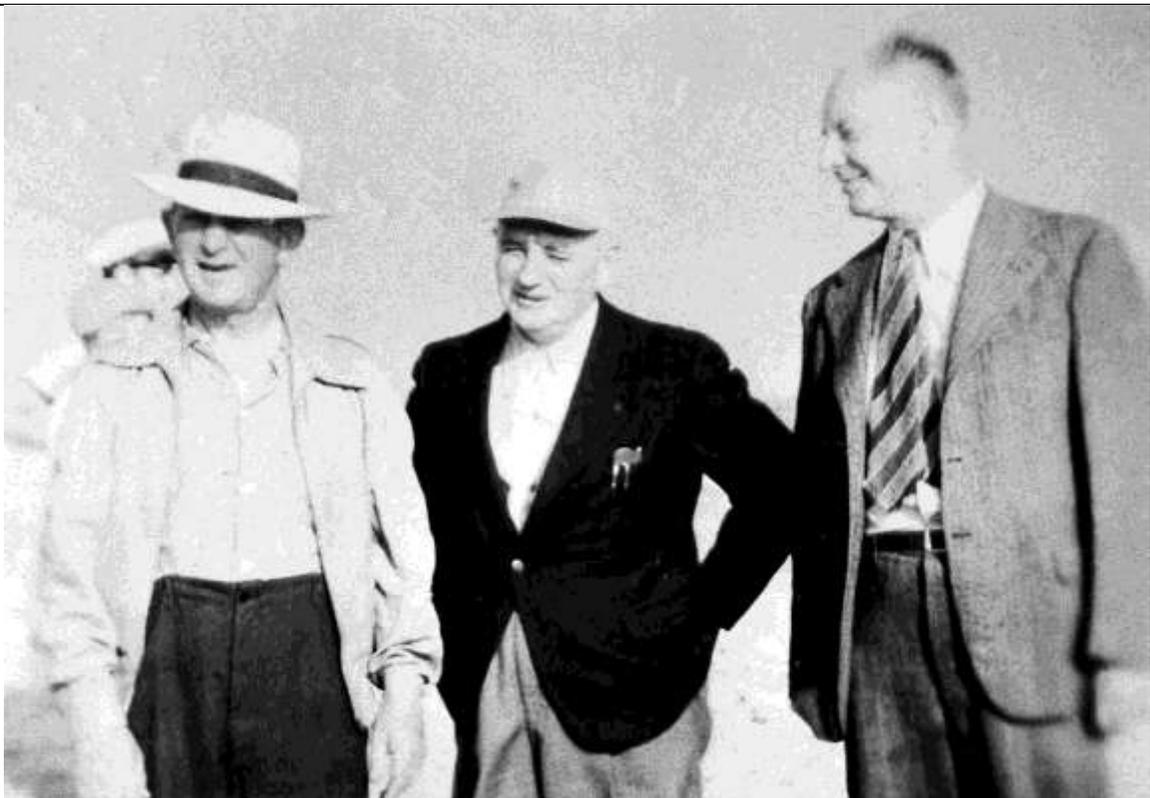
This is an ice storm at Camperdown Radio VCS in 1938. I was told the car is a 1937 Chevrolet.

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*W. H. Wooding*

These are the repairs under way to the antenna after the ice storm, Camperdown Radio VCS in 1938.



H. H. Brennan

From the left to the right this is Bob Lake, Harris Brennan and Eric Ward on Sable Island in 1952.



Pat Falvey

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This is Pat Falvey operating Camperdown Radio VCS in 1943.

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The road from Halifax out through the villages and past these stations was not paved until the mid 1950's. Prior to this many a traveler became stuck axle deep in the bottomless potholes that developed, especially during the spring of the year. Many of these travelers had to cut brush from alongside the road to put under the driving wheels in order to get moving and on their way. Although the road is now paved it still is one of the most crooked roads a person could encounter. It reminds me of a poem written about the Alaska Highway:

The way this road winds in  
The way this road winds out  
Leaves my mind in serious doubt  
As to whether the dude who built this route  
Was going to hell or coming out

Dr. John Henderson of the National Research Council, Ottawa, set up an experimental Cathode Ray Direction Finding system at Camperdown in 1938. It was here that the first experimentation took place on this type of Direction Finder. The C.R.T. D/F, as it was known, was an old personal friend of mine. I was the operator of one of these DF's at Coverdale, New Brunswick, with call sign CKT from 1958 to 1960. After World War II, the man in charge of this work was Dr. Mackenzie, his engineer was Bill Haney (who had worked with the inventor of radar), and Bert Lindsay was the technician. The Adcock Antenna Array did not work very well because of all the local interference from metal objects nearby. Having had experience on one of these arrangements I can understand this well. These antennae were quite susceptible to this interference. Once this was eliminated they were quite accurate. This of course involved a large clear field that was impossible at Camperdown because of all the other radio services being conducted.

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*Public Archives of Canada PA-142540*

This is a female member of the Royal Canadian Navy known as a “Wren” operating the C.R.T. D/F at Coverdale in August 1945. This is the same equipment we operated in 1959. The speaker at her right wrist is the intercom with the operations room a mile or more from the site and was still in use when I was there. The three vertical units to her left are the receivers. Each of the three receivers covered a different portion of the high frequency radio spectrum. These three were known as unit or band C, B, and A from left to right in this photograph. The operator in this photograph has her left hand on the tuning knob of band A. If you would like more technical detail and a good description of this station visit Jerry Proc’s site titled [HMCS COVERDALE](#) you can reach via [Google](#).

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Four years and two months after this new Camperdown station opened, war was again declared. This new war, World War II, has been called the Electronic War because this type of equipment was used so extensively. Camperdown was to see many changes, to begin with, two operators were assigned to each of the three shifts, day, evening, and night. All routine communications and broadcasts were terminated. The sole purpose of these operators was to maintain a listening watch for distress signals and take a bearing of these signals when heard. They were to answer these distress calls and relay any requests for assistance. The operation of all of these Canadian Department of Transport stations remained one should say, with Mr. C. D. Howe, who was the first and then Minister of the Department of Transport. Mr. Howe must have felt the operation of these stations his personal job because he took these throughout the various government departments. This radio section (of the Department of Transport) was on termination of the war, under the Department of Munitions and Supply with Mr. Howe as Minister. But it all did not matter in the overall operation because it all came under the direction of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Dan Martin had left the visual Signal Station staff in 1937, leaving John Spears and John Wilkie to run the station alone. J.G. "Gerry" Spears a son of John Spears took over the job of relieving his father and John Wilkie for their annual holidays. Before World War II was actually declared, the Navy took over the Signal Station on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1939. Gerry Spears was relieving signalman and worked until his last shift on September 14<sup>th</sup>. Then he went to Halifax and enlisted in the Navy on September 15<sup>th</sup>. John Wilkie enlisted in the Navy also and returned to Camperdown as a Signalman. John Spears went to enlist but was rejected, because he was colour-blind. John was not only a trained signalman but had been doing an excellent job of reading the multi-coloured signal hoists for twelve years. This eye defect was considered serious enough that the Navy felt he would not be able to help them even though they were short staffed.

Naval Signalmen took over the Signal Station on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1939, and renamed the station the Port War Signal Station. The old Duke of Kent's Signal Station was demolished on the completion of a new modern signal building. I can only hope that not only was this old building demolished with dignity, somewhere along the line someone paused to reflect on the history that was being smashed with each blow of the wrecking hammers. John Spears returned to the Department of Transport. As one former signal staff member put it "went over to read the newspaper with Sprack and the boys or whatever they did at the wireless station".

One of these naval members stationed at this Port War Signal Station during the war was Chief Petty Officer Ted Isnor, a master mechanic. Ted became a big favourite among the local residents of the area and spent much of his off-duty time wandering around the nearby beaches. He collected numerous items in this area from various ships that had sunk or run aground. Gerry Spears was not sent back to his old position as Signalman at Camperdown. He entered the Navy as a Signalman but was later transferred to the new and important Radar Branch of the Navy.

The Navy set up a guard around the Camperdown station during the war that meant that no one without permission was to go near the place. Mr. Lawrence Martin occupied the house down on the south side, from the station. Lawrence had a collie dog that divided her time between home and the wireless station. The operators at the station had a dish they kept clean and filled with water for her. She was a welcome pet, and of course received many meals at the station. Lawrence had the habit of making daily trips to the station for a chat with Sprack and the operators. He was also the Station's Janitor, which involved cleaning the floors on Saturday mornings. Unfortunately Lawrence had to be placed in the Nova Scotia Mental Hospital to end his days, but at the time of the war most referred to him as being a bit simple. He managed something many have tried and never succeeded. He beat the military at their own game. These guards around the station kept dragging poor old Lawrence (about seventy years of age at the time) in to the Officer in Charge for violating their rules. They had him up before this officer as many as ten times in one day. Finally these guards admitted defeat and went back to challenging shadows and stray dogs or whatever they did, and Lawrence went back to his normal routine – going up the hill to the wireless station for a visit.

## **THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS**

The only threat created to anyone or anything by the Royal Canadian Navy between the two world wars was to the pocketbook of the Canadian taxpayer. For this reason our government reverted to relying on the protection of the Royal Navy and decreased the size of the Royal Canadian Navy as far as possible.

After World War I, HMCS NIOBE and HMCS RAINBOW had seen their useful service and were decommissioned. These two were replaced with another British Light Cruiser, HMCS AURORA, whose Canadian wireless call sign I was unable to locate. AURORA served the Royal Canadian Navy from 1920 until 1922, and was replaced by two "P" Class Destroyers, HMCS PATRICIAN with call sign GCPA and HMCS PATRIOT with call sign GCSO. The List of Radio Station Call Sign Blocks for 1923 states that Canada held the blocks of call signs from GTPA to GTSZ and from GTVA to GTZZ, but there is definitely an error somewhere in this area.

John F. "Ginger" Taylor retired from the Royal Canadian Navy with the rank of Lieutenant Commander and states:

"I served in the PATRICIAN from my birthday 17 March 1925 as a Telegraphist. I was promoted to Tel the same day. Her call sign was definitely GCPA I will never forget it, it flows so smoothly from a key. Her naval call was MX. Possibly the reason their call signs are not from the block allocated Canada is that they may have retained their English ones, only a guess but possible. The minesweeper THIEPVAL was CFP. I was a Ldg. Tel. in her when we went aground up in Barclay Sound and lost her in 1930.

I regret that I have no photos of any of the gear in any of the ships (this was strictly forbidden). However the Destroyers had a lovely ½ KW spark set Type 4A with an emergency Mira Induction coil, range 2 to 3 miles. The spark xmtr had a freq range from about 450 to 800 metres (no Kc/s or MH/Z in those days). The power supply was from a rotary converter run off the ship's D.C. mains (100V). The Spark gap was run from a separate motor and we could adjust the speed and consequently the note. The Receiving gear had an emergency Xtal Detector and all sorts of large inductances in boxes with tap switches, large variable condensers in glass containers. The condensers were rated as being of so many "Jars" from the old "Leyden" jars. There was a 7 tube R/F amplifier of which we used usually only two or three tubes to conserve filament batteries. The Freq. range was from about 1500 Kc/s to 16 Kc/s. the gear was spread all over the bulkhead and took up about 4 by 4 ft. we used to read "GBR" Rugby on 16 Kc/s usually in Esquimalt. He made press several times daily.

When away and at anchor the ship's power was shut down at about 2200 and we used candles for light. I remember relieving a chap at 0400 and he said how quiet it had been for a long time. He had dozed off and the phone cord, which came from the deck head had swung back and forth over the candle until there was only a short length dangling from the headphones. No wonder it was quiet!

Sometime in either 1925 or 26 at the start of interest in short wave, we had an Royal Navy Petty Officer Telegraphist who was very interested and together we bought the parts to build a transmitter and receiver. The receiver was a very simple 2 R/F, Detector, and 1 Amp. We made plug in coils stripped a variable condenser to a couple of plates Etc. We had a lot of trouble with hand capacity and finally we rigged up a system of cotton reels as pulleys and cord so we could tune remotely. It was not pretty but worked so we had both hands free and didn't lose our station. The transmitter was also a simple self-excited one-tube affair. We made plug in coils Etc., used a wave meter in a ½ Lb., tobacco tin with a flashlight bulb, coil, and condenser. We calibrated it from known xmtr. Station freq's. I imagine we were away off freq., but there weren't too many on the air then. I will never forget the thrill when we made our first contact. I had made many calls without results and finally we got an answer from a U. S. Lighthouse tender the CEDAR with call sign WWDO. She was up the West Coast."

HMCS PATRIOT was decommissioned in 1927 and HMCS PATRICIAN followed the next year, 1928. By 1922 the officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy numbered only 366. In 1928 the Navy acquired two more British destroyers, HMCS CHAMPLAIN that held call sign CGAK and HMCS VANCOUVER with call sign CGAV.

Frank Chambers retired from the Royal Canadian Navy as a Commissioned Warrant Officer, and states:

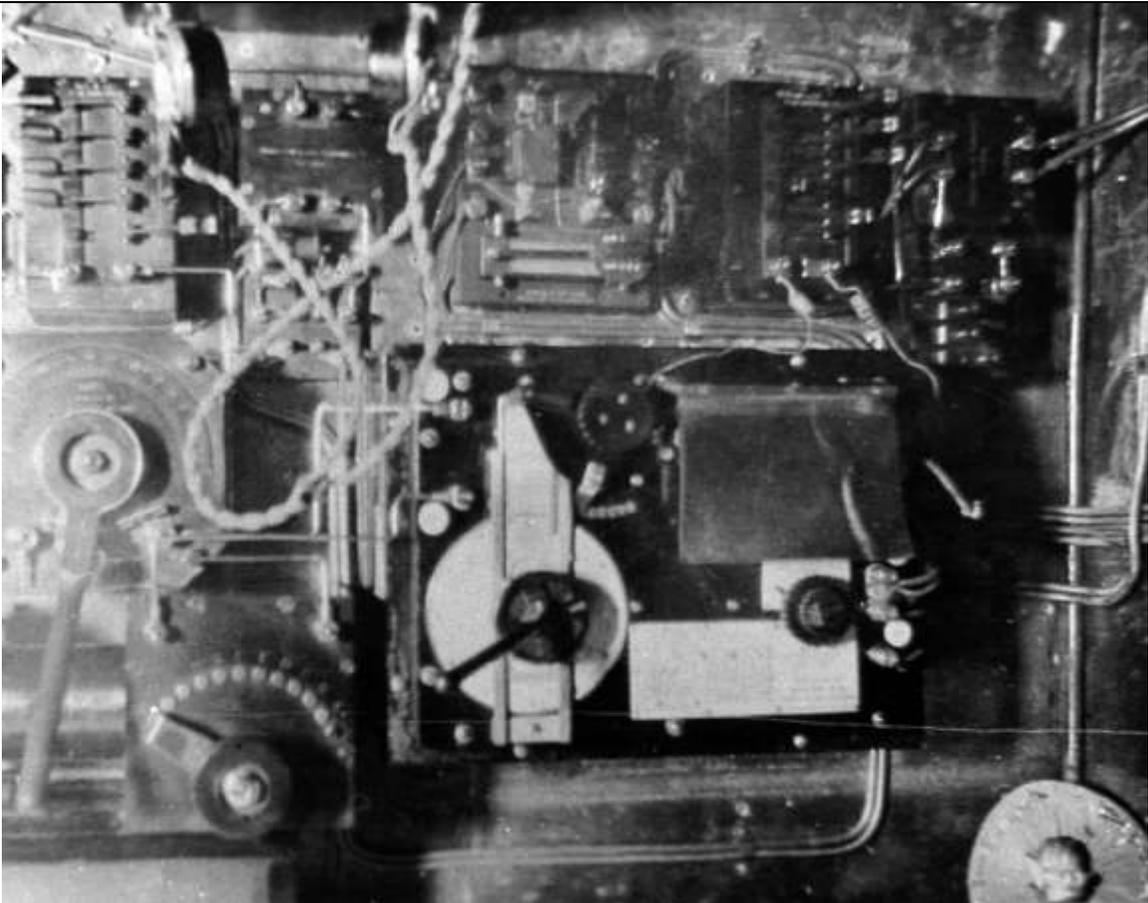
"In this snapshot (reproduced on these pages) you are looking at the receiving equipment in the W/T Office of the CHAMPLAIN, 1<sup>st</sup> world war destroyer that was acquired by the R.C.N. as replacement for the PATRIOT around 1928. Of course on this ship we had no H/F – Our W/T equipment (transmitters) consisted of a spark (rotary gap) M/F transmitter for commercial communications. (600 meters – 200 meters) and our L/F Poulson Arc Transmitters for naval communications around the 100 Kc/s frequency. Actually the Poulson Arc transmissions were the purest C/W note that one would ever hear in the earphones. The only problem was that if the ship was rolling and a strand of the aerial touched a steel wire stay the arc would "fluff" out and we had to re-start or strike the arc again. I don't know if you have ever had experience with an arc transmitter, but if not the arc was maintained in a vacuum type chamber, between two electrodes in a magnetic field, which field would "bow" out the arc (for what reason I never knew). Also the arc was burning in a methylated spirit, gaseous atmosphere (also for what reason I never knew), but the arc transmitters were very temperamental and the introduction of valve transmitters were really a Godsend.

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*Public Archives Canada PA-56571*

This is HMCS CHAMPLAIN near Varennes, Quebec in 1932.



*Frank Chambers*

This is the W/T Office in HMCS CHAMPLAIN. Does anyone know if the photograph is right side up?

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With regards to the snapshot – you will note that the tuning instruments, re, capacitors, fixed and variable, and inductances, fixed and variable, were external to the detector/amplifier unit. The tubes were on the outside of the unit and were of such brilliance that we could extinguish the office lighting. Also it was found that these receiving valves (pardon the use of the word valve, they were known by that classification in those days) emitted a ray of some type that was damaging to the eyes – hence a leather shield was added to cover the valves (tubes). This tuner unit was a detector and two stages of amplification and this receiving outfit could emit a signal that could be heard for many miles.

So much for our early communication equipment.

Of call signs I can't help you very much – all naval ships had two call signs – commercial four letter groups and naval call signs of two letter groups. It was very seldom that we resorted to commercial work – only to obtain bearings when entering foreign harbours and our navigating officers were distrustful of our charts or in fog. I suppose that Radar navigation has taken the place of even this in frequent use of commercial communications.

I was not in the Navy during the time that AURORA was in commission. I didn't join until 1924 and my first ship was the PATRIOT or time on the old minesweepers FESTUBERT or YPRES) and I can't remember any of those commercial or naval call signs now.

Time sort of dulls the memory and it is hard to drift back 50 – 60 years. About the only thing I never did forget, although I haven't had occasion to be exposed to it in 40 years is the Morse code. I gave up operating when I received my commission in 1943, but it still seems to be with me.”

John F. “Ginger” Taylor continues:

“I also commissioned the VANCOUVER in 1928. She had the same spark set the PAT had and also a 5 K.W. Arc transmitter. We worked on about 111 Kc/s and used to work Esquimalt from Mexico during the middle watch if atmos were not too bad.”

“Ginger” Taylor related some interesting detail on the earliest tubes, which is worth recording. He states: “I always remember in the Royal Navy noticing that the tubes in a short wave xmtr. were mounted at about a 30 degree angle and wondered why. These were silica envelope tubes which they used to cut open and replace the filament when needed, the elements were held in place by rods held in sleeves which were a fairly loose fit. As a ship rolled so the elements moved and altered the inter-electrode capacity with drastic results. They hoped she wouldn't roll so far as to allow this to happen.”

The Royal Canadian Navy had two new destroyers built for them in the United Kingdom. These two, HMCS SKEENA with call sign CGAL and HMCS SAGUENAY with call sign CGAB, joined HMCS CHAMPLAIN and HMCS VANCOUVER in 1931. VANCOUVER and CHAMPLAIN were to terminate their service in 1936 along with four minesweepers that had been in service since 1922. I was unable to locate any radio detail on these four but found three other naval craft equipped with wireless. HMCS FESTUBERT with call sign CGAF was classed a training ship during this period. She also served as a Gate Vessel from 1939 until 1943. HMCS THIEPVAL with call sign CFP served from 1922 until 1930. HMCS YPRES with call sign CGAY served as a training ship for a ten-year period from 1922 until 1932. She also became a Gate Vessel from 1939 until run down and sunk on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1940 with no loss of life.

The Royal Canadian Navy acquired two more destroyers in 1938. HMCS OTTAWA with call sign CGBQ and HMCS RESTIGOUCHE with call sign CGBR. Note the change in the call signs from a CGA to a CGB prefix. All the naval ship's call signs were changed at this time, possibly to confuse the enemy. Whose enemy theirs or ours? Four minesweepers and a training ship were built in Canada and added to this fleet.

At the outbreak of World War II the Royal Canadian Navy entered the war with 145 officers, 1,674 men, and the following fleet:

Destroyers:

CGBM FRASER  
CGBQ OTTAWA  
CGBR RESTIGOUCHE  
CGBD SAGUENAY  
CGBJ ST. LAURENT  
CGBK SKEENA

Minesweepers:

CGBW COMOX  
CGBS FUNDY  
CGBT GASPE  
CGBV NANOOSE

Training Vessels:

CGBP VENTURE (sailing vessel)  
CGBN YPRES

HMCS VENTURE was the last tern schooner built in Canada. Actually she was not a true tern her hull was a copy of the original BLUENOSE with three masts instead of two. She was built at Meteghan River, Nova Scotia, in 1936 and was commissioned in 1937. She was fitted with an FR12 high frequency radiotelegraph/radiotelephone transmitter/receiver at one time that had a power input of 15 watts.

These twelve ships that entered this war had been in the habit of using the services of the regular Department of Transport stations. In March 1940 the Navy took over the Marconi Station, civilian staff and all, at Glace Bay, Nova Scotia. This was the remnant of the original Marconi station that opened in 1902 in place of a station at St. John's, Newfoundland. By 1940 this station at Glace Bay was the most powerful in eastern Canada. Mr. Robert Foreman was Manager of this station at the outbreak of the war and remained in charge throughout the war. The operators at this station did not know the contents of the increasing number of coded messages they were delivering to these ships.

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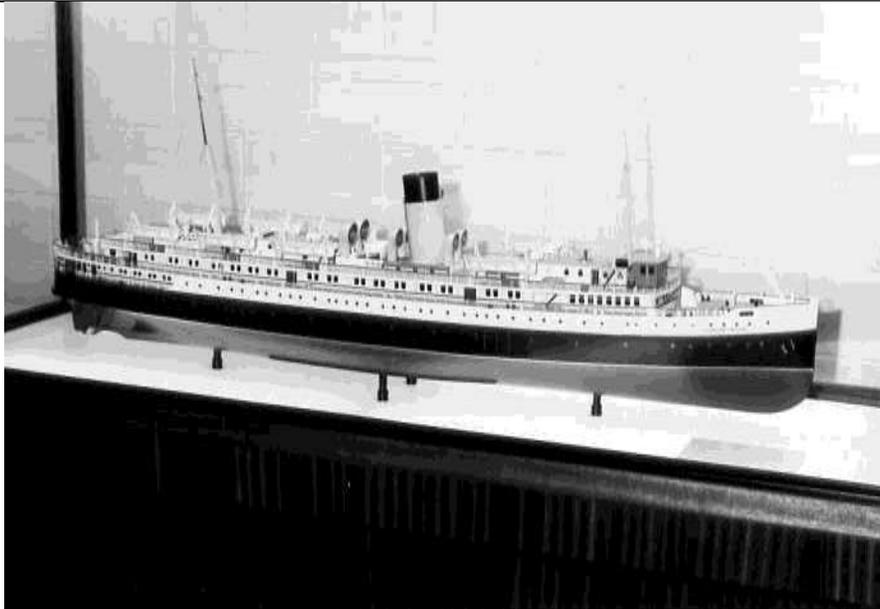


*A. K. Smith*

This is R. E. "Bob" Foreman in the door to the radio station in 1924.

Steps were taken immediately to increase the fleets of the Royal Canadian Navy and our merchant Navy. At the outbreak of war RCMP CAPTOR (call sign CGPY) was based at Saint John, New Brunswick. Both she and her commanding officer, R. C. Butt, found themselves members of the Royal Canadian Navy. Someone had reported seeing a U-boat on the surface off Digby Neck, Nova Scotia. This would put it much too close for comfort of the PRINCESS HELENE (call sign VGKL), the ferry that ran daily between Saint John and Digby. On learning of this U-boat the Navy assigned CAPTOR to travel in zig-zag fashion back and forth with PRINCESS HELENE. CAPTOR could only make half the speed that PRINCESS HELENE could and had one old machine gun only. When Captain Butt asked what he was supposed to do if they encountered this U-boat, his superior told him that was his problem his job was to see that he followed the ferry. Luckily no harm fell to either vessel. When trouble was suspected, the ferry "opened up" and ran like hell for port. CAPTOR came "puffing" in behind, taking twice as long as the ferry to get there. But this is only one of many such incidents and gives a good example of just how poorly equipped we were when we

got tangled up in this war. The one thing that should be noted is that we declared war on our own, not as a branch of the British forces as we had in World War I.



*R. J. "Dick" Roscoe*

This is a model of SS PRINCESS HELENE on display at the Museum of Science and Technology in Ottawa, Ontario

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## CORVETTES

Our shipyards went to work immediately to increase the size of our fleets. The design of these ships was kept as simple as possible, in order to assist mass production. Some very amazing facts were to be proven from this mass production. The first products from these "ship assembly lines" were to report to the Navy as our famous Corvettes. By the time the war ended we had produced many of these famous ships and had kept 123 for our own use. The majority of these ships were named after various towns throughout the country. This gave the "folks back home" some contact with the actual fleet. These vessels were assigned four letter international call signs with a CG, CY, and CZ prefix but were not listed with the International Telecommunication Union. These vessels all carried several radio operators who communicated continuously via radiotelegraph. Some of these operators were former landline telegraph operators and others former amateur radio operators, but the bulk of them were the product of Ed Hartling and his fellow instructors.

The one hundred twenty-three Corvettes were as follow, with their call sign and years of service:

|      |           |            |
|------|-----------|------------|
| CGQW | 1941-1945 | AGASSIZ    |
| CGNB | 1941-1944 | ALBERNI    |
| CGQT | 1941-1945 | ALGOMA     |
| CGTR | 1941-1945 | AMHERST    |
| CGTT | 1944-1946 | ARNPRIOR   |
| GPTY | 1940-1945 | ARROWHEAD  |
| CGQF | 1940-1945 | ARVIDA     |
| CGKK | 1943-1945 | ATHOLL     |
| CGDC | 1944-1945 | ASBESTOS   |
| CGTP | 1941-1945 | BADDECK    |
| CGTF | 1941-1944 | BARRIE     |
| CGVP | 1941-1945 | BATTLEFORD |

|      |           |  |
|------|-----------|--|
| CGBB | 1944-1945 | BEAUHARNOIS  |
| CYVJ | 1944-1945 | BELLEVILLE   |
| GPXD | 1940-1945 | BITTERSWEET  |
| CGTG | 1944-1945 | BOWMANVILLE  |
| CGTS | 1941-1945 | BRANDON  |
| CGZS | 1942-1945 | BRANTFORD  |
| CGTQ | 1941-1945 | BUCTOUCHE  |
| CYQT | 1941-1945 | CALGARY  |
| CGTZ | 1941-1945 | CAMROSE  |
| CGQK | 1940-1945 | CHAMBLY  |
| CYRF | 1941-1942 | CHARLOTTETOWN  |
| CGVB | 1941-1944 | CHICOUTIMI   |
| CGQX | 1941-1945 | CHILLIWACK   |
| CGQR | 1940-1945 | COBALT   |
| CYVP | 1944-1945 | COBOURG  |
| CGQM | 1940-1945 | COLLINGWOOD  |
| CGTC | 1944-1945 | COPPER CLIFF   |
| CGND | 1941-1945 | DAUPHIN  |
| CGVD | 1941-1945 | DAWSON   |
| CGVQ | 1941-1945 | DRUMHELLER   |
| CGZY | 1942-1945 | DUNDAS   |
| CGTX | 1941-1945 | DUNVEGAN   |
| CGNF | 1941-1945 | EDMUNDSTON   |
| GPXZ | 1940-1945 | EYEBRIGHT  |
| ---- | 1940-1945 | FENNEL   |
| CZGG | 1944-1945 | FERGUS   |
| CZGJ | 1943-1944 | FOREST HILL  |
| CYQV | 1941-1945 | FREDERICTON  |
| CYVF | 1943-1945 | FRONTENAC  |
| CGNW | 1943-1945 | GIFFARD  |
| CZGZ | 1944-1945 | GUELPH   |
| CYQG | 1941-1945 | HALIFAX  |
| CGYC | 1944-1945 | HAWKESBURY   |
| ---- | 1940-1945 | HEPATICA   |
| CGNX | 1944-1945 | HESPELER   |
| CGVC | 1944-1945 | HUMBERSTONE  |
| CGWC | 1944-1945 | HUNTSVILLE   |
| CGQY | 1941-1945 | KAMLOOPS   |
| CGVW | 1941-1945 | KAMSACK  |
| CGQS | 1941-1945 | KENOGAMI   |
| CGNY | 1944-1945 | KINCARDINE   |
| CYRB | 1942-1945 | KITCHENER  |
| CYQK | 1944-1945 | LACHUTE  |
| CYQX | 1942-1945 | LA MALBAIE   |
| CGQQ | 1944-1945 | LEASIDE  |
| CGVJ | 1941-1945 | LETHBRIDGE   |
| CGNT | 1940-1941 | LEVIS  |
| CYVB | 1943-1945 | LINDSAY  |
| CZGK | 1944-1945 | LONGBRANCH   |
| CGTM | 1941-1943 | LOUISBURG  |
| CGTM | 1943-1945 | LOUISBURG the new LOUISBURG kept the old<br>ones call sign but not her pendant number. |
| CGTV | 1941-1945 | LUNENBURG  |
| CGQD | 1940-1945 | MATAPEDIA  |
| GKLV | 1940-1945 | MAYFLOWER  |
| CZJM | 1944-1945 | MERRITTONIA  |

|      |           |                                    |
|------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| CGZT | 1941-1945 | MIDLAND                            |
| CYZX | 1944-1945 | MIMICO                             |
| CGTK | 1942-1945 | MONCTON                            |
| CGVN | 1941-1945 | MOOSE JAW                          |
| CGVT | 1941-1945 | MORDEN                             |
| CGLZ | 1941-1945 | NANAIMO                            |
| CGQL | 1940-1945 | NAPANEE                            |
| CGZX | 1942-1945 | NEW WESTMINSTER                    |
| CGYY | 1943-1945 | NORSYD                             |
| CYTW | 1943-1945 | NORTH BAY                          |
| CGVX | 1941-1945 | OAKVILLE                           |
| CGNZ | 1944-1945 | ORANGEVILLE                        |
| CGQN | 1940-1945 | ORILLIA                            |
| CYTX | 1943-1945 | OWEN SOUND                         |
| CYVD | 1944-1945 | PARRY SOUND                        |
| CYVG | 1944-1945 | PETERBOROUGH                       |
| CGWW | 1944-1945 | PETROLIA                           |
| CGTN | 1941-1945 | PICTOU                             |
| CYRG | 1942-1945 | PORT ARTHUR                        |
| CGVK | 1941-1945 | PRESCOTT                           |
| CGQZ | 1941-1945 | QUESNEL                            |
| CGQP | 1941-1945 | RIMOUSKI                           |
| CGDD | 1943-1945 | RIVIERE DU LOUP                    |
| CYQW | 1942-1944 | REGINA                             |
| CGVS | 1941-1945 | ROSTHERN                           |
| CGTJ | 1941      | SACKVILLE (now museum Halifax, NS) |
| CGVF | 1941-1945 | SASKATOON                          |
| CYVR | 1944-1945 | ST. LAMBERT                        |
| CZGL | 1944-1945 | ST. THOMAS                         |
| CGTD | 1941-1944 | SHAWINIGAN                         |
| CGQB | 1941-1945 | SHEDIAC                            |



*Public Archives Canada PA-114380*

This is HMCS SHEDIAC off the coast of British Columbia on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1944.

|      |           |                 |
|------|-----------|-----------------|
| CGTW | 1941-1945 | SHERBROOKE      |
| ---- | 1940-1942 | SPIKENARD       |
| CYVK | 1944-1945 | SMITHS FALLS    |
| GQCJ | 1940-1945 | SNOWBERRY       |
| CGTY | 1941-1945 | SOREL           |
| CZJN | 1944-1945 | STELLARATON     |
| CZJP | 1944-1945 | STRATHROY       |
| CGVL | 1941-1945 | SUDBURY         |
| CGTL | 1941-1945 | SUMMERSIDE      |
| CGVR | 1941-1945 | THE PAS         |
| CGNV | 1944-1945 | THORLOCK        |
| CGVG | 1944-1945 | TILLSONBURG     |
| CGZV | 1942-1945 | TIMMINS         |
| CGVZ | 1941-1945 | TRAIL           |
| CGDG | 1943-1945 | TRENTONIAN      |
| GQDG | 1940-1945 | TRILLIUM        |
| CGZW | 1942-1945 | VANCOUVER       |
| CYRD | 1942-1945 | VILLE DE QUEBEC |
| CGDL | 1944-1945 | WESTYORK        |
| CGQW | 1940-1945 | WETASKIWIN      |
| CGVY | 1941-1943 | WEYBURN         |
| CYVQ | 1944-1945 | WHITBY          |
| ---- | 1940-1941 | WINDFLOWER      |
| CYQZ | 1942-1946 | WOODSTOCK       |

One must admit quite a feat for a country that had constructed only a warship as large as a minesweeper.

Canadian Warship Names states some were commissioned into the Royal Canadian Navy at a later date. These are the ones with the British call signs and in the blue. I believe they did not commission into the Royal Canadian Navy far enough to receive a call sign. At least from all my research I am convinced they remained HMS and not HMCS, but the first of these were the fourteen to enter service in the closing months of 1940. I have been unable to locate a call sign for FENNEL and HEPATICA, and I have not found call signs before SPIKENARD and WINDFLOWER were lost.

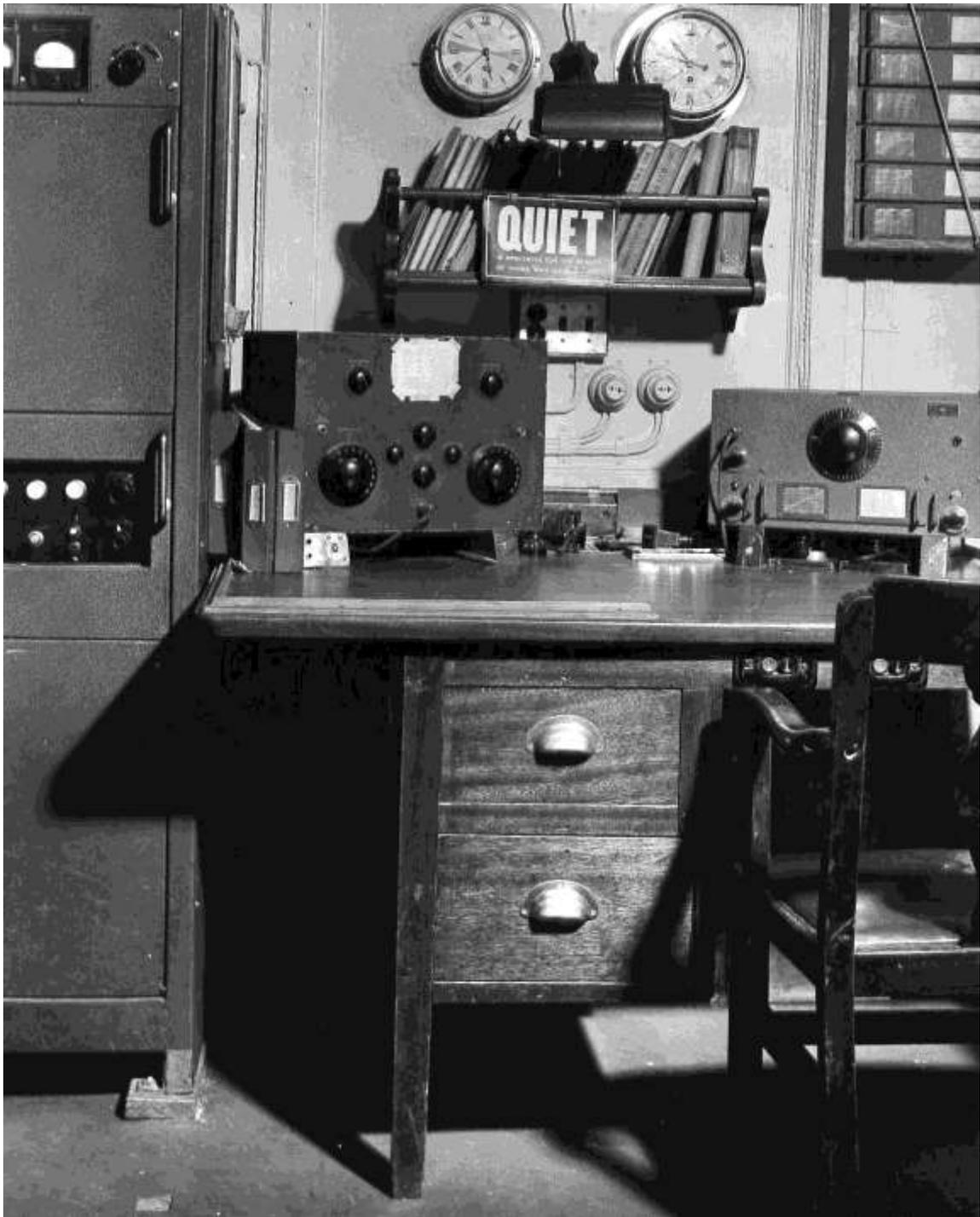
## THE CPR LUXURY LINERS

The Navy acquired three large merchant ships at the outbreak of the war. They were small luxury liners of 6,000 tons, 385 feet in length with a maximum speed of 22 knots each, built and operated for the Canadian Pacific Company.

|      |               |
|------|---------------|
| VGFW | PRINCE DAVID  |
| VGfZ | PRINCE HENRY  |
| VGJC | PRINCE ROBERT |

The call signs listed here are their pre war civil call signs and all three ships retained these same call signs when they became naval vessels. All three were converted to Armed Merchant Cruisers commencing right after the outbreak of the war and were ready for service in 1940. In 1943 they were converted again. PRINCE DAVID and PRINCE HENRY became landing ships (Infantry), and PRINCE ROBERT an Anti-Aircraft Ship. By the end of the war PRINCE ROBERT had become the most widely traveled ship within the Royal Canadian Navy's fleet.

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*Public Archives Canada E-3495*

This is the main radio station in HMCS PRINCE ROBERT in July 1942. There is a Marconi MSL-5 Receiver on the left and a National HR50T Receiver on the right. The rack above the HR50T holds the coils for the various frequency bands for this receiver.

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*Public Archives Canada E-3494*

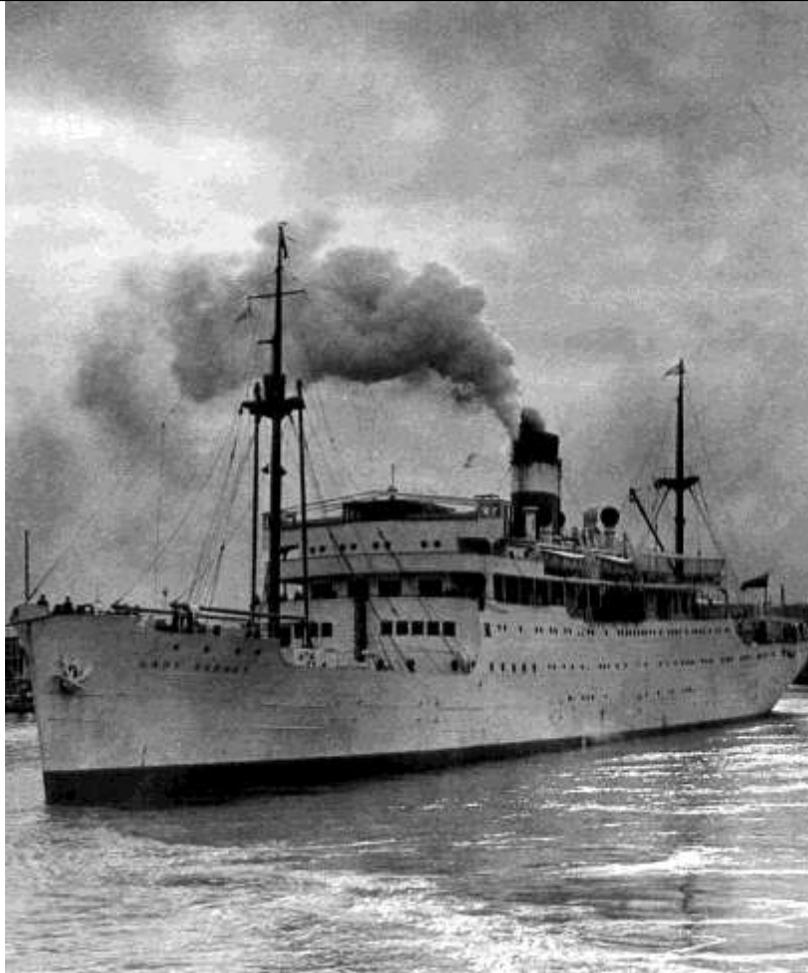
This is a better view of the HR50T Receiver and the Coil Rack.

## **THE CNS PASSENGER LINERS**

Canadian National Steamships (CNS) operated 11 ships at the outbreak of this war. There were five passenger liners. Three of these were built and entered service in 1928, registered in Halifax as General Cargo vessels. Two more entered service the following year and were registered in Montreal as

Refrigerated Cargo vessels (Banana carriers), and all five were built by Cammell Laird and Company, Shipbuilders and Engineers, Birkenhead, England. They were twin-screw (two propellers), 420 feet long, 8,000 tons, and capable of maintaining a speed of 14 knots. The five were:

VGZN LADY NELSON  
VGZP LADY HAWKINS  
VGZQ LADY DRAKE  
VGZR LADY RODNEY  
VGZS LADY SOMERS



*Public Archives Canada PA-56811*

**SS LADY RODNEY**

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The last two were the two Montreal ships. Apparently the three dashes of the letter O in Morse code were considered too long for the suffix of one of these call signs, but this is as ridiculous as assigning these calls in alphabetical order. Along with six sister ships, refrigerated freighters capable of carrying twelve passengers, they operated in a trade between eastern Canada and the islands of the West Indies. Because of this route they were well known in this area and many of the crew were native to Nova Scotia or made their homes here.

Three of these five passenger ships were lost during the war. LADY SOMERS was the first of these. She had been converted to an Armed Merchant Cruiser for the Royal Navy. While under the command of Commander G. L. Dunbar, R.D., R.N.R., with a crew of 175 men she was torpedoed and sunk on July 15<sup>th</sup>,

1941, in the North Atlantic. 138 survivors were rescued by Spanish ships and delivered to a neutral port. The rest of her crew was later reported safe and no one lost his life from this incident.

January 1942 saw the LADY HAWKINS depart Halifax for a run she had made many times. Her Master was Captain H. O. Giffen and her Chief Officer (Mate) was Percy A. Kelly. Her three Radio Officers were Lawrence Callahan, Fred Slaven, and Robert Clayton. They worked for the Canadian Marconi Company. C.N.S. paid a war bonus only. LADY HAWKINS' station was Marconi, as were all the radio stations in the C.N.S. fleet. The main transmitter in the "Lady Boats" was a huge thing of 500 watts. This contained a door in order for the operators to enter the transmitter for routine maintenance. These tube transmitters were capable of either continuous wave (CW) or modulated continuous wave (MCW) transmissions. The wave change switch (changed the output from one frequency to another) was mounted on a shaft one inch in diameter and about two feet long. Lawrence, who was married and made his home in Halifax, spent the full week while in Halifax changing this wave change switch before leaving in January 1942.

LADY HAWKINS proceeded to Boston, by a round about way, where she took on three passengers and then sailed for Bermuda. She was instructed to hug the American coast down to Cape Hatteras then proceed directly to Bermuda. She was unescorted and the evening of January 18<sup>th</sup> found her steaming along in beautiful weather. Although Fred, Bob, and Lawrence were continually receiving distress signals from ships being torpedoed near their route, the weather was so nice LADY HAWKINS steamed along as though she did not have a care in the world.

This very pleasant mid-winter cruise came to a sudden and tragic end at 2 AM January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1942, when a German U-boat scored a direct hit. LADY HAWKINS was severely damaged and sank rapidly. Those on board had little time for anything except to jump into the Atlantic and cling to whatever they could find until rescued by a ship's boat. Daylight brought some very sad news; only one boat (certified to carry sixty-three persons) had managed to get away from LADY HAWKINS, and in this boat were seventy-six persons, the sole survivors of LADY HAWKINS. The only navigating officer to survive was Percy A. Kelly and the only radio officer was Bob Clayton. Bob told Percy that there was no distress signal sent because the main transmitter had been smashed to pieces when the torpedo exploded. The radio room on LADY HAWKINS had been constructed midships on the upper deck, like so many of the day, to facilitate antenna connections which were very heavy and numerous in those days. On the "Lady Boats" this cabin was joined to the officers' quarters on the upper deck (boat deck), and the operators did not have to go outside when travelling between their station and the remainder of the ship.

250 people had lost their lives from this torpedoing and the seventy-six who survived remained in the open boat until rescued by the COAMO five days later. The COAMO was bound from New York to Puerto Rico with 500 passengers. COAMO was American and would have used call sign WKCW had it not been for the war. LADY HAWKINS was running under radio silence like all vessels during the war, but if it became necessary to transmit she would have used a coded call sign, two letters, one digit, and two more letters.



*HARC Files*

Bob Clayton

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1942, while LADY NELSON was alongside Saint Lucia in the British West Indies, a German U-boat sneaked into the harbour on the surface. This harbour is a lot like the harbour at Digby, Nova Scotia, small and narrow, and alongside with the LADY NELSON was a tanker and a British ship. This U-boat fired three torpedoes and the first landed harmlessly on the beach and exploded missing the tanker for which it had been aimed. The other two managed direct hits in both LADY NELSON and the British ship, sinking both alongside the dock. The mooring lines securing both ships to the dock held and prevented the two ships from toppling over on their sides.

The three Radio Officers in LADY NELSON at the time were Tom Gavilroff as Chief, Patrick Falvey as second and Earl Hooper as third. Tom remained with LADY NELSON while she was floated and towed to Mobile, Alabama. There she was repaired and converted into a hospital ship to survive the war in that capacity. Pat Falvey and Earl Hooper along with many of the other crewmembers were repatriated home to Canada in the sister ship LADY DRAKE.

Captain Percy Kelly, former Chief Officer in LADY HAWKINS, was now Captain of LADY DRAKE. After taking on board survivors from LADY NELSON, they steamed north to Bermuda. The Chief Radio Officer in LADY DRAKE was Alfred Millward, Ron Keddy was second and John O'Niel was third. Pat Falvey and Earl Hooper were passengers on this trip so did not stand any watch with the three LADY DRAKE operators. LADY DRAKE departed Bermuda at 9 AM on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1942, on her final leg of the voyage to Halifax. Twelve hours later found her steaming full speed and about 190 miles north of Bermuda. About 9 PM she was torpedoed and sank, but twelve men only were killed. The other 274 on board, including the radio operators from both vessels made it safely away in five boats to be picked up three days later by an American Minesweeper.

The first few years of the war were very rough days for merchant seamen. These seamen certainly deserve any credit they ever received. Many went back time and again. Several survived the loss of their ship two, three, or more times from U-boat torpedoes.

LADY RODNEY was the only ship of these five to go through the war unscathed. She and LADY NELSON were the only two on the conclusion of the war and about 1957 both were sold to Egypt. LADY RODNEY was sunk and lost in the Suez Canal during the six-day war of 1967. LADY NELSON ended her days as the Egyptian ship ALWADI with call sign SUBY.

## **CLARE LILLEY**

Getting back closer to home, Camperdown did not use a coded call sign during the war but made good use of the VCS call. One of many such incidents occurred on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1942, two and one half years after war had been declared.

On March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1942, the steamship CLARE LILLEY departed New York with an American Coastal Pilot on board to pilot the vessel to Halifax, Nova Scotia, via Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Shoals. CLARE LILLEY was a product of World War I. She was built in 1917 at Sunderland and was using the third name assigned to her, formerly the EASTCLIFFE and CLIFFSIDE. She was a general cargo vessel of 3,726 gross tons. Her international call sign was GWVL and she would have been assigned the standard coded call sign, two letters, one digit and two more letters. Her wireless room on this voyage in March 1942 was in charge of Chief Radio Operator C. W. Hodgson and under him was second operator J. Cockburn, and third operator A. B. Taylor. Hodgson was 41, Cockburn 18, and Taylor 19. All that I could find on the wireless equipment was that she was equipped with a spark station operating on 800, 706, and 600 meters, which would have been 375, 425, and 500 kilohertz respectively. This was a very common installation for vessels of this type and just prior to this period. I do not know which company had manufactured her equipment. Her radio accounts were with Vergottis Limited, London, England.

Captain J. Middleton (68 years old), from London, England, was in command of CLARE LILLEY and they were proceeding along on a voyage that had commenced at Manchester, England, on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1942. They were to enter Halifax and join an eastbound, slow convoy for Europe. Her cargo contained 1,177 tons of munitions for the war in Europe.

Friday March 13<sup>th</sup> found her steaming through a snowstorm, visibility very poor, but on March 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> she had a routine run with nothing to report. Monday March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1942, CLARE LILLEY anchored in Shelburne harbour at 7:03 PM per orders received from naval control. She asked and was given permission by the naval authorities that had boarded her to remain at this anchorage overnight. At 4:00 AM March 17<sup>th</sup>, Captain Middleton signaled the naval authorities requesting permission to get under way for Halifax. He wanted to have plenty of time in order to enter Halifax before dark that evening. Permission was granted and CLARE LILLEY hove up her anchor and proceeded on her way. At 8:00 PM March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1942, CLARE LILLEY passed the Sambro Light Vessel and ran for ten minutes on the same course. She then altered this course to 333 degrees (true) in order to take her to the first red flashing buoy, the swept channel in the approaches to Halifax harbour. At the time of this course alteration CLARE LILLEY was about one-half mile to the port (left) of the Sambro Light Vessel. It was now snowing fairly heavy and had been off and on since 6:00 PM. The visibility was ranging from good to poor, but Captain Middleton had a good fix on his position from the Sambro Light Vessel so decided to continue and made the first flashing red buoy on the port bow. All this time the wind was increasing and blowing from the East South East to about force six (strong breeze 25 to 31 miles per hour) with snow flurries that made it difficult to see at times. However they managed to pass the buoys with no trouble and when they came up to the whistle buoy brought this along the starboard (right) bow to shape up for the Pilot Boat Station.

In the meantime the CLARE LILLEY's speed had been reduced several times and she had stopped at one time, because another vessel was on her port (left) side and she had kept dropping down towards her. At one point Captain Middleton had rung for full speed astern and gave three short blasts on his steam whistle (I am going astern) to avoid colliding with the other vessel. At about this time the Port War Signal Station signaled to CLARE LILLEY via signal lamp and asked her name. They replied with their call sign GWVL. For some reason this made no sense to the duty signalman and he asked for a repeat so they gave him her name CLARE LILLEY spelled out. On receipt of this the signalman at the Port War Signal Station told them they were to report to the examination vessel.

It should be noted that during the war each of our harbours had a naval vessel stationed in the harbour entrance to board each and every vessel that approached to make certain it was who and what it claimed to be. These vessels were known as examination vessels and those ships to be given this title officially are as follow with their call sign:

|      |              |
|------|--------------|
| CGDB | ANDREE DUPRE |
| CGPX | ADVERSUS     |
| CGPS | CHALEUR      |

|      |              |
|------|--------------|
| CGPL | FLEUR DE LIS |
| CGSR | FRENCH       |
| CGFM | MALASPINA    |
| CGDR | MACSIN       |
| CGLX | MONT JOLI    |

They were small vessels rounded up at the outbreak of the war for this purpose. As can be seen several were from the Marine Section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

When Captain Middleton was told to report to this examination vessel he then asked the Port War Signal Station, "Where is the Pilot Boat?" twice by signal lamp. He did not receive a reply to either request. At about 9:30 PM Captain Middleton asked Chief Officer I. T. Jones to stand by the anchors but to wait awhile because they might find the Pilot Boat and while waiting they suddenly noticed the breakers (the sea breaking on the rocks) right abreast on their port (left) side. The engines at that time were going slow ahead and Captain Middleton immediately rang for full astern, but the ship held and did not move. The engines were then worked at various speeds until 10:24 PM, but the ship would not move. She was hard and fast on the rocks amidships on the port (left) side. Chief Officer Jones, at Captain Middleton's request, went and sounded the tanks and found twenty-four feet of water in the ship amidships.

Captain Middleton then had Bosun C. S. Sheldon sound all the ship's bilges. Sheldon reported they were dry from forward of the Bridge. Chief Engineer W. G. Mitchell, in the meantime, had reported to Captain Middleton that water was spouting up through the engine room tank. Captain Middleton realized how serious this was and gave the order to clear away the boats in preparation for abandoning ship. Chief operator Hodgson, standing by in the wireless room, commenced transmitting SOS. This was heard for miles around the coast. About this time the port main steam pipe burst with a slight explosion and a vast quantity of steam escaped which made a terrible noise and covered all of the midship section of the ship. Realizing CLARE LILLEY's cargo contained so much explosive material, this explosion caused the crew to panic and try to get clear of the ship as fast as possible. They crowded into the starboard lifeboat and started to lower away. Some left in life rafts. While the starboard lifeboat was being lowered, the after fall (rear lines supporting the boat) took charge with the result that the boat was left hanging by the forward end. On this, several jumped out of the boat and into the sea and others may have been thrown out of the boat. Quite a few managed to scramble back on board by the ladders that had been hung over the ship's side and some ropes. One man was left helpless in the boat with the ship's cat that broke away from the ship and drifted all night. The Navy rescued this man and the cat the next day.

Those ashore told those aboard CLARE LILLEY to fire a line ashore and they did and the first rocket was successful. CLARE LILLEY's crew then made fast a 3 ½ inch manila rope to this line which was hauled on shore and made fast there and the other end was secured to the mainmast of CLARE LILLEY. As they did not have a breeches buoy available those ashore advised CLARE LILLEY they felt those left on board would be safer if they remained on board. Captain Middleton agreed with this decision and told the remainder not to go. They should await daylight.

Daylight on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1942 found the naval authorities removing the remainder of the crew with the exception of Captain Middleton and Chief Officer Jones. Captain Middleton felt it his duty to remain on board CLARE LILLEY until the danger was more pronounced, but that afternoon the naval authorities again boarded CLARE LILLEY insisting that Captain Middleton and Jones proceed ashore with the remainder of the crew. Although Captain Middleton protested, he complied with these orders.

Captain Middleton blamed the loss of his ship on the fact that the Pilot Boat was not on station, claiming that the weather was such that a pilot could have easily gotten on board. He claimed the cause was due to the fact they must have been further west of the whistle buoy than they had calculated, blaming this on the various speed changes. The CLARE LILLEY was not a high-powered ship and could only manage from six to six and one-half knots. An ebb tide, the wind, and the swell were also contributing factors.

On March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1942 Captain Middleton again boarded the CLARE LILLEY with a Naval Officer. He found that she had been looted of everything of value as regards to the personal effects of the officers and

crew, and the ship's stores. The stores alone taken on board at New York were valued at \$1,800 (1942 American). There had been no guard posted either on the shore or on the ship to guard the vessel after Captain Middleton had departed. In the mind of the fishermen of Nova Scotia a shipwreck becomes the property of those on a first there, first serve, basis, once the last crewmember has left the vessel. Three of the crew and two military gunners carried in CLARE LILLEY at the time were drowned. Thirty-six survived this shipwreck. Those lost were Patrick Molloy aged 40, James Rafter 24, Charles Cooney 44, and the two gunners, Vincent Haithwaite 19, and Charles E. Bond 28.

The late Albert M. Spencer was one of the operators on the staff of station VCS at the time of this incident. He had a brother Simeon N. Spencer who was also an operator and operated VCS over the years. Bert Spencer assisted in the rescue of the CLARE LILLEY crew, those who attempted to make it ashore when the steam line blew, by jumping in the cold water and pulling them to dry land. At a later date a tribute was paid to Bert for his heroic performance at the scene of this incident. Those at the scene stated they still shivered at the thought of Bert jumping into that cold water. He was on his way home from a dance in the village.



*VCS Station Files*

This is the wreck of CLARE LILLEY.

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*VCS Station Files*

This is some of the wreckage from the CLARE LILLEY. That was a tear in the old photograph up in the left hand corner.

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*J. Gerald Spears*

This is the body of one of the British Naval Gunners from CLARE LILLEY.

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On close examination of the photographs that appear on these pages of CLARE LILLEY, you will note on the left a section of the bow of KENKERRY still visible. Shortly after the CLARE LILLEY struck the ledge she broke in two. The bow section remained on the shore but the stern slid down the ocean floor. Twenty-two years later, some of her cargo started to wash ashore. Some had been found with live fuses. In September 1964 a Navy diving team was called in to clean up the mess. With the assistance of HMCS GRANBY, with call sign CYQX, and HMC YMT-12, call sign CGJN, six hundred of the CLARE LILLEY bombs were towed out and disposed of in a dumping area. The bow section of the freighter could still be seen at this time. The six hundred bombs removed to the dumping site consisted of 150-pound general-purpose weapons that presented no danger while submerged but were potentially dangerous when they dried out.

Two years after the removal of these bombs, in 1966, this minesweeper HMCS GRANBY was replaced with the Prestonian Class frigate HMCS VICTORIAVILLE, with call sign CGVF. VICTORIAVILLE was renamed HMCS GRANBY at this time and was the Diving Tender at Halifax until 1973. She was sold for scrap in 1974, the last of the Canadian River Class and Prestonian Class frigates to be scrapped. And of further interest is the fact that HMC YMT-12 was renamed HMCS GRANBY in 1998.

A sister of YMT-12, the YMT-11 with call sign CGVY, was to be renamed HMCS CORMORANT in 1998 but the West Coast divers did not like this and wanted her renamed HMCS MANATEE. She had sailed around via the Panama Canal and based on the West Coast for some years. The last I heard they were still calling her "Eleven Boat" and she still had the CGVY call sign.

In 1998 another Navy diving team had to be called in to remove more of this debris left from CLARE LILLEY. This time they used CFAV SECHELET, with call sign CGJA, to remove more of these bombs out to the dumping ground.

The street down to the site of the wreck is now named Clare Lilley.