



# VIMM Newsletter

Winter 2016

Vancouver Island Military Museum

## THE HIGH TECH BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

By Angus Scully

The Museum has several displays that demonstrate the importance of the Battle of the Atlantic in the Second World War and of the role Canada played in winning that battle. By the early spring of 1943, it was clear that the U-boats were winning the Battle of the Atlantic. If they continued their pace of sinking allied merchant ships, Britain would face starvation, British industrial production would be crippled, and the build-up of troops for an invasion of France would be impossible. It was a high tech, high stakes struggle in which Canada played a huge role.

### HOW THE GERMAN NAVY NEARLY WON

Maps and diagrams in our Battle of the Atlantic display show that the German submarine campaign was far ranging – even into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the St. Lawrence River itself. With 240 operational submarines, their success through the winter of 1942 – 43 was based on:

- Tracking Allied convoys by means of Radio Direction Finding (RDF). Although the Germans had not cracked the Allied codes, they were able to plot roughly where the convoys were.



### Wolf Pack Grid System

- Using a block system – assigning U-Boats to specific areas in the North Atlantic. The Museum diagram shows this nicely.
- Forming Wolf Packs - fleets of U-Boats worked together under the direction of U-Boat Headquarters to find and destroy Allied convoys.
- Building supply submarines - used to extend the time the attack U-Boats could remain at sea. Fuel, food, torpedoes were supplied at rendezvous points.
- Attacking with acoustic homing torpedoes in 1943  
The U-boat tactics were so

successful that in the spring of 1943, more Allied shipping was being sunk that the shipyards could replace. The Merchant Navy was a very dangerous service – in Canada more died in the Merchant navy than in the RCN.

### HOW THE ALLIES WON THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Over the summer of 1943, the Allies went from near defeat to Victory. Although the U-boats would remain dangerous until the end of the war (HMCS Esquimalt



## The B-24 Liberator Bomber of the RCAF



Radar-equipped aircraft of the RCAF helped turn the tide in the Battle of the Atlantic.

The RCAF operated several types of aircraft in the Battle of the Atlantic, but it was the American built B-24 Liberator that really closed the air gap and made it possible for the RCAF and the RAF to sink the U-Boats in great numbers. The RCAF had four B-24 squadrons active from May 1943. On July 1, 1943, a successful attack by an RCAF Liberator damaged U 820; an appropriate Canada Day event as the tide turned against the Wolf Packs. The VIMM display of the RCAF and Coastal Command shows the radar dome on a RCAF Liberator.

## The Battle of the Atlantic

The Battle of the Atlantic is well illustrated at the VIMM in the following displays:

Navy

The Battle of the Atlantic

Merchant Navy

Coastal Command

The Sid Sharman Merchant

Navy Exhibit

The Secret War

German Collection (U-Boat)



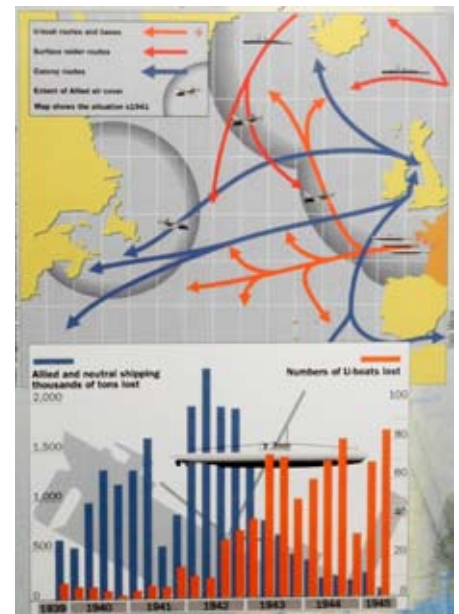
VIMM Display Battle of the Atlantic.

was sunk within sight of Halifax just three weeks before the end of the war) Britain's survival and the planning for invasion were no longer facing defeat. Several factors all came together in 1943.

- Closing the Air Gap. Long range aircraft were able to cover the whole journey of the convoys, where there had previously been a gap where U-boats could operate unobserved.
- Developing airborne radar and improved ship radar meant that the U-Boats could be found when they were on the surface – which was normal for their operations.
- Using Hedgehog and Squid depth charge systems which made hitting and destroying submerged U-Boats easier.
- Breaking the German radio codes with Enigma at Bletchley Park
- Finding the Wolf Packs with RDF.
- Building frigates, forming hunter – killer groups and using aircraft carriers. By the spring of 1943, inexperienced naval and air crews were gaining the training needed

to hunt and sink U-Boats.

- Deploying CAT (Canadian anti-acoustic torpedo) gear – simple and effective.
- Large numbers of U-Boats were sunk in 1943 and the German navy was forced to change its tactics. As it gained experience and better equipment, the RCN played an increasingly important role in the Battle of the Atlantic in 1944 and 1945.



VIMM Display of 1943 shipping losses



# HMCS LAURIER

## SURVIVOR OF THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

### DERELICT AT DEEP BAY



*HMCS Laurier on patrol during the Battle of the Atlantic.*

How many ships that took part in the Battle of the Atlantic are still afloat in Canada, or anywhere in the world? A short drive north of the VIMM will take you

an amazing situation – HMCS Laurier sits there, framed against the mountains, with her original grey paint showing through in places. Originally an RCMP

HMCS Laurier spent the war on patrol on the Halifax approaches, escorting convoys in and out of harbour, and in the only use of her weapons she sank a tanker that had been torpedoed, was not recoverable, and, drifting without a crew, posed a hazard to navigation. Can the Laurier be refurbished to her war time or RCMP era condition? Would she not be a suitable floating war heritage ship at the Nanaimo or Victoria harbours? More information on this amazing situation can be found at: <http://www.nauticapedia.ca/>

For more information on the connection between Vancouver Island and the Battle of the Atlantic see Bill Hampson's article Vice Admiral Rollo Mainguy and the Crow's Nest Club is this issue of the VIMM Newsletter.



*HMCS Laurier now derelict at Deep Bay.*

to Deep Bay and from the end of the spit you can see a derelict ship anchored just off shore. What

Patrol Vessel, she was taken into service in 1939 when the RCN was desperately short of ships.



# Message from the President



On behalf of myself and the museum directors, I wish a happy and healthy New Year to all for 2016. Welcome to our new volunteers, we are glad to have you joining the team. The museum has now been in full operation since 28 September 2012 and we are very pleased with the increase in attendance and interest from the public. Congratulations to the directors and volunteers for their continuous hard work and dedication in 2015 in keeping the museum a must see for the visiting and local public.

We have added new displays to the museum such as the West Coast Militia Rangers, WW I, Trench Art, Raymond Collishaw, Canadian Military and German Firearms, Rorke's Drift (Zulu Wars) British uniforms, and Canadian Modern Medals displays. We are continuously upgrading our current displays as we acquire new items.

Our armourer Pat Patterson has handed over his duties to Pat Murphy who recently up-

graded the weapon displays and gun storage area. Our thanks to the two Pats for keeping our armoury well organized and in tip top shape. Also, many special thanks to Brian McFadden, who did the heavy lifting in creating the new displays and advertising; and to Phil Harris who keep the workshop and secretarial duties going strong. Also, a big thanks to Jack Ziebart and Gord Buch for their strong efforts in our computer world and keeping track of the volunteers. Thanks to Bill Brayshaw for acquiring items for the museum through his network of contacts.

I am happy to announce that our "Wall of Honour" project is complete with the sale of 264 granite plaques. We are planning to have an official opening in the spring with invited dignitaries. The Board of Directors is considering the sale of an additional 50 plaques if the public interest is there.

We are also in negotiations with DND and Nanaimo Parks and Recreation Heritage Commission in acquiring the Bofors 40mm gun from the new HMCS Nanaimo Coastal Patrol Vessel and having it mounted on a concrete pad in Piper Park adjacent to the museum. The New HMCS Nanaimo is in refit undergoing upgrades with new armament, and therefore the 40mm Bofors gun is surplus to DND requirements. We anticipate this project happening later in 2016.

I am sad to report the passing in 2015 of long time museum volunteers John Barton and John Fogden, they will be missed.

We see 2016 shaping up to be an excellent year with the increase in the museum's public awareness and our proposed projects.

*Roger Bida*



*Reece Kuhn, Bruce Davidson, Logan Sherr, ready to meet and guide guests.*



*VIMM Christmas luncheon.*



*AGM discussion of plans for 2016.*

## **We're looking for...**

The VIMM is looking for an  
ATS military women's skirt  
– Army issued in 1941.

If you can help, please  
contact the Museum.



The VIMM is  
always looking for  
more information,  
especially photos.

If you can help,  
please contact us.



# A VANCOUVER ISLAND CONNECTION THE LEGACY OF VICE ADMIRAL ROLLO

By Bill Hampson,  
VIMM Volunteer

One of Canada's greatest naval leaders during the Battle of the Atlantic was Commodore (later Vice Admiral) Rollo Mainguy who was born in Chemainus, BC. in 1901 – just down the road from the VIMM. In 1942 he was appointed acting Commodore and took command of Royal Canadian Navy destroyers in Newfoundland. He retired from RCN in 1956, and

unique officers club he founded.

During World War II, the Dominion of Newfoundland became a strategic staging area for the Allied air and sea forces during the Battle of the Atlantic. Because of its strategic importance, the Government of Newfoundland granted both Canada and the United States the right to establish land, sea and air bases at St. John's, Argentia and Stephenville.

After 1930 the Newfoundland

Long Distance Radio Communications and Directional Finding in the high tech battle against the Wolf Packs. By war's end over 10 000 Canadian and British military personnel had served in the defence of Newfoundland-Labrador.

Prior to 1942 there was no formal Officers Mess for naval and merchant navy personnel in St. John's. On January 27, 1942 Captain Rollo Mainguy, acting Commodore of RCN Destroyers



*Vice Admiral Rollo Mainguy. His uniform is on display at the VIMM.*

died in Nanaimo in 1979. In 1958 RCCSC Mainguy was formed in Chemainus in honour of the Vice Admiral, but later relocated to Maple Bay near the city of Duncan, BC. Vice Admiral Mainguy's uniform can be found at the Vancouver Island Military Museum, Nanaimo, BC. Mainguy is also remembered in St. John's for the



*The Crow's Nest Club, started by Vice Admiral Mainguy, preserves the memories of the Battle of the Atlantic.*

Government, Canada and Great Britain had constructed air bases at Goose Bay, Labrador, Gander and Torbay, Newfoundland. During the Battle of the Atlantic, these bases provided short term convoy protection, coast patrols and anti-submarine detection and neutralization. The bases situated at Gander & Goose Bay also served as major staging fields for the transatlantic aircraft being ferried to the United Kingdom and later to the European continent. Canadian personnel stationed at Gander were also assigned the task of maintaining and monitoring

established a Seagoing Officers Club in the downtown area. A spirit-minded citizen, one Colonel Leonard Ouerbridge, had acquired the old Butler Building near the waterfront, and let Mainguy establish a club on the vacant top floor of the old warehouse for the annual fee of one dollar. The club was later called the Crow's Nest because of its flight of 59 stairs and its magnificent view overlooking St. John's harbour. Throughout much of the war, the "Seagoing Officers' Club" became famous for its relaxing qualities. Before entering the theatre of war, many men



# TO THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC MAINGUY AND THE CROW'S NEST CLUB

visiting the club would scratch the name of their ship on the walls. Captain Mainguy vehemently opposed the practice but eventually had to give way. Since the practice couldn't be prevented he allotted every ship 4 square feet of decorative space. Today these colorful works of art adorn almost every inch of wall space in the old mess. As wartime membership expanded, the walls of the old officers mess came to include RCAF Squadron Crests, Canadian Army regimental plaques and other military memorabilia.

## The Crow's Nest Revived and Preserved

The Crow's Nest closed at the end of the war, but on July 8 1946, "The Newfoundland Officers' Club—Crow's Nest" re-opened for business; eventually the name was changed to the "Crow's Nest Officers' Club." The Club today has become a unique museum, housing hundreds of military artifacts. At present the club has been in operation for some seventy years, still owned by its members. Its reputation as a unique historical site is known worldwide. The Crow's Nest Officers Club is still situated between Water Street and Duckworth Street adjacent to the War Memorial. Membership is now open to local civilians, military personnel, veterans and

out of towners - who enjoy and wish to preserve the memories of the Crow's Nest during World War II and its significance for St John's. Membership Application Forms and club information can be found by visiting the various online websites. In 1987 the Crow's Nest Officers Club was registered as the Crow's Nest Military Artifacts Association Inc., for the purposes of preserving and maintaining custody of its historic and mili-

tary assets and memorabilia. This place is a must to visit when in St. John's, Newfoundland. It's the only place I know where you can order a Newfoundland Black Arse Beer (Black Horse) at the bar.

For more information see:  
<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=2279>  
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/crow-s-nest-named-place-of-national-historic-significance-1.2630119>

## DID YOU KNOW?

In the late autumn of 1944, First Canadian Army took over the Nijmegen front in the Netherlands. In order to provide for the welfare of the troops, the Quartermaster General's staff under the direction of Major Gerald Levenston built the largest hamburger café in Europe. It had a serving counter 90 feet long and was designed to serve 3000 troops per day. The kitchen was supposed to turn out 2000 rolls, 100 pies, 4000 doughnuts and enough meat for 2000 hamburgers daily.

Levenston called it the White Spot. Later, for reasons now lost, it was changed to the Blue Diamond.

When opened, the Blue Diamond (nee White Spot) served 6000 hamburgers a day in its first month of operation. All this just 1000 yards from the German border.

You can see the Blue Diamond in a Canadian Army Newsreel on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eR0tvBqTgIY>



Sign inside The Blue Diamond—the food was free!

# THE EVOLUTION OF CANADIAN HONOURS

By Phil Harris

The 1993 Review to change the Honours system is part of the drive to remove the distinctions in the Awards for Bravery. The Medals using the Cross were awarded to Officers. The Medals awarded to enlisted men were the standard round medal. This change can be seen below:

1. Distinguished Conduct Medal replaced by the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (1).
2. Conspicuous Gallantry Medal replaced by the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (1).
3. Distinguished Service Medal replaced by the Distinguished Service Cross (2).
4. Military Medal replaced by the Military Cross (3).
5. Distinguished Flying Medal replaced by the Distinguished Flying Cross (4).
6. Air Force Medal replaced by the Air Force Cross (5).
7. The Distinguished Service Order is now awarded for leadership to all ranks and not for distinguished service in time of war by officers.
8. The numbers after the above Medals indicate the importance of the Award and the order in

which they are worn. A bar is attached to the ribbon on the Cross to indicate a second Cross has been awarded.

Since 1972 Canada has instituted a full range of 65 honours and awards that are Canadian based, not carried over from the UK.

The one exception is the Victoria Cross, the highest award which retains its heritage title. Canada's Victoria Cross has the Latin phrase "Pro Valore" instead of "For Valour" which is on the British Cross. The Royal Canadian mint does the casting for the medal and to date no Canadian has been awarded the new VC.

We do have our Cross of Valour, started in 1972. It is worn around the neck on a light Crimson ribbon as opposed to being pinned on the chest. This award is second to the Victoria Cross in the wearing order. To date 20 Crosses of Valour have been awarded to Canadians.

A point of interest regarding the Victoria Cross and the George Cross is an annuity. Those awarded in Britain are given ten thousand pounds a year; Canadian recipients who joined the British Forces before March 31st, 1949 and are living in Canada receive three thousand dollars a year.



## Framing Service

Let us help you care for your history and your heritage. The Vancouver Island Military Museum can mount orders, decorations, and medals with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Our experience ensures that you receive the highest possible quality and accuracy for your medal set. Your medals can be court or swing-mounted on brooch or push pins using the finest regulation ribbon. Contact the museum to discuss how best to care and preserve your history!

## VANCOUVER ISLAND MILITARY MUSEUM DIRECTORS AND STAFF

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Jack Ziebart, Computer/Archives

Gord Buch, Volunteer Coordinator

Bill Brayshaw, Acquisitions

Angus Scully, Newsletter Editor

100 Cameron Avenue, Nanaimo, BC, V9R 0C8 | 250-753-3814 | oic@vimms.ca | www.vimms.ca