



# News

CANADIAN NAVAL TECHNICAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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## Access and the DHH Archives

Most members of the Canadian Naval Technical History Association are familiar with the Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) acts. However, not everyone realizes that the acts apply to archival materials donated to the Directorate of History and Heritage through the CNTHA. Right now, the whole of the CNTHA collection is open to the public. Such openness promotes understanding of naval history and allows the Association to reach a broader audience.

ATIP may be a little bit more confusing when it concerns the donation of records containing either classified or protected material. Researchers can still request access to these records, and DND is bound by law to respond to each request and apply the Access/Privacy legislation accordingly. Naturally, the acts provide for protection of certain classes of information, and documents are sometimes severed so that only parts of them are released.

The *Privacy Act* is designed to protect personal information. A person's marital status, age, medical information, and other personal facts are stringently protected until twenty years after their death. However, personal opinions of civil servants or military personnel given in the course of employment are open. (The

Act is available for viewing at [www.privcom.gc.ca](http://www.privcom.gc.ca), and at most public libraries.)

The *Access to Information Act* (<http://infoweb.magi.com/~accessca>) is intended to promote democratic government by providing information to allow citizens to hold government accountable for what it does, and to vote in an informed way. The

Act provides specific guidelines for safeguarding classified information, such as in the case



of information relating to a weapon system currently in use by our navy. The information cannot not be released until that system is no longer in use by Canada or its allies, and has been declassified.

Information specifically excluded under the Access to Information Act is not subject to release (even though much of it is already available to the public). Library materials acquired solely for public reference, as well as materials placed in the National Archives of Canada, the National Library, or in the National Museums of Canada by, or on behalf of persons other than government institutions are all excluded. This means that private donations of

(See *Access*, page 3)

*In Progress:***A History of the RCN Supply Branch****Update:  
The Collection**

My last update reported that a number of documents had been received from the estate of RAdm S.M. Davis. This data is still being sorted and catalogued.

Meanwhile it is with regret that we must acknowledge the passing of RAdm C.W. (Carl) Ross, a fine naval officer and a dedicated engineer. His family informs us that he left several filing cabinets full of career data which will undoubtedly be varied when one considers his career: first as a naval electrical officer, then in administration, including National Defence College, and finally, following his naval career, as CEO of Stork Canada. We look forward

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While the Directorate of History and Heritage at DND was recently launching its Naval Oral History Project with former senior naval and air officers, retired Cdr (S) Tom Treherne was busy writing up a “*History of the Paymaster and Supply Functions of the RCN.*” Working from his home in Victoria, and during summer sojourns at his cottage near Ottawa, he has researched documents and interviewed retired officers and non-commissioned personnel to get their recollections in an effort to piece together Canada’s naval supply history. To date he has produced drafts covering the periods 1910-1939, and 1939-1945.

In Part One of his history, which details the period from when the RCN was established in 1910 to the eve of the Second World War, it is not surprising to learn that the original paymasters were Royal Navy officers. After 1921, Canadian officer cadets joining the branch served initially with the RN, followed by a period at sea in Royal Navy ships as paymaster midshipmen. After promotion to paymaster sub-lieutenant, they would serve in the RN for two more years before returning for service in Canada. This method of entry continued up until 1941.

The narrative in Part One of Cdr Treherne’s history concentrates on the various duties of the officers and men of the period, and provides an apt description of the growth and workings of the branch. During the 1930s, for example, the naval stores function in ships was the responsibility of the en-

gineer officer. Under him, engineering storemen performed the duties of demanding, storing and issuing of all naval and engineering stores. By 1938, however, when *Ottawa* and *Restigouche* joined the fleet, victualing assistants were drafted to each ship to carry out the naval stores duties.

Part Two of the draft manuscript covers the supply story through the Second World War. It was an extremely trying time for all concerned in meeting the demands for naval and fleet stores, and basic procedures and practices changed only as wartime circumstances dictated. As Cdr Treherne points out, the shipbuilding program that put our corvettes to sea created a need for spares, which made close co-operation between the engineering branch and

the supply organization essential. In the final days of the war, the introduction of naval supply officers in barracks, bases and ships reflected the evolving situation.

There is much work ahead for the author as he presses on with Part Three, the post-war history of the supply branch. Progress appears to be good, but at this point it is still too early to predict when the completed project will become available.

— Capt(N) (ret.) John Nash,  
Ottawa.



# New Ship, Old Ship



Most people know HMCS *Regina* (FFH-334) as a sleek, state-of-the-art patrol frigate on Canada's active fleet list. But in 1941, this ship's namesake — a revised Flower-class corvette (K234) — was launched from the same Marine Industries yard in Sorel, Québec where the modern-day ship would be launched some fifty years later.

The Battle of the Atlantic was in full swing when the corvette *Regina* took up North Atlantic escort duties in early 1942. Rushed into service, the little ship was dogged by defects, yet still managed to escort several successful convoys before being assigned to Operation Torch, the allied invasion of North Africa. A bout of "condenseritis" kept her out of the main action, but it was during follow-up operations in the Med in February 1943 that she distinguished herself by attacking and sinking the Italian submarine *Avorio* off Algeria.

Sadly, this plucky ship did not survive the war, except in name. Following a refit in Canada, she was torpedoed while assisting a Liberty ship in the Western Approaches and sank immediately with the loss of one officer and 29 crew. In 1994 the generations were bridged when several of *Regina's* wartime survivors attended the commissioning of the new patrol frigate, HMCS *Regina*.

— Brian McCullough,  
(with thanks to LCdr Sean Midwood and Cdr Karel Heemskerk — the  
current *Regina's* commissioning CSE and EO — for the story idea)



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non-governmental records to the National Archives are excluded from the Act and may not be released. On the other hand, if the same documents were donated to the DHH archives, they would be subject to ATIP.

While it is important that people realize that their donations to the CNTHA/DHH archives fall under the Access to Information and Privacy acts,

we encourage you to donate relevant records here. By this process, we may continue to assist the Association in preserving and promoting Canada's naval history.

— Dr. Isabel Campbell,  
Chief Archivist, DHH



(Collection, from p. 2)

to an involved sorting task which should result in valuable data for the collection.

And finally, we are still looking for data. Does anyone have documents or memories concerning the trials and test facility in Halifax, COMOPVAL?

As usual I can be reached by mail at 673 Farmington Ave., Ottawa, Ont., K1V 7H4; by fax at (613) 738-3894; and by e-mail at [phil@ncf.ca](mailto:phil@ncf.ca).

— Phil Munro



**Book Review:****The Fighting Captain:  
Frederic John Walker RN and  
The Battle of the Atlantic**

Reviewed by Roger Sarty

**About the CNTHA**

The Canadian Naval Technical History Association is a volunteer organization working in support of the Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) effort to preserve our country's naval technical history. Interested persons may become members of the CNTHA by contacting DHH.

A prime purpose of the CNTHA is to make its information available to researchers and casual readers alike. So how can you get to read some of it? For the moment there is only one copy of the Collection, situated at the Directorate of History and Heritage located at 2429 Holly Lane (near the intersection of Heron and Walkley Roads) in Ottawa. DHH is open to the public every Tuesday and Wednesday 8:30-4:30. Staff is on hand to retrieve the information you request and to help in any way. Photocopy facilities are available on a self-serve basis. Access to the building requires a visitor's pass, easily obtained from the commissionaire at the front door. Copies of the index to the Collection may be obtained by writing to DHH.



**Alan Burn, *The Fighting Captain: Frederic John Walker RN and The Battle of the Atlantic*. Leo Cooper, an imprint of Pen and Sword Books, Ltd., 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS, England, 1998. ISBN 0 85052 555 1, 204 pp. £12.95.**

Captain "Johnny" Walker was the Royal Navy's leading anti-submarine ace during the Second World War. The Admiralty credited ships under his command with the destruction of 20 U-boats. After his untimely death in July 1944, the ships of his group received credit for sinking eight more U-boats. This was an outstanding record, but Walker's broader influence within the Royal Navy and other Allied navies as the prophet of offensive anti-submarine tactics was at least as important.

In December 1941 Walker commanded the escort of the Gibraltar to UK convoy HG-76 in the face of a large U-boat concentration. The defending warships, by aggressively pursuing U-boat contacts at a distance from the convoy, destroyed five submarines, for the loss of two merchant vessels and two of the escorts. It was the most successful defence of a convoy to that time, and a harbinger of the organization of support groups by the Allied navies that turned the tide in the Battle of the Atlantic in 1943. Walker,

back at sea in mid-1943 after a shore appointment, led one of those support groups in a veritable slaughter of the U-boats that attempted to revive offensive operations against Allied convoys.

The story has already been well told by Terrence Robertson in *Walker R.N.*, which was first published in 1956 and subsequently reissued in many editions. Alan Burn's book, nevertheless, is an important contribution. It will be especially absorbing — and instructive — for naval personnel.

Burn, who was Walker's gunnery officer in 1943-4, has augmented his own vivid memories with excellent research and first-person accounts from his shipmates. The descriptions of complex anti-submarine actions are some of the clearest and most exciting I have read.

His analysis of Walker's tactical decisions and his leadership style is gripping and compelling. A "must-read" for naval professionals, and extremely entertaining to boot.



*Roger Sarty is the Head of Historical Research and Exhibit Development at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.*

