Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

by Dave Tyre

Much has been written on the lot of the seaman through the centuries. More still has been written to tell of the glorious, adventurous and romantic life the seaman led, most of it unfortunately, done with a far greater degree of licence than lends itself to reality. The British Seaman, the strongest surviving line of seafaring men, has been idolized by the descendents of those who brutalized him, and slurred by those who knew nothing of his real behaviour. The British Seaman, particularly the perpetual Naval Rating (if such a thing truly existed), is the root from which many navies of sailors draw their language, tradition and pride. This series is about those British and, eventually, Canadian Seamen who have left a rich history for us to relish in.

I write these essays primarily as notes. Perhaps one day, the notes you have read will become available in a single volume. In any case, the order in which the essays will appear in this publication are not the progressive order in which the chronological events took place. I hope to provide the most appealing segments soonest, with an aim to making drier portions slightly more palatable prior to sending them to the Editor. With my sources at such a distance it may be some time indeed when I present the prize of this series which, in an overt attempt to maintain your interest, shall remain my secret until its publication.

This is for you.

Press Gang!

Of the methods of recruitment, the most misunderstood system over the centuries has been that of IMPRESSMENT. Although it was to become a feared and brutal method of conscripting manpower for a wartime British navy, it started out quite innocently enough, and its necessity far out-weighed the cruelty which was to become synonymous with the Press Gang.

Before dealing with "The Press" and their operating crews — Press Gangs — it must be fully understood that prior to the middle eighteenth century in Britain, peace, more or less, prevailed. "IMPRESSMENT' as such, simply did not exist. In fact, the words PRESS and IMPRESSMENT are wholly incorrect. The term actually used was PREST. That simply meant, money or payment. There was nothing brutal about it. It was a system of inducement to attract seamen to the navy by providing them with PREST, a form of recruitment bonus. IMPREST, a term known to any mess manager, was the word given to providing a man with money for enlistment. Forcing a man to serve was never the original intention of IMPREST; paying a man to enlist, at the outset, certainly was.

The term Press was born out of the Prest, thus Impressment out of Imprestment, because of the behaviour of the system, and of course those responsible for its operation. The prospects provided for potential recruits were extremely poor and totally unattractive. Only a very few men would ever willingly accept the conditions of service in the eighteenth century British navy and they were usually directed to the fleet by the Marine Society, who neither paid, or for that matter, chased around looking for men.

The Marine Society therefore, virtually theonly means of volunteering for the Royal Navy as a seaman, provided too few sailors for even the peacetime navy. The Prest, performed in the fashion intended provided even fewer. Thus the Prest for many years preceeding 1790 had been "pressing" men into the navy using a brutal and relentless degree of force. "Pressing" men into service became a reality and because of the similarity in pronunciation PREST soon became PRESSED.

The morality of IMPRESSMENT is almost a joke. Today, given a state of emergency and hostilities, most countries would resort to "conscription" to build their armed forces quickly. Such examples as the United States "draft" (another incorrect word, not worth discussion), provide recent proof. During the last World War conscription was a policy of every belligerent involved. The principle of Impressment therefore, still exists. The application of it has changed considerably over the centuries however, something we can at least be thankful for.

By bringing up "conscription" and comparing it in principle at least, to Impressment, the point is brought up: Why? Why did Impressment exist? Well, the fact is, Impressment existed to fill ships required for war, **normally during a war.** The British navy chose a system employed by many nations today, including Canada. They maintained a fleet of ships from previous wars "in ordinary". That is to say that a good majority of British line ships were maintained with only keeper crews during peacetime. They were held alongside and never sailed. If in a time of war they were required, and it was always assumed they would be required quickly, a system had to exist which would fill them with the required manpower to sail and fight them effectively.

The Impress then existed to fill the ships if needed. It was a compromise, for often there were too few officers to command ships and the ships themselves had been lying idle so long that marine life and the elements had taken too heavy a toll to allow their use. Those that did sail during peacetime did so on a rotational basis and they sailed with mostly volunteer crews. Those men left in the navy after a war usually had no other place to go or were Marine Society volunteers. The Impress therefore, during peacetime, was a relatively quiet affair. In fact, during peacetime, the navy was so poorly manned that the instant promotion and rating of those who did remain, should war break out, did not provide enough of a nucleus of permanent naval ratings.

When war broke out, the bounties for volunteers were reduced to virtually nil. The "Press" on the other hand, was wound up to full speed.; It became known as a "hot press" and continued until the war ended.

The Press Gang's reputation for taking any able looking individual who trod across their path is wholly in error. In fact it is probably the worst error made by fiction writers of fighting sail ever. The only people who really had anything to fear from a Press Gang was a man whose occupation was that of a sailor or a waterman. In 1793 the British government correctly assumed that in order to sail ships in an emergency they would have to man their ships with experienced (not always the right kind) men. To accomplish this they established a pool drawn from the seaman-class. It became known as the Seamans Pool and every man who had a sea-going or water born occupation was exempt from the Militia Ballot, the army's form of conscription. This exemption was anything but a priviledge of course, because when the Wars started the Seaman Pool was rapidly drained and in fact, was virtually depleted by mid 1795.

Thus it becomes apparent that being a seaman in Britain, (save for a few fishermen and essential watermen), when a general Press Warrant was issued by the government, meant that compelled service in the navy was almost certain. the shift from merchant to fighting ships was brutal. Men were bludgeoned and bullyed. Beaten into submission, they were sadistically dumped on board — for the duration. And their life once on board was pure misery. Their treatment was cruel, the discipline inhumane. It is little wonder that Impressment was necessary to acquire the required manpower. And it was done with the complete knowledge and consent of the democratically elected government.

The means of Impressment are a well known fable. The conduct of the "Press", that act carried out by the Press Gangs, is not. In fact most ships Captains did their own "recruiting." He would gather his Standing Officers, determine exactly how many men he needed (and could afford) then, under the direction of a lieutenant, send an armed party (no firearms) ashore. The Press Gang was always comprised of the most trustworthy men. They would carry out their "Press" in the streets and houses of seaports and more often than ashore, the ship's boats and cutters would be sent away to take the crews of inbound merchantmen.

The individual ship method of Impressment had several faults. Primarily, it was inefficient. This being brought on by the inexperience and lack of desire of the members of the Press Gang. Secondly, the possibility of more than one ship attempting to take the crew of an inbound merchantman was very great. It inevitably resulted in fighting between Press Gangs from different ships. Thirdly, and of most importance to the government, the issuing of a general Press Warrant was a certain indication of imminent war and caused the Mercantile Exchanges and the Money Houses to go into a frenzy. In 1788 therefore, the Comptroller of the Navy proposed a new method of 'recruitment', though just as nasty, much more efficient — the Impress Service.

The closest thing we have to an Impress Service today is the Recruiting Office. Instead of sending ship's Press Gangs out, the Impress Service estblished themselves in every seaport and coastal town. The officer in charge of each Press Gang would be inpossession of a general Press Warrant which was blank and devoid of a date. The Impress Officers were briefed well ahead of the impending date of the effective time of the Press Warrant — then all Hell would break loose.

At the appointed hour a synchronized hand would reach out and grab every available seafaring man — on the first day of the Press Warrant! There was no hope for most men and it was to the credit of the Impress Service that at the implementation of one particular Press Warrant the manpower of the naval service tripled — in one day. After being pressed, men were removed to tenders and receiving ships, normally rotting hulks, to await draft to a man o' war. The conditions in the receiving ship can only be described as five times worse than the worst British prison of the eighteenth century.

The Impress Service grew until, by 1797, it was under the command of an Admiral and employed one hundred and twenty-seven officers. It was ot a good job to have. If anything, being an Impress Officer was only one step above being in charge of a receiving ship. Everyone in the town hated the Impress Officer — seamen, merchants, constables and magistrates, all for their own reasons detested the Impress Service and all who fell into its employ.

Those seafaring men exempt from Impress were mainly merchant officers, although there is some evidence that even these sailors were occasionally taken, and some fishermen. Anybody whose occupation placed them on the sea or as it was to become, anybody who worked on water, was subject to Impressment. Virtually the only other people exempt Impressment were those who could prove they had less than two years service "on the water" the boys. Boys, surprising though it may be, were to remain volunteers throughout even the Hottest Press. It was the navy's only modicum of decency during the 'press.'

But the Impress ran into difficulty. As described earlier, by 1795 the Seaman Pool was nearing exhaustion. Something else had to be found to provide the fleet with the necessary manpower, and the British government found the way — THE QUOTA.

Until next issue.

A happy retirement, Lloyd

Mr. L. Ford, Shop 04, is seen receiving his Retirement Certificate from Rear Admiral W.A. Hughes, Commander Maritime Forces Pacific.

Lloyd was born in Montreal on 13 November 1920. Moved to Halifax at age 3 where he resided with his family until July 1943, when he joined the RCNVR. In July of 1946 he joined the RCN serving on the East coast until 1947 when he was transferred to Esquimalt, where he served as a CPO plumber until his discharge in 1965. In the same year he joined the workforce of the SRU(P) Pipe Shop, where he has worked until now, giving him a total of 38 years with DND.

He was the key figure in turning our Dockers' Club into what it is today and served as it's President for the first seven years, after its transition.

He is married, has two grown children — a son and daughter — and he enjoys most outdoor activities, particularly fishing and hopes to spend much of his retirement time in Hawaii.

Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

by Dave Tyre

The quotaman - anything but seamen

The Impress Service, along with other methods of forcing seamen into Naval service started to run into considerable difficulty around 1794. It became obvious to the British Government that draining the Seaman Pool of many more sailors could have nothing less than a disasterous end. For one thing, the merchant service was starting to feel the strong effect of a "hot press" on **their** manpower resources. Even the British Government realized that pressing many more merchant seamen into service as naval ratings would eventually leave the seaborne trade in less than acceptable condition.

The Press was running into even further difficulty. Remember the only men that could legally be impressed were those who earned their living on the water. In the 1790s, when Britain was desperately trying to increase her naval manpower, wastage was taking a very high toll. Desertion was common to the point of being epidemic. Ships suffered losses to battle casualties, disease and accident on a daily and weekly basis. The Impress Service was tasked with not only providing the seamen to effect an increase in manpower, but also enough to replace the losses encountered by every ship in the fleet. By 1795 it was obvious that the normal methods of impressment would fail to provide the required manpower. In March and April of 1795 the Parliament passed the Quota Acts, the likes of which were to cause serious problems for the Royal Navy in years to come.

The principle of the Quota was reasonable enough. It amounted to nothing more than conscription on a national scale. Each county was given a quota of manpower to provide to the RN. The problem with the whole idea was a point of ability. The persons charged with selecting men for the Quota were not members of the Impress Service, nor even naval officers or men, but rather the job was left to the county authorities. It goes to say that town councils, court justices and the like, chose to send the dregs of their populace. Even in the chance that a middleclassman was chosen for Quota, he could find a substitute; one who was likely to be anything but desireable.

Those who were sent as part of the Quota went through the motions of volunteering for service. The bounties paid were much higher than paid to the volunteers, the real volunteers, of the past. Some Quotamen actually received bounties of up to 70 Pounds. This is compared with 5 to 15 Pounds paid to the volunteers only a few years previously. This fact alone caused the true seamen to become bitter.

Perhaps the worst effect of the Quota is what it did to the seaman element of the Navy. The Lower Deck, for all its problems, was a relatively stable life. When compared to what a man usually came from, life in the lower deck wasn't all that much worse. As long as a seaman did as he was told, which most did, and kept silent about his lot, which most did, the lash was not likely to fall on his back. If he didn't like his way of life, he would soon enough desert, which many did. But the fact is, until the Quota came into play, most of a ship's company was made up of honest seamen, skilled and knowledgeable in their occupation. The Quotaman on the other hand, was usually not a seaman of any kind, but more likely someone given an option by a Justice; service in the navy of Britain or the hell of a British jail. Most then, being well and truly familiar with prison, chose naval service, and were paid a bounty for it!

The Quotamen that arrived into a ship were anything but seamen then. They were often a step ahead of the effects of British justice. Their effect on the usually honest and mundane naval rating was devastating. It was also interpreted as having turned the average British seaman into worthless trash — a falsehood if ever one existed. It has been written that once the Quota started infecting the Royal Navy that relentless brutality on the part of ships officers prevailed. While, as can be expected, punishments became more frequent, the old pressed men and the volunteers were in favour of the punishments of the day. Their own self-preservation depended on it. The Quotamen, a new influence, were less disciplined, simply because of their background, unskilled as seamen and in many cases unwilling to adapt. The Quotamen found themselves singled out as "useless" by not only the ship's rulers, but also by the Lower Deck. When the Cat fell therefore, as long as it was on a Quotaman's back, few complained.

The Quota provided raw bodies. This is born out by the British Admiralty's own records, and in fact the Quota provided manpower in excess of the annual requirements. Once into a ship however, they were rated Landmen. Very few were skilled enough to be rated seamen, thus a majority of Quotamen found themselves carrying out functions which earned them labels such as "idlers" and "waisters". They held positions of no importance and generally were required to remain clear of true seamanship jobs in order to avoid causing harm to others.

The Quota did however, provide the occasional prize. It must be remembered that the typical British Seaman was lacking any formal education, displayed poor leadership ability, could not and did not express himself well and was usually obedient. His rating depended entirely upon his ability as a seaman. The Quotaman had no such skill. However, the occasional Quotaman appeared who was reasonably well educated, better spoken than the seaman and often rebellious. It was these few who were to change the Royal Navy and its approach to the British seaman for all time.

We can assume that of those better class of Quotamen, some of their educational qualities and liberal ideas would take hold in the lower deck. Certainly, the one thing they were capable of pointing out to the seaman which the seaman could not see for himself, was the level of exploitation he suffered. It is this single fact which writers of the day attribute a general decline in discipline throughout the RN. By 1797 discipline had totally decayed and resulted in disaster.

It has always been assumed that Quotamen, reasonably well educated ones, were the leaders of the Spithead Mutiny. It is known that Richard Parker, leader of the Nore Mutineers, was a Quotaman. But it was more than just the influence of the Quota which brought about the "Year of the Mutinies". 1797 is a year the Royal Navy would probably sooner forget, and it is another story.

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Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

Life in the lower deck and the year of the mutinies

Mutiny. The word sends a chill of fear down the backs of officer and seaman alike. It signifies mass insubordination and often, violent rebellion. No navy in existence in the world today can say they have been free of mutiny, although many will claim no such act has ever taken place in their service. True enough, many mutinies have been less violent and approached with a greater sense of reason than many Trade Union strikes of the modern day. But mutiny has plagued them all and few have been so significant as the mutinies of the British Fleet in 1797.

Before describing the major events at Spithead and the Nore in the year 1797 it is important to fully understand the exploitation suffered by the British seaman of the day.

By 1797 the Royal Navy's corps of seamen had acquired a good number of Quotamen. Many brought with them the knowledge that the seaman was living under less than humane conditions, indeed conditions that caused many to believe one had a better chance of survival in prison.

The British seaman was by and large, a faithful individual. His primary concerns were his pay and his food, concerns common today. His pay, by 1797, was miserable. The last pay increase allowed to seamen had taken place approximately one-hundred and forty years previously: Ordinary Seamen earned nineteen shillings per lunar month and Able Seamen twenty-two shillings six pence for the same period. Two important points come up here. First, in the **mid 17th century** these were considered reasonably good wages. Secondly, it is the first appearance of different levels of pay for the two ratings. By 1797 however, prices in Britain had tripled and the sailor's pay had not seen so much as a penny increase! Absolutely no consideration was given to the idea that a seaman may have been attempting to support a wife and family. Indeed many seamen's wives found themselves in the workhouses or on the streets selling themselves.

The subject of pay goes even further and becomes even more cruel. The service did not pay seamen wages until they were six months overdue. This was a custom of the service which oddly enough was rarely complained about by the seamen. Then of course there was the fact that a seaman could rarely leave his ship until it was "paid off" or until a long voyage had ended. His pay could be years in arrears. To add to this unlikely system, the seaman was sent ashore with not wages, but a ticket. Occasionally a sailor could claim his back wages, if he had not lost them as a form of punishment, at the naval depots. But such cases were rare. Usually it meant a personal trip to the Pay Office in London, a long trip from the dockyards of Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chatham. Then of course there were the swindlers which would buy a pay ticket for far less than its real value and, in a conspiracy from which the seaman could only lose, traffick it through the pay office at Tower Hill. There is even some evidence that once at the Pay Office things might not go terribly well, for in the early years of the 18th century the Admiralty was constructed with high walls to prevent angry seamen breaking windows as protest for their pay being so far in arrears. By 1797, the question of pay was a blister on the already festering boil.

Prize-money was another cause for complaint. (In fact, in a future installment you will see where this subject comes up in the modern RCN.) The seaman wore the brunt of battle. Death among his ranks was high and dismemberment and invaliding in battle was common. When prize-money was distributed however, an officer could be expected to receive two-hundred and fifty times more than the seaman. It was often expressed that if the cannon shot from an enemy was disbursed in the same manner as prize-money there would be no officers left to govern the Royal Navy.

The food provided in naval ships was barely able to support life. Again, the victualling policy of the naval service had been established in the 17th century and saw no improvement prior to 1797. The entitlement per man per day was two pounds of meat or, on occasion, one and a half pounds of fish; one and a half pounds of bread, a gallon of beer and, when available a half pint of rum. Before going any further, there is a noticeable lack of vitamins in the sailor's standard diet, the cause of a major problem; scurvy.

Consider that such things as refrigeration and water purification did not exist. That fact alone made food preservation difficult. But the Admiralty worsened the situation by insisting that old meat was returned from returning ships and was extremely aged when re-issued. It is said that it could break the blade of the strongest seaman's dirk. If it could be swallowed, it could not be digested, and the bread was simply a name given to "biscuit". Ship's biscuit invariably contained weevils. It took a strong stomach to accept the added contents, if it could be bitten off without cracking the jaw. When real bread became available it grew mold and was filled with maggots. Flour, for baking once at sea, contained its usual army of mealworms.

The water was carried in wooden casks, an immediate problem, for they were never cleaned. If the water was clean when embarked, it certainly turned sour within two or three days and the parasites which lived within the wood established themselves as the dominant contents of the water barrel. If it did finally "settle", it was consumed. It is not surprizing to find out that the now sour water was literally poison. Of course the quality of the water is the reason for the large beer ration, the quality of which was also laid open to question. The rum ration was "neat" prior to 1740. Unfortunately, it was issued in copious quantities which could only be considered unhealthy and dangerous by our standards.

The brutality of the officers was the straw that broke the navy's back. Commissioned officers, Standing officers and Warrant officers had the liberty to beat and brutalize any man they chose, for almost any reason. Flogging became less a punishment and more a means to evoke stronger performance from an already beaten man. It was not uncommon for a man taking a little longer than usual to come down from the yards after working sail to receive a dozen lashes. And if the Ship's corporal failed to apply the lash with enough force, he received a share of his own work from another. Knotted rope ends, canes and speaking trumpets were common devices carried by people in authority and used liberally as beating instruments on any seaman considered to be working too slowly, or for showing any form of discontent.

Midshipmen, a rank which could be held for a considerable length of time, could beat men as they saw fit, and they did so with an eagerness which bordered total insanity. When a flogging was half over a new man was handed the cat-o-nine tails, and if he could cause the defaulter's back to become cross-cut from a back handed swing, all the better in the eyes of too many captains. The seaman, it seemed, had no chance.

It was worse yet, though. A seaman wounded or ill and required to remain in his hammock had his pay docked daily. Loss of all back pay was a common punishment and the place he lived in was a stinking, cramped, disease ridden hole. Sweet ships were rare indeed.

It was these conditions then, that in 1797 caused the seamen of the British Fleet to mutiny. The ships of the Spithead fleet hoisted the red flag of liberty on the 16th of April and it flew until the 15th of May. The initial reaction of the Admiralty was confusion. Many captains stood silent while others simply over-reacted. One in fact, ordered Marines to open fire on the mutineers, an act which he was to pay for.

It must be remembered that England was at war. There was a great fear that the French fleet would sail while the Spithead fleet was in a state of mutiny. The mutineers themselves however, put the lords of the Admiralty at ease. They stated quite clearly that they were still good British subjects, loyal to the King, and should the French fleet sail, they would put aside their demands and allow themselves to be led out to fight. This coupled with the fact that the whole affair was carried out with a liberal application of moderation and common sense caused the lords of the Admiralty to listen closely to the demands of mutineers and the grievances stated. After a period of stalemate, which lasted for a length appraoching imprudence, the Admiralty admitted that the grievances of the sailormen were well founded and justified. Not only that, but they were presented in a peaceful orderly fashion with a degree of respect which confirmed at once that the Admiralty was in fact dealing with loyal men.

Redress was granted, including the demand that certain named officers be sent ashore and removed from command. The name that headed that list was one of a certain Sir John Colpoys, a monster of a captain whose insane and unjustified brutality had earned him one of the worst reputations in the fleet. The red flags were hauled down and the Spithead fleet sailed with a full Royal Pardon, their demands met. Not one man was court-martialled.

The mutiny at the Nore was a different case. It broke out on the 12th of May and lasted almost five weeks. As can be seen from the date, the demands set out by the Spithead mutineers had been met, but the leader, one Richard Parker, chose to claim that the Admiralty would not hold true to their word. Richard Parker himself was something of a colourful, if not tragic individual. He had entered the navy some years before as a Midshipman and, a good example of his self-indulgent attitude, had challenged his captain to a duel. He was thrown out for insubordinate behaviour. When war broke out he entered once more as a Midshipman. He was found guilty on another charge of disobedience, disrated, and eventually invalided out with rheumatism. He was in prison in Edinburgh when he was inducted into the navy once more — this time as a Quotaman. He found himself in HMS Sandwich of the Nore fleet in 1797.

Parker is said to have been something of an orator. He certainly had an education and was by now, an experienced seaman. The mutineers elected him leader and he established "The Floating Republic" in Sandwich. He was reminded time and again that all the demands of the Spithead fleet had been met already, but there was a far greater social cause in the mind of Richard Parker. In fact Parker was politically motivated. After almost five weeks, provisions began to run short and division began to appear amongst the mutineers. When Parker chose to question the office and honour of the King, his final card had been played. A second event took place which left him and a few followers alone with their cause. The fiercely loyal British seaman refused to become party to treason. His attempts to stop ships from sailing by gunning them down failed. The fleet broke from his hold and left him in the rotting Sandwich to be taken ashore. Richard Parker and twenty-four conspirators were sentenced to death. They hung from twenty-five yardarms until sunset on the day of execution.

The mutinies of 1797 touched ships everywhere. Communication of such events as Spithead and the Nore travelled swiftly enough to cause mutinees in the Mediterranian fleet, the Caribbean and almost everywhere a Royal Naval ship could be found. It caused men like Nelson to be sickened with revulsion at the thought of such acts. But then Nelson's ship AGAMEMNON, serving in the Mediterranian, did not mutiny. In fact, after the crew had heard of the Spithead and Nore affairs they bluntly informed their captain that they had no desire to rebel. They remained loyal and fought on. Perhaps this is a testimony in itself for the style of fearless leadership exercised by Nelson.

In any case, the Spithead mutiny brought about instant reform. Had it not been conducted with such a modicum of common sense there would have perhaps been a different end. The Nore Mutiny, while appearing pointless and redundant in its timing did accomplish something. The lords of the Admiralty now realized that the British seaman could strike back with a formidable weapon — combination. These two mutinies saw the Cat-o-nine tails become more a museum piece than a brutal method of punishment; pay improved slightly, although the seaman continued to be paid less than a private soldier; food, both quantity and quality improved, but again it was a marginal improvement. The greatest gain was the removal of officers who approached punishment with such a sadistic desire that they were indeed nothing short of murderers.

The gain made which was never demanded however, was by far the most important. The Admiralty realized they could not ignore the man that had built their Empire for them. The French navy was on the run, and it was the British seaman that attacked them with such ferocity. Continuing improvement and constant study of the conditions of service would and did become a primary consideration of the Admiralty.

The seaman was no longer to be treated like an animal. In fact, fifty-six years after the events at Spithead and the Nore, the British seaman was to become a long-service professional.

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Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

The upper and middle class of a 74

If a seaman of the late 18th century were able to visit our navy of 1982 he would not only find propulsion and weapons something quite beyond him, but he would spend several days trying to sort out the confusion of our rank structure. He would be unable to comprehend the concept of career progression in the Lower Deck and would revel at the thought of a Lower Decker actually being allowed to retire on almost half-pay.

Before going very much further, a few subjects must be defined. "Rating" as a term holds a different meaning than its present use. In the navy of the 18th century everything was rated; people and ships. Ships were rated as to size and firepower, 1st-rate through 6th-rate and "under 6th-rate". People were rated as they joined a ship. It is the system of rating men which saw men promoted. It was also a system by which one could be "dis-rated". In any given ship the possibility of a vacancy in a man's former rating was his only hope for maintaining his level of pay. If a vacancy did not exist he could find himself holding a lower rating than in his previous service.

Two more terms which must be defined before you will understand much of this are "Quarterdeck" and Lower Deck. First, we will examine the fact that the Royal Navy chose to build mostly 74 gun ships, or 3rd-rates. The average 74 had two gun decks. The lower decks; the home of the majority of the crew. The Quarterdceck on the other hand, was the walk of Officers. There were three kinds of officers - Commissioned, Warrant and Petty, the last being a title conferred by the Captain. There were also "young gentlemen", those who were striving to become sea-officers. All of these people formed the group we will refer to as the "Quarterdeck", except of course Petty officers.

It is now important to understand the make-up of the sea-officers corps to assist in finding the seaman's place in the whole picture. First there are the Flag Officrs. In fact, there were no less than ten grades of Flag Officer. During the wars with the Dutch in the 17th century there were three large fleets: red, white and blue. In the traditional sense, this concept lived on, although the RN comprised only one large fleet by the 18th century. Each of the flag fleets had to be divided into two divisions; a leading division and a rear division. The leading fleet was always red, with blue taking up the rear. The requirements for rank were as follows:

Admiral of The Fleet; Admiral of the Red, Vice-Admiral leading division, Rear-Admiral rear division; Admiral of the White, Vice-Admiral leading division, Rear-Admiral rear division; Admiral of the Blue, Vice-Admiral leading division, Rear-Admiral rear division.

Because of this structure it can be seen that the Rear-Admiral of the Blue is subordinate to the Rear-Admirals of either the White or Red. Long after the three fleets had been brought together into a single fleet, the structure and lineal importance of each appointment held fast.

The rank of Captain, or more correctly, the Post of Captain falls next in line. The Royal Navy did not hold full-time officers. All officers in the navy were considered to be in possession of a King's Commission, though they might find themselves held virtually unemployed on half-pay. They were all "misters" unless they actually held the post. When Samuel Pepys devised terms of competency for each sea-officer's post, the qualification held by an individual was the closest thing to actual rank. The concept of "Post" without holding specific rank carried on for some time. A man could call himself "Captain" by holding the post. "Post" went on to become even more. A Post-ship was a 6th-rate or better, those of over 100 men and twenty-four guns. Anything smaller was Non-post. It was some time before Captain actually became a rank.

Commander found its way into the language of the navy through the back door. In earlier days the Post-Captain commanded the ship in all respects except navigation. That was the job of a Master. We can go back even farther, but that would serve to confuse rather than clarify the situation. In any case, there was a requirement to economize in the smaller ships. It was felt that in anything smaller than a 6th-rate, the Master could also command. The title Master and Commander then found its way in. Problems occured though. Too often (and too late), it was discovered that the Commander side of the position was too much for the man. Even more often it was discovered that the Master half of the individual turned out to be a totally incompetent navigator. This too was normally discovered after it was too late.

The Admiralty decided to create a new position in the non-Post ships. That of Second Master. This instantly made the term Master and Commander redundant. After all, the man in command was no longer providing the services as Master; a navigator. That was being provided by the Second Master. It took quite a while, but during the wars with the French, Master and Commander was abbreviated to Commander.

Thus we find the **post** of Commander, not yet a Post-Captain, but in command of a non-Post ship. The **rank** of Commander also found its way into bigger ships as the officer responsible for running the ship. The Captain remember, commanded.

Lieutenant was a qualification. They held posts in a ship by numerical appointment. Each held a number which indicated his superiority and level of superseding importance. Hence the title of "First Lieutenant". A British 74 carried six Lieutenants.

Beyond these people the Wardroom officers also comprised the Captain of Marines and two Lieutenants of Marines. The Master, the Surgeon, the Purser and the Captain were all appointed by warrant and were considered and accepted as "Warrant Officer of Wardroom Rank". The Master, whose pay was second only to the Captain's was considered by all to be the third most important person on the ship. The Surgeon, Purser and Chaplain were actually members of the civil branch of the service.

The next grade of officer in a ship was called a "Standing Officer". They held warrants of appointment from the Admiralty but were not considered to be of wardroom rank. They were found in every ship and were, the Gunner, the Boatswain and the Carpenter. A good majority of these standing officers came from the lower deck by way of an acting appointment by the Captain. After serving a period as Acting Gunner, Boatswain or Carpenter, application as made to have the man confirmed by Admiralty Warrant, and once acquired it was held. The sole means of further promotion for a Standing Officer was movement to a higher rate of ship, and this brings up an important point. The term Standing Officer denotes the static positioning of these individuals. While the Officer-Wardroom establishment was appointed for one commission, and the majority of the crew was paid-off with the ship at the end of a commission, the Standing Officers were not. Once in a ship, they usually stayed with it, unless they moved to a higher rated ship. Even when the ship was laid up "In Ordinary", with no crew, the three Standing Officers could usually be found living onboard, complete with wife and family.

And so the examination of the ship's rulers ends here. There are more men further down the line with varying degrees of authority, but one important difference exists between these men and other warrant and petty officers. These men held Admiralty appointments and thus could only be disrated by the Admiralty. Their tenure was guaranteed as long as they served in a ship.

In the next issue we will pay a visit to the seaman in his early 19th century ship.

A 'happy trucker'...

Sergeant Romeo Goulet is presented with his new stirpes by Major Jeff Higgs, Base Transportation Officer.

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Transportation Corner

by The Happy Trucker

Well, here it is the start of February and I'm finally getting a column in the paper. There hasn't been too much happening in our end of the yard until recently. Not that we haven't been busy. Between destoring and restoring ships, Old Timers' Hockey and visiting Generals our drivers have been working their tushes off. I guess this is one organization that has to sit on it's asset's to accomplish any thing.

We are especially pleased with the excellent job that our drivers did during that week of snow and ice. We did have a couple of minor accidents but thanks to our defensive minded drivers there were non too serious. The vast amount of lead footed Victorian drivers still leaves me in doubt as to where these so called drivers got their licenses. I know Cracker Jack gave out prizes but this is ridiculous. My blood turns cold when I think of the number of people who were driving as they they still had dry pavement under their wheels. I was just starting to get used to the complete lack of regard for speed limits and the tail gating. But when these motor maniacs do the same on icey streets I feel like parking my truck and walking.

All that I can suggest for the driver who cares is to leave yourself plenty of room to take evasive action and drive DEFENSIVELY. Drive as though you are the only sane person behind the wheel of a vehicle. You just might be. It is no wonder that we have such high insurance here in B.C. I could go on for pages on the many rules of the road that I see broken every day but I think that I'll save them for another day. I have a much more enjoyable task to perform.

During the past few months we have seen a number of changes at Transport. Mr. George Brander has retired after 32 years of dedicated service. Mr. Bill Sullivan is back after a 2½ month holiday in the outside world. Welcome back, Bill. We would also like to welcome all the new drivers. Just in case you didn't know, fellows, we are the ones who keep CFB Esquimalt on the move. The best news of all is that we finally received a promotion in military side of Transport. Our trade is notoriously slow for advancement so when someone does get a promotion we are doubly happy. We are proud to announce the promotion of Romeo Goulet to the rank of Sergeant. Congratulations, Sarg.

That's it for this week. So until next time BUCKLE UP, DRIVE DEFENSIVELY. I would hate to lose a fan.

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Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

The lower deck of a '74'

In the last issue we looked at the Upper and Middle classes of a British 74 gun ship. What we saw was a class structure within a ship that was essentially born out of the class structure ashore. If, for example, one was a member of British society, that is "of gentle breeding", it was almost a sure guarantee of a commission in the RN. If, on the other hand, one was not "of gentle breeding" but nevertheless reasonably well educated, there was a good chance that one could secure a Warrant of Admiralty Appointment and survive under fairly healthy circumstances in a ship of the line.

The majority of Britains seafaring population however, did not ascend from thoroughbred stock, nor were they very well educated. Indeed, the average seaman had no formal education at all, and it was these men that made up the greatest majority of the ship's company of a 74.

A brief knowledge of the technology of the day is necessary to fully appreciate the conditions below decks in an 18th century British ship. Firstly, a ships age was important. Wood absorbs many things, not the least of which is perpetual dampness and odour. As a ship grew older, the dampness became more constant and the odour worse and more lingering. Bilges were pumped by hand and only when they became so full as to affect sailing ability. If the bilges filled slowly over a commission the chances of them never being drained until the ship was hauled-up became very good. The stench grew more wicked with every passing day. Entering at the hawseholes in the bows were huge rope cables which stretched down the centre of the gundecks to just about the mainmast. The guns were arranged along each broadside, the main battery being the huge 32-pounders. When under sail in any kind of weather so long as a battle was not being readied for, these guns were "run back" and lashed, the gun-ports closed. There was coiled cable, sponge and swab buckets, rammers, balls and any other anicllary equipment as might be necessary to ensure the continuity of each gun in battle. There were two long gangways running the length of the whole area. Such was the gundeck and this is where the seamen lived.

The gundeck, throughout the majority of the day, was always ready for action. When the meal hours were piped, tables secured to hooks in the deckhand beamwork were brought down. Each table was a mess unto itself, accomodated the same group fo men daily and rarely varied in size beyond eight or ten men. In many ships canvas screens were rigged between each mess during a meal hour to provide a small measure of privacy. Membership in each mess was wholly dependent upon acceptance by the senior members, and it was not uncommon to find the undesireable Quotamen, Debtors etc., messing in an area of the lower deck away from the remainder of the crew.

Rating of seamen was the decision of the ship's rulers. It should be noted that no real "rank" associated with priviledge was overly apparent. The status of all members of the Lower Deck was decidedly poor and disrating was wholesale and common-place. A Quotaman or an individual inducted from prison was assured of one of the poorest ratings in a ship — that of a Landman. They were, beyond the shadow of a doubt, considered the lowest form of life — by all others. A man whose former occupation had been that of say, a boatman, might possibly be rated Ordinary Seaman, a common rating that held no real respnsibility but "watched" him as a seaman and usually "quartered" him as a member of a guns crew. A man who had previous experience in the Lower Deck of a man o war, or was pressed from a merchantman might be rated as an Able Seaman. Again, no real level of responsibility was attached to the name, but he would certainly be a highly skilled and experienced seaman, "watched" as a seaman and "quartered" either at a gun or in the tops. And that ends the "pure" Lower Deck. No Leading Seamen existed until the middle of the 19th century, when the RN finally chose to take on a volunteer "career" posture.

Still in the Lower Deck, and without much in the way of additional priviledge, were the Petty Officers. It must be understood that the position of Petty Officer was conferred upon a man by the Captain — not the Admiralty. They could be, and often were, disrated by the same man who had rated them at will. There was really only one grade of Petty Officer, although positions such as Sailmaker, Caulker, Cook, Armourer, Ropemaker and Master-at-Arms were in some sense, Warrant Officers. They were not "Standing Officers" however, and like the common Petty Officer, could be disrated by the Captain at his choosing. The Petty Officer was simply a seaman of the most trustworthy sort. He usually lived amongst the seamen in the Lower Deck and might be anything from a 1st or 2nd gun captain to a departmental mate (not a Masters-Mate). Their superior rating allowed them the more comfortable corners of the Lower Deck, if indeed they can be described as that. In a 74 of almost 600 men, there were dozens of Petty Officers with a wide range of specialities represented.

You can probably see that any attempt to compare our Canadian rank structure and associated duties with the ratings serving in an 18th century 74 simply won't work. But the roots were there, and for the purposes and means of sailing and fighting a British ship of the line the rating, watching and quartering carried out was effective and efficient in it's day.

If you moved aft in a 74 you would run across the netting divider that was the physical separation between the Lower Deck and the other classes of the crew. Directly behind the netting was a class of people who, although briefly mentioned in the last issue, trod middle ground. That is, to delineate them as Quarterdeck or Lower Deck in the pure sense would be incorrect. They are the Midshipmen. The Midshipmen were in fact Quarterdeck stock, and they were in a position of authority as was mentioned previously and we shall more closely examine, but a weight similar to the common seaman hung heavily over their heads — the Captain could disrate them at will. There are several accounts of Midshipmen being disrated, turned before the mast as a seaman, and within days finding themselves lashed to a grating, their backs sliced open by the flailing of the cat.

The Midshipmen were often referred to as "young gentlemen", yet many were anything but young and several acted like something other than gentlemen. The age range in the Midshipmen's mess could vary from 14 to over 40, and depending upon the year you were observing them, there may have been another group of people messed with them, but quite obviously of a different social background. These then would be the Masters-Mates.

As to the range of age, we can attribute part of the older members presence to the few seamen who had broken clear of the Lower Deck and were striving, (usually quite unsuccessfully), to become Commissioned. There were others though who, either through lack of influencial connections ashore or through sheer incompetence, had failed to earn a Commission. They could remain in the Naval Service throughout their careers never having achieved any greater superiority than that with which they joined. the Masters-Mates, coming from a different social order, were usually much older than the Midshipmen on joining the mess. They were more often from the Lower Deck and were working to attain a Master's Warrant. The reason for the preferential treatment given this particular class of Mate while other departmental mates remained Petty Officers is clearly due to the status of the Master and little else. In time though, Masters-Mate became a grade of Misshipman. In fact the senior grade just short of attaining his Commission.

The Midshipmen were a difficult lot. They were handed authority as a right, a mistake if you can imagine a 14 year old boy being given the authority to beat a middle-aged and hardened seaman. And if they had no cause to become authoritative and brutal, they would goad and tempt seamen until the man came off cursing. the beating that followed caused men to despise the members of the Midshipmens mess. In turn, many Midshipmen suffered serious injury at the hands of phantoms who rolled shot into their feet or dropped well aimed marlin spikes from the tops. The mending of that relationship has been slow and in some cases, suffered some regression.

Promotion beyond the shipboard rating of Petty Officer was rare. If a man had acquired some education or if perhaps he had entered as a seaman with a reasonable enough education, he might, if the Captain took an interest in him, be rated into the Midshipmens mess. He might also be, in that ship only, granted an acting position of Warrant. This would of course depend fully on his skill in a particular field and would certainly not be granted unless the man had served for a good long period as a departmental mate. So being promoted out of the Lower Deck became next to impossible and something the average seaman did not consider a goal.

Of the Lower Deck as a place to live, much has been written. It was horrible and any attempt to downplay that fact should accompany some of the brighter details of living on the gun deck. The standard width allowed each man was 14 inches. In fact a man slung his hammock in 28 inches of space because if he was on the gundeck, his oppo was turned out and on watch. The hammocks a man slept in were marked with a number and there was a corresponding number on the deckhead beamwork. Each man had two hammocks — one which was washed and aired daily, and the other to use that night. It is an interesting point to note that the scrubbing, airing, lashing and correct stowing of hammocks was such a conscious ritual, especially when one consideres the conditions on the gundeck. As to the rest of life on the gundeck, the imagination can put together a miserable picture. 500 men living in a ship which today would only qualify as small. The HEADS, of which there are several interesting stories regarding the origin of the word, were simply the open portion of the bows. The HEADS were simply that — the head of the ship, well above the gundeck and far out over the bows.

The men were allowed to have women onboard in port, the reason for this being the fact that most men were not allowed ashore. The conduct of bringing women into the ship varied from captain to captain. The moral standard of all, not just the seamen, was a matter of little importance to most captains although a few took an evangelical approach which led to noting less than mutiny. Then of course there is much evidence to indicate that a good number women actually managed to remain with the ship after it had sailed.

The seaman of the Lower Deck had a hard life. It was brutal, uncomfortable and uncompromising. But as we leave the late 18th and early 19th centuries we must remember two things: he survived, and he managed to bring about change. He quickly became a professional and that is the story of your life.

'Prince of Wales' survivors honoured

On Thursday the 4th of February HMCS KOOTENAY was the scene of a luncheon for some former officers of the British Battleship HMS PRINCE OF WALES, sunk by the Japanese in World War II. Special guests at the luncheon were Captain (N) (Ret'd) L. Goudy, RN, DSO and his son LCdr. (Ret'd) J. Goudy, CD. RAdm. (Ret'd) R.H. Leir, CD was hosted on a separate occasion. Both RAdm. Leir and Captain Goudy were serving on HMS PRINCE OF WALES at the time of her sinking. RAdm. Leir was a midshipman and Captain Goudy was the ship's Engineering Officer. Cdr. B. Beckett, Commanding Officer HMCS KOOTENAY, Capt. (N) D. Donaldson, Commanding Officer HMCS PROVIDER, and Capt. (N) J. Slade, Commander Second Canadian Destroyer Squadron, hosted the luncheon. Captain Goudy is in above photo.

RAdm. Leir and Captain Goudy were presented with framed copies of a bottom Sonar trace taken by HMCS KOOTENAY on 7 April 1981 while deployed to the Far East on EXERCISE "HORIZON VIEW '81". The Sonar trace, completed in three runs clearly shows the beam and stern aspects of HMS PRINCE OF WALES.

HMS PRINCE OF WALES was one of five battleships of the KING GEORGE V CLASS. She was laid down in 1937, launched in 1939 and Commissioned early in 1941. Her first action was in company with HMS HOOD against the German battleship BISMARK in May 1941. HMS PRINCE OF WALES was transferred to the Far East in October 1941 and sunk on 10 December 1941 by Japanese torpedo bombers. Her gravesite is north of Singapore, 60 miles off the Malaysian Coast in 180 feet of water.

Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

The great change: the Professional Seaman

The major conflict which had absorbed so much of Britain's time, money and manpower came to an end in 1815. Napoleon had been fully routed and the American belligerence in British North America had been successfully quelled. But, many will claim, the armies of Britain actually won those fights. While the occupation and gaining of territory has always been the sign of victory, the Royal Navy did two important things. With respect to the French, the British fleet denied any form of sea control to the enemy. Napoleon and England were both aware of the fact that before there could be any victory on land, the French wold have to steal domination of the seas from the RN. They failed of course, and the Royal Navy remained dominant throughout. In North America again, the winning or loss of territory was all important. And while we can say the British fought well, we can see that a fledgling Canadian Militia appeared on the scene. We can also see, although it is not so evidently documented, the appearance of the Canadian seaman. True enough, serving in British ships, and often impressed into service, but Canadian all the same. But the second important thing the Royal Navy accomplished was a display of flexibility. They proved in North America that they could adapt to almost any tactical situation.

Perhaps the last years of the "war" showed Britain one important item: their ship design was seriously lacking. Setting aside the difference in social acceptance of the men by their leaders for a moment, the equipment and weapons of the RN had become obsolete, and it was beginning to show. The one thing that kept the Royal Navy head and shoulders above the others was their history as a deep-water force. They had mastered the ability to take ships long distances and arrive at a destination with a good part of the crew, be it ever so uncomfortable for the "common man". And their ships, for all their obsolesence in design, were well built. The art of putting a ship of the line together was a specialty of the British. The French ran into difficulties repairing and replacing ships, their dockyards poorly equipped and mismanaged. The Americans had a greater choice of woods from which to build their ships and made a functional error; they built them out of green timbers. This acted like armour plating against a British Carronade, but limited maneouverability, plus the fact that a couple of well placed rounds saw the American built ship to the bottom. The Americans learned well though and soon altered their design and construction methods to lead in revolutionary naval construction.

But the wars were over. Britain no longer needed the large seaman force it had experienced such difficulty in maintaining. The Royal Navy demobilized, if we wish to think of it in modern terms. And peace brought some of the advancements accomplished in war to a slowdown. But such is the way of peacetime as many of us well know, and it takes a different kind of fight to bring about change. It takes dedication and professionalism, and it can hardly be something which a pressed man can be expected to display.

During war the British seaman displayed above all, loyalty. Once the Spithead Mutiny had purged the fleet of its poorest officers, the seaman was well led. His officers had a will to get in and "mix it up". They took their ships in close and maintained the offensive at point-blank range. This, believe it or not, is where the typical seaman liked to be; close in to the enemy. His enemies on the other hand were found lacking. The French ship design was such that the guns were mounted higher. At point-blank range they took out the rigging and sails. they needed distance to damage an enemy hull. But the French tactical doctrine was fight and run, come back and fight another day. The Spanish had leadership problems. The Americans were by far the most dangerous enemies. The only thing they lacked was experience. But the British seaman, despite his treatment would follow his officers, once those officers had proved they were worth being followed. As a seaman with a healthy sea-going background, the British sailor was far in the lead. It seemed his only problem in the early 19th century was the way in which he was recruited. His treatment was no worse than he expected, and his chances against disease, accident and battle were no worse really than had he taken the army's famous King's Shilling. But something had to be done about keeping the seaman by force.

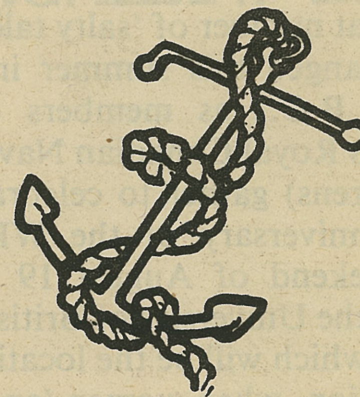
The Admiralty knowing the problem, approached the government about it and in the early 1830s Impressment as a means of recruitment disappeared. It did not negate the need for compulsory service during wartime, but the machinery of the Impress Service was dismantled for all time. The Royal Navy had truly made an attempt to become a volunteer service.

One volunteer is as good as ten pressed men according to the old saying. And true enough, the volunteer during the days of Impressment were quite obviously more willing and usually more qualified seamen. But there was little in the way of inducements during Britain's wars, to attract seamen. Now, suddenly, there was no major war, and Impressment was difficult to justify. Additionally, in order to attract more volunteers, the conditions of service were greatly improved. Perhaps surprisingly, enough men volunteered to man most of the navy.

In terms of efficiency the short-term seaman was functional enough. He was normally untrained in the means to fight and his sailing and seamanship training came from the merchant marine. It took time for him to become accustomed to the styles and customs of the service, and he normally gained this experience at sea in a Man o War. He was rarely specialized enough to provide any worth beyond his skill as a seaman and his rudimentary ability as a gunner. But in the middle of the 19th all of this changed.

In 1853 the British government created the Long-Term-Service Naval Rating. The year was something of a revolution, for the whole structure and being of the Lower Deck was altered. In fact, the Lower Deck was altered to resemble much of what we have today.

Pre-training of New Entries became mandatory. Men would no longer be recruited and sent in drafts to ships without adequate seamanship training. Specialization in certain fields was introduced. Again, a training system had to be developed. A rank structure and means to retain one's rank on draft and advance in an orderly method of progression was introduced. The rating of Landsman was abolished. This in fact had been one of the demands of the Spithead mutineers in 1797 which the Admiralty rejected. Now though, with the pre-training of men, the rating of Landsman became redundant. The rate of Petty Officer became official, was increased in status, and the men of that rate were provided with priviledge befitting their merit and length of service. Additionally two new rates were created: That of Chief Petty Officer, to replace the departmental Mate, (formerly a type of Warrant Officer), and the rank of Leading Seaman. The Chief Petty Officer was a **readily** accepted rate. In the early 1800s, when the Admiralty proclaimed that some postions defined as Warrant Officers were now officially Petty Officers appointed by the Captain, a level of prestige and experience was lost. The rank of Chief Petty Officer replaced the experienced departmental mate, gave a career goal of some importance to all in the Lower Deck and, the most important benefit, provided a specialist instructor



with many years of naval experience. The Leading Seaman on the other hand, was not so readily accepted. While the documentary evidence shows that the rate was implemented, there was a certain level of resistance on the part of his new subordinates, his superiors had, in some cases, by those who were assigned the rate initially. Those who had been promoted from Able Seaman to the new rank felt they had been denied the opportunity to achieve the rate of Petty Officer. In fact the Petty Officer now enjoyed increased status and was **just now** a social level out of the seamen's messdeck. The Leading Seaman replaced what had once been a Petty Officer on the messdeck and eventually performed most of the departmental leadership duties assigned to the "old" PO. The subordinate ranks found it difficult to appreciate the new Leading Seaman, something more attributable to human nature than anyting else in all probability. But the Leading Seaman was well placed. That one step above a journeyman, he was the working specialist the navy required.

The reasons behind establishing a full-time seaman corps boil down to simple technology. By the middle of the 19th century advances had been made in naval warfare which meant the "Utility Seaman" would no longer be able to function as the mainstay of a ship's company. Specialization was taking over, and while the seamanship functions remained, it became plainly obvious that man would have to perform both the seaman's and the technical specialist's jobs. If the seaman cadre was a full-time lot, it would be worth teaching the sailor his job in scientific terms.

And so, the year 1853 saw the last of the incessant rape of the Seaman Pool. The ordinary man could enter the naval service and be trained as a seaman. Further, he would become trained as a specialist in a special field of naval warfare. And so, 47 years before Canada was to form her own navy, the Naval Rating came into his own right.

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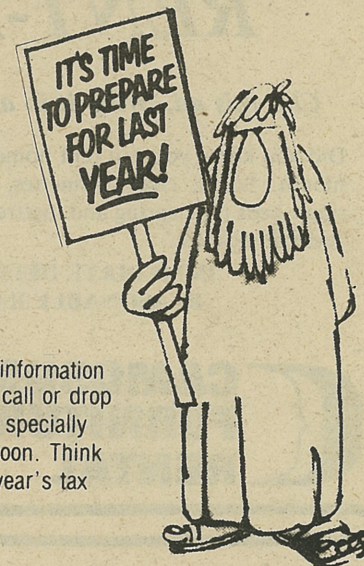

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Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

Canada in his heart - but not yet on his arm

We now leave England, but not yet the Royal Navy. From this point onward, the concentration will be on the Royal Canadian Navy and then that very same organization under a somewhat different title.

Perhaps you may ask: why have we not left the Royal Navy? Well, it must be remembered that Canada's navy was born out of the Royal Navy, a fact which often finds itself shoved into the background today. Further, the RN directly supported the fledgling RCN with respect to manpower, training and equipment for its first shakey years of operation.

The RCN got off to a shakey start indeed. As a child of the Royal Navy, it was a sickly infant and almost died on more than one occasion. Indeed, the Naval Service of Canada was almost still-born. The debate which preceded the passing of the Naval Service Act was ferocious. There were those who insisted on an autonomous Canadian Navy, while others came out in support of making contributions to Britain and had the support of some influential people in the British Admiralty. Had the latter group won the debate, Canada's naval service would very well be four or five squadron of the Royal Navy, manned by Canadians. But the nationalists won, and a Canadian Naval Service was to be.

The bill giving the navy it's official start in Canada was The Canadian Naval Service Act of 1910, passed on 4 May of that year. The bill authorized the raising of permanent, reserve and volunteer naval personnel, a naval board and placed the "paper navy" under the department of Marine and Fisheries. This may sound somewhat strange to the sailor of today, but it was a plain case of putting the navy somewhere, and the politicians of the day quite logically assumed the best department would be one which presently operated ships and marine services.

Commanding the Marine Service of the Department of Fisheries and Marine was a Canadian by birth, who had joined the Royal Navy in 1870 and had retired as a Rear-Admiral in 1908. He had returned to Canada to take command of the Marine Service. Charles Kingsmill had involved himself in the Naval Service debate by presenting a memorandum to the Minister with his professional advice. He gave facts regarding the construction of a navy from scratch complete with the type of ships and the training of officers and ratings. He became the obvious choice for the position of Director of Naval Service and took up that position from the RCNs inception.

Many other serving and retired Royal Navy personnel were on loan to the Department of Marine and Fisheries, and some found themselves transferred to the Canadian Naval Service. What is slightly less documented is that several seamen of the Marine Service also transferred to the Naval Service within the year.

Before going any further there is an attitude which must be made clear. Canada was, for all intents and purposes, independant, but had chosen for the purposes of defence, to consider herself part of the Empire of Britain. The management and development of a navy was brought about for two reasons: firstly, to defend the great coastal expanse of Canada and; secondly, and more importantly to some, to provide a proportionate share of defence to the Empire as a whole. This meant the Canadian Navy could be called upon to assist in an Imperial war, although the Canadian politicians of the day were quite clear on one point. While Canada considered an attack on Britain an attack on Canada, this country would not necessarily involve herself in war started and prosecuted by Britain. This attitude was strong in Canada at the time and it is worth remembering when reading further on.

Manning the Canadian Navy was something of a problem from the start. It was intended to assimilate Canadians into the new navy as soon as possible. With the acquisition of the cruisers RAINBOW and NIOBE, manning would become a priority. Further, the naval yards at Esquimalt and Halifax were being handed over along with the Royal Naval reserve lands. But, there were few Canadians qualified to be part of a navy. Luckily, a few RN officers resigned from the British service to go full time into the Canadian service, but the British Admiralty saw that they would have to provide officers and ratings for some time to come. Thus, the first Canadian naval seamen were, for the most part, British seamen.

The Royal Navy sent RAINBOW and NIOBE to Canada with crews which could maintain the ships for a reasonable length of time. Many were intended to remain in Canada under special engagements as instructors and leading ratings. This was to prove a reliable idea, for the Canadian Naval Service Act had conceived the RCN in a like form of the RN.

Uniforms were to be identical. Administration and rank would be similar according to some, but in fact were identical, except for the time in rate requirement for Canadian Ratings. Discipline was the same in principle at least, for the Naval Service Act included a provision for the assimilation of King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions. Traditions would be the same, with the honest expectation that Canada would add to but not bastardize RN customs. Leadership was not expected to be a problem, for the Royal Navy had some of the finest leading Petty Officers, Chief Petty Officers, Warrant and Commissioned Officers in the world. It was one of the Admiralty's greatest errors, for they had not counted on the different attitudes of the Canadian recruits.

Recruiting was something of a failure to begin with. Impressment had been no stranger to British North America in its early years, but Canada was building a volunteer service, following right along in the footsteps of the newly enlightened Royal Navy, and found several obstacles along the way.

Recruits were initially taken onboard Rainbow in Esquimalt, or Niobe in Halifax and providing they were physically fit and met the necessary educational requirements were accepted. In February 1911, reruiting posters were displayed in most cities of Canada with Postmasters authorized to carry out initial recruiting. Prospective recruits were then examined by a local doctor and then once at either naval port, by a naval medical officer. If the prospective sailor met all requirements, he was engaged for a period of seven years from his eighteenth birthday. Engagements beyond the initial term depended upon a recommendation from immediate superiors, much the same as is done today. The age of recruits varied according to branch requirements. Seamen could be recruited as young as age 15 and could be no older than 23. Boy seamen were between the age of 14 to 16. Stokers had to be at least 18 and could be no older than 23. An unofficial report states that the reason stokers were recruited from age 18 was the requirement for strenuous physical labour, demanding a strong, fully developed adult.

In the first two years of its existence the RCN recruited only 350 people. Nova Scotia provided the largest share, followed closely by Ontario, then B.C., Quebec, P.E.I., New Brunswick, Alberta and, Manitoba and Saskatchewan bringing up the rear with one recruit each for the two year period.

Fleet Reserve men and pensioners of the RN were given permission to engage their services with the RCN and luckily, many chose to do just that. They were signed-on for five year terms with special rates of pay and allowances not offered to permanent service ratings.

Once recruited, there were several problems. The young Canadian in 1911-1912 was anything but hungry and looking for work. The number of jobs was much greater than the number of men available to do them. Wages and the Canadian standard of living were the highest in the Commonwealth. The geography of the country alone presented a major problem. Getting men who would want to join and stay was going to be difficult.

The Naval Service offered higher rates of pay immediately. While much higher than those rates paid to seamen of the Royal Navy, it turned out that the Canadian Navy was paying its men less than the Canadian Militia (when worked out on a daily basis). There were certain benefits offered to Canadian seamen which British seamen had never known, not the least of which was a better system of leave and homeward transportation. But even these inducements were not enough to take a young man off of the prosperous farm. Of those that did join, many found the discipline and "different" life of a naval seaman something strange and unacceptable. On the other side of the coin, the British senior ratings on loan found it more than a little difficult to deal with these Canadians, and leadership was put to a real test.

Many Canadian seamen left the RCN, having no desire to complete anything more than their initial term of service, while others didn't bother waiting around to fulfill their engagements. The British leaders were described as "foolish" by many, when in fact, they were doing their job as they had always done it — with British Seamen. The British style of leadership and demand simply would not work in a Canadian organization, a fact that would not finally come home to the collective minds of our naval staff for almost 38 years.

But the Canadian Naval Service almost died in 1912. Not because so few men volunteered for service, but because a newly elected government intended to repeal the Canadian Naval Service Act in favour of a Naval Aid Bill, the likes of which would provide Britain with three Dreadnought Battleships, terminate the existence of the Canadian Naval Service and call upon Britain to provide all of Canada's naval defence. The Borden government started to dismantle the naval service as they said they would do prior to being elected to office. They immediately started the procedure of destruction by simply not implementing the Naval Service Act, ignoring the needs of growing navy, and reducing the manpower and estimates. The debate in Parliament was the longest, most violent ever known in that house, and the undrhandedness of some politicians during the struggle was noting short of a major disgrace. But not only had the Borden government ignored the navy, they also failed to implement the Naval Aid Bill. Any interim plan they proposed faltered. Then World War I broke out, and Canada's miniature navy was put to work.

I will not attempt to detail the jobs carried out by HMC Ships RAINBOW and NIOBE, for this is more a social history than a recollection of events, but it is interesting to note that before RAINBOW sailed for her first patrol, a draft of officers and ratings from the Royal Navy arrived just in time to supplement a badly diminished ship's company.

The one thing which occured which showed a change in the colours of the government of Robert Borden was his support of the Premier of British Columbia in the purchase of two submarines. While it has been said that B.C. bought the two boats and then contacted Ottawa, they in fact had been in communications with the navy for some time, and the Prime Minister, and the Premier was acting as an agent, although the cheque was drawn against the Provincial account and was endorsed by the Premier who perhaps was a little anxious to get the deal done with.

The boats had been built for the Chilean navy, who failed to complte payment of the contract with Electric Boat Co., and because they resembled the British C class they were named CC1 and CC2. One of the conditions was of course a higher price, which was paid in full by the Canadian authorities.

Canada accepted the boats willingly while the Base at Esquimalt went into a panic. No crews, no tools, no torpedoes and two submarines nobody knew anything about. Admiral Kingsmill finally located an old RN submarine officer whose record was, to say the least, outstanding. He was Lieutenant Adrian Keys RN(ret'd), and was taken on immediately to take command of Canada's new submarine fleet. The crews were another problem. There were about a hundred volunteers, mostly landsmen who had never seen the decks of a ship. They were lined up by Keys and told that if they did not wish to serve in submarines they should step out of line. Not one man moved. The crews were chosen from this group and the enormous task began. Never has finding a submarine force been so easy.

CCC 1 and CC 2 were taken apart by the amateurs as a means of training. Hundreds of tally plates and marking had to be changed, for the boats had originally been built for Chile. Keys taught the men as much as he could during the evenings and the strange boats became more and more familiar. Once they had been re-assembled the crews had proved their training by skillfully, if not slowly diving and surfacing them without major incident.

Torpedoes had to be shipped from Halifax from NIOBE's stock and an infusion of a few RN ratings assisted in making the submarines an effective force. The crews were mostly local boys though and were made up this way: CC 1 - Lieut. Keys in Command, Lieut. W.T. Walker RN (ret'd) 1st Lieut., one Midshipman, three former RN ratings and thirteen B.C. Volunteers. CC 2 - Lieut. Bertram Jones in Command, Lieut. B.L. Johnson RNR 1st Lieut., six former RN ratings and ten B.C. Volunteers.

The boats provided a great service to Canada during the war and proved that "these Canadians" were capable of many things. Perhaps the thing they proved most is that the Canadian Navy was destined to survive, and the Canadian seaman was here to stay.

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Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

Canada's seamanhood survives

The Canadian Seaman that went to sea in World War I was inexperienced, poorly trained and although led in the same manner befitting the British seaman, led wrong. There can be no mistake made that the Candian Naval Volunteer was nothing like his British counterpart. He came from a different way of life complete with a much superior standard of living. Considering the excess number of jobs available to anybody willing to work, it is surprising that the Candian Naval Service managed to attract anybody at all. Pay for a variety of civilian occupations was excellent for the day, and although the Canadian Navy paid better than the Royal Navy, there simply wasn't a lot of money in being a naval seaman.

The standards for recruits remained high throughout WWI and in restrospect, we should be thankful for that, for it is the few who chose to make the navy their chosen occupation who kept Canadian seamanhood alive when it was destined for destruction. Had the standards for recruits been lowered for the sake of expediency there would have been a monsterous death and no funeral for Canada's minute navy at the war's end.

The operations of the RCN during the war are a matter of record. It would have been difficult for Canada to have done much more than is recorded in G.N. Tucker's THE NAVAL SERVICE OF CANADA Vol. I. Indeed, the share of work that was handed to the RCN, particularly HMCS Rainbow, in the early years of WWI was extraordinarily large when one considers the level of training of the men and the shortages experienced in the manning.

When the war ended, Canada's navy was in worse condition than ever before. Several acquisitions of Auxiliary Patrol Craft from private resources had made the navy numerically larger, but HMCS NIOBE had been severely damaged in the 1917 Halifax explosion thus reducing the RCN's major surface force by half. NIOBE remained in Halifax as a depot ship until 1920 when she was sold for breaking up.

The RCN that was to be after WWI did not develop. The British Admiralty had developed plans at the 1917 Imperial War Conference which called for a massive naval force, supported by all Dominions and placed under the operational control of Whitehall. Robert Borden, then Prime Minister, rejected the plan outright on the basis that the Dominions had not been granted the status they deserved, nor had adequate consideration for the self-defence of Canada **without** Royal Navy aid been given. It was a reversal of his pre-war behavior which the British Government did not fully understand, but accepted nonetheless.

At the end of the war, Canada asked for Admiralty assistance in preparing plans for future naval policy and the construction of a navy that would suit the needs of Canada for the next few decades. The importance here is the recognition of the need for a viable naval force, capable of serving the needs of coastal defence plus an ability to operate with the larger fleets of the Royal Navy in maintaining sea control. The Admiralty agreed and sent the hero of the battle of Jutland — Admiral Jellicoe.

Jellicoe approached the question of Canadian Naval defence in a professional and objective manner. He carefully considered the questions posed and developed a plan for Canadian Naval Forces which some may find astounding. As an initial defensive fleet he recommended the following: 3 Light Cruisers, 1 Flotilla Leader (large destroyer), 12 Torpedo Craft, 8 submarines and a Depot Ship, plus auxiliary vessels for harbour work and training. He further advised that should Canada wish to participate in sea control they should acquire the following: 1 Battle Cruiser, 2 Light Cruisers, 6 Destroyers, 4 Submarines, 2 Fleet Minesweepers, 1 Aircraft Carrier, 1 Flottilla Leader, and 2 Depot Ships (1 for Destroyers and another for Submarines). This fleet would be a viable and complete fleet unit. He suggested that in order to make Canada a healthy naval power living within her financial and demographic limits, **two** such units need be built — one for each coast.

Jellico provided estimate for cost, recommendations for immediate acquisition of a defensive force, building estimates for all of four separate plans which Canada may have wished to adopt, plus, specific recommendations for training, discipline, bases, maintenance, facilities, manning and conditions of service, and an emphasized recommendation for the creation of a separate ministry to deal with naval affairs. Another recommendation dealt with the creation of a naval board along the lines of the British Admiralty's Naval Board. A recommendation which although not obscure was to become the most important, was the creation of a Naval Reserve.

Manning a navy, however small, had proved to be something of a task for the naval authorities, but the political assault on the naval service was the substance of the decision to create a naval reserve for volunteers which would make up a greater number of available men that the regular service could recruit and hold.

As far as a large blue water fleet went . . . well, Jellicoe could not have forecast the Canadian Government's slowness. After his initial recommendations had been reported, the Government moved quickly to ask for ships. The Admiralty was more than willing to provide the platforms if Canada was willing to man and maintain them. Further, two submarines were presented to Canada as a gift in recognition or her participation in the war. In 1920 the destroyers Patriot and Patrician were transferred to the RCN. Both ships had been commissioned in 1916 and had never been in action. A cruiser was also selected, although there was a delay because the initial selection was an older ship which the British Admiralty considered obsolete and hardly suitable for a small navy. The cruiser Aurora was finally transferred.

The three ships had modifications and repairs made to make them suitable for Canadian requirements, but two important elements of note, at the time of transfer stuck out: first, all three ships were oil-burners. This was a radical change for the Canadian service, for all prior ships had been coal-burners and the Stoker branch of the RCN was coal-fire trained. Not only that, but the RCN had ready supplies of coal suitable for naval boilers in great supply, close to the naval bases. Oil on the other hand was a scarce commodity in Canada and, while easily removed from the ground and distilled, it simply was not stockpiled at the naval bases. The three ships were, however, the state of ship type for the future. Oil replaced coal forever and the Canadian seaman found himself moving into a greater age of technology. The only problem was, very few would be left to enjoy the technology at all.

The second point was manning. There was extreme difficulty encountered in manning the three ships. By 1920, both Rainbow and Niobe were useless. They had not been to sea in so long that they in fact had too little crew to effectively operate the ships. The crews for the three new ships, though mostly Canadian, had to be supplemented by recruiting in Britain and by offset manning from the RN.

The attitude of the time is important too. Perhaps it is all too familiar to hear that the Canadian population of the time really didn't consider the naval service an important question. It was peacetime. Why was it urgent to spend money to build a fleet of warships? It was important perhaps, but no urgent. The government, unaware perhaps of the importance of continuous naval training and upgrading (a lesson learned in the 1800s by the RN in the days of sail), started a general demobilization which sent the RCN into death throes. On March 25th, 1920, the ratings of the RCN were demobilized. Demobilization was totally effected on the 15th of May that year. The Canadian navy was ten years, eleven days old.

It got worse. In May of 1922, when the RCN was but twelve years and twelve days old, Canada, attempting to show the world it could disarm faster than anybody else, disposed of Aurora and reduced Patriot and Patrician to reserve training ships. The manning strength was reduced to that of skeleton crews for care and maintenance and as instructor support during the summer when the reservists underwent training. The RCN was clinically dead. Only the brain functioned. The navy was almost totally paper. The Canadian seaman was the rarest breed in the country. The attitude of the typical Canadian was that of a pacifist, an approach to the world which has simply repeated itself. The average Canadian was behaving like an ostrich and in the process destroying any chance for a good defensive posture.

It would be expected that pay and conditions for those remaining in the RCN would suffer notable deterioration, and while each did suffer, the burden of maintaining a 500 man navy was slight. It is to the credit of the senior officers of the "between wars" RCN that the sailor's pay kept pace with the economy in relative terms; that is to say, it was adequate.

Conditions were something else again. PATRIOT and PATRICIAN were fairly modern destroyers in 1916, but small ships become obsolete and wear out rapidly. While little money could be allocated to constantly improve the two ships, living conditions in the RN had not made great advances, so the RCN generally followed unit. By 1927, when PATRIOT and PATRICIAN were becoming expensive to maintain, Canada made a wise decision to build two replacement ships. The British Admiralty agreed to supply two substitute destroyers in the meantime. PATRIOT and PATRICIAN were retired at the ripe old age of twelve.

Canada acquired HMCS CHAMPLAIN (ex-Torbay) and HMCS VANCOUVER (ex-Toreador). The naming of VANCOUVER required the RN to change the name of one of their own ships to Vimy, for they had a Vancouver of their own, and Canadian ships were part of the Admiralty books.

The navy remained far too small, but at least it was keeping up with naval technology. Further, it was agreed that Canada's choice to become the operators of smaller ships was considered a suitable decision. Destroyers were the most versatile of naval units for a multitude of reasons. To the Canadian naval seaman it meant the formality of Capital Ship routine could be put aside for the time being.

Perhaps the most important move by the Government between wars was the establishment of the two Naval Reserves. It meant Canada was willing, however reluctantly, to call upon her small but well-trained seaman pool, much as the RN had done for centuries, in the event of immediate build-up of the force. In 1923 the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) was established. A strength of 70 officers and 930 ratings was authorized for a total of 14 "Companies". The RCNVR was the reserve designed to attract non-seamen. New entries signed engagements of three years and swore a standard oath. They were required, under the terms of their engagement, to attend a minimum of thirty drills per year, for which they were paid 25¢ each. They were also required to attend two weeks of training per year at either Esquimalt or Halifax, or in one of the ships. This was done under RCN supervision and the VRs were paid RCN scale for the period served. The VRs were the emergency source of manpower for the navy.

The other Naval Reserve was for seafaring men. Merchant seamen, fishermen and tug-men. A complement of 70 officers and 430 ratings were authorized for nine "Port Divisions". The authorized strength however, was never met and the number of divisions was reduced to five. The four remaining divisions became RCNVR Companies. Called the RCNR, any professional seaman could join if between the ages of 18 and 35. Re-entry up to and including age 50 was permitted. Pay was an annual arrangement determined by rank and was more of a retainer than anything else. Training was mandatory in Naval Establishments annually although the length of training was variable depending on rank and branch.

The two Reserves, although small, would be the nucleus of the corps of amateurs who would fight the next major war at sea.

The first ships built for Canada were SAGUENAY and SKEENA. They arrived in Canada in July 1930. They had extraordinary features: heating systems, ice-boxes, showers, forced-draught ventilation and stability features. They were 'state of the art' destroyers, and they were to become an indication of modernizations which the RCN would maintain until the bleakness of the 1970s set in.

In 1933 a short, apparently charismatic little man was taking a defeated and down-trodden people and lifting them up. He was developing one of the most disciplined European societies ever known. His name was Adolf Hitler. Manchuria had been invaded by the Japanese only two years before.

At about the time of Hitler's coming to power, the Canadian Treasury Board called the Chief of Naval Staff to appear and present his views on cutting the Naval appropriation from $2,422,000 to $422,000. This ridiculous suggestion was the result of the Chief of General Staff advising that a navy was something Canada could not afford. The CNS presented his case well and won. The idea was immediately dropped. Canada was being bracketed by two rattling sabres; one in Europe and one in Asia. Canada had waited too long to **build** her navy.

Naval strength in Canada was on the rise. Allocations of money quadrupled, manpower in the RCN and RCNVR was increased, and for the first time, ratings were sent to the Royal Navy for specialized training. But it was too late in coming, for in September 1939, the Canadian government sent the navy which had been too expensive and too small headlong into war. They were the first to fight.

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Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

The 2,060 days: the Canadian seaman stands tall

World War II involved every member of the Canadian population in some respect, and surely it took every one of them to bring about the successful conclusion of the conflict. Canada's fighting forces were not only huge by the end of the war, but were well known for their fighting ability and skill. The Canadian Army took on assignments which were often called "suicide missions" but proved their mettle as one of the most efficient combat teams ever trained. The RCAF not only took the battle to Germany early in the war, but trained thousands of Commonwealth pilots. It would be wrong to ignore the accomplishments of those services in any essay, even one which focuses on the navy, for it was the combined efforts of all three Canadian services which brought about an end to the most involved conflict in modern history.

There are volumes written on the history of WW II and Canada's contribution to the Allied effort. There are volumes on the RCN's role alone. For those who may be interested in the RCN's history of WW II, I would recommend Joseph Schull's FAR DISTANT SHIPS as a valuable source of information.

For this serial, the social development of the seaman in Canada's navy is the focus, and the subject is the Volunteer Reservist who made the RCN what it was and the ship he did it in — the Flower Class Corvette. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Reg Parker, an old Corvette man, for his vivid description of the hero of the Atlantic war.

In August of 1939 the permanent force of the RCN consisted of 145 officers and 1,674 men. They operated six reasonably up to date destroyers, five minesweepers and two training vessels. The RCNR (serving merchant officers and men), the RCNVR (volunteer reservists who trained a few weeks each year) and the RCNFR (fishermen reservists from B.C. whose status was a question mark) added to the overall manpower figure bringing the total to 366 officers and 3,477 men.

The skill of the permanent force was not to be questioned. Most members had trained with the RN and were well qualified. The RCNR again, provided good seamen, but they had little knowledge of naval warfare. The RCNFR was a body of fishermen whose knowledge of the B.C. Coast would make them useful in that environment, but the war that was brewing was out in the Atlantic. The RCNVR was a group of dedicated men, mostly amateurs, but willing amateurs. There were, scattered throughout Canada, several retired RN officers and ratings who were to prove useful beyond the greatest expectations of the Naval staff. But the organization that was to build the navy were homespun Canadians. From cities, towns, farms and inland villages the RCNVR was to become the Canadian Navy of World War II.

At about the time the minute Canadian Naval Staff was tackling the problem of recruiting, they were also considering aquisition of ships. As an immediate measure they literally took over RCMP vessels and other government craft. Three ocean liners were taken over and placed into conversion as armed merchant cruisers. But the most important decision was a pure gamble — the small ships.

The Royal Navy had accepted a design from Smith's Dock Company for a new type of patrol craft, the likes of which had only been briefly experimented with during World War I. It was known as a PATROL VESSEL, WHALER TYPE. As something of a compassionate move, the then First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill chose a name with a good historical background which had always represented a ship smaller than a frigate. That name was Corvette.

In today's world the name corvette blesses one of the more stylish sports cars of the age. It is sleek, powerful and above all a thoroughbred. The corvette of World War II was anything but sleek, was less powerful than most other ships and was a hybrid cross between a commercial whaling ship and frigate. Its beauty was in its simplicity — it could be built by commercial shipyards and would most likely be simple to operate.

The RCN ordered 64 of the new class, to be built in Canadian yards, and a gamble is exactly what it was. There was no guarantee that yards which had built nothing bigger than a minesweeper could produce the corvette. There was no guarantee that sufficient manpower could be trained in time to man the little ships, and it was not known how long Canada could live with building what was virtually a coastal defence vessel before the need for larger, more powerful ocean escorts entered the picture. Canada would have to play a large role, but as the war broke out, nobody could say how large the role might have to be. The Corvette was the best gamble available.

Corvettes were ugly. In the initial versions, the mast was forward of a box-like bridge. The forecastle cut away just ahead of the bridge, and the forward gun stuck out of the middle of this forecastle. There was a squat funnel and a rather unlikely whaler stern. As one RCN officer prophesised, "There had better be more to it than that!" What he didn't know is that there was much more to the Corvette than met the eye. Although only 205 feet long, the Flower class Corvette was remarkably buoyant. This trait was quite obviously assisted by a beam of 33 feet. It had a top speed of 16 knots but cruised economically at 12. It cruised for great distances in fact. Best of all, the ship had the ability to handle weather, thanks to its buoyancy, and could plug its way right across the Atlantic. It would be the ship all right. It would fight the holding action until the frigates could be built.

The Corvette was a new breed of ship and into it would go a new breed of sailor: the Volunteer Reserve. The Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve was an organization of enthusiastic amateurs at the outbreak of WW II. The system of VR divisions is similar to the present Naval Reserve organization in outward appearance only; the pre-war RCNVR was much worse off than today's "bracket R".

The RCN permanent force was faced with what apparently seemed an insurmountable task: operate the western convoy routes, protect shipping and build a navy, all at the same time. The permanent force was totally employed in convoy protection alone and the need for personnel to train the influx of "hostilities only" ratings and temporary commissioned officers could not be properly addressed. The navy was simply too small. Luckily, the RN came to the rescue with instructors in specific fields. Further, retired RN officers and ratings willingly volunteered and were even more willingly acepted as the much sought after qualified instructors.

The RCNVR divisions became the recruiting bases and the initial training grounds for new entry volunteers. Some volunteers joined the permanent force immediately, although after 1941 this was no longer permitted. Likewise, the recruitment of Boy Seamen was eventually discarded for practical purposes. The Volunteer Reserve made up the majority of the force until the war ended.

And the Volunteer Reserve — who was he? It seems he joined the navy for one purpose; to fight and win the war. The average VR had no real inclination to become a full-time serviceman, though it was apparent there was a need that would last some years. He might be from a farm in Saskatchewan or from an office in Toronto. He may have just left school or might have reached his thirtieth birthday. He was not a professional seaman. He was not used to naval custom and discipline, often found them redundant and quite often ignored the requirement for a naval hierarchy. He had good reason to think the way he did, for he was not to serve in cruisers and battleships, most would never even serve in a destroyer, but he was to serve in the little ships. The Corvette was to become the simplified weapon of the Volunteer Reserve and perhaps it is just as well that the new type of sailor was matched up with a new type of ship. There was no room for "big ship" nause in a corvette or in the mind of the Volunteer Reserve rating.

Being small, being buoyant and being required to do the job of mid-ocean escort in a less than habitable Atlantic created a special ethos for the Corvette man: dampness, seasickness, dampness and seasickness. The Corvette was a terrible place in which to work and live.

The Volunteer Reservist on being drafted to his first ship could not have really expected to find what confronted him. Take the seamen's messdeck for example: There were two large mess tables which would seat eight; a smaller table that seated six; lockers all-round the deck; a hammock rack; the mess-trap (crockery and cutlery); hawse-pipes; and, the hatch into the stokers messdeck below. There was a labyrinth of pipes and wiring, and amongst all this, 27 to 30 men lived in a space too small to provide anything near privacy. Since the cable locker was the forward adjacent compartment, we know that this messdeck was located as far forward as a living compartment could possibly be, and as any present day sailor will tell you, living in the forecastle in rough weather is nothing short of purgatory.

The RCNVR rating did all required of him, and lived with the misery inflicted by an overly buoyant ship reacting to an unrelenting sea for some incredible rates of pay. Ordinary Seamen earned $1.25 per day. Once the OS had served 6 months he made $1.50 daily and with a promotion to AB he received an appropriate raise — to $1.85 daily. Men fighting the war from the decks, engine-rooms and bridges of the small ships. Corvettes, Bangor Minesweepers, Algerines, Ocean-going Tugs and the like, were paid 25c per day "Hard Layers" as compensation for their less than comfortable lifestyle.

In time the navy grew. Although the average civilian prior to the war would have described any effort Canada might make as "coastal defence", the truth was clearly otherwise. Canada had to ensure the safety and protection of the trade routes now endangered by the U-boat. Failure to do so would cause Canada as a country to become strangled, for although the Canadain merchant marine was small, a vast amount of Canadian goods travelled the oceans under the flags of other trading nations. The RCN assumed the role of a long range, blue-water fleet, capable of combined operations with a variety of ships and flexible enough to meet the requirements of any calling. The fleet grew to over 400 ships and the standing manpower which had been approximately 2000 in 1939 expanded to 90,000 or more by 1944. For the first time in the RCN, women, 6000 of them, volunteered to wear the blue uniform of the WRCNS thus relieving men urgently required for sea-duty on the escort routes.

The Canadian seaman soon found himself in a system of convoy and trade routes which dictated his way of life. If he was part of the Western Local Escort Force he would meet convoys at the Western Ocean Meeting Point off Newfoundland and escort them to Canadian or U.S. east coast ports. The return trip was the forming off Halifax, Sydney, Boston or New York and taking a small convoy to the Western Ocean Meeting Point where the convoy would be enlarged and handed over to a different group of ships. The Western Local Escort Force was based in Halifax and from all I have been told, Halifax made itself a thoroughly terrible host, lacking the facilities necessary to provide amenities to the sailors of the escort groups. By 1943 the WLEF was the training run provided for new ships or ships returning to service. After a period in the western Atlantic they were sent out to the peril of the mid-ocean run.

The Mid-Ocean Escort Force consisted of 12 groups, 5 of which were Canadian. Each group, (in 1943) was made up of 3 destroyers and 6 corvettes or frigates. Their job was the terrifying task of taking the convoys across the mid-Atlantic, through an area that was unprotected by the aircraft of coastal command. Based in St. John's Nfld. the mid-ocean sailor would find himself in Londonderry Northern Ireland at the end of his run. He would pick up a convoy westbound and provide protection as far as the Western Ocean Meeting Point, then into St. John's. St. John's had fewer dockyard facilities than any other base around. It was base in name only for the commander of the mid-ocean escort base actually operated out of the top few floors of the hotel Newfoundland. But the sailor liked "newfyjohn", for there was one treated with dignity and respect. The base was always open and everything was geared to supporting the escort ships and getting the crews a short rest in the camp. "The camp" was a place where the tired rating could swim, fish or just rest his weary bones before going back into the breach of the mid-ocean run.

Other Canadian sailors found themselves in almost every theatre of the war. The dreaded Murmansk run to the USSR, or the English Channel, possibly the Med. And Canadians manned a variety of ships. Motor Torpedo Boats, Flower and Castle class Corvettes, Bangors, Algerines, Fairmiles, Frigates, Tugs, Destroyers and Cruisers. Beyond that RCN, RCNR and RCNVR rates found themselves in ships of the RN. And although they bore the prefix HMS, PUNCHER and NABOB were Canadian aircraft carriers by virtue of the Canadian content of their crews.

Then it ended. In May 1945, the RCN started to demobilize. Perhaps it was the speed with which the demobilization took place that caused future problems for the permanent force sailor. The Corvette Navy, inasmuch as they were called amateurs taught something to the pre-war snobs of the RCN — teamwork. While there was always respect for rank and authority among the VRs, they also, out of necessity, relied on each other, officer and rating alike, just to get the job done. Initially it was out of a terrible fear, but eventually it became the standard of performance which got the best results. The amateurs became the true "escort" professionals. They took the patter of rote drills, threw them out and got on with fighting the battle. In more than one ship the depth-charge throwing order came out something like "fire the bloody thing right bloody now!"

But they left, for they were no longer needed and most had no desire to stay. They had put up with terrible conditions because they knew there was a necessity, but with the war over they could go home and make the war and the navy a memory. They took with them the best leaders and in many cases, the real Anti-Submarine Warfare experts. While the RCN would continue, most of the pre-war permanent force was well disbursed. The men who had joined the permanent force early in the war, or those VRs that chose to transfer to permanent at the wars end were to make up the new navy — but an old and rotting wound from the pre-war days was still very much in existence. It was to fester and the lesson taught by the amateurs of the RCNVR was to emere from the messdecks of the permanent Canadian seaman.

The Canadian seaman was well established now. His true forebearer was a temporary man, much as the RN ratings forebearer had been in the 18th century. Canada simply accellerated the process.

And the officers of WW II? They proved themselves, for as has been written in these pages previously, the seaman will only follow an officer proves he is worth following. One in fact was to become deeply involved in the post-war navy. His respect for the wartime sailor was well known and his future task was to become a test for his best credential — the conditions of service and a genuine concern for the seaman. His name was Edmond Rollo Mainguy, and he is the subject of a future chapter.

Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

1949 — Troubled waters and a strong breeze

At the end of World War II, Canada possessed the third largest Allied navy of the conflict. In fact, for a very short period, the RCN was actually the third largest navy in the world. During the period 1939 to 1945, no less than 108,000 persons had been in uniforms for the Canadian Naval Service. On a given day, the peak actual strength of the RCN had measured out at 956 principal warships, 8920 officers, 78,221 ratings (men), and 5893 women of the WRCNS. This is compared to a total manpower figure of 1585 in 1939. Most of the growth was made up of RCNVR personnel, and has been previously described, they left the service at the end of hostilities.

The demobilization of the wartime RCN was described as an orderly wind-down to normal peacetime levels. In fact, it was a haphazard disbandment carried out in a hurried rush with the tattered remnants left to rebuild that which only a few months before had been a mammoth naval force. The demobilization of the RCN and the manner in which it was carried out was the start of some bad times for the permanent naval rating.

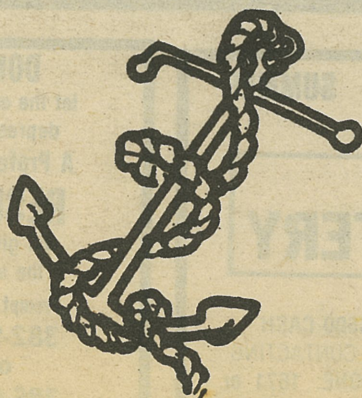
By 1949 the strength of the RCN had shrunk drastically. There were 54 total ships (some out of commission), 1212 officers and 7601 men. The total strength was 8813 persons which fell considerably short of the approved peacetime ceiling for the Permanent Navy of 10,375 officers and men. An interim authorized strength was established at 9047 total personnel which was closer to the actual strength of the day, but still failed to provide enough men to operate and support all units effectively and continuously. There is no proof to support the claim of the day that the ceiling was purposely low to ease pressure on the government and allow them to purport that manning levels were close to required strength, although the record shows that form of statement was made in response to opposition. But it was not just the level of manpower that caused the "breeze" of 1949; the conditions of service were simply not adequate, and the seaman used a weapon which, although thoughtless and illegal, proved effective: combination.

Acts of combined insubordination had occurred in the navy prior to 1949, the most noteable incident being the one in HMCS ONTARIO, which had brought about the removal of that ship's Executive Officer. While this incident had a bearing on the year being studied, it is in no way related to the three "mutinies" which occurred in three different ships over a twenty-three day period while they were separated by thousands of miles, save for the fact that some former members of ONTARIO were now serving in the ships involved.

Before going much further, the term "mutiny" must be clarified. The incidents about to be described were, in the modern sense, acts of mutiny. Men of the Canadian Naval Service, on duty either at sea or in harbour, when ordered to carry out the duties described by specific command or routine order, knowingly refused as a group. There was no violence, no attempt to wrest command of the ship from the appointed Captain in any instance, and no overwhelming disrespect for the authority of those in command. There was a simple refusal to work unless certain complaints were addressed. In any organization other than a naval or military one, it would have been labeled a "wildcat strike". But it was, and still is, mutiny. The incidents took place in HMC Ships Athabaskan(II), Magnificent and Crescent.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT had suffered through many problems after being accepted by the RCN. During and after her commissioning at Portsmouth, England, several acts of sabotage had taken place, some very serious, and most outside the possible involvement of the ship's company. She arrived in Halifax 25 February 1949 and sailed in early March for an exercise with the British West Indies Squadron. MAGNIFICENT was anything but a happy ship. Officers were frequently overheard bickering with each other over departmental deference. Chief and Petty Officers had absorbed the basis for this behaviour and were pitting their departmental ratings against other departments. Any continuation of such conduct could only lead to disaster for MAGNIFICENT was an aircraft carrier of over 900 persons in her company.

The aircraft handlers had been busy for most of the trip. They worked long hours, suffered frequent changes in the flying program, ate their meals on the run and were not shown the consideration of being a little more privy to the over-all program, the result of which would have been a better understanding of the future flying operations. Their messdeck was infested with bugs, an affliction common throughout the ship; the showers were inoperative, and; because of the flying program changes, they were unsure when the flying routine ceased and daily sea routine took over. It was the latter confusion which, on March 20th 1949, saw the Able Seamen and below of the Aircraft Handler branch refuse to leave their messdeck when piped at 0740. By 0810 the Captain was on the messdeck. He stated that he would not accept mess statements of grievance, but would take each complaint individually. He told the men that "flying stations" would be called for at 0900. When that pipe was made all men turned out on the flight deck. We will examine further causes later on.



HMCS ATHABASKAN sailed from Esquimalt on the 28th of January 1949 bound for southern waters. She had an XO which had joined that same month and a Captain who had assumed command the previous November. The ship had spent some days in Magdalena Bay cleaning and painting where, according to one individual I interviewed, an incident took place between an officer and an able seaman over some spilled paint thinners. The ship sailed for San Digo on the 12th of February arriving on the 15th. No incidents out of the oridinary are reported to have taken place and ATHABASKAN sailed on the 22nd bound for Acapulco. On the 26th she was detached to Manzanillo for fuel the next day. Hands were called at 0545, earlier than usual, and it is indicated that it was intended to carry-out a "daily routine". The morning work was carried out and the hands would not have been expected to turn out until 1315 when piped. However, a whaler crew had been piped away and the Chief Bos'ns Mate noticed their absence from the boat deck. He checked with the Duty PO, who in turn checked the messdeck. The duty PO reported that the men had shut and clipped the messdeck doors. The CBM investigated and both men reported to the Coxswain.

After all had been through the XO and Captain, and after a period of conversation through an ammunition hatch, the men in the mess deck opened the door, allowing the Captain and the Coxswain to enter. The men showed all required marks of respect and the Captian noticed a list of demands sitting on a mess table which he covered with his cap. The Captain explained that he was not present to act as Commanding Officer but as the senior officer present to advise them. He would not take complaints. There was some frank discussion and several pointed questions were asked. After the Captain had finished his talk with the men "stand easy" was piped. It was 1410. The mutiny had lasted for a period in excess of 1 hour 30 minutes. At "out pipes" all hands turned to. Charges were laid against the ninety men who took part with a "caution" being the stiffest award; no punishments were awarded.

Part of the problem in ATHABASKAN was the failure to go into tropical routine, which would have been a normal change of routine to be instituted in that climate. This would have had the men called earlier but securing for the afternoon. Another problem was the comparison of routines between ships and the difference in the enforcement of various regulations. The Executive Officer tended to be overly authoritative with the hands, and there was a general complaint that the artificial social gap between officers and men was being made wider by the actions of some members of the wardroom. In the list of demands the Captain had covered with his cap had been the requirements to remove the XO, the Coxswain, and generate a better level of cooperation between officers and men. There were further causes which will be examined later.

HMCS CRESCENT sailed from Esquimalt on the 2nd of February 1949, six days after ATHABASKAN, CRESCENT was to have sailed with ATHABASKAN on the same exercise, but the day before sailing had been ordered on a special mission to China. She arrived in Shanghai on the 25th of February after very brief reprovisioning stops in Pearl Harbor, Kwajalein, Guam and Woosung. On March 11th CRESCENT arrived at Nanking and berthed at the International Export Company Ltd. jetty.

The conditions in CRESCENT are best described by the following situations: After arrival in China, two hands had been over the side on a staging painting the ship's side. For some reason, either a parted line or a poor job of securing, the staging departed and deposited both hands in the filthy water. After being recovered it was observed that one man had lost the paint brushes. He was charged and placed on report for the loss.

Another rather poor situation existed after arrival in Nanking. The wet canteen which was reported to be operated by the International Export Company was in fact operated by the ships companies of any ship in port. There were no arrangements to transport stock for the canteen, so CRESCENT's junior ratings were left with the responsibility of operating the canteen, packing the beer to it and transporting empty bottles back. There was an additional requirement for sentries at the canteen, one on the bridge leading to it, a jetty sentry, plus the regular duty watch. The imposition of the above requirements provoked a lack of use of the available facility by CRESCENTS, but did not negate the demand for sentries.

Duty watches were irregular and, as stated by a former member of CRESCENT, changes occurred which were neither logical nor accompanied by any form of explanation. Hands were required to wear a full rig in harbour, **regardless of their duties**, which included painting and scraping. The reason given for this was the presence of HMS COSSACK whose British seamen were wearing full rig.

The majority of officers serving in CRESCENT, according to two men who were serving at the time, were appallingly bad. With the exception of a very few, most had convinced the ship's company that they were not worth following. There was an extreme lack of concern for divisional matters and a benign ignorance of conditions in the lower deck.

"Hands fall in" was piped at 0800 15 March 1949. The only men to respond to the pipe were senior ratings. Shortly after 0800, 83 men shut themselves in their messdeck. Some were there unwillingly, but there is a compulsion under that type of circumstance, to think of one's future with one's messmates, so they remained. The ensuing investigation by the XO and the Coxswain proved that the only people not involved were the senior men and the Chief and Petty Officers. At one point the XO had told the Chiefs and Petty Officers that they might have to go into the messdeck and get the men out, possibly by force. There was a flat refusal from the Chiefs and POs to involve themselves in such an act. The Captain mustered all officers in the wardroom who expressed surprize and could find no reason for the mens' action. At 0905 "clear lower decks" was piped, preceded by a warning pipe. The men in the messdeck did not respond. The Captain asked to have a certain Able Seaman report to his cabin. Word has got to the man and he came out and reported to the Captain. While this was going on, a list of demands, six demands, was placed on the messdeck door. The list was adressed to the Captain and heading the note was a demand for the removal of the present Executive Officer.

The conversation between the AB and the Captain resulted in the Captain being allowed into the messdeck to address the men. He entered alone and had previously made it clear tht he would not discuss complaints and would make a simple straight-forward address. He stated that he would take complaints individually and that since he was interested in fi ding out the causes for the incident, he would interview each complainant individually. He also stated that there was no intention of an disciplinary action thus far.

At 0950 "hands fall in" was piped and all men responded. The intended time for requestmen, 1045, had to be postponed until later in the day when the Captain interviewed 19 men. All further requests to state complaints were withdrawn.

An incident which occurred after the mutiny in Nanking caused many men to think nothing had been gained by their actions. A boats crew had been away in the motor-cutter. Upon returning they were required to secure the boat to the quarter-boom, outboard two other boats. The Officer Of the Day witnessed the boat's coxswain supervising the securing of the boat and watched the crew use the additional after line as an added measure of security, a normal procedure when securing more than two boats to the boom. The boat's coxswain reported the boat secure to the OOD. After a passing of some time, the motor-cutter was seen to be gone from the quarter boom. The lines had apparently been cut. The boat's coxswain was charged and placed on report for the loss of one motor-cutter. Although placed on Captain's report, the boat's cowswain was ordered to attend XO's defaulters. The XO accused the Leading Seaman of not using the correct size line, to which the LS responded by informing the XO that the painter in a motor-cutter was a standard piece of fitted equipment. The XO then asked for a description of the rigging of the lower boom. The LS gave a complete description. The XO then stated that the motor-cutter had been secured incorrectly which the LS responded to by describing how the boat had been secured and the reasons for additional lines. The case was dismissed, but an impression was left with some present at the table that the XO, the officer responsible for all seamanship onboard, knew nothing relating to the rigging of the lower boom or the method of securing boats to that boom. The fact that this incident occurred after the Nanking fiasco left a bad taste in the mouths of many.

The conditions in HMC ships MAGNIFICENT, ATHBASKAN and CRESCENT varied only in relation to the difference in ship types and the magnitude of the problems preceding the actions taken by the men. There were common faults within the ships which were all important.

First, the establishment and operation of a Ship's Welfare Committee in each ship was mandatory under command from Canadian Naval Headquarters. They were to be established

(Cont'd. page 11)

Sailor: before the mast

along the same lines as the previous ship's fund committees and provide a free discussion between officers and men of items of welfare and amenities within the ship that lay within the powers of decision held by the Captain or his immediate Administrative Authority. There were to be officers appointed by the Captain and men who would be elected by ballot in their messes and represent their members. There was provision for the discussion of divisional matters and complaints on a "spokesman" basis by cooption of members of the divisional system at the Welfare Committee. It was to be a sounding board and it rightly failed in all three ship described.

MAGNIFICENT had no Welfare Committee, thus an order given on the 28th of August 1947, had been blatantly ignored — without the apparent knowledge of the Captain. A Welfare Committee existed in ATHABASKAN but, it existed in name only — no meeting had been held during the cruise until after the incident had taken place in Manzanillo. In CRESCENT a Welfare Committee was in operation but its operation was so totally restricted by the Captain and the Executive Officer that its function was reduced to a canteen financial report, the subjects of welfare and conditions being banned from the agenda.

Second, and in its own way related, was the poor level of communications that existed between the officers and men. Those interviewed for this chapter clearly stated that a lack of concern for what was happening in the lower decks was a strong reason for concern amongst the men. The "Old Brigade" had slipped back in with their pre-war attitudes but forgot one very important thing — the junior men in their ships were not pre-war sailors. Many were ex-RCNVR ratings who knew how a ship could be operated and fought effectively. They were used to teamwork and got something different. They rejected the indifference they were experiencing, the poor leadership and the British style of class snobbery.

Perhaps what they did was wrong, but they seem convinced that what they did caused their superiors to become aware of the problems facing them. Most of all, they created the most important inquiry ever to be directed at the Canadian Naval Service. They were the reason for the next chapter — The Mainguy Report.

Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

The Mainguy Report

The Mainguy report was one of the most important documents relating to discipline, morale and the factors affecting personnel in the RCN for a period in excess of twenty years. Many will say that the report has no further validity in today's navy. Nothing could be further from the truth. The relevence of the Mainguy report is as strong today as the day it was submitted to the government. No other study has had such an impact on the welfare and efficiency of the Canadian seaman. MORPS for example, did not cover the wide range of conditions examined by the commission chaired by Admiral Rollo Mainguy in 1949.

The point of view is important too. Everything can be interpreted differently depending upon one's station at the time of reading. Many parts of a long report will mean less than other parts to some, while others may hold those parts out as vital. Such is true in this case, for since this is a social history of the sailor, I may appear to become sympathetic toward the seaman with less than a fair amount of study devoted to the officer of that era. But then, if you are not shown his life, the sailor's, from his point of view, you'll never be able to share his reasons for being the stalwart, loyal man that he was.

The anonymous donors of information, my thanks, and you shall remain anonymous.

the year 1949 was one full of important events for the naval seaman. The incidents which had occurred in MAGNIFICENT, ATHABASKAN and CRESCENT were only one part of a milestone year. Other important actions were taking place which would reshape the RCN of the future, not the least of which was a submission for a revolutionary new type of ship.

One important event which has often been sidelined was the Revised Rating Structure. This was to be a change which would purportedly enhance career progression in the lower deck and provide for two more ranks. The Canadian Army and the RCAF had seven ranks in their Other Ranks structure; the RCN had but five ratings for men. The rank of Petty Officer was split into PO2 and PO1 providing scale equivalents to the Army ranks of Sergeant and Staff Sergeant respectively. The rank of Chief Petty Officer was split into CPO2 and CPO1 providing scale equivalents to WO2 and WO1 respectively. The rating of Leading Seaman and its prerequisites was altered in such a way that the long service Able Seaman, (3 badge AB) would no longer exist. Out of it all, the PO2 would remain something known as a "bastard rank" for a period of over twenty years. It was one change which was not readily accepted.

The Mainguy report was accepted however. It had to be. The post-war RCN had run themselves to the brink of disaster and it took the honesty of a forthright, frank statement of the facts as they existed to guide officer and man on the narrow path to recovery. Of the facts presented in the Mainguy report, the conditions of service were of the utmost importance to the sailor. In an abstract sort of way, his basic condition had not changed in over a century. For the Canadian seaman, his basic conditions, save for pay and allowances, had improved at a slower rate than his counterpart in the other two services. He also felt that too many of his officers simply didn't care for the lot of the seaman. He had a feeling of abandonment.

Many of the shortcomings of the RCN were detailed by E.R. Mainguy:

The lack of explanation to the ships' companies for varying and differing routines;

The lack of sufficient care in the selection of Executive Officers, who should have been knowledgeable, experienced officers, with particular emphasis on the situation in CRESCENT where the XO was most inexperienced;

The far too frequent changes of officers and men in and between ships. There was no opportunity for the teamwork bond to develop;

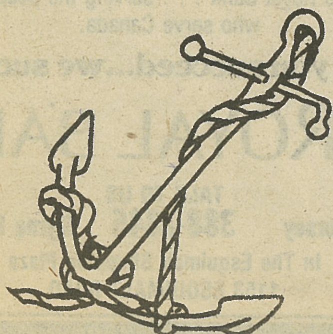
The lack of confidence between officers and senior rates, a condition which, if it had been otherwise, would have prevented the mutinies of 1949;

The lack of or improper operation of the ship's welfare committees (a great portion of the finding was devoted to this subject);

The breakdown of the "Divisional System";

The general level of inexperience of many officers, chiefs and petty officers, and the inference that the sailor will only follow a superior who proves he is worth following;

The artificial distance between officers and men. This perhaps was one of the more important paragraphs in the document, for it clearly stated that the British class system would not work in a Canadian ship;



The revelation that many men in the lower deck wanted the malcontents out of the service;

The tendency of Canadian sailors to compare facilities at American bases with Canadian establishments;

The absence of Canadian traditions in the Canadian Navy; and,

Details regarding the stating of complaints by men and the submissions of suggestions.

The aforementioned details were the result of interviewing the members of the ships' companies of the three ships involved in incidents that year, plus some serving and former members of ONTARIO, and others specially selected for their knowledge and insight. But the commissioners went much further. They went into the depths of the navy as a whole and found rot; the lethargy born out of the lack of communications, poor funding, under-manning and inadequate training. Their report told the truth of what was left after the demobilization of WWII.

The report stated that there were too few ships available for adequate training and that the frequent rotations of officers and senior men was eating away at the trust that should have developed between all. Further, several witnesses were quite clear that the overall complement of the navy was so low that an undue strain was being placed on certain officers and senior men because of a requirement to be employed in "operations" when they should have been in a position to train others.

Recruiting was outwardly bad in 1949. The commission provided evidence of out and out lies on the part of the recruiting organization. The recommendations made were for a more truthful and direct approach to attract young men. They further suggested that RCN officers be encouraged to seek out training as recruiting officers; something that was not done prior to 1950.

Officer training was criticized for some weaknesses, specifically those which failed to provide a totally Canadian course in the humanities and sociology. Most Canadian officers came to the RCN via Royal Roads and a long term of service with the RN. Some arrived back in Canada with the impression that the Canadian seaman could be led in the same way as the British sailor.

New Entry training was found to be inadequate. On this point, many stated to the commission that new Entry training was not tough enough. The commission found however, that New Entry training was less than a fair reflection of life in a ship, which is what it is intended to be. At that time, NADEN in Esquimalt was a New Entry training establishment. There, a shortage of uniforms existed, seamanship manuals were not available and officers and instructors had no special training. The report stated that this was due to the rapid demobilization after WWII and the opening of HMCS CORNWALLIS as the RCN New Entry training establishment would put much of the problems right.

One complaint heard, which the commission found much evidence in support, was the claim that the position of Chiefs and Petty Officers had been denigrated. The report was clear in stating that the position of Chiefs and Petty Officers was not what it had been in the pre-war navy nor what it should have been in the post-war navy. One very senior officer stated that the attitude of many in dealing with the Chiefs and POs had effectively cut-off the wardroom's only connection with the men. I was told recently, that the situation of the day could also be partially blamed on some of the Chiefs and Petty Officers themselves, for they were making no attempt to rectify the problem. Perhaps the problem of the wrong kind of leadership from RN trained officers was initially at fault, but that is only speculation.

Recreational facilities at the two major naval establishments received strong criticism. Esquimalt in particular was sadly lacking. There had been attempts to provide additional facilities but they were shelved on the grounds of economy.

The report strongy recommended that the public relations of the navy be improved. It was felt by the commissioners that **"In peace-time, at least, a prompt statement of the plain truth is the public's interest and right."** It should be noted that the government of the day accepted this report and that successive Defence Ministers supported its existence.

It was reported that many administrative tasks were assigned as temporary refuges for temporary misfits, rather than the assigning of such demanding jobs to the available experts. The administrative functions of the navy suffered no less than the ships when it came to the rapid and all too frequent changes in position. Officers assigned to Ottawa were not being allowed to shape and direct policy but were little more than paper-work hounds. This was essentially due to the shortage of available officers in too many positions.

The Divisional System was well described and evidence was taken before the commission that the Divisional system had collapsed. The commission stated their regrets if such was the case for they had the greatest confidence in what appeared to be a well laid-out sytem with superior drafts of regulations supporting it.

The recommendations in the Mainguy Report were quite clear and well substantiated. It was recommended that at least one training ship be made available to expose officers to Canadian routine before joining their first ship. I further stated that the company of this ship be made up of selected officers and men known for their superior leadership qualities and ability to get along with the men.

Many things were recommended with respect to New Entry training. One was that new entries be fully kitted up on entry and another was that officers and instructors take a far greater interest in their men. Still another recommendation was that barracks be developed to provide a better taste of life in a ship.

There was a strong recommendation for extended and improved divisional training for Chiefs and Petty Officers. A concern was expressed that many junior petty officers did not inherit the traditional senses of pride and responsibility which had once been standard traits in the pre-war PO.

It was recommended that a laundry be established at Esquimalt, for such a facility did not exist, although the officers responsible had done much to acquire it. It was also recommended that the construction of barracks at both coasts be advanced, for the living conditions ashore were totally substandard.

The living conditions in ships was a particular point of note. HMCS SIOUX had been the subject of an experiment which included fitting of bunks instead of hammocks, improved laundry facilities and a cafeteria.

The commission found considerable grounds for the complaint that policy, appointments, ships movements and the like were released to the news media before such announcements were made to the men. Further, official and authentic news was to be found in the local beer parlours well before it was passed to the men. It was recommended that news releases follow and not precede official reports to the officers and men of the fleet.

The question of alcohol in HMC ships was raised during the tenure of the commission. While they presented in their report, the feelings of many witnesses, they refused to make a specific recommendation save for a sugestion that the Naval authorities prepare themselves to address the question of its relevence.

In 1949, the Navy was the only service with Kit Upkeep Allowance of $5 monthly. The army and air-force utilized a free exchange system. It was recommended that the policy be standardized over the three services.

The commission recommended that there be Service Medical Care for dependants of all Naval personnel, that single men be considered under a dependants allowance in the event that they might be supporting a parent, that once per year free transportation be provided to officers and men to proceed to their place of residence on annual leave, that a nominal remuneration be provided men for Good Conduct Badges and that "charge money" be re-introduced for men in charge of complicated machinery and devices.

The recommendations dealing with the Welfare Committees strongly supported a more wide-open set of rules allowing for a more frank dialogue between the officers and men under the chairmanship of the XO. Related was the recommendation that while the Naval authorities were reviewing the present shipboard routine, if such a review were to result in the abolition of "unnecessary flummery, useless parades and pointless mustering, and a greater attention to the essential work of the ship, a most useful and necessary purpose will be served."

The subject of Officer-man Relationships is perhaps the most important. It was observed that many officers do not appreciate that the Canadian seaman presents a different problem than the seaman of the RN. It was noted that the officer most likely to do well in a Canadian ship was one who "maintains his position mainly by virtue of his capacity to express himself and persuade his followers," and that the officer who attempts to dominate and impress is less likely to command respect of great numbers. Even further, the officer who maintains his position by virtue of the established social prestige attached to his office is also likely to encounter difficulty and in fact, from the author's observation, will be a dismal failure, rejected by most subordinates. The recommendations of the comission were clear: the Canadian officer needed far more training in the style of leadership which worked best. He needed not just classroom training, but exposure to senior officers whose success in the art was well established. The Canadian officer needed to be trained to lead Canadians. That would mean he must have personal pride in the service, a belief in justice, superior character, skill, education and knowledge. In fact many officers of the day subscribed to the personal requirements and were well versed in leadership. It was the ones who were not that created so many difficulties.

Cont'd. page 11

Sailor: before the mast

(Cont'd from page 10)

It was recommended that recreational activities at sea be expanded to include things which had nothing to do with the operation of the ship. Movies of the day were inadequate and space was severely limited. The shipboard recreation officer, it was felt, should have some training in community recreation. It further recommended that officers and men with special talents be used to provide diverse forms of education and lectures.

The recreational facilities in Esquimalt were pitiful. The men there lacked the basic amenities for decent life. The commission recommended that a close look at the USN facility in Seattle with a view to vast improvements, particularly at Esquimalt, be made. At the time, the present facilities as Esquimalt were either built or under construction. Halifax had better facilities in 1949, but they in no way provided for the wholesome pursuit of recreation, away from the atmosphere of a beer hall, as was being recommended by the commission.

The Mainguy Report was submitted with a view to improving the lot of the Canadian sailor. It further supported changes which would affect all personnel, officer and man alike, for there is often a failure in recognizing the needs of officers in such cases. Rollo Mainguy did a complete job. If there was an attempt to link the incidents in MAGNIFICENT, ATHABASKAN and CRESCENT, that linkage was firmly identified; not in any collusion between the participants, but in the common conditions of service, which were far less than adequate.

If you presently serve, you may be able to make startling comparisions with existing conditions in many cases. I would advise only this! The Mainguy Report had this to say: In future, insubordination should be most severely punished. It also recommended that the legitimate grievances should be promptly investigated and remedied.

If you do not serve, or have since retired from the service, a future chapter will describe the conditions of service in today's navy.

Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

The strong years — 1950 to 1964

"Nothing can do more to enhance the pride and morale of a fighting organization than the success that comes from good leadership, consistent discipline, first-class training and the knowledge of personal strength."

-Field Marshal Erwin Rommel

On July 5th, 1950 three destroyers of the RCN sailed under the command of Captain J.V. Brock for duties with forces carrying out a United Nations Police Action in Korea. As then Captain Brock has subsequently stated in his book, "WITH MANY VOICES," no one really knew what a Police Action was ". . . because no such thing had ever occurred before." In fact, the action in Korea was nothing short of something we now know as "limited war." The Canadian units would enter a zone of conflict which included no less death, destruction and gut-wrenching fighting than any other war. The only difference is that it was to be contained in area to the Korean Peninsula.

Perhaps the advantage in what was about to take place was the immediate past of the Canadian Naval force: The senior rates of the force would almost all be veterans of WWII, the officers would be no less experienced, a Royal Commission had clearly stated the needs of the seaman just ten months previously and the same Royal Commission had identified the requirement for Canadian units to be directed by Canadian commanders. These facts alone would normally be enough to provide the new seaman with the necessary motivation to do a good job.

There was more, though. To a young man with three or less years service, he was part of a force that was embarking on something of an adventure. But it was a well executed adventure which the government took on with confidence, for there had been improvements in attitude at all levels, better training than ever before and a more realistic approach to leadership, particularly among chiefs and Petty Officers and junior officers. The RCN was well able to take on the task which lay ahead.

The Canadian seaman acquitted himself well in Korea. With the determination and skill for which he had become famous in WWII, he fought as a member of a well-founded team. From river patrols to bombardments and the support of landings, he became known for the major roles he and his force played: bombardment in support of the defence of Pusan; support of the landings at Inchon; the evacuation of Chinnampo which was led by HMCS CAYUGA and under the total direction of Captain Brock; and many other actions which distinguished the RCN's ability to deal with any emergency with total flexibility and daring. And they came away with names like "The Train-Busters" and "The Channel Racers," titles associated with honour and a skill which left the sailors of other navies in awe. And they did it as a team.

When the Korean conflict ended, there was a difference from the nilly-willy demobilization at the end of WWII. To begin with, the majority of those involved in the fighting were regulars. Those reservists that participated were not the former "hostilities only" ratings; they went back to their reserve divisions. The experience did not leave this time. It stayed and was needed.

After much consideration on the part of the government and a great deal of advice from allies, Canada took a decision which would make this country a formidable maritime power: the navy would be strengthened to include forty combat ships, twenty of which would be modernized WWII frigates, the remainder to be destroyer type, plus a fleet maintenance and replenishment force. Further, submarines of various types were under consideration with the intention of producing four or more by 1960.

On the 30th of November 1951, a minor revolution took place. A ship, the likes of which had never been seen before, slid off the ways and set the stage for a whole new era in the saga of the Canadian naval seaman. Her name was ST. LAURENT and, although not yet fitted out, she simply looked powerful. She was the prototype of a Canadian designed and built destroyer escort, the lead ship of twenty similar ships. They quickly acquired the nickname "Cadillac", a title associated with the smooth rounded hulls and the similarity in sleekness to the General Motors car of that era.

When the "Cadillacs" entered service in 1955, it was the technology and living conditions which impressed all. They had more messdecks than previous ships and **all** men would sleep in bunks. There were full-size, stand-up lockers. Men would no longer take their meals on the messdeck — there was a large main cafeteria. (Previously, hands ate their meals in the same compartment as they slept. Such an arrangement has been erroneously called "broadside messing." "Broadside messing" and "cafeteria messing" were terms applied to the type of victualling and the means applied to purchase victuals. Men ate on the messdecks no matter which system of food purchasing was in effect.) There was a good amount of office space and larger engineering, weapons and electronic workshops. The galley was fully electric, eliminating the need for oil fired cooking surfaces. The ship was air-conditioned throughout, and there was ample refrigeration space. Habitability was immensely improved over the tribals, fleet "C"s and frigates.

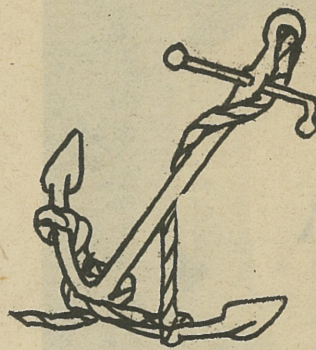
Technologically, the ST. LAURENT class was 'stage of the art.' A full fit of air-search, sea-search and navigational radar complemented a full modernized operations room and enclosed bridge/compass platform. Fire-control systems for two twin 3"50 mountings were completely up to date and in later variants (RESTIGOUCHE class and MACKENZIE class) were fitted with Mk 69 fire-control radar. Submarine detection systems, active and passive, were the most modern available, and the communications fit was a thoughtful application of the best equipment in the world.

Hull design was the best of new ideas and, although only capable of just over 29 knots, these ships were highly maneouverable owing to the installation of twin balanced rudders. Capable of towing or being towed as an added feature to a ship which could "close down" under nuclear, biological or chemical attack by employment of a "pressurized citadel" system which protected personnel operating the ship in a gas tight interior. Filtration units were employed to provide protection against immediate fallout and the smooth, rounded hulls were an integral part of a wash down system which removed radiation from the ships' exteriors. It is safe to say that the initial and following versions of the ship, prior to conversions, had good sea-keeping qualities.

The conversion of the ST. LAURENT class to the present configuration was proposed within five years of the first launching and took place commencing 1964. It changed the ship into a helicopter destroyer. (That is to say it carried a helo). This design change and improvement meant the removal of the after AA gun mount, the addition of a flight deck and hangar, and the removal of one Mk 10 mortar mount. In the place of all these weapons, the Sea-King ASW helicopter would find a nest, and a Canadian designed and developed system known as Bear-Trap provided the necessary security for safe landing and winching in. (note: the Sea-King is a large, full-sized ASW aircraft, capable of detecting submarines and delivering a high volume of weapons. No other navy in the world operates such a large, powerful helo from such a small ship with such a high degree of success.)

So the sailor had new ships. Life at sea had improved greatly and the technology the modern sailor would be working with meant that he was expected to be highly skilled, educated or willing to accept education, and innovative. Within a few years of accepting the new ships and new equipment, the sailor was making his equipment do everything but dance.

Because of technological advances, trade structuring was placed under review, and in the late 1950s — early 1960s several old branches were amalgamated. Armourers, Anti-Aircraft rates, Layer rates and Quarters rates were made into Weaponmen Surface. TAS rates (ASDIC operators) became



Cont'd. page 13

Sailor: before the mast

Cont'd. from page 12

Sonarmen. Stokers and Engine Room artificers became Engineering rates under one branch. Quartermasters formed the basis for the Boatswain branch which also expanded with some of the former weapons tradesmen. What remained after restructuring was a trade alignment similar to what exists today — user/maintainer — and which is about to be modified again. The sailor had truly become a technologically modern tradesman, but the need for seamanship in even its roughest forms was to remain, and the Canadian Naval sailor remained a seaman first and foremost.

Conditions throughout the navy had vastly improved by 1955. The new destroyer escorts were, of course, top line. The frigates had been converted to improve habitability, although a complete air-conditioning package was found to be an impossible item to fit. They were improved technologically but the government, accepting the advice of the Naval staff, took aim on possible replacements by 1966.

Coastal minesweepers, closely resembling the British Ton class, were constructed, and in 1957 HMCS MAGNIFICENT was replaced by HMCS BONAVENTURE, a light fleet aircraft carrier. HMCS LABRADOR was the RCN's icebreaker and had started to stack up an impressive record of northern passages. The only thing which seemed to be missing to make the RCN a well rounded out maritime force was a fleet of submarines. But the Canadian Navy borrowed USS BURRFISH from the USN, renamed her HMCS GRILSE, and used her as a training boat until the new order for British OBERON class submarines could be filled.

Cruisers were ideal as training ships, but both HMCS ONTARIO and HMCS QUEBEC (formerly HMCS UGANDA), were out of date and difficult to man, so in 1956 QUEBEC was paid off. ONTARIO followed the same course in 1958. The frigates of the Pacific fleet took over the role of training ships.

By the 4th of May 1960, the Canadian Navy was a highly efficient, easily adaptable and well respected fighting team. The Canadian seaman was a proud, highly trained professional, confident in his work, at ease with some of the finest equipment of the day. He was well led and well cared for. Dependants were provided benefits as a form of compensation for accepting the long absences of husbands and fathers. The Royal Canadian navy was 50 years old, and it maintained itself as one of the world's more powerful conventional naval forces with a totally volunteer establishment. It was a Soviet Admiral who stated in reference to the RCN, ". . . any expectation to defeat such a force would be exceeding the limits of reality."

By 1964, plans were underway for a ship replacement programme which would retire the old frigates and continue to keep the navy technologically current. The General Purpose Frigate was in the design stages. Initially, four were to have been built with a follow on of ten more. It was expected that the Canadian seaman would soon take his "blue-water" combat navy into the space-age that was quickly developing. It seemed that the RCN had found its size and the Canadian seaman, the naval rating, was to play a large role in the continuing effort to maintain this country's sovereignty and provide a stabalizing influence in keeping the peace worldwide. Canada's navy was health.

The years 1950 to 1964, can only be described as the strong years for the Canadian naval seaman. His equipment was the finest, his conditions were improved greatly, relative to the recent past, and he had the support of his government. Morale was at its peak. Then, something happened to dampen the buoyed spirits of all. An idea which all who served with the permanent force thought was ludicrous. "It'll never happen," they would all say. But there were dark clouds forming on the horizon.

Perhaps few believe the sailors rhyme'

RED SKY AT NIGHT,
SAILOR'S DELIGHT.
RED SKY IN THE MORNING,
SAILOR TAKE WARNING.

But a red sky in the morning is an omen of approaching storm; something a sailor should shelter from. And, as the middle of the '60s decade dawned, the morning sky was a brilliant red. A man named Paul Hellyer was the Minister of National Defence.

Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

Close hauled through the Seventies

February 1st, 1968 was a Thursday. To most Canadians it was as insignificant as any ordinary work day. It was the beginning of the month, which in most businesses and government offices spelled the start of new forms and the cleaning up of the previous months loose ends. For the Canadian sailor however, it spelled the start of a storm. It was the day the Canadian Forces Reorganization Act went into effect.

The Canadian Forces Reorganization Act effectively wrote the end of three services in arms, including the Navy. Although the battle had been going on for a little better than four years, 1 Feb '68 officially dispatched the name Royal Canadian Navy to the history books, and the traditions of the naval seaman to the darkest corners of man's memories. It soured a decade of improvement and rebuilding, and worst of all, it cost more than it was worth — in too many good men.

The sailor's leaders had expressed their dislike for the idea of unification and had suffered terribly. Landymore, Sterling, Brock and many others became casualties, forced out of the Service because of the disagreement they expressed. And when they left, others followed. There were large numbers of men who simply refused to be party to a concept that had already been proven a failure. To the sailor it meant a struggle just to regain the right to be known as a sailor holding a sailor's rank.

The Navy became known as the "Sea Element", an off-handed attempt to admit that a navy in fact still existed. Each individual carried an (S) behind his official rank which bore no resemblance to ranks held by every other naval seaman in the world. Ordinary and Able Seamen were known as Privates; leading Seamen were known as Corporals; P2s were known as Sergeants and so on. The official list of ranks therefore, were not "unified" — they were army, and a great majority of sailors despised it.

Then the battle over uniforms came forward. Suggestions went from awful to ridiculous. One of the suggestions which found vehement opposition from sailors was a green four button suit with a forage cap. It was strongly pointed out that the cut was similar to the Air-Force blues and the colour and style was remarkably similar to that worn by the U.S. Army. In it's initial forms, there was not the slightest element of tradition for anybody and least of all, the sailor. Perhaps it was the opposition which caused it to be selected, but in any case, by the early 1970s the green uniform, complete with military style rank insignia, was the official uniform of the Canadian Armed Forces, thus the uniform of the sailor. And a warped uniform it was.

Officers continued to wear rank similar to the former RCN pattern but without the executive curl. Men wore rank on both sleeves and showed no trade affiliation. Cap badges initially issued for "Sea Ops" personnel were downright illegaL. Officers continued to wear their former badge, but the men were soon to become the subject of some confusion. Petty Officers First Class and above wore the former Chief Petty Officers cap badge; Petty Oficers Second Class and below wore a Petty Officers cap badge. Initially such dress caused confusion, especially in foreign port where other Commonwealth navies couldn't understand why Ordinary Seamen were wearing a badge of rank of a Petty Officer. It didn't take long for a formal complaint to come in from Great Britain. Those cap badges denoted rank in the RN, as they had done formerly in the RCN, and the Canadian Forces were abusing the marks of a proud institution. The badges were removed completely and replaced with a metal and enamel badge closely resembling the former officer's badge.

So the uniform, which had started with the sailor's blue-jacket of 1854 was gone, and a little remembered promise made in 1966 was broken. The Minister of National Defence had made the promise that all three services would retain their former service uniforms for ceremonial purposes. By 1970 however, sailors were told that they might as well throw their old uniforms away. They would never be allowed to wear them again.

Some things were apparently looking up, though. The new Tribal Class destroyer was being trialed. This remarkable class of ship was to set the stage for a new type of navy, technologically advanced and totally re-equipped. They were packed with state of the art electronics. Accommodation was modernized. Propulsion was by gas turbine jet engines combined with variable pitch propellers. It seemed as though the sailor would soon leave the steam-age behind for this fast efficient class of gas turbine destroyer. Such was not to be the case however, for the ships laid-down in the 1950s are still doing service as principal units.

Amongst the turbulence of the seventies another sailor appeared. Another rank in fact: Master Seaman. When Paul Hellyer was Minister of National Defence he changed the prerequisites for promotion to the rank of Leading Seaman in the Navy and Corporal in the Army and Air-Force. Promotion to Leading hand became automatic after 48 months service and attendance at the proper courses. There was no selection by merit, thus no assessment of leadership abilities, yet a massive number of Leading rates now existed, many with no leadership training or experience. The answer was the creation of yet another rank, between PO and LS to replace the old "Hooky". Master Seaman filled that requirement. Initially established as a Commanding Officer's appointment which was relinquished on posting, it eventually became fully established and promotions came from a merit list.

By the mid-1970s a slow disaster had started to develop — uncontrolled attrition. The initial instance of massive attrition was of slight concern to the government, for the total force was to be reduced by considerable numbers. The navy would have to take its share of the cut. The problem however, quickly became enlarged and the remaining seamen and officers began to show a good deal of concern for continuity and the ability to maintain a fully trained force. As an example of the pattern of development of the situation, a good starting point was the paying-off of HMCS BONAVENTURE. It was felt that when Canada's only aircraft-carrier was sent to the breakers that the navy would have a great many men in excess of the authorized strength. That situation lasted for less than five months. By the start of the 70s decade, the navy was falling through its authorized ceiling. Further ships were paid-off to category 'C' reserve status, (unmanned, In Ordinary), as an economy measure and an attempt to disburse crews to other ships in need. Less than one year after each instance the navy was encountering new difficulties manning existing ships. A certain fear developed in the minds of many senior officers — paying-off ships to man others didn't work. The reduction in billets caused the excess personnel to vanish, and the recruiting system wasn't able to provide men fast enough to take up the slack.

In an effort to speed up the process of training sailors for their first years of sea duty, the problem of maintaining an efficient force was allowed to compound itself. Training standards for Ordinary Seamen, particularly in some communications and technical trades, were reduced. Initially it might have made sense to get a new man through the new "integrated recruit training" in 9 to 11 weeks, through a "sea environmental course" in 4 weeks, and through a difficult trades training course in 15 weeks. This was done even though previous trades training courses had been over 20 weeks in duration. To accommodate the lost training days, standards fell.

Perhaps the worst failure to recognize the fault in the new training system was the need to reduce the failure rate of trainees. This was accomplished by eliminating difficult portions of the course. The result was a successful trainee with less training than necessary to properly serve in a ship. Such a problem only made the function of senior personnel and officers more difficult, for along with ship's team training was the requirement for an extraordinary amount of on-the-job training, a system which was bound to vary from ship to ship. By the late 1970s the training standards and syllabuses for formal courses were re-evaluated and improved to provide a better found trainee, although the quality of the past was gone and would take a great deal of time to re-establish.

By the late seventies the navy was desperately short of men. It was predicted that an immediate infusion of 600 ratings was required in order to meet the minimum committments set out for the Canadian Naval Service. That figure represented the Lower Deck of three operational destroyers. Recruiting was fast becoming a problem.

Traditionally, the recruit of the seventies had an education anywhere between grade 8 and secondary school completion. As recruiting became more difficult, the traditional resource dwindled. There appeared to be a trend for Canadian youth to remain in school for a longer period. The men that started joining the navy were better educated but more difficult to attract and even more difficult to retain. The policy that continued past the end of the decade was one of voluntary discharge on request. The terms of a great many engagements were never completed by the ratings who had signed them. Manpower management was truly out of control.

There are many reasons given for the condition that existed in the seventies — the massive attrition at the junior level. Many blame the problem on a lack of discipline; partially true, but a problem that seemed to vary from unit to unit. Others blame a general softening in society producing less of a man than had been traditional in the past; again partially true, but to a lesser degree than was perhaps reported. The most interesting finger was pointed at a lack of job satisfaction; this perhaps was one of the most valid points. It was difficult to convince the young man, fresh out of a highly advanced technological society, that ships and equipment developed in the 1950s, still being used with only minor modifications, operating through Defence Budget cuts, with no sign of an improving situation, were the best that could be provided. He further saw increased committments with no increase in manpower or equipment. His superiors were uncomfortable and he became somewhat disillusioned.

A fact of human nature is that one does not necessarily have to be the operator or maintainer of high-tech equipment to appreciate that it is there and being used. But even that condition was not the reason for the massive attrition. The problem was the policy which allowed a man to leave with six months notice, no matter the age of his engagement. A man suffering temporary disillusionment might depress himself to the level where he would choose to leave, thus making a fairly permanent decision which many in that category regretted. Had they been required to fulfil their engagement, many would have had to accept the parts of the service which caused them distress, and in fact, would have left many dissatisfiers behind with an increase in seniority and a change in status within a ship. It isn't that most didn't know this either; many simply chose the easier of two routes.

As the seventies progressed year by year, the sailor began to make some headway against the damage done to his traditions by "unification". His rank structure, although slightly altered, was re-established — **officially**. The Canadian naval seaman was again not just authorized to use his naval rank, but ordered to do so by a Canadian Forces Administrative Order. The uniform gained some additions which identified the seaman as such. Discussion began to take place on re-introducing some of the traditional garb and ceremony of the seaman and a saying worked its way out of the messdeck — "There's blood on the blue. On the green there's only lint."

Sailor: before the mast to gas turbines

By Dave Tyre

Jewels of the past and a diamond dead ahead

The sailors of Canada's navy are really just people, the same in many respects as their civilian friends. The difference is very subtle — and very difficult to define. Perhaps past attempts to analyse the sailor's motivation has been, in part, the cause of some problems. In some instances, lack of interest in the sailor and his motivation have definitely been the cause of a few very evident problems. The British seaman was totally misunderstood and virtually ignored for many years. It wasn't until a more enlightened and interested form of Naval Officer appeared on the British scene that the British Naval Seaman was fully recognized for his value; he was the Royal Navy, and proved it by preventing that force from sailing. He also showed responsibility, loyalty and dedication by placing the good of his country above his own demands for reform. He has since seen constant improvement in conditions of service and job satisfaction. He is consulted as to social changes in his part of the RN and enjoys the complete respect of his leaders. In battle, he remains the toughened combatent he always was. When HMS COVENTRY finally had to be abandoned after many hours of fire-fighting off the FALKLAND Islands, one of the first statements her Captain made to the press was, "What a ship's company. I'd sail with any one of them again." His words were testimony enough.

The motivation, though. Canadian and Briton share a similar motivation. Although they come from a different economic and social background, they share the same enjoyment in service. Their job is unique, their life is unique and because of those things, they become unique. They share a pride in that fact. The money they are paid is a simple retainer. It allows the sailor to relax away from his chosen environment and live as a respectable citizen. The fact is he does his work for reasons so simple and so old that they are often forgotten. Service. He has chosen to serve. No less than the naval officer, the naval seaman has voluntarily accepted the hardships that come with a life at sea and wishes to serve. He enjoys the unique life.

The Canadian is faced with a slightly different problem than the Briton however: recognition. The unique desire to serve is fuelled by simple recognition. In a country as vast as Canada, recognition of the sailor's job is slight. In fact, all arms of the Canadian Armed Services lack the public recognition which is necessary to motivate them to continue. The population of Canada generally doesn't think about the navy at all. The fault lies not in the population however, but in another direction, and until it becomes history, it cannot be amplified upon.

Generally, the conditions of service in the Canadian Navy are good. Overall, the Canadian Naval Seaman has little to complain about. His pay is adequate, his benefits are average and his working conditions are subject to the same things which govern working conditions in ships everywhere: the state of the sea. Living conditions in his ships are slightly behind those of other western navies, but it is a slight slip which can easily be rectified. Socially and traditionally, he is gradually pulling away from the mashed vegetable effect of "unification". It has been said that the only branch of the service which wears the green uniform the way it was designed to be worn is the navy. So perhaps, in a cruel sort of way, the sailor has not changed: he usually reserves his fighting for a foreign enemy.

The Canadian navy generally is in rough condition. Its people remain the strongest asset in the aresenal, and even in that category an upsetting turmoil has spread to become one of two major problems.

The first, but not necessarily the most important problem, is in equipment and ships. Age is beginning to take its toll. A majority of Canada's ships are passing the twenty-five year in service mark. Many have had little in the way of modification to make them viable combat units in a modern warfare envirionment. Of little consolation to those who serve is the fact that the RCN has seen worse times.

The second problem, sharing importance with the first, is manpower. Only recently has there been any attempt made to control attrition at the junior rank level. At the senior rating level, attrition continues unchecked and unpredicted. The terms of service are so poorly defined at the intermediate term, those with five to twenty years service, that ships are constantly faced with situations which leave essential billets empty and a shock wave of unfavourable reaction throughout tradesmen in that rate. But the primary complaint of sailors with respect to manpower today, is that there are not enough of them.

The navy is literally undermanned, and shall remain so until the present system of manning the force changes. The present system is "one man, one billet". Unfortunately the operational units pay for training by finding billets empty in their ships. A trade can be filled to quota, yet have less than the required number of men available to properly man the ships. It is best described by this example: A trade has a ceiling of 300 men. There is a rank pyramid which is logical and progressive. 62% of the trade is to be leading Seamen or below. On the basic training list are 60 men, none available for sea duty. Rather than allow the ceiling to temporarily increase and then decrease with attrition, those 60 men are counted in the trade ceiling of 300. That means that 20% of the trade is untouchable for duty beyond their basic training requirements. The ships go shorthanded. The trade has a full quota on paper, yet the ships suffer critical shortages which in turn causes further unscheduled attrition; men simply get fed up with "making do" and seek employment where the job seems a little more stable.

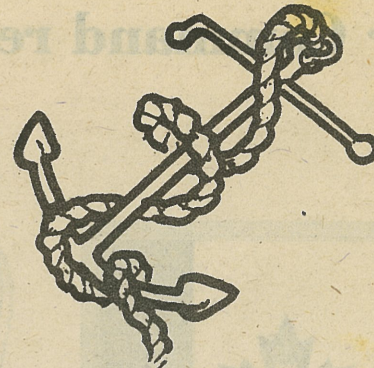
There are conditions in the navy today which smack of attitudes of the past. They are not, as many may tend to state, numerous and widespread. They are most definitely isolated, yet are a great cause for concern. Incidents which require only a few minutes to verify have taken place. For example, in the past three years more than one representative on one particular Welfare Committee has stated that the meeting is conducted less openly than has been their experience in other ships. In one particular meeting the Chairman of the Welfare Committee stated quite clearly that the purpose of the Welfare Committee was to concern itself with the operation of the Ship's Fund and little else. Subjects relating to morale, complaints beyond anything but a minor problem etcetera, were denied hearing. Past history has revealed that a similar approach has spawned disaster.

Routines in ships of the same command vary according to their role. To many this is a desireable situation for it shows a flexibility on the part of administrative commanders to adapt a basic routine to provide a better benefit in time-off to their men. Others disagree. They feel that varying routines between ships are the cause of unnecessary dissention between ships' companies. They support their disagreement by producing a general complaint from the past which was found to be justified. Indeed, varying routines was one of problems which the Mainguy report recommended be corrected. This may be particularly true in the case of ships in company.

There have been complaints, mostly on the messdecks, of the dispassionate approach of many officers toward the men. They feel a gap has regenerated itself between the wardroom and the lower deck. Such, however, does not appear to be the complete story. True enough, there are officers who tend to exercise their authority by virtue of the prestige attached to their rank, and if history is any reference, they will do poorly in their endeavour to make a career as a naval officer.

The majority, it would appear, are well educated, dedicated and well trained. They do not support a gap between the wardroom and lower deck. They support a difference in privilege associated with rank. Indeed there are those in the lower deck who find that situation more than desireable and promote it. The original complaint therefore, is based upon experiences with those few who give the majority an unfavourable tint. The same must be true in the other direction too, if we examine all parallax views.

The Divisional System has come under serious scrutiny. There has been much time and effort spent to streamline it and make it more effective. The problem with the system however, is not its present effectiveness as laid out; it is the lack of uniformity in its operation between units and the varying treatment afforded men of different ranks. In some units the Divisional System is highly effective and very successful. In others it is a defunct, authoritarian shell. In yet others, the system works well in support of the junior men and to a much lesser degree, in fact, sometimes not at all, in support of the senior rates. There is a theory attached to that situation which does generate some thought. It is theorized that many senior rates rejected the use of the Divisional System on their own behalf and dealt with personal problems outside the system. This was allowed to continue unchecked by some Divisional Officers and became the norm. Now that men who have been subject to the operation of the Divisional System as junior rates have progressed to the senior rank levels, they find a lack of support when they enter the system with an extraordinary problem.



Only a theory, but an interesting one.

On the subject of Divisional System is a small sheet known as the "Divisional Record Sheet." Most of the information contained on it, once filled in, is necessary. However, parts of it are questionable and the fact that it moves from ship to ship with the man's records is something which was rejected in the past as unfair and dangerous. It is nothing more or less than something known in the past as a "yellow sheet" — the hated CNS 264. One Chief Petty Officer, on seeing the "Divisional Record Sheet" for the first time simply shook his head and remarked, "God, here we go again."

Until the "Divisional Record Sheet", not quite a Zerox copy of the CNS 264 but very close, appeared on the scene, a man who had been doing less than adequate went to a new ship with the opportunity to start afresh. If there was any communication about his conduct, attitude, or work, it was usually between supervisors and was a verbal contact. Now, such a man arrives in his new ship pre-assessed. It is an undesireable situation which can do nothing to promote good relations.

And what of morale? Morale is relative. Morale generally throughout the seaman corps of the Canadian Navy is certainly not poor. But it varies, as it always has and always will, from ship to ship and barracks to barracks. Morale, almost completely, depends upon three things: the quality of leadership; unit efficiency; and, tradition. Since that intangible, leadership, appears to be good, morale is not lessened by that factor. Unit efficiency depends on many things and certainly affects morale. Tradition depends to a large degree on the promotion of customs of the service and convention. If they are allowed to slip, or crash as they have done in the recent past, morale will be seriously degraded. The sailor has regained a good part of his customs and tradition, save for his traditional uniform, so we can assume that the overall morale is relatively good. It has been much better.

And the sailor of the future. What of him? What lies in the path ahead? Who knows? The sailor, the permanent naval rating, in Canada is here to stay. His past is far reaching and has been less than stable. He has been the subject of violent debate at the inception of the RCN and a strong contributor in two wars. He takes his heritage from the finest, best developed seamanhood in the world: the British sailor. He has been called a complainer, a great kidder, a fool, and all this by his political leaders.

He serves on anyway. Many fail to understand why. Perhaps what they fail to understand is his very nature. It has never changed. From his service before the mast to his service in the age of gas turbines, his nature, his purpose and his will have remained the same. There may be changes in expression, but deep down the sailor of today is the sailor of yesterday. It is because of that that he serves on. He has been through it all before. His heritage is as full of disasterous calamity as it is full of glory. If his existence in the service of his country is threatened — well, it certainly wouldn't be the first time.

The year 1985, just around the corner, holds special interest for many sailors in this country. It will mark the diamond anniversary of the Canadian Naval Service. 75 years old. Three different names, (The Canadian Naval Service, The Royal Canadian Navy and Maritime Command of the CAF), three wars, hundreds of emergencies, the record could go on and on. But what will the Canadian Naval Seaman celebrate with in 1985? In 1960 he showed the world a strong, proud, modern, world-class battle team. Will he be able to show the world a navy befitting a diamond? Perhaps himself then — an old and tarnished jewel.

Not a diamond, but with a place in the naval crown.

Editor's Note: this is the last installment of Petty Officer Dave Tyre's series 'Sailor: before the mast go gas turbines. Lookout is pleased to have published this well-researched and informative social history of the sailors of the Canadian navy.