

A brief history of the ships of the Royal Newfoundland Navy: HMNS CABOT, HMNS FOGATA and HMNS PETREL by Donald (Bud) Rose.

At the start of WWI, Britain relayed their displeasure with Newfoundland for not doing a fair share in defence of the empire. They made a point of indicating that the Dominion of Newfoundland did not have an army or navy, and thus did not contribute to any war effort. The South African (Boer) and Crimean wars were emphasized. The message was clear and Newfoundland commenced to raise both an Army and a Navy. The history of the Royal Nfld Regiment is now legend.

His Majesty's Royal Nfld Navy was a different story; three vessels were obtained by the NFLD Government. The **CGS PETREL** from the Canadian Fisheries Protection Service, the **S.S. FOGATA** from Bowring Brothers, and the **S.S. CABOT** from Crosby Shipping. Two were (at one time or another) used in the Nfld coastal service, engaged in taking supplies to various out ports around the island and on the Labrador coast. All three were commissioned as "His Majesty's Newfoundland Ship" (HMNS), and manned by sailors from the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve. **HMS CALYSPO** had been sent to Nfld in 1902 and served as both a training vessel and depot ship.

1) The **PETREL** was obtained from the Canadian Fisheries Protection Service which operated in Atlantic waters from 1905 to 1914. In 1914 she was seconded to the Dominion of Newfoundland Navy and became **HMNS PETREL** under Captain Kennedy. In 1915 she was transferred to the RCN as **HMCS PETREL**. Paid off by the RCN in 1918, she returned to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries and continued in government service until she was paid off in 1923 and she was sold to private interest.

The **PETREL**, when operated by the Dept. of Marine and Fisheries, would also carry small order freight to Out Ports, if she was going that way. Financial documents from the Ryan Premises in Bonavista revealed an item where they paid for 2 sides of beef, which they never received. The supplier was to ship the beef on the **CGS PETREL**.

2) The **S.S. CABOT** was obtained from Crosbie & Company Shipping of St. Johns Nfld and commissioned **HMNS CABOT** Under Captain Mackey. She was transferred to RCN as **HMCS CABOT**. Crosbie shipping is still in operation today, but have no records of their many ships. Crosbie re-acquired **CABOT** at wars end.

3) Little is known of the **SS FOGATA** under Captain M. Dalton. Although obtained locally, she displayed many features of a New England built 'Menhaden Trawler'. Her vertical stem – raked aft funnel – datum deck – gunnels - dove-tail stern and draft, are striking resemblance. Transferred to RCN as **HMCS FOGATA**. She was paid off by the RCN in 1918 and went back to private interests.

The Dominion of Nfld Navy was not what the admiralty envisioned. Having the Royal Navy, Canadian Navy and the Nfld Navy, each with the same objective but appearing to be at cross purposes, was not satisfactory. During 1914 the need for any and all ships was paramount. With the increasing strength of the RCN and the urgent need for Royal Navy Ships to be elsewhere, a conclusion was reached. The ships of His Majesty's Nfld Navy would be re-commissioned into the Canadian Navy. The Canadian Navy would assume control of naval operations on the Atlantic seaboard. The RN would then be at liberty to re-deploy her Atlantic squadrons. This re-commissioning took place in early 1915.

A file photo show mainly RCN sailors on **HMCS CABOT** (4 RCN, 1 Nfld Royal Naval Reserve). The [photo of the D P Ingraham](#) was taken on 15 June 1915. As a point of interest, 106 members of the Nfld Royal

Naval Reserve, served on HMCS Niobe. There is a [photo of the stokers](#) on HMCS Niobe having just finished re-coaling the stores. Of the 22 sailors in the photo - 8 are wearing white hats (RCN) 8 blue hats (NRNR) and the rest wearing their old "scrub-bees".