

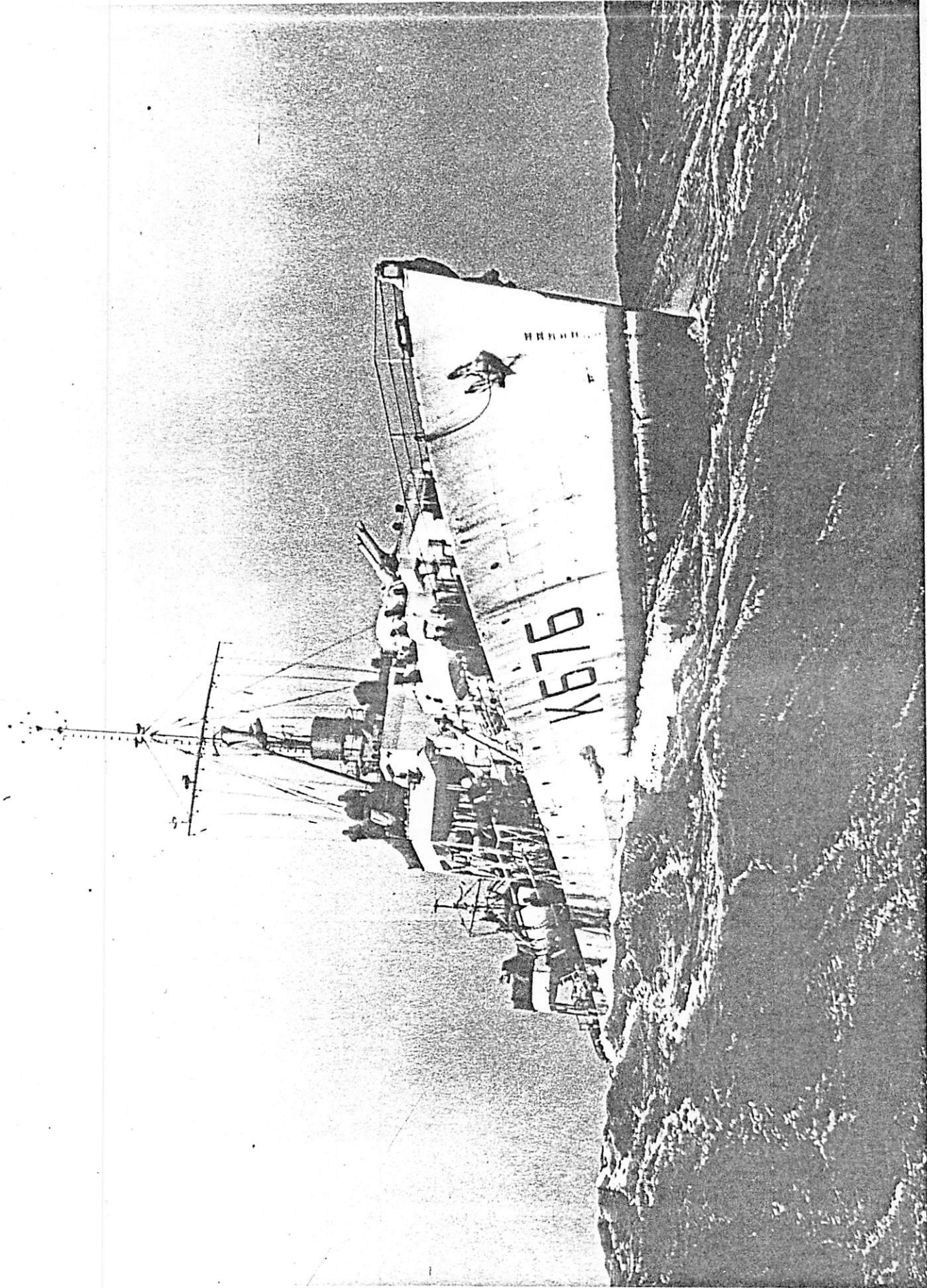
WELCOME TO PENETANGUISHENE

ALL VETERANS

OF

H.M.C.S. PENETANG

September, 1983



BRIEF HISTORY OF HMCS PENETANG

HMCS PENETANG, a River Class frigate of the 1943-44 building programme,¹ is named after the Ontario town of Penetanguishene. The name "Penetanguishene", which means "the place of the white falling sands", was given to the district by the Indians because of a great sandy cliff on the western side of the harbour, pieces of which are forever falling away. The white falling sands not only gave the town its name, they also provided HMCS PENETANG with an interesting ship's badge. Against a blue background this badge shows a yellow hour-glass filled with white sand. Although this badge was not chosen until 1954, it represents very well the origin of the ship's name and her connection with the town of Penetanguishene.

This small Ontario town has shown for many years a keen interest in things naval. This interest probably stems from the historic connection between Penetanguishene and the Royal Navy. The first man to settle in the town belonged to the naval garrison who moved into the town site in 1814 as the war with the United States was drawing to a close. Situated on a sheltered arm of Georgian Bay, the harbour at Penetanguishene had been chosen as a site for the chief Royal Navy base on the upper lakes. A pier and shipyard were constructed, and for the next forty years a naval base was maintained here. The people of Penetanguishene are very conscious of this period in their past, being at present engaged in a project to excavate and restore the buildings of the former naval establishment. Their pride in this connection with the Royal Navy helps to account for the keen interest which the townspeople

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These River Class frigates, 301½' long and 36'7" beam, had a displacement of 1,445 tons and a full speed of 19.0 knots.

have taken in HMCS PENETANG from the time of her commissioning.

Built by the Davie Shipbuilding and Repair Company in Lauzon, PENETANG was commissioned on 19 October 1944. The acceptance trials held prior to her commissioning had not proved satisfactory and further work had to be carried out at Lauzon. Then, on 4 November, PENETANG was allocated to the Commander-in-Chief Canadian North-West Atlantic, and by the 5th she was ready to proceed to Halifax.

The next few weeks were occupied by a fitting-out period at Halifax, followed by "work-ups" at Bermuda from 13 December to 2 January 1945. On the return voyage, PENETANG got her first taste of convoy work,¹ but no U-boats were encountered. During this period the Germans were concentrating their submarines in the costal waters around the British Isles, and not many ventured across to this side of the Atlantic. However, one or two of the U-boats did carry out attacks in Canadian coastal waters, and five merchant ships were sunk off Halifax during January 1945. Having returned safely, PENETANG carried out an anti-submarine sweep and two brief convoy patrols during the next few weeks.

Then, on 9 February, PENETANG was assigned to Escort Group C-9 as Senior Officer. An additional escort group on the North Atlantic convoy run was necessary in order to allow a convoy to leave every ten days instead of at fifteen-day intervals. And so Escort Group C-9, consisting of HMC ships PENETANG, VICTORIAVILLE, FERGUS, THORLOCK, FREDERICTON and HALIFAX, was to operate on the main convoy route between St. John's Newfoundland and Londonderry. The group was to commence

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Convoys escorted by PENETANG while returning from Bermuda were ON-274, HX-331, and XB-142 (3 to 13 January 1945.) Later she escorted SC-168 out of Halifax (12 to 13 February.)

operations on 20 February, which meant that convoy work would then begin in earnest for HMCS PENETANG.

Escort Group C-9 sailed from Halifax on 26 February to meet convoy SC-168¹ and escort it to the United Kingdom. The rendezvous was made on the 28th at WESTOMP.² The convoy was rather scattered after two days of heavy seas, but the ships started to reform almost immediately as the weather was improving. The voyage to the United Kingdom proceeded without incident, the ships arriving in Londonderry on 14 March to complete Escort Group C-9's first major convoy operation.

During the next two and a half months, C-9 escorted four more convoys³ across the Atlantic without encountering a German U-boat. Several asdic contacts were investigated during the course of this convoy work, but they all proved to be non-submarine. However early in 1945 the Germans still had close to one hundred and fifty U-boats in operation. Their numbers were again on the increase, their boats were better and more elusive, and they fought with a vigour unequalled since the days of the wolf packs. Every convoy that sailed had to be given protection, although perhaps only one in ten might be attacked. It was the presence of these escort groups with the convoys that warded off attack, and long tedious patrols were necessary right to the end of the war.

The closest contact that Escort Group C-9 made with an enemy U-boat occurred during their fourth convoy operation. The group was proceeding from the United Kingdom to New York with Convoy ON-300, when the German High Command ordered the boats of their submarine fleet to surrender. During the

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1. A Halifax to United Kingdom convoy.
 2. WESTOMP means Western Ocean Meeting Place, a location off St. John's Newfoundland where the convoys that had been proceeding along the coast from New York or Halifax were picked up for escort across the North Atlantic. The exact location of WESTOMP varied from time to time.
 3. Convoy ON-292 (25 Mar. to 4 Apr.). Convoy SC-172 (9 to 22 Apr.) Convoy ON-300 (2 to 12 May), Convoy SC-176 (20 to 29 May).

morning of 11 May 1945, the Senior Officer of C-9 was ordered to dispatch two ships to intercept an enemy submarine, the U-190. This U-boat had surfaced, reported her position, and was making for Newfoundland in accordance with the surrender instructions broadcast to the German fleet. HMCS VICTORIAVILLE and HMCS THORLOCK were detached from the convoy to escort the submarine into port. They caught up with the U-boat before midnight and a boarding party prepared to board the submarine. No trouble was encountered with the crew and the two RCN ships escorted U-190 to Bay Bulls, Newfoundland.¹ Although they were not able to claim any U-boats destroyed in action, Escort Group C-9 at least had the satisfaction of accepting the surrender of one enemy submarine.

The 28 May 1945, saw the end of the Atlantic convoy system. The majority of the enemy U-boats had surrendered by this time, and it was considered that the delay and the navigational risk of sailing in convoy outweighed the danger of attack. At midnight on the 28th, therefore, a signal was sent out discontinuing convoys in the Atlantic, the North Sea, and other neighbouring waters.

This order reached the ships of Escort Group C-9 as they approached the United Kingdom with a convoy of twenty-seven ships. Arriving in Londonderry on 30 May, the group sailed on to Greenock to embark service personnel for the return voyage to Canada. The ships then proceeded via great circle route to St. John's Newfoundland, where one hundred and forty-two returning servicemen were disembarked on 12 June. And so, after three and a half months of service, C-9 had completed her tour of duty on the U.K. convoy run.

¹. Bay Bulls is situated on the Avalon Peninsula a few miles south of St. John's.

HMCS PENETANG was next required to play a part in the transport of service personnel to their homes in Canada. Because the port and rail facilities in Halifax were already overworked, many of the servicemen returning home from the United Kingdom were landed at St. John's Newfoundland. From there they were taken to Quebec City by ship and thence along the north shore of the St. Lawrence to Montreal and points west. When she arrived in Newfoundland PENETANG was assigned to this St. John's to Quebec City transport run. During the next few weeks she made five voyages between Newfoundland and mainland ports, completing her last voyage to Quebec on 11 September 1945.

The ship had been scheduled to begin a refit on 1 September in preparation for service in the Pacific. However the Japanese surrender had occurred in August, and when PENETANG left the transport run, it was to proceed to Shelburne, N.S. to pay off. Having landed her ammunition there, she proceeded to Sydney for the removal of stores. Then she returned to Shelburne to be paid off on 10 November 1945. Although her war-time career had been short and without occurrences of particular note, the ship was awarded the Battle Honour "Atlantic 1945" for her service as close escort on the North Atlantic convoy run.

On 21 December 1945 PENETANG was turned over to War Assets Corporation for disposal. Sometime before December 1947 she, along with several other frigates was acquired for scrap purposes by Marine Industries Limited at Sorel. However, before these ships could be converted to scrap, they were frozen by the government. Then in September 1950

at a meeting of the NATO Chiefs of Staff in Washington, Canada's contribution toward Atlantic defence was set. Fortunately the frigates at Sorel had been frozen by the government. Almost immediately, the Naval Board recommended that they should be reacquired to meet these NATO commitments. Negotiations got under way, and on 7 June 1951 the government bought back from Marine Industries the eighteen frigates that lay at Sorel.

The contract for the modernization of HMCS PENETANG went to George T. Davie and Sons Limited, and she arrived at Lauzon on 26 June. Work on the ship continued for the next three years, PENETANG being stripped down to her hull and rebuilt. The chief structural change was the extension of the fo'c'sle deck aft to add a whole new deck level for almost a third of the ship's length. This change meant that the squid¹ was set down in a well or hatch that could be covered, and it also gave more space for the storing of ammunition. For the comfort of the crew the living quarters had been redesigned so that every man would have his own bunk instead of the traditional hammock. A stainless steel galley and cafeteria as well as a fully equipped laundry had been fitted. These modernized ships were sufficiently different from the River Class frigates of the Second World War that it was decided to reclassify them as Prestonian Class frigates.

By April 1954 PENETANG began her contractor's sea trials. All was in readiness by the end of May and the ship was recommissioned on the afternoon of 1 June at

¹. A more recent ahead-throwing anti-submarine weapon than the hedgehog, the squid fires three large bombs which can be set to explode at any given depth. The weapon possesses a certain amount of manoeuverability, for the squid can be moved through a small arc so as to fire off either bow.

Lauzon. Major George Kerry of Penetanguishene took part in the ceremony at the Lauzon shipyards, presenting the original ship's bell of HMCS PENETANG to the new Commanding Officer. This bell had spent the nine years since PENETANG had last seen service in the Legion Hall of Penetanguishene. During the presentation Major Kerry spoke of the honour afforded the citizens of his town in having a ship of the RCN named after their community.

From the shipyards at Lauzon, HMCS PENETANG proceeded to Halifax where she secured on 6 June 1954. Storing the ship and harbour trials occupied the rest of the month until the 29th, when PENETANG weighed anchor for St. John's Newfoundland. She spent the next three weeks on a northern cruise to Labrador, organized so that the Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland, Sir Leonard Outerbridge, might visit some of the more remote parts of his province. The ship called at seven ports in Labrador, of which the farthest north was Hebron in the latitude of Ungava Bay. Then, during the month of August, PENETANG was engaged upon anti-submarine exercises first with USS BAY and then with HMS ALCIDE. The summer's activities came to an end on 2 September when the ship returned to Halifax from these TAS exercises.¹

After spending most of September and October in drydock at Dartmouth, HMCS PENETANG sailed for anti-submarine exercises off Bermuda. The ship spent the week-end alongside at St. George's under a clear blue sky and a sun which "outdid the tourist literature". On 17 November 1954 while exercising off Bermuda, PENETANG met HMCS LABRADOR steaming northward on the homeward lap of her voyage around North America. A spirited exchange of messages took place and the ship sent her congratulations to the LABRADOR. On the following day, PENETANG also steamed northward on her way

1. Torpedo Anti-Submarine Exercises.

back to Halifax.

Christmas was preceded by one more cruise to Bermuda. However HMCS PENETANG had returned to Halifax by 12 December and remained alongside for the rest of the month so that Christmas and New Year's leave could be granted to the ship's company. The men worked with enthusiasm to make PENETANG the best decorated ship in harbour, and when the officers conducted rounds on Christmas Day they found no lack of festive spirit among those left on board. The youngest man in the ship donned the Captain's uniform for this occasion, following a custom which appears to be slowly dying out in the RCN. In the Commanding Officer's opinion his ship stood second to none that Christmas, particularly with regard to the keenness and enthusiasm of her crew.

In the next few months HMCS PENETANG made no fewer than eight cruises to Bermuda to carry out anti-submarine exercises. Eventually, in July, "Crowsnest" carried this report of the ship's unvaried activities:

It is rumoured in the PENETANG that the ship knows no other steady course than 184 degrees to Bermuda and 004 degrees back to "Slackers".¹
In fact it is further rumoured that the "Old Girl" can find her own way there and back as she has been there so often.²

During one of these cruises to Bermuda the ship was operating with USS RAY. When PENETANG met with the submarine at first light on 17 March to commence the day's work, the USS RAY fired two green flares. The ship's officers and yeomen immediately began leafing through orders and publications to determine the meaning of the signal. It turned out that the Commanding Officer of the submarine, being of Irish descent, could not resist celebrating the

1. "Slackers" is a nickname for Halifax.

2. "Crowsnest", July 1955.

17th of March.

In between cruises to Bermuda, PENETANG took part in the ceremony marking the opening of the Angus L. Macdonald Bridge linking Halifax and Dartmouth.¹ Then in June 1955 she also found time to take part in Exercise "Fog Hank" with HMC Ships MAGNIFICENT, HAIDA, MICMAC, TORONTO, LAUZON, and PRESTONIAN. This exercise was most aptly named since the rendezvous was made in fog and no ships were sighted, except briefly, until its completion. The Commanding Officer of the PENETANG acted as Commodore of the convoy throughout the exercise and so the ship had to maintain a steady course and constant speed.

At the end of June a regatta was held in Bedford Basin. The fleet, when assembled in the Basin, made a most impressive sight, particularly in the evening with all the ships illuminated. When the points for the regatta were tallied PENETANG had finished fourth, her crew having shown a keen interest in the day's events. The regatta proved excellent for morale, and it was felt that it should help to revive boat pulling which is slowly becoming a dying art in the RCN.

Then, in July, the National Film Board spent two days with HMCS PENETANG shooting a television film on anti-submarine warfare. The sea scenes were filmed on 14 July in the approaches to Halifax harbour. Two cameramen were transferred at sea to an RCN helicopter in order to take shots of the PENETANG under way. The sequences that were filmed alongside the jetty were completed the following day.

Of course the cruises to Bermuda for anti-submarine training had been continuing throughout the summer. The last of these was completed on 11 August 1955 and PENETANG spent the rest of

¹. This ceremony took place on 2 April 1955.

the month preparing to pay off. On 18 August the ship, in company with HMCS BUCKINGHAM, put in at Digby in order to embark one hundred and sixty Boy Scouts. The two ships were to transport these boys to Saint John, N.B., on their way to the World Scout Jamboree at Niagara-on-the-Lake. During this passage from Digby to Saint John, PENETANG took on the appearance of a fishing boat; for the Scouts had on board over one hundred lobster pots which they were planning to use for trading purposes at the Jamboree.

Finally, on 2 September 1955, at Saint John, HMCS PENETANG paid off and HMCS OUTREMONT was commissioned. It was rather unusual to hold such a combined ceremony in which the officers and crew simply transferred from one ship to the other.

Lieutenant-Commander J.M. Paul commented,

"We of the PENETANG were sorry to loose our good ship, however we did gain a newer model and we are grateful to remain at sea.¹ "

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During the course of the summer negotiations had been going on between the Norwegian and Canadian Governments concerning the loan of certain Canadian frigates to Norway. Not all the modernized Prestonian Class frigates could be kept in operation by the RCN under the current policy of maintaining a 20,000-man navy. Since the Norwegians were faced with the necessity of replacing some of their ships, it seemed only sensible for the RCN to loan them the necessary frigates as part of the Canadian contribution to NATO. The agreement on the loan of the ships was finally reached at Ottawa during the first week of November 1955. Three RCN frigates, HMC Ships PENETANG, PRESTONIAN AND TORONTO were to be transferred to the Royal Norwegian Navy early in 1956.

HMCS PENETANG was the first of the three ships to be

¹. Report of Proceedings, HMCS PENETANG, for August and 1 to 2 September 1955.

taken over by the Royal Norwegian Navy. In order to make sure that the frigate was turned over to the Norwegians in proper condition, it was decided that she should be recommissioned in the RCN before transfer. The commissioning took place on 9 January 1956 at Saint John, N.B. Acceptance trials had been carried out prior to commissioning so that PENETANG was ready to proceed to Halifax as soon as stores were embarked. Having arrived at Halifax, ten days were spent in attempting to repair many minor defects which had been overlooked during the ship's refit. The officers and men of HMCS PENETANG did not want to give the Norwegians a poor impression of the RCN by turning over to them a ship that was not ready to put to sea.

The 25th January was the day set for the transfer of the PENETANG. Rear-Admiral Bidwell, Flag Officer Atlantic Coast, addressed the assembled guests and the RCN and RNN personnel, stressing the significance of the event that they were witnessing that day. Then the Commanding Officer of the PENETANG, having requested permission to proceed with the transfer, ordered the White Ensign lowered and marched his men ashore. The Norwegian Ambassadore, His Excellency Arne Cunneng, addressed the assembly and accepted the ship on behalf of the Norwegian Government. By this time the ship's company had disembarked and the Ambassador's wife proceeded to rename the ship KNM DRAUG. The Norwegian naval personnel embarked and the new Commanding Officer ordered the Norwegian ensign hoisted. Later, Norwegian Admiralty instructions were read to the new ship's company, and the ceremony of transfer was thus completed.

KNM DRAUG left Halifax for Norway on 4 February 1956, and is at present still in service with the Royal Norwegian Navy. When she first arrived from Canada, Rear-Admiral E. Hostvedt of the Royal Norwegian Navy made the following statement at a press conference:

The agreement between Canada and Norway for the loan of three frigates illustrates Canada's friendly attitude towards Norway and characterizes her outstanding effort towards the common interest of the North Atlantic Tready Organization.¹

¹."Crowsnest", April 1956.

LIST OF COMMANDING OFFICERS
HMCS PENETANG

19 October 1944 to 23 August 1945	Lieutenant-Commander A.R. Hicks. RCNVR.
23 August 1945 to 8 November 1945	Lieutenant E.M. Lutes, RCNVR.
8 November 1945 to 10 November 1945	Lieutenant W.H. Shaw, RCNVR.
1 June 1954 to 5 November 1954	Commander B.P. Young, MBE, CD, RCN.
5 November 1954 to 14 December 1954	Commander V. Browne CD. RCN
14 December 1954 to 2 September 1955	Lieutenant-Commander J.M. Paul, CD. RCN.
5 January 1956 to 25 January 1956	Lieutenant-Commander A.M. McDonald, CD, RCN

Naval Historical Section,
Naval Headquarters,
Ottawa, Ontario.
16 October, 1957.

S O U R C E S

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NHS 8000 Signals, HMCS PENETANG.
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NHS 8000 General Information, HMCS PRESTONIAN.
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NHS 8440 C-9 Escort Group C-9.
NHS 1650 U-190
NHS Provincial Marine : Penetanguishene.
NSC 8700 FFE-316 Movements, HMCS PENETANG.
NSS 8355-381/43 Days at Sea, HMCS PENETANG.
NS 1460-FFE-316 Insignia, Badges, and Flags, HMCS PENETANG.
DNPO Cards, HMCS PENETANG.

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