



WE WELCOME

H.M.C.S. UGANDA TO FALKLAND IS.

H.M.C.S. "Uganda" was originally a Royal Navy ship, built by Vickers-Armstrong at Newcastle-on-Tyne and commissioned on December 17th, 1942.

She is a medium cruiser of the "Fiji" class, 555 feet long, with a beam of 62 feet and a displacement of 9,500 tons. Her main armament consists of nine six-inch guns, arranged in three turrets. She also carries extensive anti-aircraft armament, including eight four-inch guns.

In May of 1943 she escorted Prime Minister Winston Churchill to the United States. She then took part in the Sicilian and Salerno actions in the Italian campaign and on September 13, 1943, was hit by a rocket bomb off Salerno and badly damaged. One officer and 15 ratings were killed.

The ship proceeded to Malta in tow and finally left for Gibraltar in slow convoy. After temporary repairs had been made, she steamed for the United States for refit in the Navy Yard at Charleston, South Carolina.

Here "Uganda" underwent extensive modernization and on Trafalgar Day, October 21, 1944, she was recommissioned as the first all-Canadian cruiser of World War II. The speakers on that occasion were Sir Gerald Campbell, British Minister and special assistant to the British Ambassador to the United States, and Hon. Leighton McCarthy, K.C., Ambassador of Canada to the United States.

At the request of the Protectorate of Uganda and the Admiralty, the original name of the ship was retained as a tribute from Canada to a sister member of the British Empire.

"Uganda", on her way to Australia to join the British Pacific Fleet, steamed 20,000 miles by way of Scapa Flow, Gibraltar, Malta and Alexandria, where she completed working-up exercises

She reached the battle area in April and, during the next four months, steamed thousands of miles with the British Pacific Fleet, taking part in several actions.

One of the records established by "Uganda" in the war in the Far East was in remaining 152 days at sea or in the battle area with steam on the main engines continuously. For most of this period the ship was in the tropics in conditions of great heat and discomfort.

"Uganda", during her nine months with the Royal Navy, steamed 46,236 miles. From the time she left Charleston, South Carolina, on October 24, 1944, to her arrival in Esquimalt, B.C., on July 10, 1945 -- a period of eight and one-half months -- she had steamed 63,400 miles. In other words, since her original commissioning by the Royal Navy, until the close of the war in the Pacific, "Uganda" had sailed a distance about equal to four times around the equator.

Royal Canadian Navy in World War II.

In September 1939 a keen but infinitesimal Royal Canadian Navy put to sea in six destroyers and a handful of smaller craft. This was the entire fleet available for meeting its part of the appalling situation faced by the suddenly embattled Allies. Of the 3,604 officers and men making up the force prior to the outbreak of hostilities, less than 1,700 were on a permanent active service basis. These ships and men, however, were to prove the core of a Navy that within five years was fighting a global war as the fourth Allied sea power. Each trained seaman of the active force was to be duplicated nearly sixty times in providing crews for the fleet of 378 warcraft and more than 400 smaller vessels which Canada had in operation by 1945.

During the six years of the struggle over 107,000 Canadians wore Naval uniform. The peak personnel at one period reached 95,705, by which time the wakes of R.C.N. vessels were streaking every ocean to which the fight against the Axis had been carried. Apart from the manning of her own warships, Canada loaned a considerable number of personnel to the Royal Navy.

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The remarkable feature of this performance was its truly national character. For several generations the Dominion had been without marked maritime activity. The contribution to World War I. had been a Navy of less than 6,000 men, many of whom served in British ships. When Canada assumed a major responsibility for the Battle of the Atlantic in the early stages of World War II, the practical implications seemed far beyond her capacity. A large percentage of recruits came from her great inland stretches. Many of them had never seen the sea before. Nevertheless, they brought with them capacities for teamwork which, under rapid development, provided the winning touch against a tough, highly trained enemy. Most important from the point of view of morale, they had a suddenly Navy-minded country's enthusiastic backing.

From North Russia to Japan, ships of the Royal Canadian Navy, played their vigorous part. Ten thousand men and 109 ships participated in the Normandy invasion. When the Allies landed in North Africa, the R.C.N. was there. The Fleet Air Arm was studded with outstanding Canadian sailor-airmen, one of whom, Lt. R.H. Gray, V.C., D.S.C., Mention in Dispatches, died as one of the war's great heroes.

Of all service ribbons, however, the watered blue, green and white of the Atlantic Star is one that symbolizes the great contribution of the R.C.N. The battle which this decoration commemorates lasted from the day the war opened until the day of the German surrender. At no time was there any letup on the part of the enemy's effort to break the all-important lifeline of supplies from the American continent to the United Kingdom. For months on end the fighting remained on a knife-edge in mid-Atlantic. From the moment when Canada threw her first little flotilla into this desperate battle in 1939 until the victorious months of 1945 when she had taken over the entire close escort for merchant convoys, this was her most relentless test and her greatest triumph.

During that time Canadian warships convoyed 25,343 merchant vessels carrying 181,643,180 tons of cargo from North American ports to the United Kingdom. The largest convoy of its sort during the war, a mercantile armada of 167 ships, was among those escorted without loss. Over 1,000,000 tons of cargo crossed in it. With

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the exception of its air protection, the escort was entirely Canadian.

Of the 17 enemy submarines definitely sunk by the R.C.N., the 11 in which they shared the credit with other Allied craft, and the probable sinking of several more whose loss could not be officially established, the great majority were in the Atlantic fight. In addition to the submarine score, Canadian ships destroyed, captured or damaged at least 31 enemy surface craft and assisted in the case of 80 others.

In Naval operations, contradictory to fighting ashore, fatal casualties far outnumber the wounded and prisoners. Against the 33 officers of the R.C.N. wounded in action, 225 were killed. The proportion among ratings was about the same; 1,756 dead for 286 wounded. Of the 98 officers and men taken prisoner, the majority were from a single ship, H.M.C.S. "Athabaskan", which went down in pre-invasion battle off the French coast. All told, 31 Canadian warships were lost during the war. Seven of them were motor torpedo boats but the heaviest casualties were among the destroyers, frigates and corvettes -- the "work horses" of the seemingly endless Battle of the Atlantic.

One significant feature of the contribution was that Canadian shipyards produced the swarms of frigates, and corvettes and minesweepers that formed the backbone of this essentially submarine-hunting Navy. Towards the finish, even the largest type of destroyer, the Tribal, was being launched in Canadian yards. Trawler minesweepers had been the most ambitious warcraft undertaken by the Dominion's shipbuilders in the previous war.

Sharing honours with the seamen were nearly 6,000 members of the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service -- the "Wrens" -- who, authorized in 1942, played a striking part on the shore side of the Service and, at war's end, were practically as numerous as had been the entire R.C.N. at the end of the 1914-18 conflict.