

'WELCOME ABOARD'



HMCS OTTAWA

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

Until 1910, Canada showed little interest in Naval affairs. But on 04 May 1910, with a major conflict brewing in Europe, the Canadian government passed the Naval Service Act which gave birth to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). This new Navy, which originally consisted of two second-hand British cruisers and a handful of volunteers, reached a strength of 9,000 officers and men during the First World War.

During the 1920's, and most of the 1930's, the RCN was reduced drastically and consisted of a mere token force. When Canada declared war on Germany in September, 1939, the RCN consisted of 6 destroyers, 5 minesweepers, 2 training vessels and less than 2,000 officers and men. Therefore, the RCN immediately embarked on a rapid expansion program, commissioning 6 American destroyers (including the first HMCS ANNA-POLIS) on lend-lease to Britain, and reactivating the Canadian ship-building industry. Canada's Naval contribution to the Second World War was a large one for a nation of 12 million people. From 13 ships in 1939, the RCN had grown to 400 ships with a strength of 95,750 officers, men and women by 1945. The RCN represented the third largest allied Navy in the Second World War.

Following the Second World War, the RCN adopted the primary role of anti-submarine warfare (ASW), which it conducted during the United Nations (UN) Operation in Korea. Three Canadian destroyers served under UN command near Korea on a variety of missions.

In 1949, the government announced a program for the construction of 7 new ASW destroyer escorts called the St. Laurent class. The 7 Restigouche class destroyer escorts came next, followed by 4 MacKenzie class destroyer escorts in 1962 and 2 Annapolis class destroyer escorts in 1964.

In 1965, the Canadian Army, Navy and Air Force reorganized into 3 functional commands; Force Mobile Command, Maritime Command and Air Command respectively. This was the first step towards unification which was completed in 1968.

All services of the Canadian military are now called the Canadian Armed Forces.

MARITIME COMMAND

The role of Maritime Command (MARCOM), based at Halifax, Nova Scotia, is to provide an operational maritime force to meet Canada's defence commitments. This includes:

- a. surveillance and control of Canadian territorial waters, adjacent ocean areas and the Arctic Archipelago;
- b. defence of North America, in cooperation with United States Forces (NORAD);
- c. contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and
- d. assistance to the UN and other international bodies.

To meet these commitments, Maritime Command's ships and Air Command's aircraft, under the operational control of Maritime Command, operate from bases in Esquimalt and Halifax, as well as from stations as far north as Frobisher Bay and as far south as Bermuda.

These bases and units are comprised of dockyards, training schools, supply warehouses, offices, communications centres, and Naval Reserve units. They provide support for an operational force of 20 destroyers, 3 support ships, 1 diving tender and 3 submarines. In addition, there are 15 vessels located at Reserve training units on both coasts plus 18 minor vessels located at these Reserve units all across Canada.



THE HISTORY OF HMCS OTTAWA

Since 1910, when the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) was founded, men from all across our nation have had the honour of serving in Canadian warships - both abroad and in Canadian waters. Like the many dedicated men who have served the Navy, our ships have carried a proud tradition from generation to generation.

The first OTTAWA was a River Class Destroyer, which was commissioned into the RCN at Chatham, England on 15 June 1938. OTTAWA(1) spent her short career escorting convoys between England and Canada, but on the eve of 13 September 1942, she was torpedoed while under hard rudder to avoid a close quarters situation with ST. CROIX. A torpedo had come from out of the darkness and exploded on her port bow. OTTAWA(1) was badly disabled, with no bow, but still afloat. Twenty minutes later while stopped dead in the water, a second torpedo exploded on the starboard side of #2 boiler room, which caused OTTAWA(1) to break in half and sink; taking along 5 officers, including the Commanding Officer, and 109 men with her. OTTAWA(1), who herself had seen numerous other ships stricken in battle and who had rescued many crews from a freezing death in the lonely waters of the Atlantic, had but a handful of survivors of her own.

On 20 March 1943, the British destroyer GRIFFIN was transferred to the RCN for convoy duty, where she was renamed OTTAWA(2). On 06 July 1944, OTTAWA(2) and KOOTENAY were detached from a convoy to assist the STATICE with a submarine contact off Beachy Head, Sussex. As OTTAWA(2) swept through the area, she gained sonar contact and attacked with depth charges. Shortly afterwards; a large amount of wood, clothing, oil and books appeared on the surface. Amongst the debris were two German caps marked U-678. Similar battle action was encountered in the final year of the Second World War, and post war investigations have credited OTTAWA(2) with two additional submarine kills; U-621 and U-984. At the end of the Second World War OTTAWA(2) was declared surplus and turned over to the War Assets Corporation for disposal.

Eleven years later, in 1956, a new Anti-Submarine Destroyer Escort was commissioned OTTAWA(3). She was the third of a new generation of ships to join the Canadian fleet and like the rest of her class, OTTAWA(3) was all Canadian in concept and design. At the time of construction, she carried the most advanced equipment available for the detection and destruction of submarines. Since 1956, OTTAWA(3) has gone through many changes, alterations and extensive refits, to accommodate the rapid advances in Maritime Warfare. The most recent such refit was completed in 1987 in Halifax. Since her commissioning in 1956, OTTAWA(3) has sailed in excess of 600,000 miles and has visited over 350 ports in more than 40 countries throughout the world.

The Battle Honours awarded to an HMC Ship bearing the name OTTAWA are:

- a. ATLANTIC (1939-1944) for ocean escort duties
- b. NORMANDY (1944) for operation Neptune
- c. ENGLISH CHANNEL (1944) for the destruction of U-678
- d. BAY OF BISCAY (1944) for the destruction of U-621 and U-984

OTTAWA(3)

The primary role of OTTAWA is Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW). Detecting and attacking the modern day submarine is a very complex operation, which requires a professional team of skilled and dedicated men. To help in this detection, OTTAWA is equipped with four sonars, each capable of both passive and active acoustics. One sonar, the variable depth sonar (VDS), can be lowered to several hundred feet to detect submarines below the ocean's thermal layers. Once sonar contact is made, the attack is carried out using acoustic homing torpedoes or close range mortars.

In addition to her ASW capabilities, OTTAWA carries a 3"50 calibre gun forward. Due to its high rate of fire, this gun was designed primarily for defence against low flying aircraft, but it is also quite suitable for surface engagements and shore bombardment.

OTTAWA has an overall length of 366', a beam of 42', draws 17½' to the propellers and displaces 3,000 tons. She also features the rounded upperdeck contours and bow that are distinctive of the older Canadian warship designs. This "round-down" facilitates the removal of radioactive fallout in the event that OTTAWA is required to transit an area of nuclear contamination. She is capable of sailing for nearly a month in such contaminated areas without danger to her Ship's Company. The rounded contours and heated anchor pocket doors also help counter ice accumulation, which is a problem encountered during the winter months in the North Atlantic.

OTTAWA is powered by two steam turbines, capable of developing 30,000 shaft horsepower and speeds up to 28 knots. Shipboard electric generators produce enough electricity to supply both heat and light to a town of 18,000 people. OTTAWA is completely air conditioned, has her own laundry, and contains many mechanical and electronic workshops. She also has an administrative centre; which includes offices for financial management, supplies and maintenance.

THE CREST

The design of the Ship's Crest is derived from the unofficial wartime badge of OTTAWA(1). The wavy white and blue represents the Ottawa River, after which the ship is named, while the red background represents the Indians (Redmen) who travelled that river. The gold beaver at the centre of the crest is the national animal of Canada and from this OTTAWA's motto "REGAE REVAEB" ("Eager Beaver" spelled backwards) is derived. According to the rules of heraldry, the two principle colours in the crest, red and gold, should be the Ship's Colours. However, since the capital of Canada is situated on the Ottawa River, the official colours of Canada, red and white, are used in preference.

THE SEA KING HELICOPTER

An integral part of OTTAWA's ASW team is her Sea King Helicopter, which was initially designed as an all-weather aircraft for both shipborne and shore-based operations. Like OTTAWA, the Sea King has received several major conversions and is quite capable of operating independently, or as an extension of the ship. Her primary role is search and rescue (SAR), utility work, fisheries patrols and pollution reporting.

The Sea King is powered by two gas turbine engines and can fly at speeds of 151 knots ahead, 30 knots sideways and 20 knots astern. A normal crew consists of 2 pilots, 1 tactical navigator and 1 electronic systems operator. To carry out her roles the Sea King is equipped with a tactical navigation set, a radar, a variable depth dipping sonar and a rescue hoist. There are also 4 external weapon mounts that can carry either torpedoes or depth bombs.

OTTAWA's Sea King helicopter, which is part of the HS 423 Squadron based at CFB Shearwater, is quite capable of upholding the squadron's proud motto, "WE SEARCH AND STRIKE".

