

MARINE SOUNDINGS

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The 100th Anniversary of the RCN—Some stories from WWII

May, Marine Soundings



Detail of a painting by Peter Rindlisbacher: **HMCS NIOBE at Daybreak** painted for the RCN Centennial

Do you know that when we use the term RCN we are using an anachronism? The official title since Paul Hellier's time as Minister of Defence has been and still is Maritime Command. Similarly the Canadian Army is the Land Force, and the Royal Canadian Air Force is Canadian Air Force. The buzzword at the time was unification and integration. A dark green uniform was adopted for all three services, and a lot of traditions were jettisoned as so much useless baggage. It was a kick in the teeth to many who revered the sacrifice of our parents and siblings. That uniform lasted till 1985 when Defence Minister Robert Coates restored some things: the uniforms of the navy and the airforce with the army alone carrying on with the green uniform. The break with tradition was almost twenty years so that many sailors have lost contact with our long traditions. This much bemoaned by older retired officers and chiefs, but hard to reinsert in the younger generation. **So it's the Canadian Air Force, the Canadian Navy, and the Canadian Army.**

A note on camouflage. The French impressionists broke up colours and asked the viewer to reassemble the picture in their own minds. At certain distances then the picture looked like so many blobs of paint. It should be no surprise then that the first camouflage painting was done by an artist working in the French army. It seems it was the British that adapted the idea to painting ships--**dazzle paint**.

The rest of the story: Picasso and his friend Georges Braque picked up on ideas of Cezanne and invented Cubism. They broke up images into their component parts rearranging them into a design. It was the French artist Lucien-Victor Guirand de Scevola working in the signal corps that came up with camouflage. Watching the German artillery pounding a French position mercilessly, he realized that cubistic techniques would make the French troops and machines harder to see. He began work in February of 1915. A year later Norman Wilkinson, a British admiral and painter adapted the idea to navy ships--dazzle painting to confuse gunners, and torpedoists. (From the book **The Age of the UNTHINKABLE** by Joshua Cooper Ramo)

MARINE SOUNDINGS is a quarterly newsletter of the PROVINCIAL MARINE RE-ENACTMENT GROUP of Amherstburg. It is put out in FEBRUARY, MAY, AUGUST and NOVEMBER Ideas, questions, articles are needed at the **beginning** of the month of publication. Note the change in our publication dates.

Marine Soundings

is published by the Provincial Marine Amherstburg, a Re-enactment Group.

Membership at \$15 a year includes the right to go on encampments, training with equipment, sailing on our vessels plus an insurance component and our quarterly newsletter. In addition we have many social events each year. Active re-enactors pay an additional \$7.00 towards insurance.

Members of similar organizations may apply for just a newsletter subscription. At \$6.00 Canadian funds and \$6.00 US, we simply recover our costs.

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To submit articles, questions, ideas e-mail

gtmar@allstream.net or georgemrshl191@gmail.com

To Read articles in our newsletter on the web, visit

www.provincialmarine.org

To contact Marty Burnet, our events coordinator

Martyb17@hotmail.com

P1 HMCS Niobe at Daybreak by P Rindlisbacher,

Dazzle paint, current official names of forces go back to a bad period in our military history

P2 Size of navy controversy; List of officers

P3& 4 The story of camouflage painting; Commerce

raids in WWI, one example; the Battle of the Falklands WWI, an extreme example of dazzle

P5 DAVID MAY'S MESSAGE, List of 1812 Events

P6 Brick Programme, Comments on Centennial prints

Pp 7-8 Peter Rindlisbacher's Report on the Commemorative Sculpture Group for the park, Photos of Brick Laying and New members

There is some question whether Canada's WWII Navy ever reached 4th largest, because as the German and French Navies were being reduced, the Soviet Navy was gaining. Nevertheless our navy was a presence to be reckoned with. Our role was primarily naval escort. And we played a very considerable role.

Let's look at the problem. The American and British navies were first and second. The Japanese Navy was clearly third for much of the War. Britain had to contend with the fascist navies: Germany, Italy, and Vichy France. Combined they clearly challenged her local supremacy at sea. So before the attack on Pearl Harbour she made a surprise attack to eliminate Italy from the Mediterranean Sea. In fact it was this attack that gave the Japanese the idea for their attack on Pearl Harbour.

In 1940, she also attacked the Free French at anchor in what is now Algeria. One year later at Toulon to prevent their navy from falling into German hands the French made the same choice destroying about 80 ships at anchor in Toulon. So the fourth largest fleet was being degraded throughout the war.

During this period the Soviet Navy was being constantly enlarged. So let's use the dates of V-E and V-J, May 8th and August 15th to compare the size of these fleets. May 8th USSR had 337 ships; Japan 296; Canada had 278, and France 159, but by August 15th USSR had 415, Japan had 246; Canada had 159 and France had 153. By the 31st of December Canada had only 53 ships in commission, exceeded even by Sweden (78) and Australia (70)

A little interpretation here: France was looking to return to her role as a great power. So she decommissioned very few ships at the end of the war. The Russians were looking at a great expansion of their power and continued with the build up. Although the Japanese still had a lot of ships and personnel, 296 **misrepresents** their power. They only had fuel for a very few of them. So for a few weeks if you accept this argument, Canada was the fourth largest navy: US, GB, USSR, Canada. But after V-E Day Canada was decommissioning at the rate of about one ship per day. By 1946 she had fewer ships than she had at the beginning of WWII. This is a brief summary of an article in **Canadian Naval Review** (Fall 2009) by Rob Stuart. Also from his article is this picture of the French fleet scuttled and burnt in Toulon, France by its own crews, 28/11/42 (picture is from the **Internet**)

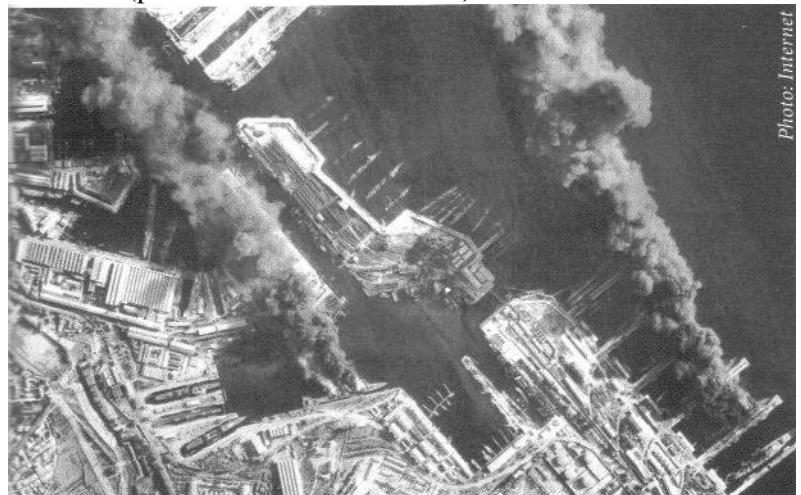


Photo: Internet

MARINE SOUNDINGS promotes the history of the Provincial Marine, most particularly in the War of 1812, and is available as part of the membership of the Provincial Marine. For members not on the web we mail their copies and send it to organizations at cost for \$ 6.00 CAD or US including postage and handling. MARINE SOUNDINGS/MAY p3

Please submit contributions in the form of photos or articles, links to other groups that might interest members.

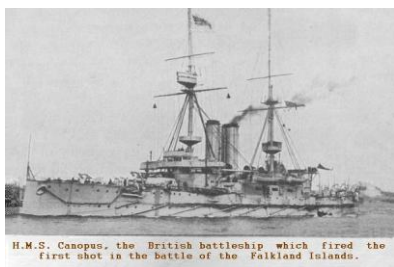
David May
President
Provincial Marine Amherstburg
mrdavemay@sympatico.ca

Please contribute to our new website. Googling "Provincial Marine" will bring you to over one hundred items. To go to our newsletter directly use: www.provincialmarine.org

BRITISH STRATEGY IN WWI



When the British built the all big gun **Dreadnought** in 1906, they rendered all ships previously built obsolete including her own. That did not mean that these ships were useless; it meant that they could not engage in a battle with the newer type ships. They were



H.M.S. Canopus, the British battleship which fired the first shot in the battle of the Falkland Islands.

consigned to defending coaling stations, smaller ports, or escorting convoys. Such was the role of the **Niobe**. Her role was to help protect Halifax, escort convoys and show the flag. Her presence meant that the fledgling naval service, as the RCN

was briefly named, got to train with experienced naval RN officers. Many older ships gave valuable service in spite of their obsolescence.

The **Canopus** (laid down in 1897) stationed in the Falklands is a good example. With its 12 inch guns it fought in the Battle of the Falklands to avenge losses sustained in a previous battle.



The Imperial German naval jack (left) showed the influence of the British empire, as did their commissioning pennants, and national flag (above)

The WWI naval **Battle of Coronel** took place in November 1914 off the coast of central Chile near the city of Coronel. German naval forces led by Vice-Admiral **Graf Maximilian von Spee** met and defeated a RN squadron manned by reservists and commanded by **Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock**. The older ships could not compete with the newer, and the Admiral and the **Good Hope** were lost with the entire crew. A smaller cruiser the **Monmouth** was also lost to a man. The other ships escaped.

Following his stunning victory over the British, Graf Maximilian von Spee turned the **German East Asia Squadron** for Valparaiso, Chile. Entering port, von Spee was compelled by international law to leave after twenty-four hours and first moved to Mas Afuera before heading to Bahia San Quintin. Assessing his squadron's situation, von Spee found that half his ammunition was expended and that coal was in short supply. Turning south, the East Asia Squadron set a course around Cape Horn and made for Germany. Pausing at Picton Island off Tierra del Fuego, von Spee distributed coal and allowed his men to go ashore to hunt. Departing Picton with the armored cruisers SMS *Scharnhorst* and SMS *Gneisenau*, the light cruisers SMS *Dresden*, SMS *Leipzig*, and SMS *Nurnburg*, and three merchant ships, von Spee planned to raid the British base at Port Stanley in the Falklands as he moved north. In Britain, the defeat at Coronel led to a rapid response as First Sea Lord Sir John Fisher sent a fleet including two of the new Battle Cruisers and ordered the old pre-dreadnought **Canopus** to ground herself by Port Stanley. When Von spee made his attack on the Falklands hoping to destroy facilities and recollect his ships, he got a nasty surprise. There was the old battleship with 12 inch guns. He abandoned his attack on the Falklands.

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HMS Invincible, one of the two fast Battle Cruisers

Photograph Source: Public Domain

Fleets & Commanders:

British

Vice Admiral Doveton

Sturdee

2 battlecruisers (12 inch guns)

3 armored cruisers

2 light cruisers (slight damage only)

Germans

Admiral Graf Maximilian von Spee

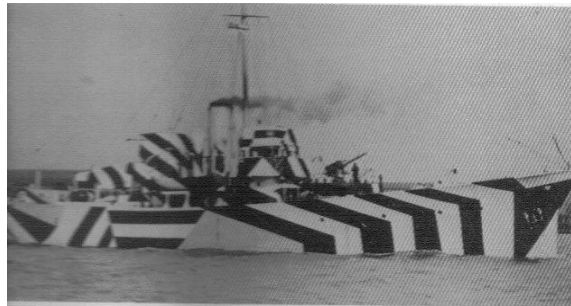
2 armored cruisers (8.2 inch guns)

3 light cruisers (four ships of 5 lost)

The squadrons engaged on December 8, 1914, off the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. The German ships were no match for the fast big gun Battle Cruisers. This was the role that the battle cruisers were designed for. When they went into a big fleet battle they failed miserably as seen in the Battle of Jutland. The old battleship **Canopus** denied the use of the Falklands to Von Spee. (material from the internet and from **The Dreadnoughts**)

The British strategy in WWI was to deploy some older ships to offer resistance to commerce raiders, show the flag and reassure her colonies but then send out powerful flotillas to put the raiders out of action. Her main fleet held the opponent's fleet in blockade. In WWI the Canadians served as adjuncts to the British navy. Germany's surface navy achieved so little in spite of its quality that more and more the nation turned to submarines for success. Eventually the surface navy mutinied. All that talent, all those wonderful ships were being wasted! WWI was like a rehearsal for WWII with its convoys, its dazzle paint, its zigzagging courses to prevent

torpedoing. All that was lacking was radar!



An extreme example of dazzle painting from WWI is shown above. Dazzle painting was adopted by individuals from all services and some sort of camouflage was used by the allies and the axis powers almost from its invention. Commonly on British, French and German artillery, paint was daubed on--often on the field.

CONVOYS by G. Marshall

The Convoy system of WWI was a learning experience for Britain and Canada. At first merchant ships travelled singly or in small groups; the fast destroyers and other sub fighters went on sub hunting trips on their own. But finding subs was like finding needles in a haystack. The German subs had a picnic. The constraining principle was keeping enough of them at sea. Usually it was hard to keep more than 30 at sea at any one time. They simply had not built them with a great enough range. Designers and tacticians thought they would be used defensively.

Similarly the British seemed to latch on to the logic of destroyer, frigate, and corvette going with the convoys almost

by accident. It worked in the Mediterranean; perhaps it would work on the Atlantic as well. Once they started using escorts with their convoys, the kill rate dropped dramatically. So in the latter part of the war, the British used dazzle paint to confuse the torpedoists; they used convoys of similarly speedy vessels, setting out from a safe port—HALIFAX; they used early Radio Direction finding gear; early versions of hydrophones (later called Asdic); and they used Q ships. Q ships looked like convoy stragglers, but actually were armed with fairly large guns and other weapons.

Also they used nets, and mines in areas frequented by subs. In fact these simple devices were the first big success. The Germans had learned to avoid these dangers even in the narrows of the English Channel, and so the British started laying deep water mines to catch subs going deep and using extensive search light patrols to catch them at the surface at night. The Germans were forced to send subs the long way north of Britain.

Finally the Allies came up with the use of fast liners to ship grain and other essentials to Great Britain. Sources for this article were *Seapower*, *The Deadnoughts*, and *Warships of WWI*.

Not to be forgotten is the use of Halifax as the great seaport for staging the convoys and it was this engagement that occasioned the Great Halifax Explosion which set the city back tremendously in its development. *Up to the time of the atom bomb this was the largest explosion ever.*



MARINE SOUNDINGS of the Provincial Marine
Windsor Charity Bingos, Hbc, Trillium Corporation, ECFDC
CAPTAIN'S CORNER



The Provincial Marine are like one big family. The family gets larger and some move away. We try to get together on special occasions. The Provincial Marine got larger by people from outside our area coming to join us. A family that chooses to be together grows stronger. Our special occasions are the events that we attend.

The first few times at re-enacting is a steep learning curve indeed. Start by setting up your tent and go on from there. Gradually you learn bit by bit (like where to get the food). You meet people who have done the same as you, starting from scratch, with just enough to get by.

Years later you pack more stuff in your car for a weekend than you do for a two week vacation. Welcome to those who have just joined or re-joined! The next years will have more people looking to their past as we celebrate the War of 1812 Bi-centennial and remember the fallen of that war as well. We can look for new people joining and more interest in our mission of keeping history alive.

David May

President

Provincial Marine Amherstburg

Some Reminders from Dave about our membership fees. We're holding the line on prices.

Our NFA black powder insurance runs out in April. Marty needs to know who is, or will be, insured so he can register us for Longwoods. Jane Teeple is still our membership chair and has sent out reminders. Membership is \$15 single; \$30 family. Insurance is an extra \$7 per member. Single with insurance is \$22. Family is \$30 plus \$7 for each insured member. Jane's address is:

Jane Teeple, 443 Dalhousie Street, Amherstburg Ontario, N9V 1X4

Marty Burnet's: List of 1812 Events for 2010 - Provincial Marine Amherstburg

April 18 - Provincial Marine Dinner - Legion Amherstburg

May 1-2 - Battle of Longwoods - London, ON

28-30 - Maidstone Museum Encampment - Puce Road, Lakeshore, On

June 4-6 - Stoney Creek - Hamilton, ON

11-13 - School of the Sailor - Kingston, ON

18-20 - Port Dover Marine Heritage Fest - Port Dover, ON

July 10-11 - Crysler's Farm - Morrisburg, ON *(Distant events not directly involving PM)

23-25 - Wasaga Under Siege - Wasaga Beach, ON

Jul 30 - Aug 1 - Ft Malden Heritage Weekend - Amherstburg, ON

- Grand Tactical - Sackets Harbor, NY *

Aug 7-8 - Siege of Ft Erie - Fort Erie, ON

Sept 4-5 - Fairfield - Thamesville, ON

11-12 - Backus Mill - Port Rowan, ON

Oct 2-3 - Fanshawe 1812 - London, ON

8-10 - Mississinewa 1812 - Marion, IN *

Dec 4 - Sutlers' Christmas Gathering, Hamilton, ON *

MARINE SOUNDINGS
The Provincial Marine Newsletter
OUR COMMEMORATIVE BRICK PROGRAMME *by Carol Ferguson*

Our brick programme remains very successful so far. 833 bricks have been sold at the time of writing. Our May installation went well and our August 1st Dedication Ceremony is coming up. We make people feel this is an important event by having refreshments, music and entertainment. The charge is still \$60.00 for a single brick. \$50.00 for subsequent purchases. We are trying to hold our prices level in spite of rising costs. \$30.00 goes to the town for the engraving and laying of the bricks, and the rest goes to us for our share of the work. (Please see page 8 for photos.)

It is easy to order a brick now. You can go to the town offices or simply print up a copy of the order form off your computer by visiting the Provincial Marine site: www.provincialmarine.org. Once at the site go to bricks and you find the form. Send it to Carol Ferguson for processing along with your cheque. For 2 or more bricks the charge is 50 dollars each, and there is the discount mentioned in paragraph one. At the August 1st ceremony, there are plenty of opportunities for photographs. The ceremony takes place at 10 AM. The reading of a poem composed for the occasion by Linda Bertrand, the singing of a song by Courtney Meloche, and the firing of the cannon make the reading of the names of the people commemorated there somewhat special. Afterwards we retire to the Commissariat for our Provincial Marine--1812 Cake and refreshments. So we are giving good value for the money.

So if you are interested in a brick order please do so now so that it can be installed in time for the August 1st Dedication Ceremony.

CENTENNIAL SLIP UP? *by G Marshall*

The picture of the NIOBE on page one is used by permission of the artist. I asked Peter about purchasing the print. The Centennial Committee has made it rather difficult. Peter did not get his usual allotment of prints to sell privately, and the print cannot be bought individually.

Though Peter Rindlisbacher's Painting of **The NIOBE at Daybreak** would make a nice gift for any family member with a naval background unfortunately it is only available as part of a set of six prints for \$800.00. Selling them in groups of two or four makes sense, but how many of us can use six? Even in a rather naval family like mine with more than four people with a naval connection, this would be an expensive proposition, and would the recipients like the ones chosen out of the set for them? The prints are 12"X18" and the set would take up a lot of wall space. Even a Legion might find it hard to find the space for them. I expect that at some point they may have to sell the prints off in smaller sets. I would like the **NIOBE** and the **MAGNIFICENT** prints. Even then for two it would be hard to find the space.



FACTINO After Japan entered the War against the USA, most of the US Atlantic fleet was transferred to the Pacific. From 1942 the USA supplied 2 % of the escorts, the UK supplied 50 % and Canada 48%. So our importance in keeping the vital lines open to the UK cannot be over emphasized! (from **Sea Power** by John Batchelor, Anthony Preston and Louis S. Casey, 1979)



Provincial Marine

REPORT ON THE BRONZE SCULPTURE



BRONZE SCULPTURE MOVES AHEAD

By George Marshall, Peter Rindlisbacher, and Carol Ferguson

We are trying to cover the progress of the Bronze Sculpture for Navy Yard Park so far. We have long felt the total lack of a monument to the men who so courageously fought to keep our country whole during the War of 1812.

The dignity of our country demanded a memorial. Senator Eugene Whelan often sought out solemn occasions to remind us of this need. Other statues could be placed in Amherstburg. One commemorating the historic meeting between Tecumseh and General Brock is an example; but other communities had strong claims to a monument to Tecumseh, and Brock's Monument at Queen's Heights is bigger than the one to Nelson in London.

And across the Lake in Ohio there is a huge monument to Perry. So what better place could there be than the King's Navy Yard Park in Amherstburg for a sculpture honouring the men who fought against tremendous odds--six small vessels against nine and almost won. Peter created a jpeg concept version of the sculpture.

Our group immediately liked the concept. It showed a gun crew operating a ship's long gun and there was space for additional figures. Some of our gunners would pose for the sculptor when the time came.

Anne Rota, the town's Manager of Tourism and Culture, said that she was immediately impressed and that it seemed so appropriate.

Where should the sculpture be placed? Well, we went outside to discuss it. Most of us thought that as a sculpture it should be visible from the street and from the water. Sculptures invite you into a park, and this one should as well. We wanted it on a mound.

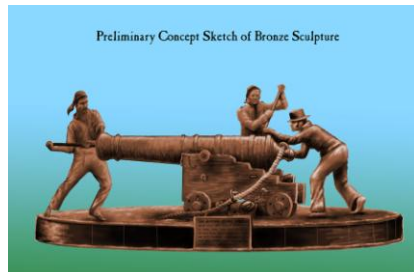
We made an application for a grant to the Ontario Trillium Foundation to cover some of the statue's costs. We applied for funds to cover the base, the cannon, and some of the key figures. When we raised further money, we could add other members of the gun crew—perhaps one wounded or dying.

A counter proposal for the positioning from Amherstburg's Public Works sought undisturbed soil as a base. Their proposal saw the sculpture closer to the existing plaques. We preferred the mound. Sculptures are works of their own and not subsidiary to a

should face the lake where the action took place.

Peter's Comments

Our PM group is aware of the importance of this sculpture. The Americans have a substantial viewing tower over 300 feet high, built in 1913. Our answer to that is a Bi-centennial project, a compelling stop action of a gun crew at work during the Battle of Lake Erie. As the bronze figures will be life-sized, and with spectator access allowed, it will be possible to move right in among those fighting men and better imagine the drama of the Battle. Currently, the Navy Yard is a multi-use property, filled with monuments, plaques, flag poles, flower beds, etc. and our intent is to place the sculpture in harmony with, but not overshadowed by the surrounding plants and man-made structures. Town management and Provincial Marine members finally chose a site on the extreme North end of the Park, on the end of a crescent shaped mound facing the Detroit River. The sculpture will be raised well above the grade of the Park, visible from both the River and road, and clear of trees and flower beds. We expect that it will become a major destination for visitors to Amherstburg, during the Bi-centennial celebrations and long afterwards.



teaching facility.

We were relieved when Mark Williams, the sculptor selected for the project, inspected the park and said that the mound would be the best place and he went further suggesting that symbolically it

Final Thoughts—Brick Laying

**Marine Soundings is sponsored by
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We are indebted to Carol for these pictures of the installation of bricks, which occurs at various times in the year, and not too many of us have witnessed the event. The installation is handled by our very competent Public Works Department, who keep our parks, and most especially Navy Yard Park, so nice that people drive out from Windsor to look at the river and have an ice cream.



New Members bring a lot of talent to our Group.

By George T. Marshall

I want to welcome returning members Rob Paulson and Linda Bertrand to our group. Rob was a member of our old boat crew in the HMS DETROIT PROJECT and brings with him a wealth of teaching experience, especially music education. Rob would like to get some sort of music programme going again. We wish him well whether it be choral singing or getting our fife and drum project going again.



Linda Bertrand has often recited poems at events of the PM. She writes these specially for occasions.

Kenneth Cyr joined in the spring and has already made headway on our web site, which we were having trouble keeping up to date and having items posted in a timely manner—especially our newsletter.



A happy group of installers and witnesses photographed by Carol