



News

CANADIAN NAVAL TECHNICAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

The Royal Naval Engineers Quart Club

Article by Gordon Smith

Photographs courtesy the Canadian Quart Club

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The Royal Naval Engineers Quart Club (RNEQC) was founded at the Royal Naval Engineering College at Keyham, Plymouth on July 1, 1930, the object being to form a beer drinking club and to discourage people's "gin habit." In December 1930 it was decided to extend the activities of the club beyond the bar and form a general sports club. Since then the club has taken on a more general character, with particular emphasis on charity work. It consists in the main of retired and serving engineering officers, with worldwide membership now over 1,200.

The founding president was Lieutenant (E) H.C. Brown who, as a commander, was killed in action in 1941. The other founding members were engineering-lieutenants F.L. King-Lewis and F.B.A. Wilkinson (who died in 1989). King-Lewis was invalided out of the navy in 1934 and became a doctor. He became president of the Quart Club in 1947, the post having been vacant since Brown's death in 1941. He stayed on as president for 33 years until 1980, and when he died in 1997 the club turned out in numbers for his funeral.



The Blacksmith Arms, Lamerton, Devon. This English pub was the site of the first meeting of the Royal Naval Engineers Quart Club in 1930.

Vice-admiral (ret.) Sir Louis Le Bailly, who served in HMS *Hood* as a junior engineer and retired from the Royal Navy in 1975, took over the presidency from Dr. King-Lewis at a monthly meeting at the Volunteer Inn at Yealmpton in December 1980. (VAdm Le Bailly also served as mess president at RNEC Manadon during the construction of the wardroom from 1956 to 1958.) In 1998 VAdm Le Bailly wrote to RAdm P.G. Hammersley, "When I first went back to Keyham on the staff as Lieutenant in 1941 there were only two Quart Club members. It was when we got the show on the road again that I was run in by the Crownhill Police for being drunk in charge of a bicycle as we raced from Roborough to Manadon." Hammersley went back in the records and found, "February 1941: The

George at Roborough – It had been snowing hard but the meeting was well attended. Due to enemy action there was no gas and the room was freezing. Business was discussed for about 5 minutes and we repaired to the bar where there was a fire.” By 1944 the club was thriving again but having difficulties with transportation, shortage of beer, and other problems caused by the war.

VAdm Le Bailly handed over the presidency to Adm Sir William Pillar in 1983 who led the club for 12 years. When RAdm Hammersley took over in 1995, he shared these thoughts during his after-dinner speech: “The Club is thriving, though it has sometimes been criticized and indeed its existence threatened. Some people feel that it is elitist, but I am not sure what is wrong with that as long as it is not divisive. If a group of congenial and like-minded people choose to get together to quaff some ale, why shouldn’t they as long as they don’t hurt others? If those same people go further and do a great deal of positive good for others, the Club’s existence is totally justified.”

The club survived a transfer of the headquarters branch from Manadon, Plymouth to Sultan/Collingwood in Portsmouth. According to Adm Hammersley, “The Club owes its existence and its strength to the influence of some great men over the years, to hard



On loan from the Royal Navy, Lt Cdr Nigel Kennedy lifts his glass in company with former president of the Canadian Quart Club, Gerry Lanigan. (Ottawa, 2006)

work, and dedication of successive Presidents and Secretaries and to the support of the membership which is today, wider and stronger than it has ever been.” In 2005 the Quart Club presidency passed to RAdm (ret.) Mike Wood, the former Chief Naval Engineering Officer for the Royal Navy, and the man responsible for planning and staging the 50th anniversary of D-Day commemorations at Portsmouth.

The idea of a Canadian branch of the Quart Club was first raised in late 1990 by Lt. Cdr. Steve Gosden, a Royal Navy exchange officer serving in the Directorate of Marine and Electrical Engineering in Ottawa, and Gerry Lanigan, ex-Royal Navy, who



The Canadian Quartists with their spouses at the Quart Club’s January 2006 annual dinner hosted by John Frank at the Royal Ottawa Golf Club.

had immigrated to Ottawa 10 years earlier. A number of Canadian “Quartists” were known to be in the Ottawa area, so a couple of trial meetings were held at the HMCS *Bytown* Officers Mess to gauge interest, which proved to be strong.

In early 1992, after consultation with headquarters at the Royal Naval Engineering College, Manadon, approval was granted to establish a Canadian branch of the Quart Club in Ottawa, with permission to elect honorary life members locally. In June 1992 Jim (J.Y.) Clarke (now deceased) was elected as the first life vice-president, with Gerry Lanigan named as honorary secretary. The early meetings included such stalwarts as Bryan Allen (1956), Dudley Allan (1949), Jim Clarke (1950), Keith Davies (1957), Steve Gosden (1980), Charles Gunning (1956), Dick Hodgson (1963), Stan Hopkins (1950), Don Jones (1946), Jim Knox (1952), Bob Lane (1942), Gerry Lanigan (1966), and Mike Saker (1967).

Meetings were held about every six weeks, with attendance and membership increasing steadily. In 1994 a charitable element of the Canadian Quart Club’s activities was established in the form of an annual donation to the Perley Rideau Foundation. Over the years the Remembrance Day cheque presentation at the Perley and Rideau Veterans’ Health Centre has been well attended by hospital residents and members.



“Quartists” Dave Riis, Bryan Allen and Gerry Lanigan with Quartist-author Gordon Smith at their pub gathering last October. The Canadian branch of the Royal Naval Engineers Quart Club was founded in 1992.

In May 1999 J.Y. Clarke stepped down as branch president and was succeeded by Gerry Lanigan. Cdr Tony deRosenroll was elected honorary secretary in January 2000, but had to relinquish the post less than a year later when he was posted to the West Coast. Gerry became the ad hoc secretary until the author volunteered to assume the secretarial mantle in 2003.

Membership in the Canadian Quart Club, which is by invitation only, stands at about 50 active members, six of whom live outside the Ottawa area. The club meets every six weeks at different pubs throughout the Ottawa area. Our “highlight” meeting of the year is now hosted each January by John Frank of the Royal

Ottawa Golf Club. It is a wonderful event, with spouses in attendance.



Gordon Smith is Honorary Secretary of the Royal Naval Engineers Quart Club Canada. More information and photos may be found at the club’s website:

<http://www.rneqc.ca/>

Cleaning House?

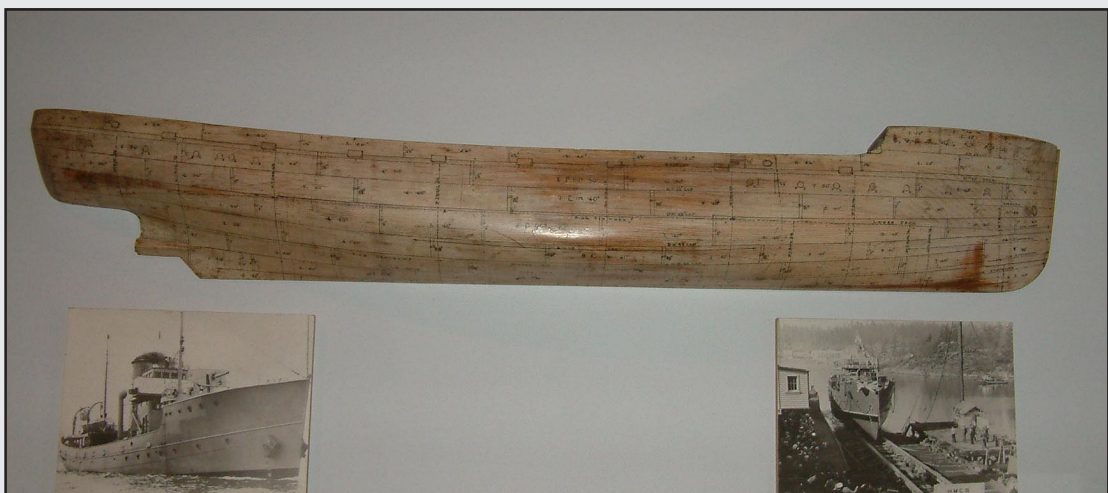
The Canadian Naval Technical History Association is working hard at preserving Canada’s naval technical heritage. If you are planning to dispose of any unclassified/declassified naval technical documents, drawings, videos, or other material you think might have historical significance, please contact Warren Sinclair, Acting Chief Archivist with the Directorate of History and Heritage in Ottawa. Arrangements will be made to examine your material, and steps will be taken to preserve whatever may be historically significant. Warren Sinclair can be contacted at (613) 998-7060. Thank you for doing your bit to preserve Canada’s important naval technical historical record.

CANDIB Oral History Interviews



Oral history interviews for the Canadian Naval Defence Industrial Base (CANDIB) Project are still going strong. At top, Gord Smith interviews RAdm (ret.) Bill Christie, while Don Wilson and Tony Thatcher (above left, centre) learn what they can from Frank Porter.

Museum Quality —



This beautiful builders hull-plating model of a Fundy-class minesweeper is one of several such half-models on display at the Maritime Museum of British Columbia in Victoria, BC. (Photo by Brian McCullough)