

News

CANADIAN NAVAL TECHNICAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION



Introducing the Newsletter



RAdm (ret'd) M.T. Saker

Welcome to the first CNTHA newsletter. Its purpose is to provide an informal communication channel for those of us engaged in the noble pursuit of preserving our naval technical history. Through the newsletter we will strive to keep you informed of our progress and needs, and of upcoming events.

First a word of thanks to our hard-working volunteers who managed to get our initial distribution of the *Maritime Engineering Journal* to you over the Christmas holidays. As with any new undertaking, there were some problems. Some of you will have received two copies of the *Journal*. Mailing lists are being revised to fix this. Some of you perhaps noted the missing word between the two pages of my covering letter. The word was "Journal." Also missing was the promised list of recent contributors to our information bank. You'll find it in this newsletter.

Our December 1996 mailing has elicited lots of expressions of interest and encouragement. What we need, of course, is participation. Starting with this issue, we'll be unfolding our proposed program of work so that you can see where you might fit in. In our first feature article, Dr. Roger Sarty, senior historian in the Directorate of History and Heritage, DND, comments on how our work fits into the larger project of the post-1945 official history.

This first newsletter has been edited by Pat Barnhouse and Hal Smith. This is only a temporary arrangement. They're both active elsewhere in the project, and we'd like to find two other volunteers, preferably in Ottawa, who could take the job on more permanently. Please give it some thought.

Elsewhere in this issue, you'll find information about how we're organizing work on the coasts, and how we plan to start dividing up the work of collecting more information into manageable chunks. Get involved. It's interesting, it represents a significant portion of your life, and it's fun. We can't preserve the heritage without your help.

And finally, congratulations are in order for RAdm (ret'd) Bill Christie whose article, "Canadian Technical Involvement in the Design and Construction of HMCS *Bonaventure*," made the cover of the February issue of the *Maritime Engineering Journal*. Our hope is that we can direct material from the CNTHA database to the pages of the *Journal* on a regular basis. Bravo Zulu to all concerned.

Mike Saker

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An “Official” Historian’s View of the CNTHA

As the senior historian in the Directorate of History and Heritage, DND, I am responsible for the official history of the post-1945 navy. I have been asked to explain where the efforts of the CNTHA fit into the broader historical picture.

DND has approved the production of an official history of the Royal Canadian Navy during the postwar years 1945-68. Don’t be put off by “official.” It just means that DND has given the job to its own historians in DHH. Military organizations generate millions of pages of records, photographs and other materials, and the navy is no exception. An official history takes years of effort by a trained team of researchers, writers and archivists, and only the government can provide the continuity that’s needed.

Even so, this has never been enough to produce the complete and balanced account of complex events that official history tries to explain. Much important information was either never written down at all or has since been lost. Official historians, like all historians of the recent past, rely heavily on information and advice from those who were there at the time to “get it right.” This is particularly important for the post-1945 RCN. Much of what the post-1945 navy was about involved profound technological change. Technology strongly influenced strategy and tactics, and it’s difficult for the historian to grasp the essential points without experienced technical help. Technical documents, aside from their inherent difficulty, tend to be thin on the context that gives meaning to the story.

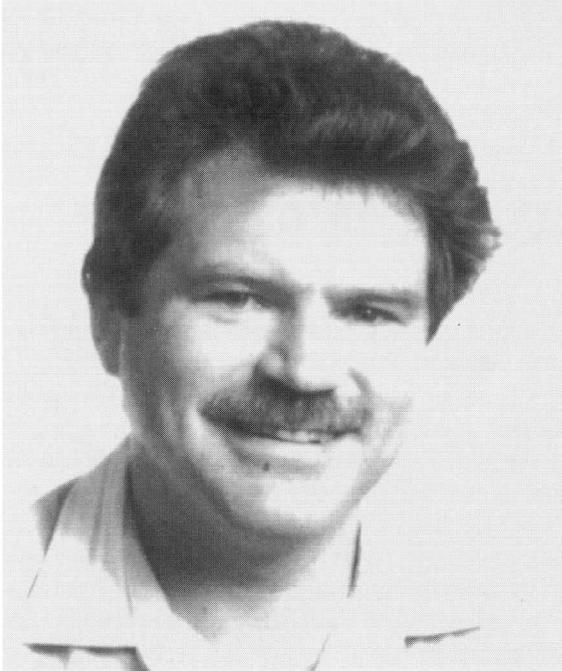
Questions constantly arise that only participants can answer: How were ship and equipment requirements developed? What were the ideas behind the equipment? How did the

teams responsible for equipment selection, design and procurement evolve? Who were the key players? How did they get on together? How did the technical branches relate to the Naval Staff and to each other? How did the navy relate to the Defence Research Board, to the Department of Defence Production and to industry? How did offices function? What was the working atmosphere like? Most importantly, how did the ships and equipment perform in the fleet? What problems were encountered and how were they dealt with?

In an ideal world, DHH would have the resources to locate and interview the participants who can answer such questions. In a time of cutbacks, however, our resources are severely limited. As an “official” historian, I believe that the voluntary efforts of the CNTHA — and your individual contributions — are essential to the work of the “official” team.

Anecdotes, reminiscences, copies of working papers, accounts of experience in a particular ship or with a specific item of equipment can be immensely revealing. With some indication of time — not necessarily a precise date — they can provide a vital key to understanding otherwise obscure technical records. There’s no need for a carefully written piece; letters and rough notes can convey the message just as well. All this material gains greatly in value when it’s combined and collated in the CNTHA collection. DHH will provide all the informal support for your efforts that it can. We would welcome your contributions, no matter how insignificant they may seem to you. It all helps.

Roger Sarty



Dr. Roger Sarty

Contributors

The CNTHA had its informal beginnings in the efforts of Captain(N) (ret'd) Rolfe Monteith, who is also responsible for the initiative that led to the very successful book, *"Certified Serviceable: Swordfish to Sea King,"* edited by Commodore (ret'd) Peter Charlton and Michael Whitby, an informal technical history of the RCN's Air Branch.

This led to circular letters by Phil Munro (1993) and Sam Davis (1994) to many of you asking for contributions to a proposed Naval Technical History Project. Phil has also collected copies of previously published papers relating to the technical history of the post-1945 navy.

These papers and individual contributions received so far form the basis of the CNTHA collection held by DHH. Phil has also indexed the collection; those interested can obtain copies of the index from DHH.

People who have responded to the call for contributions are:

M.W. Anketell-Jones, P.D.C. Barnhouse, E.C. Brady, T.M. Brett, A.G. Bridgman, D.K. Brown, H.G. Burchell, W.B. Christie, J.Y. Clarke, G.G. Croswell, S.M. Davis, R.J.S. Dickinson, J.M. Doull, R. Dyson, K.P. Farrell, D.C. Filewood, F. Finlay, R.E. Fisher, J.F. Frank, M.T. Gardner, D.J.I. Garstin, R.A. Grosskurth, R.V. Henning, R.R. Hind, V.W. Howland, E.W. Kimmerly, D.E. Lemon, J.A.M. Lynch, T.W. Maxwell, P.R. Munro, A.J.C. Pomeroy, A.D. Rackow, I.J. Reid, J.W. Russell, A.T. Satchwell, L.A. Sellick, L.E. Simms, G.F. Smith, H.W. Smith, G.D. Spergel, M. Staal, T.C. Treheme, D.C. Waring, B.L. Wilkins.

We should like to express our thanks to all of them and to urge those who have not yet contributed to please do so. Not to put too fine a point on it, none of us is getting any younger and much valuable information has already been lost.

About the CNTHA

The Canadian Naval Technical History Association is a voluntary organization working in support of the Directorate of History and Heritage to preserve our naval technical history. It is directed by a committee whose members are:

- RAdm (ret'd) M. T. Saker (*Chairman*)
- Dr. S.M. Davis, RAdm (ret'd)
- Dr. W.A.B. Douglas, Director General History (ret'd)
- Cmdre F.W. Gibson, Director General Maritime Equipment Program Management
- Capt(N) (ret'd) R.G. Monteith
- LCdr (ret'd) P.R. Munro (*Executive Director*)
- Dr. H. W. Smith, Commander (ret'd) (*Research Director*)
- Dr. R. Sarty, Senior Historian (*DHH liaison*)
- Mr. R. A. Spittall (*DGMEPM liaison*)
- Mr Brian McCullough (*Maritime Engineering Journal liaison*)
- Ms. Gabrielle Nishiguchi, DHH (*Secretary*)

Membership is open to anyone interested in Canadian naval technical history. At the moment, CNTHA material is being sent to a list of serving and retired officers and civilian personnel compiled from various sources by the Executive Secretary. Names may be added or deleted from the mailing list by contacting DHH.

Help Wanted!

[This section will appear from time to time when people working on aspects of the navy's technical history need information. Please get in touch with them directly. Cries for help can be sent to either of the (temporary) editors or to DHH. Eds.]

Don (D.K.) Nicholson is compiling the history of postwar Canadian propulsion system development up to and including the Y-100. Currently he's looking for information relating to rotor forgings made in Canada, especially as regards problems relating to quality. Can anyone help? You can write to Don at 542 Hillcrest Avenue, Ottawa, ON K2A 2M9.

Hal (H.W.) Smith is working on the history of sonar development in Canada from 1945 to 1968. Information about performance, reliability and maintainability in the fleet is somewhat thin. Hal would like to hear from anyone with sea experience (especially sea trials and operational evaluation) with 170B/SQS-502, SQS-503, SQS-504 and SQS-505. Comparisons between 170B and SQS-502 are particularly needed. Write, fax or e-mail Hal at the address given on page 4 in this newsletter.

We would be glad to have suggestions about what you'd like to see in future newsletters. Comments to DHH or directly to your editors, please.

News Briefs

Coastal Connections

We're planning to place copies of the CNTHA document collections in Halifax and Victoria for workers on the coasts. We'll also appoint a coordinator on each coast as a contact point, organizer and general factotum. Capt(N) (ret'd) Tom Brown has agreed to coordinate activity on the East Coast, and he is already busy developing a program of work. Appointment of a West Coast coordinator is in the works.

Subject Coordinators

The starting point for future work is what we already have in the collection. We need subject coordinators who would be willing to examine the relevant parts of the collection, identify gaps and the follow-up that's needed, and find people who may be able to add to the record. We have our first two subject coordinators: Sam Davis, once DG Ships, will look after ship design and construction, and Hal Smith will look after sonar and the hydrofoil project. If you're interested in coordinating work on a subject, contact Hal Smith, our research director. More about this later.

Coming Events

Naval support seminars are held annually in Ottawa and on both coasts, and we're hoping eventually to offer a short historical session at each of these in cooperation with the organizers. We are still working on opening the attendance to interested retirees. At present, the planned dates are:

Ottawa	April 14, 1997
Halifax	April 30 – May 1, 1997
Victoria	To be announced

We'll notify you when we have more detailed information.

Contact Information

Addresses of some of the people named in this newsletter are listed below.

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We'd love to hear from you...

If you have information, documents or questions you'd like to pass along to the Canadian Naval Technical History Association, please contact:

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We look forward to hearing from you.

The deadline for contributions for the next newsletter is **May 30, 1997.**