



NEWS

Canadian Naval Technical History Association

The CNTHA at 20!

By Tony Thatcher and Pat Barnhouse

CNTHA News

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CNTHA Chairman

Pat Barnhouse

CNTHA Executive Director

Tony Thatcher

Directorate of History and Heritage Liaison

Michael Whitby

Maritime Engineering Journal Liaison

Brian McCullough

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CNTHA News is the unofficial newsletter of the Canadian Naval Technical History Association. Please address all correspondence to the publisher, attention Michael Whitby, Chief of the Naval Team, Directorate of History and Heritage, NDHQ
101 Colonel By Dr
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K2
Tel. (613) 998-7045
Fax (613) 990-8579

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www.cntha.ca

The Canadian Naval Technical History Association (CNTHA) aims to capture and preserve oral and written records of Canada's naval technical history by encouraging the establishment of a culture in which Canada's naval technical heritage is preserved and made accessible to future generations. The association was established in 1996, and has been actively engaged since then. The technical history material we have gathered is archived in the CNTHA Collection held by the Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH) within the Department of National Defence (DND). The information is available to official historians, researchers, authors and casual readers alike.

Between 2001 and 2008 the CNTHA's Canadian Naval Defence Industrial Base (CANDIB) subcommittee collected and documented as much historical information as possible on Canadian naval construction programs, and on the effect these programs had on Canadian industry. It also traced the legacy of this developmental activity, calling on the experience and recollections of as many people as possible who were involved in any way in these important events in Canada's naval history.

In 2004 CANDIB entered into a contract with DHH to run an oral history program. This successful contract was followed up by two further contracts in 2005 and 2016, and under these CANDIB met its mission of capturing the story of Canada's naval industrial activity in a highly productive manner. While the mission continues to be a relevant topic, the CANDIB subcommittee has been stood down, and the acquisition of this information now continues under the wider auspices of the CNTHA.

Also in 2004, the CNTHA launched a website to showcase the results of our efforts. The website [www.cntha.ca] was most recently upgraded earlier this year to enhance its overall security, the search capability, and its functionality, and today offers many things of interest to anyone wanting to learn more about



DND Photo

HMCS *Algonquin* under construction at Lauzon, Quebec in 1970-71.

Canada's naval technical history. Photographs, interview transcripts, and the entire collection of back issues of the *Maritime Engineering Journal* are just some of the items available on the website. The feedback we have received from users has been very positive.

Priority Effort

At the moment the CNTHA is supporting the current priorities of DHH in preparing for the writing of Volume IV of the official naval history, which will cover the period 1968-1990. Whatever information people can offer regarding the following topic areas could be extremely valuable in this effort:

- DDH-280 construction and trials
- Improved Restigouche Class (IRE) program
- Destroyer Life Extension (DELEX) project
- Submarine Operational Update Program (SOUP)
- Tribal Class Update and Modernization Project (TRUMP)
- CFAV *Quest* program
- HMCS *Cormorant* diving support ship
- CPF Requirements and Definition phases

Other topics of interest include:

- Time lines showing the links between R&D, and equipment/system development and integration in ships; and
- Background behind major departmental decisions relating to the various ship and equipment programs.



Accomplishments

Since its inception, the CNTHA has gathered a large quantity of diverse technical history material into its collection. There are in excess of 500 items, including about 100 concerning the Canadian naval industrial base in some form or another, and more than 50 transcripts of oral, first-hand historical accounts. For the small band of mostly grey-haired ex-Navy volunteers who meet monthly to guide the activity and share the workload, the CNTHA Collection represents an enormous commitment by them, and by the few of our number who have since crossed the bar.

As we continue to find ways to forge closer ties with the Director General Maritime Equipment Program Management division, and with the Canadian naval technical support community at large, let me leave you with the words of our first chairman, RAdm (ret.) Mike Saker, who wrote in this space one year after we launched the CNTHA 20 years ago:

“To everyone who has contributed in however small a way to the achievement of the goals of the Canadian Naval Technical History Association I offer my sincere thanks. Your dedication and effort have made an enormous difference in completing the historical record. I ask all of you who read this to please keep our aims in mind, and to look for ways in which you can help us preserve a record of your

technical contribution (past and present) to Canada’s navy. I can think of no better professional legacy.”

We look forward to hearing from you.



DND Photo

The Canadian Forces oceanographic research vessel *Quest* (AGOR-172).

HMCS *Huron* propelled into history at Naval Museum of Alberta

By Don Wilson, CD, P.Eng

In July 2012 my brother Ken and I had the good fortune of visiting the Naval Museum of Alberta, which in October 2008 had moved to a new facility in Calgary called The Military Museums. This complex consists of eight distinct museums and galleries under one roof, including the Naval, Army and Air Force Museums of Alberta, the four regimental army museums, The Military Museums Library and Archives (University of Calgary), as well as the Founders’ Gallery.

Among the excellent displays can be found a number of valuable naval artifacts. One addition, dedicated on June 3, 2012, was a display of the port propeller from HMCS *Huron*. This visit prompted memories of having stood by both *Huron* and *Iroquois* in Sorel, Québec as the Royal Canadian Navy’s engineering overseer for the building of these two DDH-280 Tribal-class destroyers. I recalled visiting the ships regularly while Marine Industries Ltd. personnel created these magnificent vessels before our eyes. In due course, both were completed, commissioned and sailed away to Halifax – and beyond. As the engineering officer, I had the honour and privilege of commissioning *Huron*.

That ship – following in the wake of its predecessor of the same name that had garnered battle honours in the Second World War and Korea – was laid down on June 1, 1969 and commissioned as DDH-281 on December 16, 1972. Having distinguished herself time and again as part of the Atlantic Fleet, *Huron* took part in the Tribal Class Update and Modernization Project (TRUMP) in the early 1990s along with sister ships *Iroquois*, *Athabaskan* and *Algonquin*. Once this process was complete, *Huron*’s classification changed from Destroyer Helicopter (DDH) to Destroyer Guided Missile (DDG), and

was assigned to Maritime Forces Pacific for the rest of her active service.

As a result of a shortage of crews, *Huron* was decommissioned in 2000 and laid up in Esquimalt. In 2006 the ship was assigned target status for a sinking exercise as part of Operation Trident Fury. Before being towed to the offshore weapons range about 150 km west of Vancouver Island, *Huron* was stripped of her armaments and environmentally harmful contaminants. Some artifacts were preserved, including the propeller now on display in Calgary. On May 14, 2007 a combination of Royal Canadian Navy and US Navy ships and submarines and Air Command CF-18s bombarded *Huron* until she sank.

A history of both *Hurons* can be found at <http://www.hmcshuronassociation.com/>

Additional information can be found on our own website at <http://www.cntha.ca/articles/hmcs-huron.html>

Don Wilson is the CNTHA’s webmaster.



Photo by Ken Wilson

CNTHA webmaster Don Wilson stands next to the port propeller taken from HMCS *Huron*, a ship he commissioned as engineering officer in 1972. The artifact is on display some distance from salt water at the Naval Museum of Alberta in Calgary.

