



Scuttlebutt

Crow's Nest Officers' Club

January 2012

Renovations: It's (Mostly) About the Artifacts

By David Moores

Fundraising is in the air. Soon, sawdust will soon be too. Come summer, we'll tear the upper storey back to the studs and put it back together again. In the process, we're going to insulate, replace wallboard, rewire, install a dehumidifier and make the place look and feel more like it did when it first opened. The plans are ambitious, detailed and costly.

Why are we doing this?

Simply put, we have no choice. The Crow's Nest is a treasure – we all know that. But it's also a provincial historic site, and – someday soon, we hope – a national historic site as well. The heart and soul of the place is the collection of artifacts: those wonderful, irreplaceable gun shield paintings, those ships' plaques, the photos, and the periscope.

Much of that collection is endangered by the way it's displayed.

The walls are covered with tintest, which is highly acidic. It eats away wood, including the wood on the gun shield art. The air is too damp, which mildews paper and fabric. And everything could be destroyed by fire from obsolete wiring.

So we've set our sights on raising \$100,000 to bring the Crow's Nest up to code and closer to museum standards. We've already mailed out letter to members and friends, and the donations are coming in. But we have a long way to go, and we need your help to get there. If you haven't already – and even if you have – take a minute to donate to the Crow's Nest Military Artifacts Association.

You can write us a cheque or go to <http://www.canadahelps.org/> a website that helps charities in their fundraising. Either way, you will receive a receipt which you can claim

on your income tax.

If you give \$100 or more, your name will be placed on a plaque honouring the donors. For an amount of \$500 or more, your name will also go on the back of one of the new chairs which will soon grace the club. And for \$1000, you will also receive a badge, suitable for wearing or framing, which is being designed for this effort.

We hope work can begin in the early summer to minimize the disruption. When it is done, we will redecorate in a style more reminiscent of the 1940s. The club will also be warmer, more comfortable and safer.

Please help. We all know there is nowhere like the Crow's Nest. We want our children to know that as well.

President's Letter

by Tony Dearness

Our Club is a lively place. We have enjoyed another successful round of fall events. On November 5, we held the annual Remembrance dinner as a formal mess dinner. With Vices Shannon Lewis-Simpson and Gary Green, and ex-naval officers Robert Lucas and Wayne Ludlow, the banter and the appropriate tributes made for a memorable evening. The New Year's celebration saw a fine group of guests, excellent

food, with harp music before and during dinner, New Year's piped in and lots of dance music.

Music is also a feature of the end-of-month Weepers, running the gamut of jazz, traditional Newfoundland, and bluegrass. The Christmas dinner was enlivened with carol singing accompanied by Bob Innes on piano.

Food is our other shared pleasure, with one or two dinners

per month, all well attended. In September we enjoyed a traditional German buffet, in October lamb and curry specials, in November another champagne chicken night, and in December, Christmas dinner. The Club is a regular meeting place for other groups introduced by our members; some of these groups have been coming to the Crow's Nest for many years. We also welcome individual visitors and

groups who often ask members to describe the history of the Club and its artifacts.

We continue to be grateful for the support of the caterer Red Oak and service by its staff in the Club. For many members and visitors, Andrea and Joy are the familiar faces of the Club who bring voice to its stories.

Our Board, since the AGM in May, has overseen the usual agenda of managing the catering contract, reviewing maintenance requirements, and dealing with communication with members and the public. A special project has been the Renovation Fund, whose work is described

above. We have already received generous donations toward the renovations and the effort continues. The website has been completely redesigned and is being re-launched at www.crowsnestnl.ca

The New Year promises more enjoyment. We will soon be celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Club. On 27 January 1942, the Sea-Going Officers Club was established under the direction and auspices of Capt. Rollo Mainguy of the RCN and the Outerbridge family, who provided the property. We will honour these beginnings and proud history at a dinner on 28 January.

This year is also the 70th

anniversary of the sinking of the HMCS *Spikenard* which will be commemorated during the Corvette Wake dinner on 11 February, as a mess dinner. And, of course, the Board is always interested in hearing your suggestions, feedback on the planned renovations for preserving the character of the Club and its artifacts, the redesign of the website to make the story of the Club more widely and visually accessible, and our offering of Club services and entertainment. Let's make it another great year.



Royal Canadian Sea Cadets from Charlottetown PEI do their best to "clutter up the bar" while touring of the Crow's Nest last year on Friday, October 21st. See Gary Green's article on page 4 to find out about the future of this and similar photos.



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**Please support the
Crow's Nest
Building Restoration
Fund**

Welcome Aboard to New Members

In Town

Richard Gantt,
Gerry Germain,
Scott McClelland,
Karen Mitchell,
LCdr (Ret'd) William Perks,
Guido Del Rizzo, Honorary Consul
for Italy,
Chris Rutkowski,
Barry Stone,
BGen Anthony Stack,
Waldemar Scharwey, Honorary
Consul for Germany,
Dan Walker,
Lorne Wheeler.

Out of Town

John Attersley, Dartmouth, NS,
David Austin, Toronto, ON,
Janet Brake, Gander, NL David
Walton-Ball, Owen Sound, ON,
W. Brent Holden, Ottawa, ON,
Ian Searle, Calgary, AB.

Club Reservations Policy For Lunch and Dinners

Effective January 1st, 2012

DINNER RESERVATIONS:

Dinner reservations will be accepted from members only. Two seats are allowed for each member. Guests may be placed on the wait list when the reservation is taken. Only Club staff are authorized to make entries in the reservations book.

LATE RESERVATIONS: Even if there is space available, the caterer is not obliged to accept reservations less than 48 hours before the dinner. We do not have a full time kitchen.

Ordering is done in advance and late additions are difficult to accommodate.

GUEST POLICY: Effective immediately, the cut-off time for booking is 48 hours prior to the dinner. This will usually be 7 pm on the Thursday before the event. After that time, any excess capacity can be allocated

to guests on the wait list on a "first come, first serve" basis. Members on the wait list take precedence over guests.

CANCELLATION POLICY:

Members are requested to advise the Club at least 48 hours prior to the dinner that they are cancelling. For cancellations with less than 48 hours notice, the member is responsible for the cost of their meal(s) if their seat(s) cannot be filled from members or guests from the wait list. Dinner privileges will be denied to those who cancel late and do not pay up.

MAXIMUM SEATING FOR DINNERS: 44 for a plated dinner, 38 for a buffet.

FRIDAY LUNCHES:

Reservations are recommended for groups of four or more.

Members' Activities

Congratulations to Dr. C.R. (Bob) Lucas on recently being named Dean Emeritus at MUN.

Long time *Scuttlebutt* editor Derek Yetman recently launched *The Beothuk Expedition* (Breakwater Books) which recreates Cartwright's mission to find the Beothuks.

Marilyn Beaton has produced *Come from Away* (Breakwater Books) with Jeanette Walsh, the story of nurses who immigrated to this province.

Recently Cross the Bar

Mrs. Marguerite Giannou, wife of the late Ted Giannou, passed away on 31 October in St. John's.

LCdr (Ret'd) Clifford Chaulk crossed the bar in Ottawa, 16 December. Born in Maberly, Newfoundland, Cliff served in the Navy at sea and ashore for 26 years, followed by another 19 in hydrographic services at National Defence HQ.

Hazel Goodridge, St. John's, wife of late Past President Owen Goodridge, passed away on 18 December.

Dr. Peter Lockwood, eye specialist, (M.D. FRCS), and long-time Crow's Nest member, passed away at the age of 84 on December 23.

Crow's Nest Military Artifacts Association Report

By Gary Green

During the fall we conducted tours for several visiting groups including a group of Sea Cadets from PEI. As you can see in the photo on page 2, the young female members took full advantage of the occasion to clutter the bar. The relatively new tradition of female members of visiting ships' companies cluttering up the bar in defiance of the posted notice from the original 1942 constitution seems to have taken a firm hold in recent years. We now have a number of these photos and alas, too little wall space to display them. The decision has been made to procure an archival quality album to house the pictures and which can be left on the bar for viewing. In this manner, the ladies shall continue to clutter the bar even when they are not there.

The CNMAA executive continued to meet with the Crow's Nest Officers' Club executive and board to discuss our plans to raise money for the proposed renovations to the Crow's Nest which are needed to help protect and preserve the artifacts.

A letter was sent to members of the CNOC and the CMAA seeking support. Early responses have been favourable

but we still have a long way to go. Those wishing to contribute to this project may make cheques payable to the CNMAA. Tax receipts will be issued. A big thank you goes out to those who have already contributed to the fund.

Some of our members were able to take advantage of training sessions offered by various agencies. The new knowledge has been very helpful in guiding the revision of some policies and the creation of new ones. We hope that, the better educated we become about the care and management of our important collection, the better we will be able to preserve it.

Some members were able to attend the Old Christmas Day reception held by the Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives and made contact with members of other organizations similar to CNMAA. The contacts will be valuable in helping us move forward with our projects. As mentioned in the last edition, we are in the planning stage for a new book to record the history of the Crow's Nest, its artifacts and people. It is important to preserve the stories, for once they are lost the culture which makes the Crow's Nest unique is also lost. Several people have come forward

and offered to write articles. Thank you. If you would like to write an article, we can provide topics for research. Volunteers are needed to assist with all aspects of book production – research, writing, layout, editing, etc. If you are interested in helping out, please e-mail me at jrpenl@yahoo.com.

CNMAA is always looking for new members. You can join one of our working groups or just support our efforts with your membership dues. Meetings are held at the Nest at 11:00 am on the first Saturday of the month (please note the change in day and time). Membership fees are tax deductible. Membership is \$15.00 for regular member, \$30.00 for sustaining member, and \$100.00 for patron. Patrons receive a complimentary reproduction of a WW II painting reproduced by kind permission from the Canadian War Museum. Cheques may be forwarded to the Crow's Nest Military Artifacts Association, PO Box 32161, St. John's, NL, A1B 4J9.

Battle of the Atlantic Memoir, Part Two: Introduction

This is the second episode of Rob Robertson's memoir. Rob and I have been encouraged by the number of members who have e-mailed and telephoned to say how much they enjoyed Rob's first-hand witness account of the Atlantic in Wartime. You will remember Rob and his wife Kath came to St. John's in 2010 on the U.K. program enabling veterans

to revisit places from their war service.

During the Canadian Merchant Navy Reunion, which we all attended, I asked Rob what he was doing before joining the Navy, and was amazed to hear that in 1941 he worked as Station Clerk at St. Neot's railway station. In 1941, my family and I arrived at that

railway station, as my father was posted to help run the St. Neot's - Little Barford Power Station. I wonder did we meet? Truly, it's a small world!

John Henry Moyes

Battle of the Atlantic Memoir by Robbie Robertson

Editor's Note

The ONS 5 Convoy is now remembered as a turning point in the Battle of the North Atlantic, and this detailed first hand account from the decks of the SS Northern Spray is a remarkable addition to the historical record. In the first episode, Mr. Robertson concluded with the fateful night of May 5, 1943, which began with the torpedoing of a merchant ship, the SS North Britain. This was the start of a five-hour battle that saw the sinking of three more merchant before midnight. The Northern Spray rescued as many survivors as possible, and by the time the night was over, the number of men on board ship had quadrupled. We pick up the story that morning...

Whether we carried a supply of clothes for use on occasions like this I am not sure, but clothes and blankets were supplied together with plenty of hot drinks. With 143 in addition to our own crew complement of 56, conditions were, to say the least, somewhat overcrowded. The merchant navy officers were billeted in the wardroom and possibly the Captain's day cabin. The crew initially gave up their bunks to the survivors, and when these were filled others stretched out on the mess deck tables and on the floor. Our own crew rested between watches in any spare space they could find (I recall spending an uncomfortable few hours trying to sleep in the Captain's bath!!)

Medical staff and facilities on board were extremely limited. For the first time, *Northern Spray* was carrying a Sick Berth Artificer, although we had no sick bay. To date he had not enjoyed the journey, having been very seasick

for most of the time. Now, having work to do, he recovered rapidly, and with "customers" to attend to was in his element. To the best of my knowledge he had no serious injuries among the survivors, but no doubt many cuts and bruises of varying magnitude. He also had the problem of trying to relieve the discomfort of those who had swallowed the diesel oil.

During the hours we were fully engaged in picking up survivors, the convoy and escorts continued on their way still accompanied and harassed by the U-boats. That the enemy had remained with the convoy was extremely fortunate for us on the *Northern Spray*. Hove to from time to time as our rescue efforts proceeded we would have been a "sitting duck" for a torpedo from any U-boat still around. The enemy continued to press home attacks on the convoy until daylight and, in spite of the very active response from the escorts, by that time two more merchant ships – *S. S. Bristol City* and *S. S. Wentworth* – had been torpedoed. In the darkness between 2200 the previous evening and 0400 on Wednesday 5th May, the Germans had succeeded in sinking six ships from convoy ONS 5, giving them a total of seven since we had sailed. Possibly even more disappointing to the escort group was that, in spite of the intensive and widespread counter-measures undertaken continuously throughout the night, they still had no definite confirmation of any damage having been inflicted on the enemy.

Air cover for North Atlantic convoys, depending on the convoy's location in the ocean, was usually provided by aircraft flying from Iceland, Greenland or Newfoundland. For ONS 5 the periods of atrocious weather and

bad visibility had meant that flights had frequently to be cancelled. It was only much later I discovered that during the afternoon of 4th May, although weather conditions were far from favourable, two flights, several hours apart, had been flown from Gander in Newfoundland, their orders being to locate and provide cover for the convoy. For the crews of both Catalina aircraft it was to produce a welcome and positive return for all the hours of monotonous routine spent in searching vast areas of sea during their long and tedious patrols - on this patrol both were to be fortunate and locate a U-boat on the surface.

The first sighting was made a considerable distance ahead of the convoy and two attacks were rapidly pressed home using both cannon fire and depth charges. All fell close around the U-boat, which appeared, after the second attack, to be settling by the stern. Returning for a third run over the position the crew could see no trace of the vessel. Being at the limit of their patrol it was then time to return to base. Later that afternoon sighting number two took place astern of the convoy. This aircraft also attacked immediately, seeing their depth charges straddle the vessel fore and aft of the conning tower. Turning quickly and returning to the scene, the U-boat had completely disappeared. There was, however, wreckage floating and oil beginning to spread across the surface of the sea, an encouraging sight for the aircraft's crew.

In the twelve days the convoy had been at sea, these incidents were the first and only where possible "kills" had been inflicted on U-boats, and these had been achieved by the air force! Post war research revealed that

Battle of the Atlantic Memoir, continued from page 5

the first U-boat attacked had not been sunk, but had managed to dive deep and remain out of sight of the aircraft. With the arrival of full daylight, it was seen that the torpedoed *SS Harbury* was still afloat and her Captain suggested to our skipper, Lieut. F. Downer RNR, that he should reboard to investigate any salvage possibility. The weather had eased during the night and accordingly at about 0600 her Captain, with his Chief Officer, our Lieut. A. Burke RNR, together with a boarding party were rowed across and climbed aboard. It was soon apparent that the ship could not be saved but whilst aboard time was spent locating and collecting stores and provisions for transfer to the *Northern Spray*.

As numbers aboard the *Northern Spray* were now about four times her usual complement, the acquisition of additional food stocks had been essential if we were not to be severely rationed for the next three or four days until we reached Newfoundland. That collected during our visit to *S. S. Harbury* was therefore of prime importance. Shortly after the return of the boarding party we were instructed to detach and proceed independently at best speed to St. Johns to land our "passengers".

For all aboard *Northern Spray*, the remaining three days of our journey were quiet when compared to the happenings of the previous twelve. The weather and sea conditions had eased and we were fortunately spared the attention of the U-boats. We encountered some fog and ice

floes, although these were only minor problems and caused little delay. After the first twenty-four hours or so the general confusion on the mess deck abated and crew members began to retrieve their bunks when off watch. The overcrowding and inconvenience seemed to be accepted by both crew and survivors as a necessary part of life to be endured until we reached port. The Americans among our "guests" were the first to return our bunks and to offer and insist that they helped with the cleaning ships duties. They also provided assistance in the galley with the preparation and serving of meals. This was the first occasion I had spent time in contact with Americans and their willingness to help came as a great surprise.

Our survivors were generally most friendly and helpful, being no doubt thankful to have been picked up and aboard. There was however one disturbing incident that I recall, which involved Lascar seamen among those rescued, who sat around on the mess deck tables. One, possibly upset by remarks made when asking him to move, refused, drew a knife and acted threateningly supported by a colleague. Lieut. Downer acted quickly, the disturbance was quelled and the participants locked away in the for'ard storeroom until we reached St. John's.

The food stores transferred from the *S.S. Harbury* proved sufficient to remove any need for rationing before we reached Newfoundland. With our greatly increased complement, however,

drinking water was now in short supply. Consequently sea water had to be used for personal cleanliness. This was not particularly pleasant to use or successful, and crew members tended to wash only infrequently during the final few days. In a photograph of crew members on the fore deck that I took after our arrival in St. John's, everyone looked more like a survivor than the survivors had when they had gone ashore! We eventually entered the harbour at St. John's and tied up alongside during the morning of Saturday 8th May after being at sea for sixteen days

Once started on our lone journey to Newfoundland, we aboard *Northern Spray* resumed normal sea-going duties and watches. We continued to listen to the R/T traffic between the convoy escorts, from which it quickly became apparent that our peaceful progress was in direct contrast to that being experienced by the convoy. From their reports of HF/DF and radar activity, it was obvious that many U-boats were still in close contact. They had evidently regrouped after their exertions and successes of the previous night, and were apparently ready and eager to renew the assault. By mid-morning, battle had been rejoined, with the enemy once more closing on the convoy from all sides. Strive as they might, the hard-pressed escorts' defensive tactics were unsuccessful in repulsing all the varied attacks. In spite of all their efforts, within the hour immediately following midday

Battle of the Atlantic Memoir, continued from page 6

four more merchant ships were torpedoed. The *SS Dulus*, *Selvistan*, *Gharinda* and *Bonde* all sank quickly, adding to the difficulties of the escorts as they now also had survivors to pick up.

Throughout the afternoon and evening the battle continued unabated. At times as many as seven U-boats could be seen simultaneously on the surface, as they manoeuvred to strike at the convoy. There were also occasions when a single escort would be in close contact with two or even three U-boats at the same time. In these circumstances, the escort's captain had to decide how far he could continue the attack against one of the enemy vessels without exposing himself, or ships of the convoy, to the danger of a torpedo from one of the other U-boats. Once sighted on the surface, a U-boat would initially be engaged by gunfire as the escort hurried to close the range, before the enemy dived in her endeavour to avoid the hedgehogs or depth charges that were to follow. The prime objective of these attacks was, of course, to sink or inflict damage on the enemy. A partial success was, however, achieved if the U-boat could be persuaded to dive deep and to remain submerged, where her speed was reduced and she was consequently marginally less of a menace.

The approach of darkness brought no respite from the intensity of the assault. At about 2230, *Loosestrife*, responding to a radar contact, was surprised to see the U-boat

make off at speed on the surface. After firing off two torpedoes, which passed one on either side of the corvette, the enemy then crash-dived. Arriving at the position, *Loosestrife* dropped a full pattern of ten depth charges. Following quickly upon the explosions of the depth charges, the U-boat broke the surface again, only to disintegrate as a huge internal explosion scattered bits and pieces over a wide area. From the amount of floating debris and with oil spreading across the surface of the sea, it was obvious that the vessel had been sunk. After thirteen days at sea, for half of which the convoy had been shadowed and attacked by an increasing number of U-boats, *Loosestrife* had achieved the first definite "kill" inflicted on the enemy, as a result of Escort Group B7's defensive activities.

For the next six hours, attack and counter-attack continued relentlessly, both opponents seemingly intent on establishing some superiority over the other. Although in no way involved in the action taking place, the intense R/T transmissions from the convoy provided for us aboard *Northern Spray* an encouraging commentary on the continuing battle. Reports told of torpedoes being launched at several of the escorts, all fortunately missing or being evaded by the intended victims. Incidents of individual attacks made on the enemy by various escorts also made interesting listening. The most exciting and encouraging news, however, came from the destroyer *Oribi*, which said

simply "Have rammed U-boat. U-boat has sunk." Further successes were recorded and reported by *Vidette*, who sank another enemy vessel with a hedgehog attack, and by *Sunflower*, who rammed yet another U-boat inflicting some damage.

With the approach of daylight, the intensity of the attacks was easing and by 0500 they had ceased. The convoy was by then enveloped in thick fog and was scattered, with attempts being made to round up the stragglers. The attacks on the convoy had continued virtually without respite for around thirty hours. During the first half of this period, the hard-working escorts could report no positive instances of having inflicted any damage on the enemy. In contrast, the Germans could celebrate having sunk ten merchant ships from the convoy. The U-boats sunk and damaged during the night just ended at least started to redress the balance, and this was without doubt a very welcome change of fortune. It confirmed that the U-boats were vulnerable and could be sunk. To many extremely tired crewmen on both the escorts and the merchantmen, this was indeed most cheering news.

Continued in the next issue.

Club Dinner Schedule January - June 2012

Friday January 27, 2012

Weepers

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres

Saturday January 28, 2012

Anniversary Dinner

Spinach Salad
Calvados Apple Chicken
(Salmon Alternate)
New York Cheesecake
with a Blueberry Sauce
\$ 22.95 per person

Saturday February 11, 2012

Corvette Wake Dinner

Tiger Shrimp Cocktail
Roasted Strip loin
(Chicken Alternate)
Apple Dumpling
with a Bailey's Custard
\$ 22.95 per person

Friday February 24, 2012

Weepers

Complimentary hor's d'oeuvres

Saturday February 25, 2012

Tomato and Juniper Berry Soup
Pan Fried Cod
(Chicken Alternate)
Two Tone Orange and
Chocolate Parfait
\$ 22.95 per person

Friday March 2, 2012

Market Garden Salad
Roasted Pork Loin
in a Brandy Cream Sauce
Strawberries and ice cream
\$22.95 per person

Saturday March 17, 2012

Paddy's Day Irish Buffett

An Assortment of Irish
Traditional
Recipes served buffet style
\$ 26.95 per person

Friday March 30th, 2012

Weepers

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres

Saturday March 31, 2012

Smoked Salmon Mousse
Spring Lamb Dinner
slowly roasted in Rosemary,
served with homemade mint sauce
(Salmon Alternate)
Bavarian Cream
\$22.95 per person

Saturday April 14, 2012

Seafood Chowder
Salmon with a cream Dill Sauce
(Chicken Alternate)
New York Cheesecake
\$ 22.95 per person

Friday April 27, 2012

Weepers

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres

Saturday April 28, 2012

Curry Buffet

\$ 24.95

Saturday May 5, 2012

Battle of the Atlantic Dinner

Roasted Squash and Apple Soup
Carved Roast Beef
Pear Strudel with homemade
Hazelnut Ice Cream
\$ 22.95

Sunday May 13th, 2012

Mothers Day Brunch

\$26.95

Friday May 25th, 2012

Weepers

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres

Saturday May 26, 2012

Sweet Tomato Salad
Flipper Dinner
Crème Brule
\$ 22.95

Saturday June 9, 2012

Spinach Salad
Lobster Dinner
Fresh Fruit Salad
\$26.95

Friday June 29, 2012

Weepers

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres

A Word from the Editor

I'm pleased take the helm as editor and hope to be able to maintain Derek Yetman's high standards. Two of my novels for young people are set in wartime St. John's and the research I did for them made me familiar with the time period that gave rise to the Crow's Nest. My father served with the RCAF in Gander early in

the war and crossed on the *Caribou* a few hours before that ferry was torpedoed, so even as a child in Toronto, I was aware of the Battle of the North Atlantic.

The historic crossing of ONS 5 convoy is well documented on the internet. If you'd like to learn more, go to Mackenzie J Gregory's Ahoy

Mac website page:

<http://ahoy.tk-jk.net/macslg/WilfredRonaldSidneyBavers.html>

There are also detailed articles in Wikipedia complete with lists of the ships involved.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convoy_ONS_5 is a good starting point.

Janet McNaughton