

Cover

WHITE ENSIGN FLYING

Corvette HMCS *Trentonian*

ROGER LITWILLER



DUNDURN
TORONTO

Dedication

*This book is dedicated to the men who sailed in Trentonian — true sailors, each one
—
who upheld the highest traditions of the Royal Canadian Navy.*

Epigraph

**You may not have read about us in the papers, but let me assure you that we are
not idle and we are doing**

our share of the job. Some day you will be able to hear about our exploits.

— Excerpt from a letter to the City of Trenton from Douglas Excell, RCNVR, ERA4,
HMCS *Trentonian*, 1945

HMCS TRENTONIAN BATTLE HONOURS

ATLANTIC	1944
ENGLISH CHANNEL	1944 – 45
NORMANDY	1944

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Foreword

White Ensign Flying is a work of love and respect by a true *amateur* of naval history (adopting the French usage denoting an enthusiast). Roger Litwiller refuses to resort to the customary telling of a ship's history, one long on technical facts and details of equipment and operational manoeuvres. Instead, his focus is the true essence of the story, the dedication and engagement of the officers and men who comprised her crew. It is hard to imagine the pace of wartime ship construction and training. *Trentonian* was a typical corvette of the time — laid down and launched in six months; fitted out, manned, and passed workups in another six; with convoy duty immediately following. Today's frigates — bristling with complex systems for surveillance, communications, and weapons control — bear no resemblance to *Trentonian*. Ships of its era went to sea searching for hostile submarines and ocean raiders with no longer-range sensors than the human eye and only the vigilance of the crew for the ship's effectiveness. And who were these men? As Roger Litwiller shows us, they were novices in the extreme. The commanding officer had less than thirty months sea time and the executive officer only six. The crew came from all walks of life and all corners of Canada. Often they had no experience of the sea and were surprised by its alternating moods of calm and ferocity. They suffered the extraordinary discomfort of the wet corvettes — mess tins balanced across open decks often arriving with more salt water than food; hammocks little different from the days of Nelson; sleep a commodity seldom sufficient.

In 2002 I had the privilege of meeting some of *Trentonian's* crew. Seldom did their stories dwell on the difficult times. Often they remembered their own pride and determination to "do their part" in the campaign against Nazi Germany. And they were in the midst of it. They remember with dignity their role in the chaos of the English Channel during Operation Neptune and the fierce resistance that ensued. They look back with sadness to *Trentonian's* final days in the Channel, attacked, severely damaged, and eventually sunk by a German submarine's torpedo. They remember with reverence the sacrifice of six of their friends and they look back with gratitude to the victory that the Allied nations wrought. When I look back over my own career, whether serving with Canadians or the many nations of our allies, it has been the strength of the individual sailor, regardless of nation, that stands out.

This book is the story of each *Trentonian* told with care and compassion. It is a vital addition to the history and tradition which has surrounded and sustained the Royal Canadian Navy for more than one hundred years. I am grateful to Roger Litwiller for the opportunity to offer these few words as a preface to a much more valuable work and I commend the story of *Trentonian* to the Canadian people as a reflection of the strength of a nation in difficult times.

David Morse

Rear-Admiral (Ret)

Royal Canadian Navy

Acknowledgements

In researching the story of HMCS *Trentonian*, I have had to follow many paths and gather information from several sources. This includes collections from public, private, and personal sources. Combined, this has given *Trentonian* a story unlike any other warship.

For the historical record, I have researched many national and community archives. The staffs of the Library and Archives Canada and the Department of National Defence, History and Heritage Section, and Directorate of Navy History and Heritage have been invaluable.

The loss of *Trentonian* meant the loss of its log as well. In order to accurately gather the movements of *Trentonian*, I have sifted through cases of naval messages — monthly reports, reports of proceedings, and other such resources, to reconstruct the daily activities of the ship. Therefore, when I note a date, time, or place in the story, the information is correct.

Additional information has been gathered at smaller archives and museums across Canada, giving a more detailed account of the ship and providing the record of its construction and the active participation of *Trentonian*'s namesake community. This was possible with the co-operation of the staff at the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes in Kingston, Ontario; the Quinte West (Ontario) Public Library; the Maritime Command Museum in Halifax, Nova Scotia; the Naval Museum of Manitoba; the Naval Museum of Alberta; the Belleville (Ontario) Public Library; the Kingston (Ontario) Public Library; Canada's Naval Memorial, HMCS *Sackville*; the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 110 in Trenton, Ontario; and the Naval Marine Archive in Picton, Ontario.

Many individuals have provided information, resources, and introductions that allowed the research to be completed. I would like to thank the following individuals: Robert Amesse, Paul Adamthwaite, Betty-Ann Anderson, Richard Gimblett, Dean Boettger, Lena Beliveau, Rick Sanderson, Mike Shortridge, Max Corkum, Murray Knowles, William Gard, Dave Innes, Steve and Agnes Drury, and Sam Andrews.

The heart and soul of *Trentonian* is its crew. There were almost 160 men that served in *Trentonian* and many of them have contributed to this work by providing their personal recollections. I have diligently attempted to place their stories at the correct time and location in the history of the ship. This work would be just another ship's history without the enthusiastic contribution and support of the men. I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to Bruce Keir, Jack Harold, Gordon Gibbons, Jack McIver, Frank Barron, Norman Sharp, Joe Gosskie, Les Majoros, Bill Shields, Jim Irwin, Eric Muff, Sydney Coates, Tom Farrell, Jim Rickard, and Stan Bennett.

I would like to thank the families of Maurice Campbell, Lewis Karns, Sidney Atkinson, Colin Glassco, and Moyle Kitchener Beck for sharing with me the stories of the crew members who have passed away.

With all the interviews and research, I have collected more information than could be published in this work. I have set up a *White Ensign Flying* page on my author website (www.rogerlitwiller.com) for this book and have included the additional material there.

This includes ships' plans, additional photos, interviews, and more.

There are three authors who have given me permission to use their work, contributing to the story of *Trentonian*:

Walter Gregory, author of *Memories of HMCS Trentonian, Alias K368: Trenton's Own Ship* (with research by Michael Ticehurst under the sponsorship of Branch 110, *Royal Canadian Legion*, Trenton, Ontario, 1980). Walter is a good friend who graciously allowed me to use his detailed work, which contains interviews with many of the crew who had passed away by the time I started this project. Walter's work is exceptional and has provided many interviews and stories to this book.

Mac Johnston, author of *Corvettes Canada: Convoy Veterans of WWII Tell Their True Stories* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1994), has given me permission to use the stories he collected from members of *Trentonian's* crew in his excellent book telling the stories of corvette sailors from all across Canada.

Fraser McKee, author of *The Canadian Naval Chronicle, 1939–1945* (Vanwell Publishing Limited, 1996), for allowing the perspective of the victories and losses for the Royal Canadian Navy to be included in this story.

Canadian artist Marc Magee created the spectacular painting used for the cover of the book. Marc is a member of the Canadian Society of Marine Artists and has graciously allowed the use of his work for the book and has donated the original painting to the Quinte West Public Library in Trenton, Ontario.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Rhonda, and our children for their support, encouragement, patience, and understanding during twelve years of research and writing.

Introduction

On February 22, 1945, HMCS *Trentonian* was the last corvette to be lost to enemy action. The ship was a late-war design, Increased Endurance, Flower-class corvette; a very different ship from the original corvettes built earlier in the Second World War. In total 294 corvettes were built in England and Canada. These were employed in many Allied navies during the war, including those of Canada, England, United States, Norway, France, Greece, India, Netherlands, Australia, Yugoslavia, and South Africa. The corvette was also used by the Kriegsmarine (German Navy), as four French Navy corvettes were surrendered with the fall of France and commissioned into service for Germany. During the war the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) employed 123 corvettes, 121 of which were built in Canada. This marks the largest class of ship in service with the RCN. Combined, Allied corvettes are credited with the destruction of forty-seven German and four Italian submarines during the war, with the loss of thirty-six corvettes. As convoy escorts, the job of a RCN corvette was not to hunt and kill the enemy but to force them away from the merchant ships the corvettes were charged with protecting. The corvettes were not permitted to “stay and play,” that is, to hunt a submarine until a kill could be confirmed. Once the threat of the submarine was forced away from the convoy, the corvette was to let it go and return to the merchant ships.

In the capacity of escort, the RCN did not sink a great number of the enemy's submarines; in fact, the RCN is credited with sinking only thirty-three during the war. But how many attacks did Canadian ships and men prevent? There is no way of answering this question and therefore, when value is measured in submarines destroyed, the RCN falls short of other navies' expectations.

Trentonian is not credited with sinking any German submarines, so its place in history has been measured by this considered lack of success. This, combined with the fact that it was the last corvette of all navies to be sunk in battle with the enemy, *Trentonian* has been considered an “unlucky” ship. But before we attach that label we must also ask, did *Trentonian* do its job? Did its crew perform their duties? For that question we should ask the thousands of men, in the hundreds of merchant ships it escorted, who arrived at their destination safely. Their answer would be far different from history's designation.

Trentonian escorted convoys in the North Atlantic and protected merchant ships in the Caribbean, the coast of North America, and also in the most dangerous waters of the world at that time: those of England, France, and the English Channel.

Trentonian escorted an immeasurable number of merchant ships in more than sixty convoys and other escort duties over its fifteen-month career. All but two of those ships arrived at their destinations safely. The first ship was severely damaged, not during an attack by the enemy, but a mistaken attack by an American destroyer. The second was on *Trentonian's* last fateful day, when one ship in its convoy was torpedoed and sunk minutes before *Trentonian* suffered the same fate.

Ask yourself, is history's depiction of *Trentonian* accurate? How many lives did *Trentonian* save? How many attacks were prevented because *Trentonian* was on duty and on station, doing a job that no other navy wanted to do?

Trentonian's place in history will ultimately be measured from its crew's contribution. Many of the men who served in it have given their stories to this book. All of them were young men, some even boys, who volunteered to sail into harm's way and possibly give their lives to fight the enemy. They have willingly described their lives in *Trentonian* and what it was like to be a Canadian sailor serving in a corvette in the Second World War.

There are some stories that only one man may remember as it affected him personally, while other events are vividly recollected by all. The best example I can give of this is

that with each interview I asked, "What was the food like?" Collectively the response was, "most of the time pretty good, except we had red lead and bacon a lot." This is the slang for stewed tomatoes and fried bacon. When I found one of the cooks, I changed the question to, "What did you cook?" His reply gave the entire project perspective, "I cooked a variety of meals, but there was one meal I made all the time, in fact I am having it tonight for supper. I love red lead and bacon; I made it all the time!" It is their stories that will give future generations a personal glimpse of living history, during the course of one of Canada's greatest moments.

1: The Birth of a Corvette

It was a pleasure for the citizens to sponsor the vessel. The achievements of *Trentonian* would be watched by every citizen of Trenton.

— Mayor H.R. Cory, City of Trenton

The history of *Trentonian* started long before two pieces of steel were joined to form its keel. Its story begins in a small town in eastern Ontario.

During the Second World War, Trenton was looking to make a meaningful contribution to the nation's war effort. Canada's navy had adopted the practice of naming warships after communities. This allowed the community to adopt the ship and provide all the comforts that the crew would need to live. It became an honour for towns to have a Canadian warship named after them, and so Trenton made an application to the Royal Canadian Navy early in 1942 to have the name Trenton attached to one of Canada's fighting ships. Unfortunately, the name was rejected by the navy as an American cruiser was already named USS *Trenton*.

In November 1942 Trenton's mayor, H.R. Cory, submitted four substitute names.^[1] The names were "The Trent," for the river that runs through the city; "Quinte," for the bay that Trenton sits on; "Mount Pelion," for the name of the highest point in the city; and finally, "Trentonia," an easily recognized altered form of Trenton. The Navy Board decided on Trentonia after all the others were determined to be in use. Another reason for its selection was that it was not too long to fit on a cap tally or ship's name board. It was practice then for a clerk in Ottawa to prepare a list of the names of all the ships under or awaiting construction and the hulls they would be assigned too. This list was sent to the king for royal assent. While typing the list that contained Trentonia, a clerk added a typo — the ship before Trentonia was Prestonian and an "n" was added — changing the name to Trentonian. The error was not found until after the list was returned from the king with his consent. Unwilling to inform the king that he had given royal approval to the wrong name, the RCN kept the name *Trentonian*.

To help form a bond between community and ship, the navy built ships as close to the place they were named for as possible. The Kingston Shipbuilding Company in Kingston, Ontario, was assigned to build *Trentonian*. Construction began on February 2, 1943, and progressed quickly as the ship was expected to be launched in early August.^[2] The Kingston shipyard gave it the hull number of 27,^[3] and the RCN designated the new construction as CN443.

On April 10, 1943, the secretary of the Navy Board, J.A. MacDonald, sent the following letter to the mayor of Trenton, the Honourable H.R. Cory, announcing the navy's decision:

As you are probably aware, it is the custom of all Navies to give to certain classes of ships the names of certain class of persons, places, or objects. For example the British Navy, cruisers are called after counties or larger cities, and in the United States Navy, battleships are called after states of the Union.

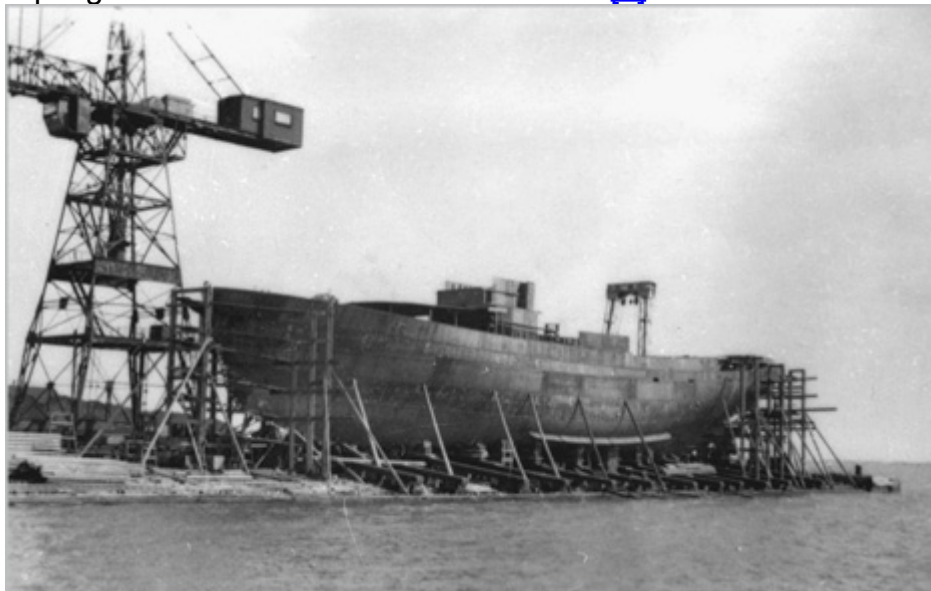
Following this custom the Canadian Navy some time ago decided to call corvettes and minesweepers after cities and towns in Canada. The corvette H.M.C.S. "Trentonian" has been named after your town.

Many communities which have had ships named after them have undertaken to supply to the crew of the ship comforts which are not supplied by the Department. For example, some towns have given a ship's bell, books, magazines, extra clothing such as sweaters, mittens, and the like. Some towns have given a bit of silver plate for the mess; others have given a washing machine or radio for the use of the officers and crew. Many cities have not confined themselves to one form of gift but have given a great many gifts. Thus, in some places the women of the city or town have banded together and provided articles of clothing. A club in the city might give a radio; the city

council a bit of plate, etc.

The idea of having ships adopted by the city or town after which they are named has been found to be very advantageous in keeping up the morale of the ship's crews, as well as in giving the citizens of the community concerned an opportunity to give expression to their desire to help in the winning of the war.

I should like to know if your community or some organization in the community, would consider adopting the corvette H.M.C.S. "Trentonian."[\[4\]](#)



Trentonian under construction at the Kingston Shipbuilding Company shipyards in Kingston, Ontario, August 1943.

Photo courtesy of the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes, neg. 1982_0019_0179.

On April 15, 1943, Trenton announced the name of the ship in the local newspaper. The following is an excerpt from the *Trenton Courier Advocate*:

Mayor H.R. Cory was advised this week that the Naval Branch of the Department of National Defence at Ottawa had christened a corvette Trentonian in honour of this town, and the department asks that the town adopt the new vessel as its very own.

Corvettes have been playing a big part in destroying submarines and convoying much larger ships in this war, so this town's own Trentonian will soon be in there giving the enemy something to worry about.

It is now up to the citizens not only to adopt their own vessel, but to see that it is equipped with the things that are needed to make it more homelike, and above all to see that the crew of the Trenton vessel is kept in supplies and comforts of all kinds.[\[5\]](#)

The article mentions *Trentonian* had already been christened, but this ceremony would not take place until its launching. The citizens of Trenton rallied to the navy's call for support. A few days later the newspaper reported on the town council meeting, the headline read "Trenton Ship Must Have Best Says Mayor." The article went on to state that a special committee should be formed to work with council, to advise and purchase the items that the ship would need. The clerk was asked to write to the Honourable Angus MacDonald, minister of naval affairs, and ask what was needed for this new ship, when it was needed, and where it was to be launched.[\[6\]](#)

This began a flurry of correspondence between the RCN and Trenton starting with the community's official reply to the navy on April 21, 1943, "The Council appreciates this gesture of naming the Corvette H.M.C.S. 'Trentonian' and has arranged to hold Saturday, June 19, 1943, a tag day for which the proceeds are to be spent for the comforts for the crew of Trentonian." This was signed, "Yours Truly, W.J. Potts. Clerk-Treasurer."[\[7\]](#)



*The Corvette Committee of Trenton, Ontario, at the launching ceremony of *Trentonian*. Miss Hazel Farley, who was responsible for communications with the ship, is standing top right in the black hat.*

Photo courtesy of the Quinte West Public Library, Hazel Farley Collection.

A second letter was sent to the navy on April 28 asking where the crew of *Trentonian* could be contacted and what items they would prefer.^[8] Still under construction, a crew had not been assigned so the navy sent the following reply on April 30, "The compliment of this ship is six officers and seventy-nine ratings. Attached is a list of amenities for your guidance which the crews of most ships like to receive." The letter ends, "It is desired to express the appreciation of the Department in anticipation of the many comforts which will be supplied to the crew of this ship as a result of your efforts."^[9]

As support for the ship grew, a Trenton branch of the Navy League of Canada was formed in May 1943. Their first ad in the newspapers requesting supplies for the crew was for magazines and ditty bags for sailors to keep their personal effects. An editorial in the same issue called for the formation of a Navy League Cadet Corps for Trenton, citing that the Sea Cadets could play a part in all ceremonies surrounding the ship.^[10] On June 3, 1943, Trenton sent a letter to the RCN requesting that once *Trentonian* was launched, it be moved to Trenton to finish construction.^[11] The secretary of the Navy Board sent a reply to Trenton on June 15, "it is regretted that circumstances prevent this ship being fitted at Trenton, Ontario."^[12] Although Trenton's Central Bridge Company was building tug boats, the water in the Bay of Quinte was not deep enough for a corvette. The empty hull could be floated into the bay, but once the engines, boilers, superstructure, weapons, and all other equipment were fitted into the ship, it would draw too deep to leave the shallow bay.

Also on June 3, the local newspaper reported an update on the ship and the committee that had formed. The article started with, "Trenton's battle-wagon, HMCS *Trentonian*, is being built in Kingston and will be launched shortly at which time it may be possible that the townspeople in goodly numbers will be on hand." Trenton was no different than any other community when it came to rumours and stories; anything with a bit of gossip was

good news. The article went on to clarify a public announcement earlier, "Some time ago it was reported ... in public that this corvette was already in action on the high seas, but a letter received from the Department of Naval Affairs at Ottawa scotches all such reports."[\[13\]](#)

A second article in the June 3 issue of the newspaper reported that \$665.20 had been raised on the first tag day and several private donations had been received for the ship.[\[14\]](#) An editorial called for the navy to man *Trentonian* with sailors from Trenton. The article stated, "there have been enough local boys enlisted in the Navy that we should be able to man our own ship."[\[15\]](#) This was not permitted as the Canadian Navy had a standing policy not to allow sailors to serve on the ships named after their home towns. The RCN knew the loss of a ship meant the loss of lives — sometimes the entire crew was killed with no survivors. Imagine the grief of a community that had just been informed that over one hundred of their young men had been killed in a single action. The loss would be devastating.

Construction on *Trentonian* continued during the summer of 1943 and the ship slowly took its shape. At the shipyard preparations began for a launching ceremony. T.G. Bishop, manager of the Kingston Shipbuilding Company, sent a letter to the secretary of the Navy Board on June 11 stating, "We shall be glad to arrange to have a launching ceremony for H.M.C.S. "TRENTONIAN," CN443, and shall be glad to have you invite some lady designated by the mayor of Trenton to perform the christening ceremony. We expect this ship to be launched early in August but will advise you later on a more definite date."[\[16\]](#)

A letter was sent to Trenton on July 2, 1943, with official notice of the upcoming launching ceremony:

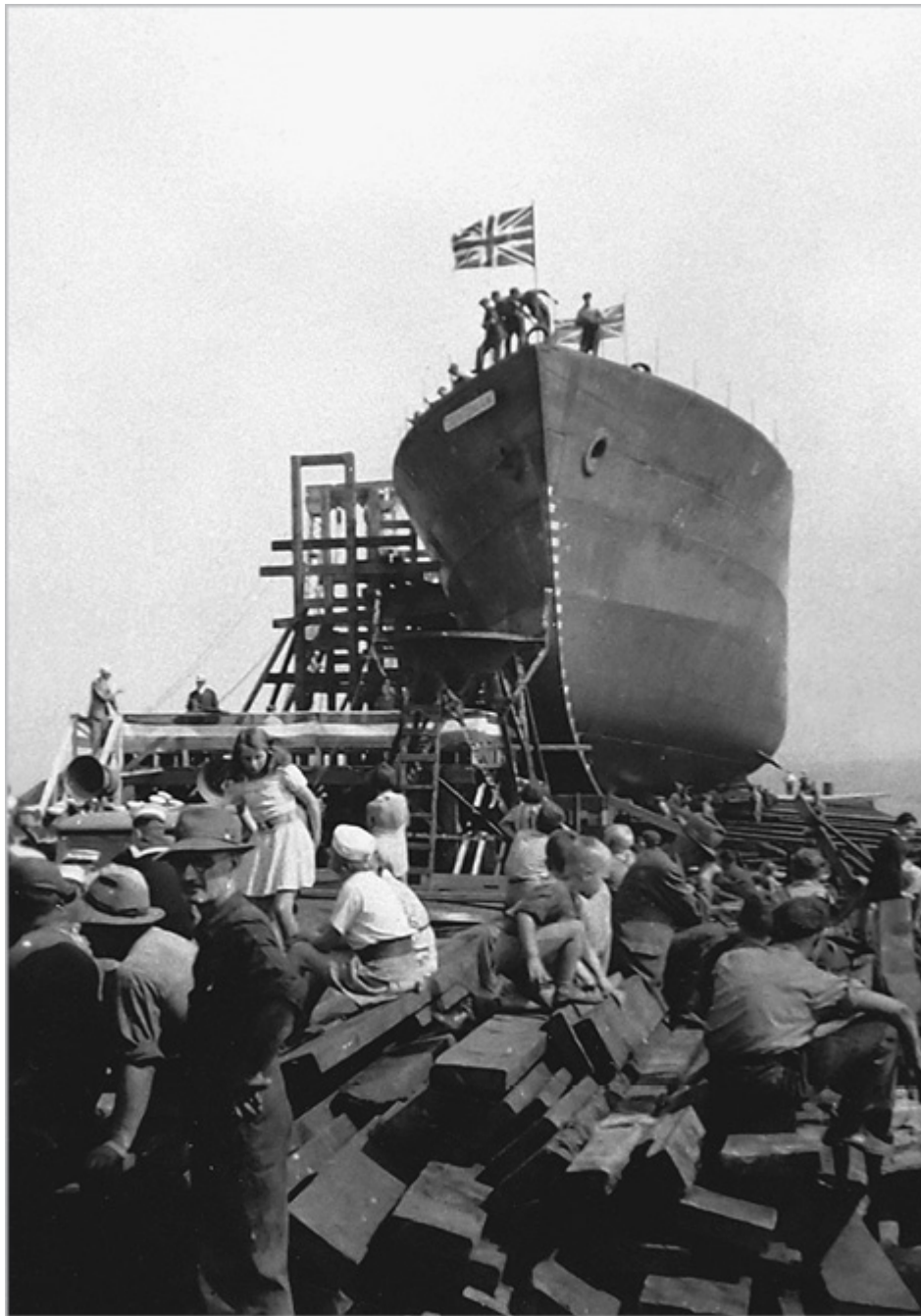
The Minister of National defence for Naval services, the Honourable Angus L. MacDonald, has asked me to write to you to advise you that the launching of H.M.C.S. "Trentonian" will take place at Kingston Shipbuilding Company, Kingston, Ontario within a month.

The Shipbuilders have stated that they intend to have a launching ceremony and it occurred to the Minister that some lady designated by you would like to launch the ship. The Shipbuilders will write you in connection and invite you also, specifying the time and date at which the ceremony will take place. The ceremonies are not elaborate in wartime in order that production may not be unduly held up.

Will you kindly advise me whether or not your appointee will be able to launch the ship? Travelling expenses are not provided by the department.[\[17\]](#)

The citizens of Trenton continued to raise funds and items for their ship with enthusiasm. By early July a sizeable collection had accumulated and the navy was asked where the items should be sent. On July 5 the navy responded that all comforts could be shipped directly to the "Resident Naval Overseer, c/o Kingston Shipbuilding Company in Kingston."[\[18\]](#)

The construction of *Trentonian* had not proceeded as quickly as anticipated and the launching ceremony was officially delayed when the Kingston Shipbuilding Company sent a letter to the RCN on August 10, "*Trentonian* will be launched at 3 p.m. on September 1st."[\[19\]](#)



A crowd gathers on the waterfront to witness the launching of Trentonian.

Photo courtesy of the Quinte West Public Library, Hazel Farley Collection.

On the night of August 26, security around *Trentonian* was increased after nineteen German prisoners of war escaped the POW camp located at Fort Henry, which was across the harbour from the Kingston Shipbuilding Company, by digging a tunnel under the walls of the 150-year-old fort.^[20] This was the second-largest prisoner of war escape in Canada, and over one thousand military personnel, along with provincial and local police, were mobilized to track down the German prisoners. By noon the next day, twelve were recaptured. Three more were caught on the twenty-eighth, leaving four POWs still at large.^[21]

With the launching of *Trentonian*, only a few days away, the local newspaper reported the activities of the Trenton committee on August 27, 1943, "It is understood already some \$1,100 has been raised for the purpose of buying comforts and equipment for the ship, and some of the suggested articles included radio, gramophone, records, sheet music, cards, games, knitted wear, electrical appliances, and numerous others. While

many of these may be purchased with the sum already available, there is still a need for more money and for many articles not mentioned above to be donated by private individuals." The article concluded with, "The ship is to be launched next week in Kingston and Trenton citizens are asked to avail themselves of the opportunity of seeing this corvette 'Trentonian' launched." [22]

On September 1, 1943, *Trentonian's* hull was complete and ready to have its first taste of fresh water. The launching ceremony took place that day amid great celebration, dampened only somewhat by the fact that the day was also the fourth anniversary of the start of the war.

A large delegation from the city was present for the christening ceremony. This included Mayor Cory and his wife, along with Councillor R. Whitley and Mrs. Whitley, Councillor Walter Gainforth and Mrs. Gainforth, Councillor H. LaFleur and Mrs. LaFleur, Councillor R. Burt, Chief Constable W. Bain and Mrs. Bain, and several members of the local committee. [23]

The federal government was represented by the member of Parliament from Belleville, the Honourable George Stokes and his wife, and the province of Ontario by the member of provincial Parliament, R.D. Arnott and his wife. Other dignitaries included, Mr. Roy M. Wolvin, the Montreal president of the Kingston Shipbuilding Company, and his vice-president, Mr. J.F. Leitch. [24]

The dignitaries, guests, and members of the public were greeted by a contingent of sailors from the Naval Reserve Unit in Kingston, HMCS *Cataraqui*, as well as an honour guard of local Sea Cadets. [25]

With the four escaped German prisoners still at large (they would be captured the next day), the ceremonies began under tight security at 1500, with the general manager of the shipyard, Mr. T.G. Bishop, officiating. Several speeches were given. The *Belleville Intelligencer* reported Mayor Cory's address, "Mayor Cory in a short but appropriate address spoke on behalf of the town of Trenton, expressing what a deep honour he felt along with Trenton citizens at the honour and privilege of having a Corvette named after his town, and said that he trusted God in his Great Mercy would guide the ship and the men who sailed in her, and that this worthy ship might participate in ultimate victory." [26]

He went on to state, "It was a pleasure for the citizens to sponsor the vessel. The achievements of *Trentonian* would be watched by every citizen of Trenton." [27]

Also speaking at the ceremony was Lt. G.E. Kernohan, commanding officer of the Kingston Naval Reserve Unit, *Cataraqui*, and Alderman C.L. Boyd, representing the mayor of Kingston. [28] The dedication service and blessing of the ship was performed by Lt.-Col. H.A. Kent, principal of Queen's Theological College. [29]

Mrs. Cory, the wife of the mayor, had been selected as the patron for the ship and given the honour of christening it. Mrs. Cory briefly thanked the Department of Naval Services and the management of the Kingston Shipbuilding Company for the honour which had been conferred upon the citizens of Trenton in being asked to sponsor the ship. Betty Rice, the daughter of William Rice, riveter at the shipyards, presented Mrs. Cory with a bouquet of roses. [30]



Mayor Cory of the City of Trenton addresses the crowd during the launch ceremony.

Photo courtesy of the Quinte West Public Library, Hazel Farley Collection.

Mrs. Cory released the bottle of champagne at the same time the final blocks holding the *Trentonian* to dry land were removed by the shipyard workers. The ship began to slide sideways off the ways and the crowd watched as the bottle swung out to the limits of the rope and then swung back again, not touching or breaking against the hull of the ship. Unfortunately, Mrs. Cory's toss of the champagne bottle was not as fast as *Trentonian's* slide to the water and the bottle stopped short of the ship. The all-important bottle of champagne briefly dangled from the ribbon-decorated line, until one of the workmen grabbed the bottle and threw it, breaking it across *Trentonian's* bows, christening the ship.[\[31\]](#)

The deep-toned steam whistles from the dockyard were joined by those of the Canadian Locomotive Company and every factory within sight. Added to that, the whistles and horns of the ships in the harbour and the smaller boats gathered to witness this great event resounded across the water to signify the birth of a new warship.

Trentonian finally touched the water at exactly 1530 on September 1, 1943. The large crowd gathered along the shoreline cheered as it touched the water and sent a great wave across the harbour.

The ship sat bobbing in the water of Kingston Harbour getting a feel for its natural element. Once settled, it was taken in tow and secured to the dock. The festivities then moved to the Cataraqui Golf and Country Club. Mr. Roy M. Wolvin, Montreal president of the Kingston Shipbuilding Company, gave a short address. He paid tribute to the workmen for the splendid job which they had done in record time. He thanked the citizens of Trenton for sponsoring the ship, and then presented Mrs. Cory with a silver tray, engraved to commemorate the occasion.^[32] The Belleville *Intelligencer* reported on the events of the reception, "Mrs. Cory graciously accepted the tray, thanking Mr. Wolvin, his company, and the citizens of Kingston for their kindness on this occasion. Mayor Cory thanked Mr. Wolvin, the members of the Kingston Shipbuilding Company and others for the great pains which they had taken in making it possible for Trentonians to be present at the launching of their ship and promised that he and his town would do everything in their power to provide comforts for its crew."^[33]



Trentonian sends a large wave across Kingston harbour as the ship enters the water for the first time.

Photo courtesy of the Naval Museum of Alberta.

As quickly as the celebrations ended, construction began again. The ship's hull was complete, but now the rest of the work needed to be finished — and quickly. *Trentonian* had to be complete before the freezing of the St. Lawrence waterway or it would be trapped in the Great Lakes until spring. There was still a great deal of work to be done. The ship's engines and boilers needed to be installed, the upperworks and superstructure had to be built, the miles of wires for the electronics had to be installed. All of the equipment — radios, radars, compasses, steering gear, repeaters — had to be outfitted. Finally, the weapons that would allow the *Trentonian* to engage the enemy — its four-inch gun, anti-aircraft guns, depth charge throwers, and hedgehog (a new weapon that launched forty mortars from the front of a ship directly over a submarine's location) — needed to be installed.

On November 11, 1943, *Trentonian* was assigned its first crew member, William

Edward Harrison, lieutenant, RCNVR. Harrison was a native of Ireland living in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and had joined the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve on May 29, 1941. Having a background with the merchant navy, he was given the rank of lieutenant (temporary).

Lieutenant Harrison's first command was the armed yacht *Husky* from September 6 to October 18, 1941. He was then given command of the new corvette *Lunenburg* from December 4, 1941, to October 13, 1943. He commanded *Lunenburg* for almost two years on active duty, escorting convoys on the east coast of Canada, in the St. Lawrence, and around the United Kingdom.

Harrison and *Lunenburg* were one of the seventeen Canadian corvettes assigned to Operation Torch, the invasion of Sicily. During the operation, Harrison and his ship were under continuous threat by German aircraft, E-boats, and U-boats while escorting convoys in the Mediterranean. These experiences gave *Trentonian* an officer with a wealth of sea-time — adept in both command and the use of corvettes during war.



The commanding officer of Trentonian, Lt. William E. Harrison, RCNVR, from Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Photo courtesy of the Quinte West Public Library, Hazel Farley Collection.

Years later crew members from *Trentonian* would remember Harrison pacing the

bridge in a turtleneck sweater and jacket, even in the coldest weather, rarely needing anything more. They describe him as a quiet and unassuming man, a dedicated seaman with a wealth of knowledge. He was honest, with a genuine concern for his men. When they occasionally ran afoul of some authority ashore or aboard ship, he could be relied upon to treat them fair and even, with a certain amount of fatherly protection.^[34] When crew members described Harrison, there was always a sense of loyalty, respect, and devotion in their recollections.

As with all commanding officers in the navy, he was given typical slang names by the crew — things like “the old man” and “skipper.” They were always used as a term of endearment; sometimes near him, but never to his face.



Trentonian undergoing speed trials on Lake Ontario on November 20, 1943.

Photo courtesy of the Naval Museum of Alberta.

The first of *Trentonian*'s crew arrived with Harrison. These men would be the senior ratings and officers to learn their ship before commissioning. At this point the ship was almost ready, its appearance set, and most of the engineering complete. On November 17, Harrison received a message from the navy that he was to conduct full speed trials with *Trentonian* and the builders on the twentieth.^[35]

Trentonian slipped its lines for the first time, at 0951 on the morning of November 20 and proceeded out to Lake Ontario under its own power. For the purpose of this voyage the ship was manned by a skeleton crew and workers from the Kingston Shipyards.

Speed trials are an opportunity to test the ship's engines and performance. The ship is tested for speed and agility and how it will perform at in various conditions. Steering gear, anchors and winches, and emergency gear are all put through their paces as well. When the trials commenced, the weather on Lake Ontario brought the wind from the south-west and the conditions were slight.

Trentonian's steering was checked and performed very well. The ship could turn from amidships (straight) to hard starboard or hard to port in six seconds. The turn from hard starboard to hard port took twelve seconds and the ship was slightly slower turning in the opposite direction, from hard port to hard starboard took thirteen seconds. It took one minute twenty-five seconds to change from steam steering gear on the bridge to hand gear steering in the emergency steering position in the tiller flats, and twenty-five seconds to change back to steam. There was a slight difficulty in steering from the tiller flats, as the voice pipes had not yet been installed throughout the ship; all commands from the bridge had to be passed through several men stationed along the ship. Anchors were tested, and when both dropped together, sixty-six feet of cable could be let out in one minute. When dropped one at a time, eighty feet of cable could be dropped in the same time.

Trentonian's turning performance was tested and it was found the ship could complete a turn to port or starboard in less than two minutes. A complete circle could be turned in a radius of 325 feet.

During the engine trials the ship was able to go from full speed to stop in one minute fourteen seconds and from full speed to reverse in one minute twenty-six seconds. During the trials the ship sailed at full speed for three hours and logged 46.7 nautical miles at 15.56 knots.

Trials were completed at 1630 and *Trentonian* returned to the dock at 1715. All aspects of the ship performed well except the time it took to change from steam steering to the hand gear in the emergency steering. Harrison recommended this be rechecked at the acceptance trials later.[\[36\]](#)

That same day, good news was waiting for the ship on its return to Kingston. After the loss of two Canadian ships in the previous months, two RCN ships had attacked and sunk a German submarine. *Snowberry* and *Calgary*, along with HMS *Nene*, had sunk U-536 off the Azores.[\[37\]](#)

Harrison took a break from overseeing the preparations of his ship on November 27 to travel the one hundred kilometres to Trenton. He paid a visit to Mayor Cory and thanked the city for the many useful and appropriate gifts that had been presented to the ship and crew. In an interview with the local newspaper, Harrison stated that the piano was three inches too wide to fit into the ship and if a trade could be made for something smaller it would get used. When asked if *Trentonian* could visit the city, he stated the water in the Bay of Quinte was too shallow for the ship, but all of Trenton was welcome to come and visit it in Kingston and be on hand for its commissioning.

During this visit, Harrison went to the local high school to meet the students and teachers. While there he met one of the members of the committee to support the ship, Hazel Farley. Miss Farley was one of the high-school teachers and had been assigned the position of correspondence with the ship and Lt. Harrison. She also set up a pen-pal system for the Trenton High School students to write letters directly with the crew. Harrison's visit with the city very much impressed the citizens of Trenton and the newspaper commented in an interview with the city's newest dignitary, "Lt. Harrison is a fine upstanding chap and thoroughly qualified to command such a vessel as The *Trentonian*."[\[38\]](#)

In this final week before commissioning, the builders finished the small details in the ship, and its skeleton crew slowly moved aboard as the mess decks and living quarters were completed.

Lieutenant William Burley Kinsman, RCNVR was appointed as *Trentonian's* executive officer, the ship's second-in-command. Originally from Vancouver, British Columbia, he joined the navy at the Naval Reserve Unit, *Chippawa*. He had come from the River-class destroyer *St. Francis* and joined *Trentonian* on November 11.

Three other officers were assigned to the ship: Lt. L.P. Parre, RCNVR, came on as the navigating officer; and two sub-lieutenants, C.H. LaRose, RCNVR, as the gunnery officer, and D.J. Dodds, RCNVR, of Westmount, Quebec, as anti-submarine officer.

Trentonian's engineering officer was Hamilton Francis Hindle, RCN, warrant engineer, born in Victoria, B.C. but raised in Vancouver and Hong Kong. Hindle had joined the Royal Navy as an ordinary seaman in 1936. He later transferred to the RCN and was appointed as a warrant engineer in March 1943. *Trentonian* was his first ship. Hindle had a strong football background as an avid player, coach, and fan. To his friends he was known as Mr. Football. As the engineering officer, Hindle was responsible for the operation of everything mechanical in the ship. This included engines, boilers, generators, and winches. He was also responsible for the damage-control operations of the ship.

Prior to commissioning, forty-three of the ratings reported aboard in addition to the six officers.^[39] The remainder of *Trentonian's* crew would join later in Quebec and Halifax. The coxswain was Chief Petty Officer Thomas Raymond Roberts of Halifax, Nova Scotia. A ship's coxswain, or chief, is the senior rating and responsible for all the men in the ship; he reports directly to the commanding officer. A good coxswain performs his duties with a combination of diligence and respect and will also instill a little bit of fear into those under him. Any of the ratings in the ship would not dare question any order given by the coxswain, and although he is not responsible for the officers in the ship, any officer that the coxswain made a "suggestion" to would be smart to follow his advice.

One of the ratings assigned to *Trentonian* was the Sick Bay Attendant (or "Tiffy," the naval slang term for the position) Allen Egerton Singleton from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He was responsible for tending to the illnesses and injuries of the crew. Singleton was an avid amateur photographer, and with his box camera he would take many pictures of the everyday life aboard *Trentonian*. Using the sickbay as a personal dark room, he developed his black-and-white photos and posted them on the ship's bulletin board. The crew could then place their orders and he would provide copies for a small price. Fortunately, he remained with *Trentonian* for its entire length of service. His original photographs were lost with the ship, but the many copies he produced for his shipmates have survived, giving *Trentonian* a rich and unprecedented pictorial history.^[40]



Top Left: Lt. William B. Kinsman, RCNVR, Executive Officer of Trentonian (Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell); Top Right: Lt. Donald Dodds (Photo Courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell); Bottom Left: Warrant Engineer Hamilton Francis Hindle, RCN (Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell); Bottom Centre: Chief Petty Officer Thomas Raymond Roberts, Trentonian's Coxswain (Photo credit: SBA A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir); Bottom Right: Sick Bay Attendant Allen Singleton (Photo courtesy of Walter Gregory).

The Kingston Whig-Standard reported on the final days of construction of the ship, "Gifts, which have been donated by the citizens of Trenton, were placed aboard HMCS *Trentonian* which is being built at the plant of the Kingston Shipbuilding Company. The naval vessel which was christened by the wife of the Mayor of Trenton and which was sponsored by that town will shortly join the Royal Canadian Navy." The article went on to state, "The Whig-Standard was told this morning the corvette, one of the most modern type now being built for the United Nations, has been accepted by the Department of Naval Affairs, Ottawa after passing its tests. A few minor changes will be made before the ship leaves for an eastern Canadian port."[\[41\]](#)



Trentonian just prior to commissioning into the Royal Canadian Navy on December 1, 1943.

Photo courtesy Directorate of Naval History and Heritage.

On December 1, 1943, at 1300, with a small ceremony the white ensign was raised for the first time on *Trentonian's* gaff, just behind the funnel. RCN Hull number CN443 was commissioned into the Royal Canadian Navy as His Majesty's Canadian Ship *Trentonian*.^[42] Once again a delegation from Trenton was on hand to participate in the commissioning. The citizens of Trenton were now able to step aboard their new ship and inspect it for themselves.

The Trentonians of the city were able to meet the Trentonians of the ship, and at the service the crew were made honorary citizens of the city of Trenton. Each crew member was given a cloth badge from the city to commemorate the occasion and the shared name. The crew spent time giving detailed tours of the ship to the delegation. With *Trentonian* sailing soon for the east coast, this was the last time for the people of Trenton to see their ship.



Three citizens of Trenton pose with Lt. Harrison (rear left), Lt. Kinsman (rear centre), and Warrant Officer Hindle, on board Trentonian following the commissioning ceremony.

Photo courtesy of the Quinte West Public Library, Hazel Farley Collection.

2: A Voyage to the Sea

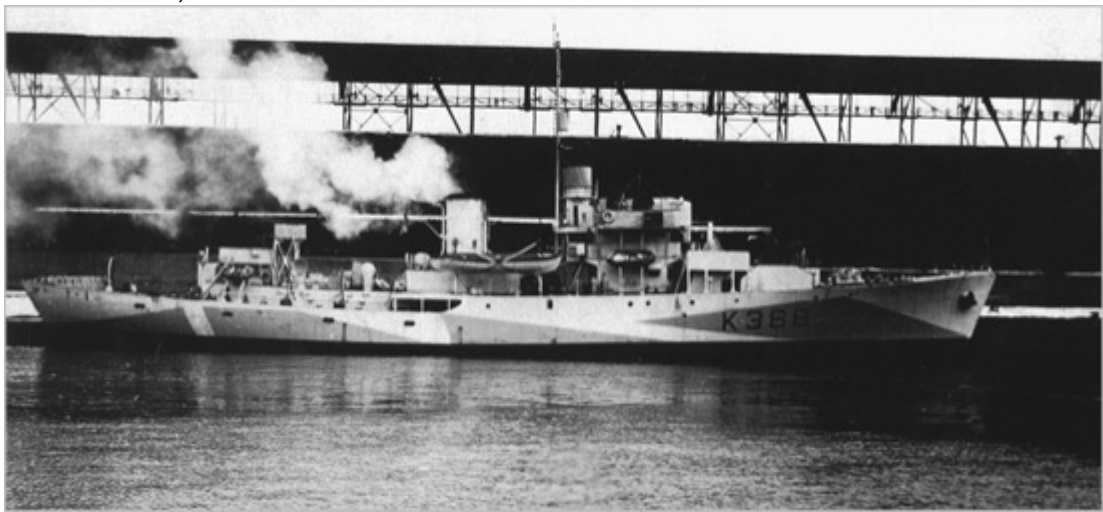
The ship's Company have found the "comforts" the people of Trenton have sent us of tremendous help in improving the living conditions in our ship.

— Lt. W.B. Kinsman, RCNVR, executive officer HMCS *Trentonian*

Shortly after the commissioning ceremony, *Trentonian* prepared to leave Kingston. The crew had two days to bring in provisions, supplies, spare parts, and all the stores the ship would need.

The piano, too large to fit through the hatch, was disassembled and brought into the ship, then reassembled in the seamen's mess and secured. Stoker Bruce Keir, from Scarborough, Ontario, remembered many hours playing on the piano, "no one really knew how to play well, but we tried anyways."^[1]

Although *Trentonian* was now commissioned and accepted by the Royal Canadian Navy, it was not fully complete. Still to be installed was the after pom-pom gun, search light, asdic (sonar), and other smaller projects. Work on the ship would continue in Quebec and later, on the East Coast.



HMCS Trentonian at Montreal after commissioning.

Photo courtesy of Gary McGregor.

Finally, at 1145 on December 3, *Trentonian* slipped its lines and left Kingston and the Great Lakes with the white ensign flying.^[2] The ship entered the St. Lawrence River after passing through the Thousand Islands, making its way to the first port of call in Montreal.

On the afternoon of December 6, *Trentonian* arrived in Montreal where it would remain for three days. On arrival, more of the crew joined the ship after being transferred from the manning pool at the Naval Reserve Unit, *Hochelaga*.

One of the sailors to join the ship was Stoker Sydney Coates, RCNVR, from Carbon, Alberta. He had quit school to join the navy in 1942 after finishing eleventh grade. He enlisted in Calgary, but the navy could not take him until the next class. Coates went to work in Fort St. John driving a gravel truck for the Alaska Highway. After an accident left his truck stranded, he returned to Calgary and had three weeks basic training at the local Naval Reserve Unit, *Tecumseh*, before being sent to Halifax to train as a stoker. Three months later Coates was assigned to the corvette *Baddeck*. He was reassigned to *Cornwallis* for training when *Baddeck* went for refit. On completion of his training he was sent to Montreal to await his assignment on the frigate *Valleyfield*, which was still under construction.

The sailors assigned to the manning pool were required to attend morning parades to see if their ship was ready; if their name was called, they reported to the ship. If their name was not called they were free until the next day. Coates reported faithfully for

weeks, awaiting news that *Valleyfield* was ready. One morning, he met an old friend from home and the two sailors went into Montreal and enjoyed the city. They missed morning divisions the next day and, when they did show up, the military police were looking for Coates. Missing the division had caused Coates to be reported as Absent Without Leave (AWOL); *Valleyfield* had been ready and his name called.

Coates was placed in the cells for seven days. He described the routine of being in detention as waking at 0600, cleaning his cell, polishing his uniform (including the soles of his boots), and shining the garbage can until he could see himself in it. A breakfast consisting of toast and coffee followed. The morning was spent being inspected, and then he was given a rifle and a backpack full of sand and had to march and drill until noon. Lunch was soup and bread. The afternoon was filled with running and exercise. The day ended with a supper of meat, potatoes, and vegetables at 1800 followed by lights out at 1930.^[3] On his return to the manning pool, Coates was reassigned to *Trentonian*.

Trentonian departed Montreal for the short trip down the St. Lawrence River to Quebec City on December 9 and arrived there the next day. In Quebec City more crew joined the ship, bringing its compliment to eighty-eight.

Lieutenant Harrison spent the next few days forming the men into a ship's company with training exercises and evolutions in the river. They spent a great amount of time leaving the dock only to come back and secure the ship again. How well a skipper and crew can perform this evolution is the first impression the rest of the fleet, and especially the brass, have of a ship.

While more equipment was fitted into the ship, Harrison's cabin was unuseable, as workmen were running ductwork and wiring through it. He was forced to spend nights ashore.

On December 11, Harrison wrote his first letter to Trenton. Fortunately, he kept very close contact with his ship's namesake town through Miss Hazel Farley. Miss Farley donated the entire collection to the Trenton Public Library. His first letter is as follows: Many thanks for the snap which I received yesterday. My wife is [removed by censor] now and she is very pleased with it, so you see yours was a happy thought. We have arrived here after many vicissitudes and headaches and the sooner we get into more open water the better I'll like it.

The ship doesn't look much better than when you saw it but we have more than half the crew here now. I am enclosing the list you asked for, giving the names of all on board at present. Will send a supplemental list when our compliment is complete.

We expect to be here until about the 20th Dec. so you could send the afghans to above address. After leaving here the address will be c/o F.M.O. Halifax.^[4]



*The St. Lawrence River frozen over while *Trentonian* is in Quebec City.*

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Jack Harold.

Due to lessons learned from predecessors sailing the North Atlantic during winter, a new type of insulation was used in *Trentonian's* construction. The interior bulkheads and deck heads were covered in a layer of insulation to keep the crew warm. When the typical December Quebec City weather began, temperature plummeted. With the bitter cold outside the crew became very cold in the mess decks despite the new insulation. The men could see their breath and frost formed on the portholes. The crew wore several layers of clothes to sleep, but as the temperature became colder outside, the mess deck could not be kept warm. One morning, when icicles formed on the deck heads, the crew threatened to walk off the ship.

Harrison notified the engineers ashore and the ship's heating system was inspected. They found the blower fans for the heaters had been installed backwards; instead of blowing stale air out of the mess decks, bitterly cold air was being sucked in. The problem was quickly remedied and the crew spent their first warm night playing cards and writing letters home.^[5]

Repairs to the ship and training of the ship's company continued, some of the men were able to visit family in the area; others were able to go ashore to enjoy the sights of Quebec City.

Not all of the large gifts from Trenton had arrived in Kingston before *Trentonian* departed. Two large crates consisting of toasters, hotplates, and electric irons had required special documentation and permission due to their weight. The paperwork began on December 15 and cited, "This is a gift from the Trenton Corvette Committee to the crew of HMCS *Trentonian*."^[6] With *Trentonian* no longer in Kingston, the crates would first be shipped to the RCN and the navy would forward them to wherever the ship was located.

The first of the care parcels from Trenton arrived in the form of afghans for the officers bunks. Harrison was able to send another letter to Miss Farley on December 17: Your letter and parcel with afghans arrived yesterday. Many thanks for both. Some of the men, have, I hear, already received letters from their pen-pals. They appear to be delighted with them so I hope the friendship by correspondence lasts. Sailors are notoriously bad correspondents but some of them make up for the others. I hope to send you a list of the remainder of the crew next Monday or Tuesday.

You asked about quilts. I am sure they would be useful, but a limited amount, as there are only nine bunks in the ship. The Officers supply their own sheets, pillowcases, and

counterpanes and I imagine they have not got around to getting very much in that line as yet. As for your other questions socks and mitts are always acceptable, little pictures that they can stick up to improve the scenery and a very urgent need at the moment — ashtrays. However we don't really want to trespass on your generosity except for the little things that perhaps could be easily got hold of.

Things are still hectic here, still wet paint around and ends of wires. We have also got the dismal news that we will spend Xmas at sea so that won't be so hot in more senses than one. It couldn't be very much colder than it is here at any rate. However, we will have quite a time finishing off when we get there so the above address should find us for a few weeks more.

I am still living on shore not having my cabin finished yet. They have decided to run a lot more wires and a ventilating shaft right through it.

Well, I fancy I have to go out in the cold again so won't put it off any longer.[\[7\]](#)

On December 22, 1943, Lt. Harrison received his sailing orders from the Naval Officer in Charge (NOIC,) Quebec. He was to sail to Halifax the next day with the corvette *Norsyd* and the tug boat, HMCTug *Norton*.

Harrison sent a Christmas card to Hazel Farley before sailing. The card was signed by the skipper, "May Christmas bring you Joy, Happiness and Prosperity in the New Year — Bill Harrison."[\[8\]](#) Inside the card, Lt. Kinsman took the opportunity to send a new crew list and a note to the people of Trenton thanking them for the many comforts they had sent. [\[9\]](#)

The following day the orders to sail were postponed due to poor weather conditions.[\[10\]](#)

On December 24 the order was again postponed, delaying the small fleet to sail on Christmas Day.[\[11\]](#)

On Christmas morning 1943, yet another signal from the NOIC Quebec came with the same message, "Sailing postponed 24 hours due to poor weather."[\[12\]](#)

The crew looked forward to their first Christmas in port as the preparations began.

Some of the crew were able to get ashore during the day; Stoker Sid Coates went skating with some girls he had met.[\[13\]](#) Signalman Jack Harold, RCNVR of Aurora, Ontario, was invited to Christmas dinner in the home of a local family that had befriended him. When he approached the XO for leave, however, he was refused; the entire crew was expected to be aboard for Christmas supper.[\[14\]](#)

Festivities aboard *Trentonian* began. Following the usual customs of the navy, the youngest member of the crew changed places with the skipper and became the commanding officer for the day. His first order was to stand down from normal routine for the Christmas celebrations. The cooks prepared a turkey dinner with all the trimmings and that was served to the crew by the officers. All enjoyed their Christmas together despite the underlying feeling, for many of *Trentonian's* young men, of being away from home for the first time, coupled with the uncertainty of not knowing when they would rejoin their families.[\[15\]](#)

Normal routine returned to the ship the next morning when the NOIC Quebec signalled that his orders were to be carried out and *Trentonian*, *Norsyd*, and *Norton* were to leave Quebec City for Halifax.[\[16\]](#)

Prior to departure, a local harbour pilot was assigned to each of the ships. (Pilots are responsible for the safe passage of ships in and out of a confined waterway; they know the waters in and around their port better than a visiting ship's commanding officer or navigator.) The bitter cold and poor weather formed thick ice on the harbour and St. Lawrence River. The pilot made several attempts to break the ice with *Trentonian's* hull, and several times the ship smashed into large blocks and bounced off solid sheets of ice. Despite Harrison's protests the pilot continued to ram the ice, causing rivets to break and small leaks to appear.[\[17\]](#)

The pounding of *Trentonian's* hull stopped when Harrison threatened to toss the pilot

over the side, and an ice breaker, *Earnest LaPointe*, was brought in to clear a path. However, the pilot in *Trentonian* stayed close to the side of the open passage, which caused the ship to continue ploughing into large blocks of broken ice.^[18] Once clear of the harbour approaches, the pilot left the ship and *Trentonian*, *Norsyd*, and *Norton* continued on course to Halifax.



Earnest LaPointe returns to Quebec City after having broken the ice for *Trentonian*, *Norsyd*, and *Norton*.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

The three ships sailed at twelve knots following the route laid out by the NOIC Quebec: down the St. Lawrence River, into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, through the Canso Strait dividing Cape Breton from the rest of Nova Scotia, and into Halifax Harbour. Once through the strait, *Trentonian* would be in the North Atlantic for the first time. Harrison knew these waters and their dangers well. His previous command, *Lunenburg*, had escorted many convoys from Quebec City to Halifax. And although *Trentonian* was sailing in the interior waterways of Canada, thousands of miles from the battleground of the North Atlantic, the enemy had attacked ships on the St. Lawrence previously.

From May to October 1942, a battle with the German Navy was waged on the St. Lawrence. Five U-boats entered Canadian waters and attacked in the Gaspé, Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the St. Lawrence River as far west as Rimouski, Quebec. The submarines sank eighteen merchant ships, damaged another three, and sank two RCN ships. The combination of fresh water mixing with salt water and differences in water temperature formed layers for a submarine to hide, making asdic operations almost impossible in this area. The attacks on the St. Lawrence River and Gulf eventually forced the RCN to close the waterway to shipping and provide convoys from Quebec City to the Atlantic.

It had been over a year since the last attack on the St. Lawrence River, but *Trentonian*, *Norsyd*, and *Norton* continued on their course knowing that the German submarines could return.

The three ships entered the choppy waters where the river met the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Many of *Trentonian*'s crew got their first taste of seasickness and it became apparent that the worst two cases in the ship were both the cooks. One of them suffered so badly that he would often become completely incapacitated.^[19]

On December 28, the three ships entered the Strait of Canso, passing through the

single lock of the Canso Canal. *Norton* detached and proceeded into the harbour at Mulgrave. As *Trentonian* and *Norsyd* passed Mulgrave, the senior naval officer (SNO) Mulgrave sent a message to Halifax verifying their position.^[20] *Trentonian* and *Norsyd* arrived in Halifax on December 29 at 0700, joining Canada's East Coast Fleet.^[21] Once there, the remaining crew members reported to the ship, giving *Trentonian* its complete ship's company of almost one hundred officers and men.

One of the sailors joining the ship in Halifax was Stoker Norman Sharp, a logger from British Columbia. He had joined the Canadian Army in February 1940, volunteering for the commandos. His officers suggested he might be better suited to the navy and he became a stoker. He served in the destroyer *St. Laurent* before his transfer to *Trentonian*.^[22]

Also joining *Trentonian* was Lt. Gordon Kent Stephen, RCNVR, from Toronto, Ontario. He had graduated from the Canadian Navy's Officer Training School at King's College just days before. He was a strong athlete and avid rugby player. The navy was not new to his family; his older brother J. Stuart Stephen was the skipper of a Canadian Fairmile.^[23]

The crew spent two days cleaning ship and settling into their new home. They received orders on December 30 to depart Halifax for the short trip to Liverpool, Nova Scotia, where they would complete the ship and repair its ice-battered hull.^[24]



Trentonian passes two Canadian Fairmile motor launches in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Trentonian slipped its lines at 0700 on the morning of December 31 and arrived at the docks of the Mersey Paper Company in Liverpool at 1400.^[25] After securing the ship, most of the crew was given shore leave for New Year's Eve.

When going ashore for leave the men had to be in their best uniforms. Boots shined, collars neatly pressed, gun shirts white and pressed. No one was allowed to leave who was not up to standard. Sailors, being an enterprising group, had discovered the chemical in the fire extinguishers made an excellent spot remover to get grime and grease out of their uniforms.

Quickly, the men prepared their number one uniforms and themselves; not a moment of leave was to be lost. Once ashore they found the Salvation Army Canteen nearby. Stoker Sydney Coates described the evening as "Good Food, Good Company, BUT NO DRINKS!"^[26]

They celebrated the evening with the usual naval customs for the New Year; the normal division between the officers and the men was relaxed so the two could enjoy fellowship together. At midnight, the youngest member of the crew struck the ship's bell sixteen times — eight bells for the old year and eight bells to usher in the New Year.

After New Year's, *Trentonian* was taken into the dry dock to have the damaged hull repaired and the asdic installed. Overall, *Trentonian* spent a month in Liverpool while the last of its equipment and electronics, along with the after pom-pom gun and the twenty-inch searchlight, were installed.

The crew continued to work on their ship, but also had time for leave. Those with family nearby were allowed to visit.^[27] While in dry dock, the only way to access *Trentonian* was a long wooden ladder that reached from the floor of the dry dock to the railings of the ship, about seventy-five feet up — a difficult and harrowing experience at the best of times.

During the evenings in dry dock, the crew noticed one of their new mates enjoyed drinking spirits more than the others. Jim (not his real name) was from Newfoundland and an able sailor described as a “hell of a nice guy, sober or otherwise.” He was always borrowing uniforms from his shipmates after selling or trading his own. One particular night he returned to the ship barely able to walk. As he made for the ladder, the crew on deck noticed he had a small dog tucked under arm. They yelled at him to stay below and let the dog go. He climbed the ladder with one hand while the other held onto the dog. The higher he got, the more he swayed. The crew held their breath, knowing what could happen. Eventually the inebriated sailor made his way to the ship and climbed over the side, safe on deck, to the relief of his mates. He staggered to the galley and made the dog a mustard sandwich. The dog, unimpressed, sniffed the snack and walked away, leaving the sailor to eat it.^[28] The dog, having been brought aboard involuntarily, was returned to shore later.

On one weekend there was a dance at a high school in Liverpool and several of the crew made plans to go. Jim made plans to attend after rounding up a uniform from his mates. Knowing he was penniless, some of the crew offered to lend him money, which he refused. So they left for the dance without him. Later they spotted Jim on the dance floor having a great time with one of the young ladies, the front of his white uniform shirt as black as night. When they asked, how he had got into the dance he replied, “I broke a window and crawled in through the coal bin.”^[29]

In Trenton, the Navy League was still busy collecting funds to support their ship. During a Navy Week fundraising campaign, \$1,345.10 was collected from a number of sources, including community service clubs, businesses, factories, schools, and individual donations. Two of the largest donations came from the Bata Shoe Company. The company itself donated \$150, while the employees gathered \$142.25.^[30]



Trentonian secured to the jetty in Halifax. The crew could play hockey on the ice covered gun deck in the foreground.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

On January 30, *Trentonian* was taken to the gunnery range for the first test of all its weapons. The forward four-inch gun fired a series of four rounds to port, starboard, forward, and then repeated with the gun elevated. The two-pounder gun in the after gun tub was fired twenty-four times and the two twenty-millimetre oerlikon machine guns located on the port and starboard bridge wings fired sixty rounds each. All aspects of the guns and weapons were found to be correct and working well.^[31]

With work on *Trentonian* nearly completed, Harrison wrote a letter to Miss Farley to update the City of Trenton:

Many thanks for the woolens and ashtrays. They are being put to good use, I assure you.

It is very difficult to find out just who receives parcels from home. To ask the whole ship's company would result in a victory for the more unprincipled, which is a thing we try to avoid. However roughly speaking there seem to be very few who do receive parcels and a list of names would include practically the whole ship's company. As I'm sure you had anticipated only a few, that's not much good. The fairest way would be for us to distribute any parcels that turned up to the various messes. As a general rule foodstuffs etc. that arrive in parcels from home are shared with their messmates anyway.

I'm sorry I haven't a picture of the ship as yet. We're waiting for a chance to take a photo of the whole ship's company, which we will send on as well as a picture of the ship when we get it.

Hoping you are enjoying the mild winter and not missing the warm weather too much.^[32]

The same day, Harrison received a signal from the Senior Naval Officer in Liverpool stating, "SLIP AT 1200 PM TOMORROW MONDAY AND BEING IN ALL RESPECTS READY FOR SEA PROCEED AT 12 KNOTS DIRECT TO HALIFAX..."^[33]

There would have been a sense of pride with this message. "BEING IN ALL RESPECTS READY FOR SEA," is a naval term used for centuries meaning a ship is complete and ready to do its duty. This was the first time the phrase was used in reference to *Trentonian*. The ship was finished and ready to engage the enemy on the

high seas. It had the most modern equipment available — radars, asdic, radios, specialized electronics — and was armed with a four-inch gun forward, pom-pom gun aft, anti-aircraft guns, depth charges, and hedgehog mortars.[\[34\]](#) After a year of construction, *Trentonian* departed Liverpool and proceeded to Halifax. They performed an asdic sweep the entire way.[\[35\]](#) The Canadian coast had been a favourite hunting ground of German submarines; an attack could happen at any time.

3: Training a Crew — Working Up and Evolutions

The officers of this ship must get to work and learn their ship and having learned it must inspect it frequently until it is up to standard.

— John Waterhouse, acting commander, RN, training commander, HMC Dockyard, Halifax, NS

Trentonian arrived in Halifax on January 31, 1944. Crew training began immediately. The first corvettes, built for the war in 1941, were commissioned and sent immediately to sea and to battle; training took place on the job with the few experienced sailors training the green recruits who made up the majority of the crew. They had to face a well-armed, well-trained, professional enemy on the North Atlantic battlefield, often with tragic results.

The war had changed since those dark, early days. Sufficient ships were being built, which allowed the crews time to learn their ship, their jobs, and become a cohesive team in the relative safety of home waters.

Trentonian spent seventeen days in Halifax while the crew trained and learned how to work the equipment and electronics in the ship. Just as important, the crew learned how to work with each other.

A ship is divided into several divisions; each division is responsible for a specific operation of the ship. An officer is assigned to each division, with a chief petty officer (CPO) and petty officer (PO) assigned to each section within the division, and, finally, a leading seaman (LS) to each trade within the section.

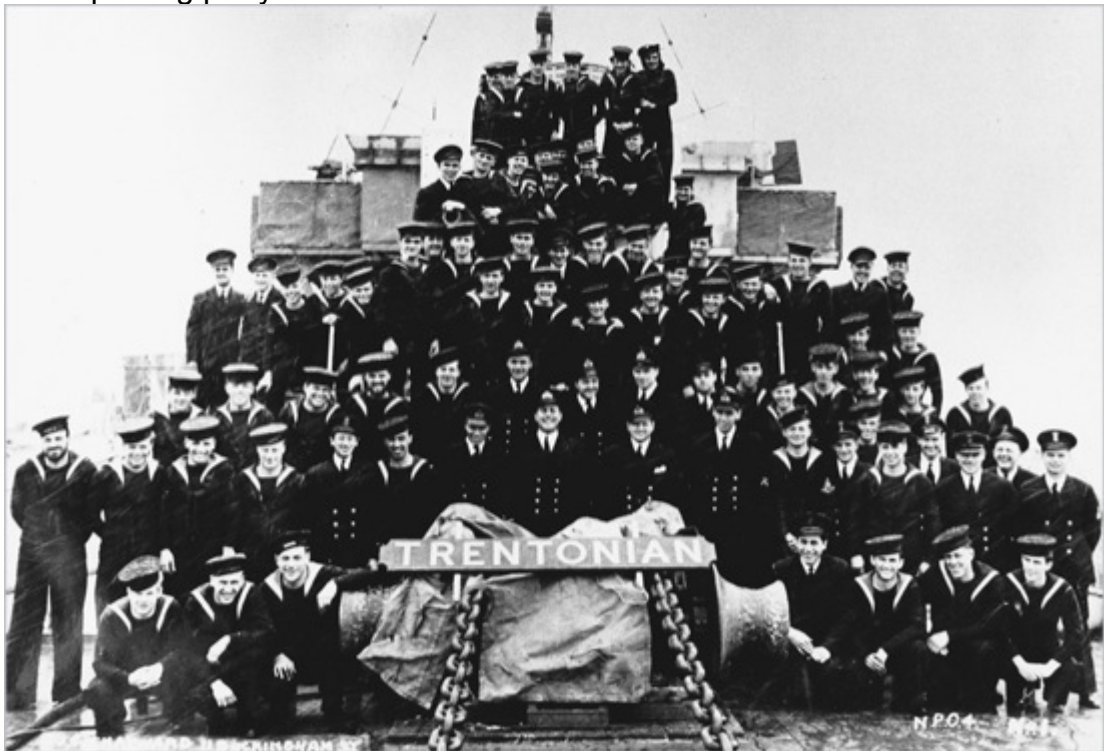
The engineering division is responsible for the engines, boilers, generators, winches, steam fittings, and other machinery; the gunnery division operates all the guns, weapons, depth charge throwers, ammunition, magazines, and small arms; the communication division is made up of specialized trades including radio operators, signalmen, coders, and radar and asdic operators; the deck division is responsible for everything seamanship and needed to sail the ship; and all other trades are placed in the logistics division — this includes supply, writers, cooks, stewards, and sick bay attendant.

Each section spent their time in Halifax refining their own trade and equipment. They ensured that they could work together as a team so that all operations of the ship could be carried out smoothly and efficiently.

Each crew member was assigned a station in the ship; each station had a specific location and corresponding responsibility to be performed in the event of action with the enemy or any emergency that might arise. The stations were based on each sailor's trade and experience, and could vary depending on the situation at hand. Each man was assigned his station for action stations (surface, anti-submarine, anti-aircraft), fire, damage control, man overboard, and abandon ship. These stations were practised until each man knew his place and could perform his duty without thinking.

On February 16, *Trentonian* received orders to conduct hedgehog trials the next day.^[1] Typical of the navy, the order was rescinded later that day and postponed until the eighteenth.^[2] The next signal brought some much anticipated news for *Trentonian*'s crew: the ship was ordered to leave for Bermuda on the eighteenth.^[3] *Trentonian*'s adoption papers were sent to Trenton on February 17 with an accompanying letter from the secretary of the Navy Board. The papers listed several organizations and individuals as the adopting organization, including the students of Trenton Collegiate. (Eventually the city coordinated the effort, and the City of Trenton was named as sole sponsor with all support organized through the Corvette Committee.) The letter thanked the community for the enthusiastic support of

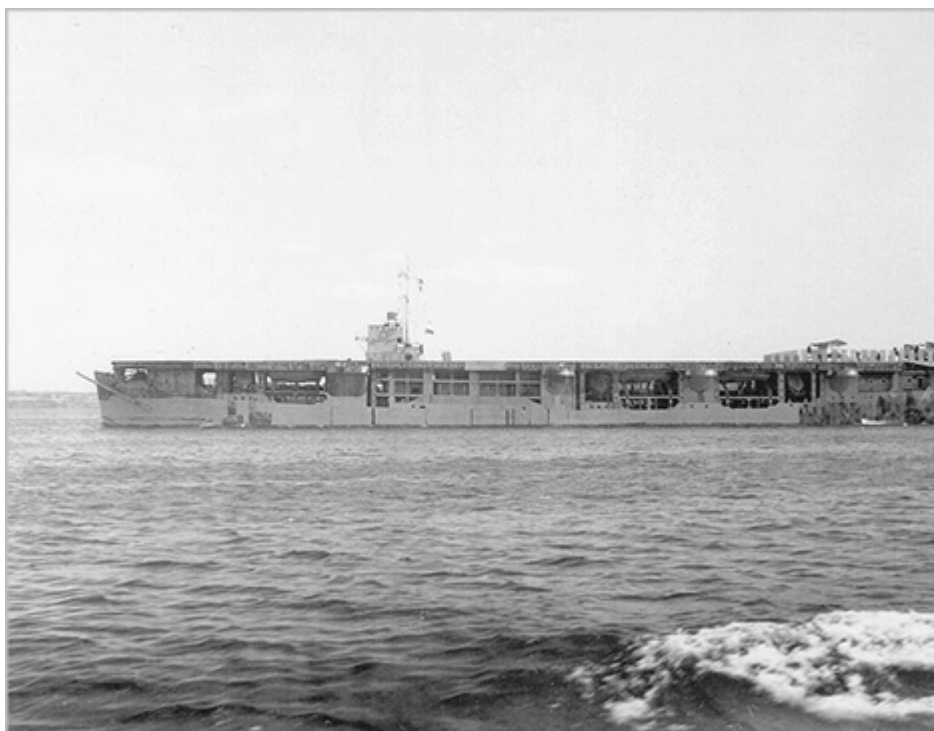
Trentonian and included a list of additional comforts required by the crew.[4] The foggy morning of February 18 found *Trentonian*'s crew making preparations for sea. Supplies were brought aboard and stored, and the hedgehog trials were delayed to later in the day due to very poor visibility.[5] The ship slipped from dock just after 1800 with the inspecting party aboard.



The crew of Trentonian poses for a photo during a snowstorm, January 1944.

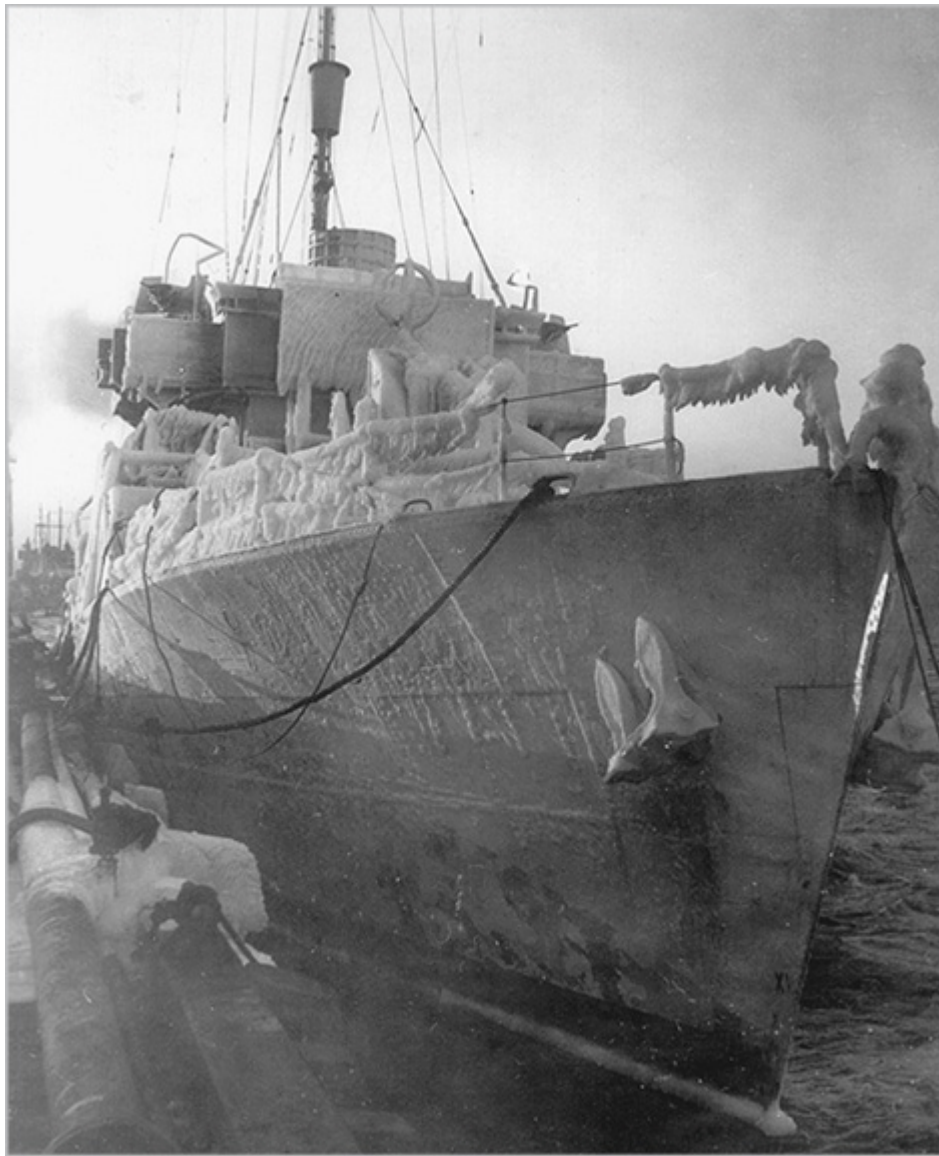
Photo courtesy of Quinte West Public Library, Hazel Farley Collection.

They found the stabilizer and yaw control for the hedgehog had been installed incorrectly and needed to be rewired. The weapon was dismantled and repairs carried out. Once done, they fired and found the hedgehog had an error of one degree, which caused the mortars to land forty feet to starboard. This was corrected and the trials completed. The report following the trial noted that there were no spares for the gyro compass stabilizer on the hedgehog, and the workmen, at the time of installation, should have checked the work before leaving the job — this would have required less time and effort than having to repair the wiring later.[6] *Trentonian* returned to the French Cable Wharf in Halifax to take on fuel for the trip south.[7]



Trentonian's crew saw their first Merchant Aircraft Carrier (MAC), HMS Ancyclus, when it arrived in Halifax on February 15, 1944.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy Bruce Keir.



Trentonian taking on fuel before leaving Halifax for warmer weather in Bermuda.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

The fuelling complete, *Trentonian* slipped from the dock at 2000 on February 18 in company with *Kitchener*, a recently refitted corvette on its way to Bermuda for training. *Kitchener* was called “Hollywood” by the sailors of the RCN, as it had been featured in a full length Hollywood movie called *Corvette K225*. The movie starred Randolph Scott in the lead role, but *Kitchener*’s crew would tell you their ship was the star and Mr. Scott played a supporting role.

Because Harrison was the most senior commanding officer between the two ships, *Trentonian* was designated senior officer (SO).^[8] The two ships travelled at twelve knots and estimated their arrival time at the Royal Navy base in Bermuda, HMS *Malabar*, for February 21.^[9]

The weather was cold and the spray off the waves formed ice on the upper parts of the ship. As ice accumulates, ships can become top heavy and can lose stability unless it is cleared away. This is a constant battle in the North Atlantic winter, and *Trentonian*’s crew was turned out with hammers, picks, axes, and shovels to clear ice. As *Trentonian* sailed farther south to warmer climates, the ice stopped forming and began to melt. At one point, Harrison announced on the ship’s public address system (PA) that no one was allowed on deck without a helmet. Immediately the off-duty crew cleared the mess decks to see what was going on. When they got on deck, the men were greeted

by massive blocks of ice falling from overhead wires and superstructure and quickly retreated back to safety.[\[10\]](#)

The next day, they were far enough south that flying fish were landing on deck. The weather started to change. The sky grew dark and the waves and wind were getting stronger. Before long *Trentonian* was in a full hurricane, with waves estimated at seventy-five to ninety feet high.[\[11\]](#) It was no longer safe to be on deck. The crew felt the full effect of the storm as many became disabled with seasickness,[\[12\]](#) leaving only a few men to work the ship and battle the storm. Eventually, they lost contact with *Kitchener* and were left alone to face the hurricane.



OS John Holden, AB Robert Powell, and AB Delmar Beaumont taking a break as the warm sun starts to melt the ice covering Trentonian.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Tom Farrell.

The force of the waves caused water to come into the ship. It filled the seamen's mess, caused hammocks and personal effects of the crew to slosh about, and soaked everything. When Stoker Sid Coates came off duty from the boiler room at 0400, he found two feet of water in the stokers' mess. His mess mates, asleep in their hammocks secured to the deck head, hadn't noticed this. He opened the hatch to drain the water into the locker where the anchor chain was stored. Unfortunately, that space was already filled with sea water that had entered through the hawse pipes (the pipes that the chain runs through to meet the anchors). This water combined with the bilge water in the lower part of the ship and the sludge it produced created a very intense odour that infiltrated the entire ship.[\[13\]](#)



Ice has formed over the outer surfaces of the ship, rendering the forward gun completely unusable.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Food was still important, even though most of the crew couldn't eat. The cooks hadn't gained their sea legs; one was too sick to move, the other couldn't be found and was feared lost overboard.^[14] With so many of the crew disabled, the sailors still able to work and eat would grab whatever food they could. Jim from Newfoundland was seen eating an entire tin of sardines, this was the final straw for some of the men watching him!^[15] A few of the off duty men would go into the galley and cook whatever they could for the rest — as untrained cooks they would produce a concoction of eggs, bacon, and grease^[16] — while others were a little more resourceful and produced a hearty stew.^[17] During one of the more greasy meals prepared by one of the amateur cooks, a young sailor who was struggling to keep his bacon and eggs down heard one of the old salts call his name. When he looked up he saw his mess mate had stuffed a large piece of bacon rind up his nostrils. With that image, the young sailor, after fighting a good fight against seasickness, lost it — literally!^[18]

The sea is a powerful force, capable of destroying anything that man chooses to put upon it; *Trentonian* was not entirely spared its wrath. Early in the storm, Harrison ordered the ship's course altered, turning its bow into the waves. The constant battering of the bow eventually caused the anchor winch to break from the deck, which allowed the anchor chains three to four feet of play. Every time the ship rose or fell with the waves, the anchors crashed against the steel hull. The ship's twenty-seven foot whaler broke loose and was damaged. Several oil drums at the aft started to roll about and damage the ship before eventually going over the side.^[19]

As the storm subsided, the crew began to clean up. The cook feared lost overboard was found almost unconscious under a large pile of clothes, hammocks, and other debris, in the mess.^[20] *Kitchener* was nowhere to be seen, and due to the storm, Lt. Parré could not take a navigational sun or star fix for two days — technically they were lost.^[21] Eventually *Trentonian* met the RN frigate HMS *Lawson* and found that they were only

one hundred miles east of Bermuda.[22] The two ships altered course and made it to Bermuda late on February 21.[23] *Kitchener* did not arrive until the next day.



Trentonian shows signs of being battered by the North Atlantic winter storm.

Photo credit: D. Trimingham, courtesy of the Naval Museum of Alberta.

Trentonian's trials were not quite over. As mentioned earlier, the professionalism of a ship's company is often measured by the performance of their duty, and the first impression most have of a ship is when it secures to the dock. *Trentonian* entered St. Georges harbour already battered from two days of battle with the hurricane. As the ship approached the dock at HMS *Malabar*, a line was passed from the fo'c'sle to shore and secured to the bollard. Harrison ordered the engines from slow ahead to slow astern. The telegraph in the wheelhouse was moved to the proper position; unfortunately the cable connecting the wheelhouse telegraph to the repeater in the engine room was broken and it stuck on "full ahead." The engine room artificers immediately followed that incorrect order. On *Trentonian's* deck the heavy berthing line started to grow taught and snapped, whipping back like a wild snake. Fortunately the crew on the fo'c'sle were able to jump clear and the only casualty was one of the forward ventilating hatches.[24]



*Chief Roberts (left) and AB Nick Tarasick on deck during cleaning stations.
Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.*

Once properly secured to the dock, an inspection party came aboard from *Malabar* to assess the damage. The base medical officer also came aboard to check the welfare of the crew. He immediately ordered an unprecedented forty-eight hour stand down for the entire ship's company to recover from the storm. [\[25\]](#)



*AB Sydney Hunter (right) and J. Taft, almost recovered from the storm.
Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Jack Harold.*

The next two days were spent cleaning ship, washing clothes, and recovering from the ordeal. *Trentonian* itself needed care and attention; repairs were made to the winch, hull, ship's boat, railings, radio antennae, and the ventilation hatch damaged by the broken line. [\[26\]](#) Signalman Jack MacIver from Winnipeg, Manitoba, recalls he was detailed to scrub the deck of the communications mess using caustic soda. The deck was filthy from sea water, spilled food, bilge water, and vomit. Wearing gloves, he started to his duty; by the time he was finished, the towel he had been using had all but

disintegrated from the caustic soda. To his dismay he saw the linoleum floor on the deck had also started to dissolve. The entire deck in the communication mess had to be added to the list of repairs.[27]

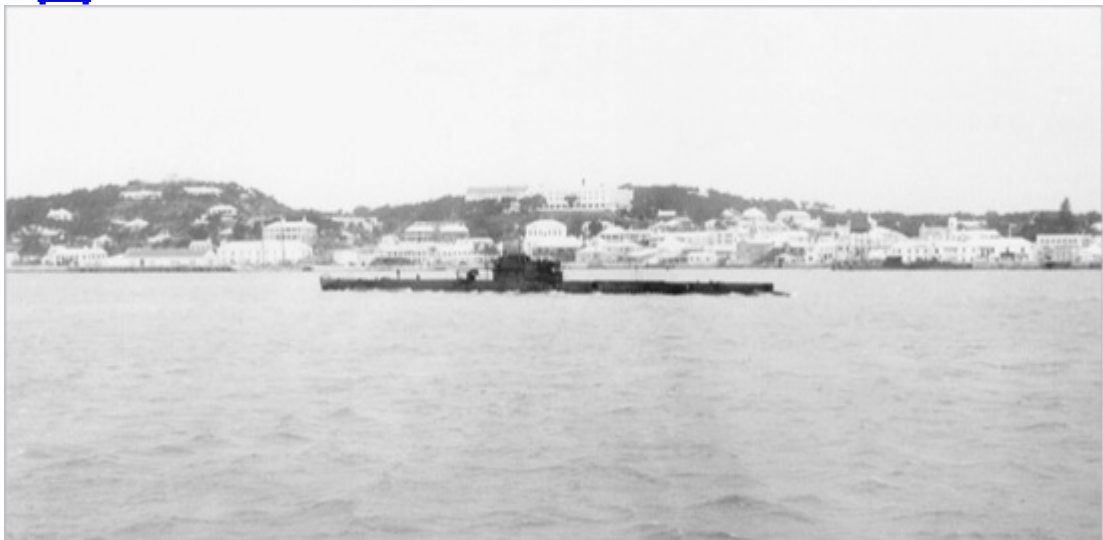
Training evolutions and work ups began under the watchful eyes of Acting Commander John Waterhouse, RN. The crew practised the various action stations, damage control, firefighting, man overboard drills, boarding drills, fleet manoeuvres, and gunnery drills, as well as mock battle drills. The weapons were fired and the crew given time to work on accuracy. They fired the primary four-inch gun at towed and shore targets and tested the depth charges. A training submarine was used to improve the skill of the asdic operators.[28]

The anti-aircraft guns fired at test targets towed by aircraft. After one exercise, the gun crew were very confident they had “blown away” the target and congratulated each other heartily for a job well done. The inspecting officer ordered the aircraft to return and make a close pass to have the joyful gunners inspect the damage they had dealt to the target. Their collective celebration ended abruptly as the unscathed target flew by.[29]

During a break from the evolutions, *Trentonian* was at anchor a quarter mile from the city of Hamilton, Bermuda. Some of the crew took advantage of the time off by going for a swim in the warm waters. Usual practice was if you had a bathing suit, you wore it, if not you stripped down and jumped in — with the ship so far from shore no one would be any wiser. The daughter of the admiral in charge of *Malabar* had a hobby of scanning the harbour with binoculars from the house, and she had an eyeful that particular day. After this, a new standing order was given for crews in Bermuda: no swimming without a suit.[30]

The crew did receive time to go ashore and enjoy some of the delights Bermuda had to offer. Before the first shore leave the crew were warned that the primary source of transportation for the islanders was bicycles, and anyone “borrowing” a bike for a joy ride would get a minimum penalty of jail time.[31]

The American Construction Battalion (Sea Bees) was building an airfield and docks in Bermuda and had a USO canteen. Stoker Sid Coates described the canteen as, “lots of cheap food, drinks, and good entertainment.” He purchased five bottles of rum at seventy-five cents a bottle and made almost a month’s wages reselling them in Halifax.[32]



An Italian submarine used for training in Bermuda.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Another crew member of *Trentonian*, AB Frank Barron from Montreal, Quebec, ran into his brother-in-law, who was serving on one of the other Canadian ships. During their conversation, his brother-in-law told him of a sailor in his own ship who had his toes

bitten off by a barracuda when they had abandon ship drills. Back on *Trentonian*, when the crew was called to abandon ship stations, Barron hid behind some lockers. He was found by one of the officers and ordered over the side. Reluctantly, he climbed down the ladder but held on, only going into the water as far as his knees.[\[33\]](#)

One sailor tried to bring a monkey aboard the ship. Lt. Kinsman spotted the animal as it was brought into the ship, and the sailor, who had bought it from a street peddler, pled his case with the XO. He explained that the primate was very tame and well-behaved and would make a very unusual mascot for the ship — no other ship had a monkey. Kinsman took one look at the monkey and ordered the flea-infested animal off the ship immediately.[\[34\]](#)

Harrison received orders to return to Halifax and the ship left the island paradise at 2030 on February 29, 1943.[\[35\]](#) Training is never complete, however, and the crew continued to practise all the stations while travelling north. They complained that any time of the day or night, the old man would roust them out to “play games.”

The crew hoped the trip home would be better than the one south had been. However, shortly out of Bermuda they ran into another North Atlantic winter storm, albeit not as severe. Once again the men were turned out to clear ice.[\[36\]](#) As they travelled north, it became thicker and several of the crew suffered severe frostbite, keeping the tiffy busy in his sickbay.[\[37\]](#)

Trentonian's water tanks developed a leak, possibly due to damage from the previous storm, that was now affecting the water supply for the men and for cooking. To deal with the shortage, water use was issued in the order of importance, always going to the engines and boilers first, cooking second, and hygiene and washrooms last. While off the coast of New York, some of the crew on duty tried to convince the skipper to put into New York City for repairs, hoping to spend the some time on shore leave in the Big Apple. Harrison understood their intent and continued on course for Halifax.[\[38\]](#)



Trentonian entering Halifax harbour on March 3, 1944. This picture is looking aft from the break of the fo'c'sle; the ship is completely covered in ice.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

When *Trentonian* arrived at Halifax on the afternoon of March 3,[\[39\]](#) it was completely encased in ice. The upper decks were covered; the guns, hedgehog, and depth charges

were inoperable. Wires normally the size of a pencil were encased in ice as thick as a man's leg.

Trentonian received orders to escort the RN submarine HMSubmarine *P554* from Halifax to Head Harbour in St. Margaret's Bay on March 4.^[40] *P554* was the ex-American S-class submarine USS *S-22*, built in 1920. The sub had been transferred to the RN on July 19, 1942. It was stationed in Halifax as an operational submarine used for training escorts in asdic searches and anti-submarine attacks.

At 0700 on March 4, *Trentonian* and *P544* departed Halifax Harbour, travelling at a speed of ten knots for the short cruise to St. Margaret's Bay.^[41] *Trentonian* spent the next seven days continuing to work up the crew and practise evolutions. This final stretch of training was done under the close scrutiny of Captain James Douglas Prentice, RCN.^[42] Prentice was the man who had developed the training program for Canadian escorts and who was instrumental in improving the overall fighting efficiency of the RCN.

On March 5, Harrison signalled Halifax requesting to have a relief for one of the engine room artificers in *Trentonian*, citing he was "unfit for sea duty owing to constant seasickness."^[43]

On March 6, the RCN announced the destruction of *U-744* in the Atlantic. For over thirty-two hours, the sub was hunted by the ships of Support Group C-2.^[44] The group dropped 291 depth charges and the U-boat was forced to the surface. Two corvettes attacked, and when the U-boat failed to return fire, the two ships sent a boarding party over. They found the submarine abandoned and flooded. While returning to the boats with signal equipment and codes, the boarding parties' boats capsized as the waves sent them crashing against the U-boat's hull. Thirty-nine survivors from the U-boat were rescued and the submarine was finished off with a torpedo. Operations such as this served as a prime example of what *Trentonian* and its crew were training for.

Signalman Jack Harold was temporarily transferred to *Kitchener* with instructions to assist their communications division. Harrison had noticed some exceptional qualities in the young signalman and had sent him over to be assessed for possible promotion to an officer. Harold returned to *Trentonian* a few days later, unaware of the purpose of his transfer.

On March 10, *Trentonian* was placed on emergency ship duties for twenty-four hours.^[45] These orders meant that the ship needed to be fully manned and ready, capable of sailing for any emergency at a moment's notice. Once again the navy demonstrated its communication skills by ordering *Trentonian* to sail for Halifax at the same time it was acting as emergency ship. The order to sail was later rescinded.^[46]

On March 11, *Trentonian* was ordered back to Halifax with corvettes *Buctouche*, *Drumheller*, and *Kitchener*. Harrison was designated senior officer and the fleet departed St. Margaret's Bay at 1900. They proceeded at twelve knots, arriving in Halifax at just after midnight on the twelfth.^[47]

The crew replenished the ship as Harrison had received orders to be ready to sail at noon the next day.^[48] *Trentonian*, along with *Drumheller* and the corvette *Port Arthur*, had been scheduled for a full calibre shoot of their guns.^[49] The gunnery exercise was completed on March 14 and *Trentonian* finished its period of working up. But, as all sailors know, training is never complete; when the skipper decides he wants to exercise the crew, action stations will be sounded again and again.

Captain Prentice and Commander Waterhouse submitted their respective reports to the RCN on *Trentonian's* performance. The fifteen page report goes into great detail on the operation of the ship, the quality of the leading hands for each department, the professionalism of the officers, and the performance of the crew in the various evolutions and procedures.^[50]

Evaluation reports are not designed to be a "pat on the back," but to help the officers

and crew improve the efficiency of their ship. To that end, they point out all areas where performance can be improved and it provides recommendations on how the operation and effectiveness of a ship can be made better. They also list any deficiencies with the ship itself.

Some of the more serious problems with *Trentonian* were that it did not have the newest type of radar, the wireless transmitters (radio sets) required extensive repairs (only one worked), all the guns required repairs or modifications, and the recognition lights had yet to be installed.[\[51\]](#)

In his final assessment of *Trentonian*, Commander Waterhouse states, "Fighting Efficiency is low and this fact may be largely attributed to the unfinished or badly finished state of the ship."[\[52\]](#) Waterhouse went on to summarize his report, remarking on his general impression of the ship, "Ships are always a little worse than their officers. If the officers do not know what various articles are for or in what condition various fittings are in, the crew will take even less interest and deterioration will be rapid. The officers of this ship must get to work and learn their ship and having learned it must inspect it frequently until it is up to standard."[\[53\]](#)



Leading Seaman Kenneth McDonald during gunnery practise on the oerlikon.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

4: Trentonian Goes to War

The catalogue of comforts which have been sent to HMCS *Trentonian* is an impressive one, and it is desired to take the opportunity to convey the appreciative thanks of the Department for the generosity of the good people of Trenton, Ontario, and for the interest they are taking in the comfort and welfare of the crew of HMCS *Trentonian*.

— Captain J.P. Connelly, RCNVR, director of special services

With training evolutions complete and *Trentonian* operational, the ship was assigned to the newly formed escort group (EG) W10, part of the Western Local Escort Force (WLEF) commanded from Halifax.

The crew assumed there would be a break between the hectic working up program and commencement of operational duties. This was not to be — less than twenty-four hours after the gunnery exercise, *Trentonian* was ordered to overtake a convoy already at sea.

Trentonian left Halifax in the afternoon of March 15 in company with *New Glasgow*, a River-class frigate, and corvettes *Drumheller* and *Louisburg* (II). *Drumheller* was the senior officer (SO) of the group.^[1]

They met with convoy HX 283,^[2] consisting of sixty-two merchant ships, which had departed New York on March 13, 1944, en route to Liverpool in the United Kingdom. (The “HX” in the designation was for convoys departing Halifax or New York for the United Kingdom.) All merchant ships in the convoy were capable of maintaining a speed above nine knots. The convoy was under the protection of local escort group W6, consisting of *Winnipeg* (SO), a Bangor-class minesweeper, and corvettes *Timmins*, *Trail*, and *Cobalt* (the latter was detached from the convoy to commence a refit on March 16). For *Trentonian* and many of the crew, this was their first convoy. The Park- and Liberty-class merchant ships’ ten-thousand tons and more dwarfed *Trentonian*’s 970 tons. The merchant ships were organized in a rectangular shape made up of several columns. The escorts took station on either side of the convoy, with an additional escort ahead and another behind the convoy. If one of the escort ships found a submarine, the faster frigates or destroyers could then move in to assist with the attack.

Trentonian took up its station, screening the convoy and performing asdic sweeps for submarines while sailing a zigzag pattern. The ship maintained this watch for three days as the convoy sailed east, into the Atlantic Ocean.

On March 18, *Trentonian*, along with River-class frigates *Stormont*, *New Glasgow* (SO), *Drumheller*, and *Louisburg* (II), received orders to detach from the convoy and search for a possible submarine.^[3]

With an increased number of escort ships available, Halifax was able to reassign escort ships in a concentrated effort to find the suspected German submarine. Under the instructions of Operation Salmon, all available escorts were detached and sent to the location of the contact.^[4] At 1700 a patrol aircraft had a sonic buoy contact with a probable submarine approximately 150 nautical miles due south of Halifax.^[5]

New Glasgow and *Trentonian* were the first ships to arrive at the location, at 0600 on the nineteenth, fifteen hours after the last reported contact. The SO set up a boxed-grid search area from the last contact position, which was rapidly expanded to quickly cover the range the submarine may have travelled. Patrol aircraft could not assist with the search as the weather had deteriorated to heavy fog and rain.^[6]



Some of the crew taking a break from their duties. Pictured: OS John Holden, AB Walter Barber, AB Darcy Graham, AB Stanley Bennett, PO Richard Medhurst, AB Robert Gray, AB Gordon Simpson, Coder J. Roberts, AB Gordon Harley, AB A. Elslinger, and Leading Stoker Francis Walsh.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

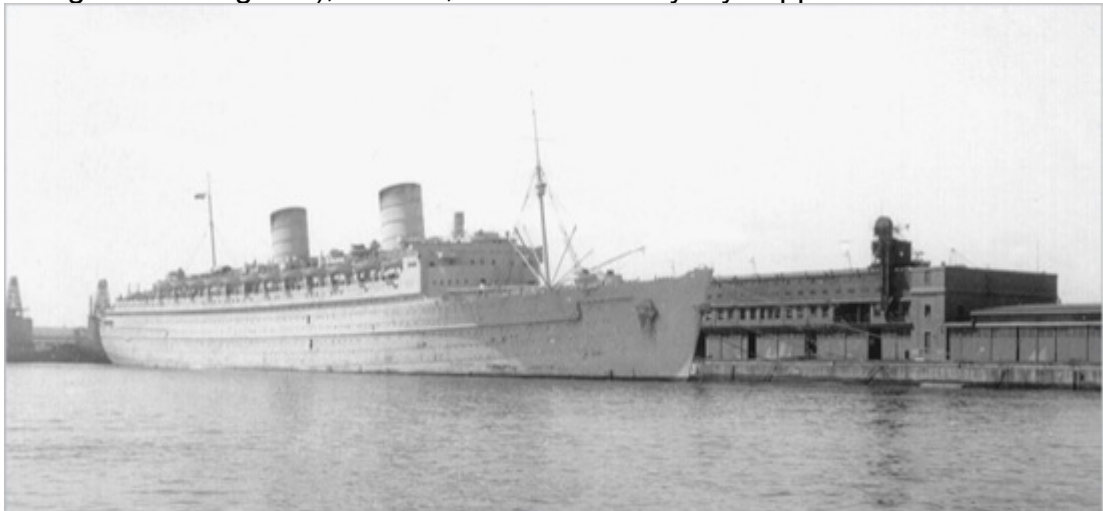


Sub-Lt. C. LaRose (left), Lt. Burley Kinsman (centre), and Lt. William Harrison on Trentonian's bridge during convoy duty in the North Atlantic in March 1944.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

Six hours later the two ships were joined by *Stormont*, *Drumheller*, *Louisburg* (II), and Bangor-class minesweeper *Trois Rivières*.^[7] Together, the six ships performed continuous asdic sweeps, searching a fifty-mile area for eighteen hours. Just after

midnight on March 20, *New Glasgow* picked up a high frequency radio transmission. The search moved to the new location and an expanded box search began.^[8] With no results from the search, on March 20, just after 1300, *Trentonian*, *New Glasgow*, *Drumheller*, and *Louisburg* (II) were recalled to Halifax. *Stormont* was sent to Horta in the Azores for fuel.^[9] Operation Salmon continued with *Trois Rivières*, joined by corvette *Matapedia*. As flying conditions improved, patrol aircraft from the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) assisted the search.^[10] The four escort ships arrived at Halifax on March 21^[11] and *Trentonian* was sent for boiler cleaning.^[12] The ship had put on many hard miles in the over four months since the boilers first fired and the cleaning would keep it running smoothly. Also, the defects identified in the report by Commander Prentice could now be addressed. More importantly for *Trentonian*'s crew, shore leave was granted. The crew had been continuously working since February, and though they did have an opportunity for leave in Bermuda, nothing compares to an extended leave at home. Many of the crew took advantage of the boiler cleaning to visit family and friends. *Trentonian*'s crew rotated through leave; half the men stayed on board to man the ship while the other half went ashore. One evening, one of the officers was entertaining a few friends in the wardroom. The next morning the galley was found to have been broken into and a supply of chickens cooked. Rumour in the mess decks was this officer had broken into the galley to provide a late night meal to his friends.^[13] On March 23, Harrison received a letter that was sent to the secretary of the Navy Board from the City of Trenton on March 20. It acknowledged the receipt of the adoption papers and contained a list of items the city had sent to the crew. These supplies included clothes, games (including *Monopoly* and jigsaw puzzles), musical instruments (mouth organs and a guitar), clothes, and other everyday supplies.



The crew was awestruck by the magnificence of the Cunard liner RMS Queen Elizabeth as Trentonian passed the converted troopship in Halifax late February or early March 1944.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

The secretary of the Navy Board also sent a letter to Trenton, acknowledging the list of items the community had already sent to their ship, stating, "The catalogue of comforts which have been sent to HMCS *Trentonian* is an impressive one, and it is desired to take the opportunity to convey the appreciative thanks of the Department for the generosity of the good people of Trenton, Ontario, and for the interest they are taking in the comfort and welfare of the crew of HMCS *Trentonian*."^[14]

The letter included a list of items still needed in *Trentonian*, seaman's jackets, warm hats, mitts, razor blades, writing material, magazines, sewing kits, scrubbing basins, hot plates, phonograph, records, waterproof flashlights, a banjo, a washing machine, and an accordion.^[15]

The washing machine mentioned in the letter was a prized possession; it was not part of the equipment supplied by the navy to the corvettes. Officers paid the wardroom steward to wash their clothes ashore, but most of the men would have to wash their clothes with a bucket and washboard — a time consuming operation. The stokers, however, had devised a unique method: they took a milk can, drilled it full of holes, and fastened a hinge and latch to the lid. The clothes were placed inside and the lid secured, then with a long line the can was dragged behind the ship while underway. Stoker Bruce Keir said the old can worked well, except once the clothes were dry they would have to pound the salt out of them.[\[16\]](#)

As leave ended, Lt. Stephen returned particularly happy. He proudly informed the other officers that, while on leave, he became engaged to his girlfriend from Toronto. The couple had set a date near Christmas.[\[17\]](#)

With boiler cleaning and repairs complete, *Trentonian* joined EG W2 and received orders to escort a convoy leaving from Halifax. Convoy SC 156 departed Halifax on March 29 with forty merchant ships and fourteen landing ships bound for Liverpool. The SC designation was given to slower convoys leaving from Halifax or Sydney, on Cape Breton, which travelled at a speed of 7.5 knots. Slow ships usually meant old ships, and in this convoy, twenty-nine of the ships had been in-service for more than twenty years — many of them had been built during the Great War. The oldest merchant ship in the convoy was built in 1904.

EG W2 consisted of the senior officer in *Portage*, an Algerine-class minesweeper; *Sherbrooke*, a corvette; *Transcona*, a Bangor-class minesweeper; and *Trentonian*. The four Canadian ships escorted SC 156 for four days without incident. When they arrived at the rendezvous point in the Atlantic Ocean on April 1, 1944, W2 turned over the convoy to the British Escort Group B7, and the Canadian ships returned to Halifax. SC 156 and Escort Group B7 would not make Liverpool unscathed. A German submarine sank two of the convoy's ships on April 6. Later that day, the submarine was located by HMS *Swale* and attacked with depth charges. The sub was hit and all fifty-one of its crew were killed.

Trentonian received orders to escort a small convoy, designated HJ 92, from Halifax to St. John's, Newfoundland, on April 2.[\[18\]](#) The convoy consisted of two merchant ships, the British *Nipawan Park* and Norwegian *Havmoy*. *Trentonian* was joined by *Portage* (SO). They departed Halifax at 1830 and were expected to arrive in St. John's the next day.

The convoy arrived as scheduled, passing under the high cliffs protecting the harbour. *Trentonian's* special duty men were closed up for entering harbour, readying lines for docking. The off-duty crew were on deck in their number one uniforms, ready for shore leave and a chance to visit the various clubs and bars in the city. St. John's was a busy East Coast port that played an active role in the Allies' war effort. Several Canadian and British escort groups operated from this port on the Newfie-Derry Run, picking up convoys from Halifax, Sydney, or New York and escorting them to the United Kingdom. *Trentonian's* officers made plans to visit the legendary Crowsnest, a club for naval officers. The Crowsnest was located on the top floor of an old warehouse. To get to it you had to successfully navigate fifty-nine stairs from roadside up to a small loft door. This was considered more treacherous when leaving the club. The Crowsnest was a welcome safe haven for naval officers wanting to escape the dangers of the North Atlantic. The officers of escort ships were permitted a two-foot area on the club walls to decorate and leave the mark of their ship. Many famous and successful Canadian ships had a proud display inside the Crowsnest. Some of the displays, now revered, represented ships that had been lost to the enemy. The Crowsnest remains open and is a popular destination for those interested in naval history.

In St. John's harbour on the day of *Trentonian's* arrival there was a merchant ship with

a giant hole blown out of its bow. The older hands explained: that is what a torpedo will do. For most of the crew this was the first time they realized the real danger ahead of them.^[19] Conversation quickly returned as the crew watched the liberty boats of sailors from the navy base on the south side of the harbour pass through the hole in the ship as they took sailors for leave in St. John's on the north side.^[20]

Trentonian approached the dock, ready to secure to the jetty, when a signal lamp was flashed from shore. The crew stood with baited breath, watching the signallers answer and then hand Harrison a message. Immediately, the skipper ordered the ship secured from harbour stations and made ready for sea. *Trentonian* turned away from the dock and increased speed, leaving the crew cursing on deck.^[21]

Lieutenant Harrison told the ship's company that *Trentonian* was going on a rescue mission. A Royal Navy submarine, HMS *Sea Nymph* (P223), had been damaged by ice off Newfoundland and could no longer dive.^[22] *Trentonian's* crew immediately went to work and readied their ship. Knowing how much trouble the submariners were in, they would gladly give up anything to help them out.^[23]

Since the German U-boat threat was so severe, the Allied navies had a very simple order concerning submarines: "Sink All Submarines on Site!" This RN submarine, damaged and unable to dive, was a sitting duck. Any Allied ship or aircraft that spotted it would immediately open fire; the Germans would do the same.



The Dutch freighter SS Moderita, in St. John's harbour after it had been torpedoed by a German U-boat.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Communication between *Trentonian* and *Sea Nymph* was impossible; the ships had different radios and did not have a common frequency for direct communications. So each ship was ordered to report its position, course, and speed every six hours to the Flag Officer, Newfoundland (FONF). FONF would then coordinate a rendezvous between the two, and radio each ship the course changes to meet.

At 1300 on April 3, *Sea Nymph* reported its position as 210 nautical miles south east of Newfoundland, steering a course of 215 degrees at a speed of ten knots.^[24] FONF set the rendezvous for 0700 on April 4. Included in the message was an order lifting the mandatory bombing of all submarines in this area.^[25] *Trentonian* was racing at 14.5 knots to this position.^[26]

Harrison reported *Trentonian's* position, course, and speed at 1325 to FONF, with a weather update. Wind was from the south, visibility was five to ten miles, and conditions were fair; the speed of his ship was reduced to thirteen knots.[27]

As is typical of Newfoundland weather, by 1500 conditions had changed. A drizzle had moved in, reducing visibility to one to two miles, and the wind had started to come around to the southeast. *Trentonian* continued on course at thirteen knots.[28]

Trentonian was to wait one hour at the rendezvous for *Sea Nymph*, and if the submarine did not arrive, *Trentonian* was to return to Newfoundland without it.[29]



A photo of *Sea Nymph* taken from *Trentonian's* deck during rescue operations.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Harrison radioed FONF at precisely 0800 on April 4. *Trentonian* had been at the rendezvous for one hour, having arrived at 0700, and was now proceeding to Argentia, Newfoundland, independently, in compliance with orders.[30] However, seven hours later he sent another message to FONF that *Trentonian* had met with *Sea Nymph* and both ships were now en route to Newfoundland.[31]

Harrison had obeyed his orders to abandon the search, but with the rendezvous area blanketed in dense fog, and visibility at fifty yards, he had ordered *Trentonian* to proceed away at a very slow speed. When the fog lifted, the black hull of a submarine appeared. Harrison sounded action stations and the crew reported for duty, guns manned and trained on the submarine, depth charge crews ready if it suddenly dived. Signals and recognition codes were passed and, when the proper replies were given, *Trentonian* secured from actions stations and pointed its guns away from *Sea Nymph*. [32]

The two ships arrived in Argentia on April 5. [33] This time *Trentonian* made it to the jetty. Not having been ashore in several days, Jim from Newfoundland was waiting on deck, and as soon as the ship was secured, he was ashore and on his way to the nearest bar. As Jim sped away from the ship, a messenger appeared with orders for Lt. Harrison; Halifax had ordered *Trentonian* to return there as soon as it arrived in Newfoundland. [34]

Shore leave cancelled, a party of sailors were sent to recover Jim. They found him a half hour later, already drunk in the American wet canteen. On the way back, Jim went berserk and struck one of the petty officers. [35]

Trentonian was to return independently to Halifax in order to have a new radar set and four more oerlikon anti-aircraft guns installed. [36] So once again, the ship slipped its lines and proceeded immediately out of harbour.

While at sea *Trentonian* maintained its anti-submarine work, always scanning the depths with its asdic for a possible enemy contact. Asdic could pick up any object under the water and the asdic operators were trained to identify the difference between a submarine, a rock, or a school of fish. The asdic equipment, depth sounders, and other anti-submarine sensors were located in a small compartment forward of the bridge. While off the rich fishing grounds of the Grand Banks, many biological contacts were reported by the asdic operators to the officer-of-the-watch.

On the return journey to Halifax, Harrison came on the bridge and walked over to the asdic repeater and contacted the asdic hut to identify the contact now on the screen. The operator replied, "contact biological already reported to the officer-of-the-watch." Harrison asked for a confirmation and the asdic operator reported contact confirmed. At this time the skipper ordered "actions stations — anti-submarine," and the klaxon bells sounded and the crew rushed to their stations.

Trentonian increased speed and turned about, heading back to the area of the asdic contact. The crew thought this was just another drill and were surprised when the order was given to ready a single depth charge to be dropped. When the asdic operator reported *Trentonian* was over the contact, Harrison dropped the depth charge and all on deck watched the gigantic explosion as the water erupted from the sea in a geyser behind them. Harrison had *Trentonian* return to the site of the depth charge attack, slowing the ship ordering "all stop" on the engine.[\[37\]](#)

The rookies in *Trentonian* were wondering what the old man was up to. Harrison's next order was to close up the boat's crew and lower the ship's whaler. The old hands knew what the skipper was doing, and already had their knives out, sharpening them. The boat pulled away from *Trentonian* and the crew lined the rails to watch the boat crew fill the whaler with fish. As soon as the boat was secured back aboard *Trentonian*, the fish were lined up and the fishermen amongst the crew had them cleaned and gutted and turned over to the cooks.[\[38\]](#)

The cooks took the fresh fish and prepared them in milk so that all the *Trentonian's* crew enjoyed a seafood feast that night.[\[39\]](#)



Trentonian's crew posing with the fish caught by a single depth charge.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

Trentonian arrived in Halifax on April 7.^[40] Jim, who had been charged with assaulting a superior, was taken off the ship in cuffs for punishment. He had not said a word to anyone the entire trip from Newfoundland. As he passed the duty officer at the gangway, Jim stopped and turned to the officer, who was reported to have been the one to break into the galley for the chickens. Jim said, "I might do a lot of crazy things but I am not a chicken thief." The whole crew broke into laughter.^[41] Lieutenant Harrison had a complete list of defects ready and repairs would be made to the ship while the new equipment was installed.^[42] *Trentonian* went to the dockworkers on April 8^[43] and remained in their care for the next twelve days. During this time the entire crew was turned out to paint ship; the pristine and colourful

paint scheme had worn off. Gone were the blues and greens of its bright camouflage, replaced with dirt, grime, and rust from months of hard work, salt water, and storms. Ordinary Seaman Harold Salmon from Hamilton, Ontario, recalls that one of the leading seaman assigned him to climb to the top of the mast and paint the masthead. A friend of Salmon's informed him that, as an ordinary seaman, climbing to the masthead was not permitted. Salmon promptly reminded the lead hand, who reluctantly rescinded the order and informed Salmon that "this would not be forgotten!"^[44]

Trentonian had the newest radar installed while in for repairs. The new, Type 271Q, radar was more efficient and accurate than the one the ship had been using. The 271Q surface-warning radar worked on a ten-centimetre wavelength and was sensitive enough to allow the recognition of submarines at night and through dense fog. The radar performed a 360-degree sweep, with the ship located on the centre of the screen. Four more twenty-millimetre oerlikon guns were also installed; two on either side of the ship's funnel and another two just behind the after gun tub. This greatly increased *Trentonian's* anti-aircraft capabilities.

The crew wondered why the ship would need to fight aircraft on this side of the Atlantic, and rumours started in the messes as to where *Trentonian* was going next. These rumours were confirmed when, on April 18, new pay chits were issued to the crew for overseas duty.^[45] Many assumed the ship was to join one of the ocean escort groups taking convoys from Canada to the United Kingdom.

That same day, Harrison wrote a letter to Miss Hazel Farley, updating Trenton.

I have sent two pictures of the ship's company under separate cover, so hope you will like them. They were taken in a snowstorm but came out pretty well notwithstanding. If you would care for any more or if anyone else is interested please drop a note by return c/o F.M.O. Halifax and we may be able to do it. However if not we will endeavour to have them sent to you sometime. A picture of the ship is not forthcoming yet, maybe we will have one soon.

Chaplain Hutchison has been on board here a couple of times and we were very glad indeed to see him. We only wish more of you "Trentonians" could make it. We gave him a lot of information which he required, re. dates etc.

It was very good of you to take such trouble about our washing machine. I hope it comes through in time but I know that a lot red tape is involved.

Thanks very much indeed for all your good wishes and work on our behalf.^[46]

The *Trenton Courier Advocate* reported the arrival of the photos on April 18 under the heading "Picture Of Ship's Crew Gift To Trenton High School." One of the photos Harrison had sent was reprinted in the paper with the caption, "From the first day pupils of Trenton High School learned that a Canadian corvette was being named after their town, they have taken a keen interest in the vessel and her crew and have worked hard to provide comforts for the officers and men." The caption finishes with, "In appreciation of their efforts the school pupils recently received a fine picture of the crew."^[47] The second photo was presented to the city and is still displayed in the Quinte West City Hall and Public Library.

On April 20, at 1300, *Trentonian* proceeded to the gunnery area for tests.^[48] Each gun fired sixty to 120 rounds and all aspects of the weapons were examined: the line of sight for clearances and obstructions; deflection in the decks from the force created by the energy of the weapon; and hazards to the gunner.^[49]

During the gun trials, a few particularities were found. The starboard midship gun had the whaler in its line of site; the gunner would have to watch that he didn't shoot up the ship's boat. Both midship's guns did not have a rigid safety rail; the gunners could break out over the side if they became too excited, and all four guns were crowded in their positions.^[50]

Lieutenant Harrison suddenly granted shore leave to half the crew on April 22. The crew

knew something was about to happen and rumours once again started making their way around the ship. Most believed they would join their sister corvettes working with the escort groups in Newfoundland.

One sailor returned to the ship bleeding from his arm. Radar Artificer Joe Gosskie, RCNVR, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, remembers the sailor was questioned by the officer-of-the-watch. He only replied it was a little cut and returned to his mess. When the sailor unwrapped his arm, his mates noticed that the wounds were considerably more serious than the little cut he had described. He refused to go to the tiffy, insisting that he did not want to be put ashore in hospital. He remained very evasive regarding the circumstance surrounding his horrible wounds.

When asked years later, the sailor revealed that he knew *Trentonian* was going overseas and was determined not to “die a virgin.” He went to a brothel in Halifax to “pop his cherry.” After paying his money and spending his time in the back room, he found to his dismay that he could not go through with it. With his time up, he was asked to leave. With great frustration, he smashed every store window with his fist on the way back to the ship.[\[51\]](#)

The crew members that had to stay with the ship were allowed to have guests aboard when not standing a watch. Able Seaman George Hayward of Montreal, Quebec, befriended a shore-based sailor and had him in for supper. Later, that same sailor would become his brother-in-law.[\[52\]](#)



Trentonian's gunners testing the new oerlikons, which were fitted to increase the ship's anti-aircraft defences.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

The morning of April 23 saw a flurry of activity around *Trentonian*. All further shore leave was cancelled, much to the disappointment of the men who had stood duty the night before. The stokers fired *Trentonian's* boilers and made steam for the engines. Stores and supplies were loaded, ammunition checked for all the guns, depth charges, and hedgehog, magazines filled, and fuel taken on. At 1400 *Trentonian* slipped from the dock and left the harbour. The ship was joined by two sister corvettes that had been constructed around the same time and in the same manner as *Trentonian*. They were *Louisburg* (II) and *Lindsay*. *Trentonian* served as senior officer of the group.[\[53\]](#) The ship was secured for sea and, once complete, Lt. Harrison called the crew together.

Signalman Jack Harold remembers what the skipper told them, “We have our orders; we are going to England. That will be our new home. Take a good look boys, this will be the last we see Canada for some time.”[54]

Trentonian’s crew fell silent. Harrison provided a few words of strength, comfort, and caution, and wished them all good luck in the uncertain days ahead.[55]

As the coast of Nova Scotia disappeared behind them, *Trentonian*’s crew milled about on deck, quietly discussing what the future might involve. The younger sailors listened to the old salts describe what England was like and what they could expect.

Later that night, OS Harold Salmon recalled quietly discussing their future with another sailor when one said to the other, in a hushed voice, “We’re not going to bring the ship back, are we?”[56]



Trentonian in Halifax, April 1944, sporting a fresh coat of dark and light grey paint. New oerlikon guns were installed in the waist and stern. The ship’s pennant number had not been fully painted at the time of the photo so Bruce Keir added the “K” in ink.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

5: Say Goodbye to Canada

We have our orders; we are going to England. That will be our new home. Take a good look boys, this will be the last we see Canada for some time.

— Lt. W.E. Harrison, RCNVR, Commanding Officer, HMCS *Trentonian*

The move to the United Kingdom brought *Trentonian*'s Atlantic convoy operations to a close, earning the ship the Battle Honour, Atlantic 1944.

Travelling at a speed of twelve knots, the crossing took eleven days. *Trentonian*, *Lindsay*, and *Louisburg* (II) remained in company for the voyage.^[1] Harrison continued to exercise the crew, who by now were well-trained and knew their jobs thoroughly.

On the second day at sea, Signalman Jack Harold reported for his watch on the bridge. As the morning wore on, despite the sun, the temperature grew steadily colder. Harold commented on the cold and the skipper remarked that it usually meant icebergs were nearby. Later, a large iceberg was indeed spotted.^[2]

The gunnery officer, seeing such a big target, closed up the four-inch gun crew for some live-fire shots. Several rounds of high explosive shells were fired at the iceberg.

Determining accuracy was difficult. Firing into a mountain of ice creates a white explosion and the true fall of shot is difficult to determine. Some of the crew reflected they never hit it once.^[3] The gunners who fired the four-inch gun, however, will tell you that every shot hit.

The three ships were ordered to intercept a position 350 nautical miles southwest of Newfoundland on April 25.^[4] They were to perform an asdic search for a possible U-boat along their new course, and if no contact was made proceed on their original route to Londonderry in Northern Ireland. Excitement grew in the ship as word was passed along that they were once again hunting submarines. As fortune would have it, the ship made no contact and *Trentonian* resumed its original course the next day.

On April 27, Harrison reported position, course, and speed to Western Approaches Command in England as 530 nautical miles southwest of Iceland, travelling at thirteen knots on a course of 070 degrees. The three ships were then ordered east of their position to search for survivors of the merchant ship SS *Colin*.^[5] The search was called off three hours later when a signal was received all survivors had been picked up.^[6] *Trentonian*, *Lindsay*, and *Louisburg*(II) continued on their course to Londonderry.



HMCS *Lindsay* crossed the Atlantic in April 1944 with *Trentonian*. The two ships are identical. Marc Magee, the artist who

painted the cover for this book, used this photo to paint the water and the placement of Trentonian in the water.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

With more than half the distance travelled, Harrison updated Western Approaches Command on April 28; their position was now eight hundred nautical miles west of Ireland, steering a course of 053 degrees and proceeding at a speed of thirteen knots.^[7] All three ships were still on schedule to arrive in Londonderry on May 2. The voyage across had been relatively calm. However, the engine room artificer that Harrison had wanted replaced had been left in the ship; AB Jack Scott recalled the sailor became sick before the ship left Halifax and remained that way for the entire trip.^[8]

Two days later Harrison sent another update to Western Approaches Command, updating *Trentonian's* estimated time of arrival as May 1.^[9] Moving at between thirteen and fourteen knots most of the voyage had reduced their travel time by almost a day. Included in his message were defects that had occurred in the three ships while en route. *Trentonian* had not incurred any problems or breakdowns. *Lindsay* had both radar sets break down and the main circulating pump for the engines was defective. *Louisburg* (II) had more problems; its radar, direction finder, wireless transmitter (radio), and steering gear were all defective or inoperable.^[10]



Two unidentified crew members from Trentonian during the North Atlantic crossing in April 1944. The weather was still cold enough that there are icicles hanging from the kisbie ring.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Jack Harold.

Trentonian, *Lindsay*, and *Louisburg*(II) arrived in Londonderry on May 1, 1944.^[11]

Trentonian was immediately assigned to the Western Approaches Command in Londonderry as an unallocated unit not assigned to a specific escort group.

Lindsay and *Louisburg*(II) went immediately for repairs while *Trentonian* was sent to the oiler to take on fuel after the long voyage across the Atlantic. Once the ship was fuelled and secured to the dock, Lt. Harrison and the navigating officer, Lt. Parre, were both called ashore.^[12] Also leaving the ship was the seasick engine room artificer, who was taken by stretcher to the hospital. The crew took pity on the poor man and hoped he would be sent back to Canada by airplane.^[13]

With the skipper ashore, the executive officer, Lt. Kinsman, was in charge and the crew was turned out to clean ship.

The crew had been isolated from news of the war for the last ten days and the first reports they heard were of two sea battles off the coast of France, one victorious, the other tragic. During the night of April 26, Canadian Tribal-class destroyers *Haida*, *Huron*, and *Athabaskan* were patrolling off the coast of Brittany with the Tenth Destroyer Flotilla. They found three German destroyers attempting to make their way to St. Malo Harbour. The ships engaged the Germans in a running surface battle and all three German ships were hit and damaged. Two were able to escape while the third

was sunk.[14] Two nights later, *Haida* and *Athabaskan* were off the coast of France on April 29. The surviving German destroyers tried to break through again. Discovered by the Canadians, the German destroyers turned away and fired torpedoes. The Canadian destroyers returned fire, and in the ensuing fight one of the German torpedoes hit the Canadian ship *Athabaskan*. *Athabaskan* lost power and was left behind while the other Canadian ship, *Haida*, pursued and ultimately sank one of the German ships. When *Haida* returned to aid the damaged ship, they found that it had sunk. They were able to rescue thirty-eight crew, another eighty-six were taken prisoner, while 128 were killed in the action.[15]

Before *Trentonian* started work on British waters, the officers and crew went through training and evolutions again.[16] They spent fourteen days in rigorous training at what became affectionately known as “panic incorporated,” as all crew members spent time in the ship and ashore learning their jobs under every conceivable emergency and hardship.

They also trained in early versions of technological simulators; that is, full-scale mock-ups of the ship’s bridge. The entire bridge crew ran through simulations under different weather and day/night conditions. They would repeat the process with the crew changing positions so that they could learn the job of another person; if a key crew member was wounded or killed during battle, another person could step in and take their place.

The difficult training took on an increased importance when more bad news arrived. On May 6, 1944, *Valleyfield* was torpedoed and sank off the coast of Newfoundland.

There were only thirty-eight survivors; 123 of its crew and two passengers were killed.[17] The news of *Valleyfield*’s loss hit Stoker Sydney Coates particularly hard; that was the ship he had been assigned to and missed the call for in Quebec City.

Suddenly, the seven days he had spent in the brig didn’t seem that bad.[18]

One of the highlights in Londonderry was a young Irish boy who came to the ship every day to sell fresh buns. He carried a guitar with him and received a few shillings for the ballads he sang. He had a wonderful voice and the crew would listen to him until he was finished and then purchase all his buns.[19]



The forward gun crew practising loading Trentonian's four-inch gun in Londonderry harbour.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

During their days in Londonderry, a small dog wandered aboard *Trentonian*. Signalman Jack Harold described the dog as a mutt that looked like a black and white terrier with a curly tail. The dog took a real fancy to the crew and the crew to him. This time Lt. Kinsman said the animal could stay. There were conditions, however. He was not to get in the way and he must be trained; there were to be no presents left about the ship. [\[20\]](#)



Trentonian gained a new crew member in Londonderry when this dog, named AB O'Brian, wandered onto the ship and voluntarily stayed aboard.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

The dog was given a name and rank, "Able Seaman O'Brian," and stayed in the communications mess with Able Seaman "Slats" Slater as his primary caregiver. One of the sailors made a collar and a hammock for AB O'Brian. This was slung between two stanchions in the mess and low enough for the dog to climb into. While *Trentonian*

remained tied to the dock, O'Brian made no attempts to leave the ship.[\[21\]](#) The dog quickly became a favourite amongst the crew and was very spoiled. Back in Canada, a letter was sent to the City of Trenton from the secretary of the Navy Board on May 14, warning the committee that extra care was now needed when shipping parcels to *Trentonian*. The city had not been informed that their ship was operating in the United Kingdom and the letter vaguely stated that new shipping arrangements would be needed to protect the items sent to the ship.[\[22\]](#) Training in the simulators and classrooms ended on May 14 and *Trentonian* proceeded for evolutions at sea.[\[23\]](#) They spent the next four days practising the simulated training in their ship at sea, repeating everything that had been done in the simulators on the real ship at sea. *Trentonian's* crew were much improved from their days in Bermuda. This time, when the towed target flew past the anti-aircraft gun crews, they saw parts of the target being blown off by the accuracy of their fire. Later, they watched the entire target plunge into the sea, the crew having blown away the cable that attached it to the tow plane.[\[24\]](#)



AB Arthur "Slats" Slater volunteered to be responsible for Trentonian's mascot. AB O'Brian lived in the seamen's mess with him.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Years later, Stoker Bruce Keir vividly remembered the day the entire off-duty crew was called on deck so the training officer could provide a demonstration of what an air attack would be like. The German air force was considered a serious threat and special emphasis had been placed on anti-aircraft operations. The entire crew watched as two Spitfires made a fast passing sweep of *Trentonian*. The two fighter planes then gained altitude and turned once again towards the ship. The crew was utterly surprised when both Spitfires started to fire their machine guns. They watched the flashes of white light from both wings and then saw the water on both sides of *Trentonian* erupt as the fighters strafed down both sides of the ship, flying closer than before.^[25] The training evolutions came to a climax when *Trentonian* sailed for Larne and

commenced two days of battle training on May 18. This entailed a mock escort of a convoy under all battle conditions. It was two days of continuous action stations, drills, attacks, and anti-aircraft and submarine sweeps.[\[26\]](#)

Trentonian returned to Londonderry on the morning of May 20, taking on fuel at Moville along the way. While fuelling, Signalman Jack Harold recalls that a number of “bum boats” came out to the ship from the Irish Free State side of the river and came alongside, trying to sell their merchandise to the crew. They were peddling all sorts of contraband like silk stockings, booze, and chocolate. Harold bought a bottle of what he was told was Irish whiskey. Later, when they drank it, the taste was horrible and he developed a rash and became itchy all over.[\[27\]](#)

When fuelling was complete, the bum boats were chased away and *Trentonian* let go of the lines securing it to the oiler. Harrison ordered slow ahead. The after wire had not been taken up, however, and it promptly wrapped around *Trentonian*’s screw, fouling it. Unable to remove the wire, *Trentonian* was towed to the dock in Londonderry. Later, a hard-hat diver was brought to dive under the ship and cut the wire away.[\[28\]](#)

After an eleven-day ocean crossing and twenty days of training evolutions, the crew was finally given shore leave in Londonderry. Half the crew was given the evening to run about town, starting with the men that did not get leave before leaving Halifax.



Stoker Bruce Keir (left) and AB Weldon Runtz in their number one uniforms, ready for leave in Londonderry.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Telegraphist Tom Farrell recalls how Able Seaman Eric Muff of Toronto, Ontario, Coder Phil Kevins of Verdun, Quebec, and he went to the local pubs. Muff was a real character and kept everyone amused by reciting poems by Robert Service, and Kevins had a wonderful voice and could sing Irish ballads. Farrell emceed and the impromptu shows earned them free beers. They later repeated the performance in each port *Trentonian* visited. [\[29\]](#)

The antics were not limited to the men. Two of the officers — the anti-submarine officer, Lt. Dodds, and navigator, Lt. Parre — were standing on the dock together waiting for a

cab to arrive to start their shore leave. On a whim, Parre grabbed Dodds cap, tucked it under his arm like a football, and started down the jetty. Dodds, running behind him, quickly made up the distance and tackled the navigator, sending both officers crashing onto the jetty. A horrendous sound that Signalman Jack Harold described as a “crack that was heard around the fleet” erupted from the two officers.[30] Lieutenant Parre’s femur had broken! The gut-wrenching sound of the largest bone in the body breaking was followed with a scream that was heard throughout *Trentonian* and that brought the men to the rails to see what was happening. They all watched as an ambulance was summoned and *Trentonian*’s navigating officer was taken to hospital.

What happened next shocked the crew even more. Lieutenant Dodds was immediately sent for by the skipper. This was expected, but once in Lt. Harrison’s cabin, the entire crew could hear the berating the young lieutenant was receiving through the closed door. They had never seen or heard their normally calm commanding officer like this. Not once could the young officer be heard defending himself, though the crew could hear phrases like “this childish act has now endangered the ship and the men.”[31] The next day, May 21, a new navigating officer reported aboard, Lt. John K. Macbeth, RCNVR, from British Columbia. He immediately reported to the XO and then to Harrison. Once with the skipper, the two officers barely left Harrison’s cabin the rest of the day.[32]

Macbeth had been a student at Queen’s University when he joined the RCN at *Cataraqui* in Kingston. He had spent almost two years serving in corvettes *Eyebright* and *Summerside* before being assigned to the newly formed Canadian Beach Commando Unit. Due to an injury in a training accident, he was no longer able to serve on the beach. Still fit for sea duty, Macbeth was transferred to *Trentonian* as a temporary replacement for the injured navigating officer.

It did not take long for stories to circulate about the new officer. Apparently, a year earlier he had been disciplined for misappropriation of equipment when he and two other officers took a landing craft on a thirty-six hour joy ride on New Year’s Eve. At the court martial, Macbeth received six months loss of seniority and a severe reprimand. After the proceedings, the president of the court brought Macbeth a double rum in the club — despite his wrongdoing, Macbeth had demonstrated exceptional skill by successfully evading the multitude of craft sent to search for and intercept him.

With shore leave complete, *Trentonian* proceeded out of Londonderry on May 23 for Oban, Scotland.[33] The skipper announced to the crew that they were on their way to pick up their first convoy in English waters. The ship was to remain with the Western Approaches Command, assigned to Greenock, Scotland.

They arrived in Oban the same day. As the ship entered the harbour approaches, the crew watched as they passed the lush green hillsides of Scotland and the ruins of an ancient castle. *Trentonian* anchored in the harbour and remained at immediate notice for steam. The ship was to act as an anti-aircraft picket for the other boats assembling in harbour. The crew was informed there would be no shore leave; no one was allowed off the ship except for duty reasons.

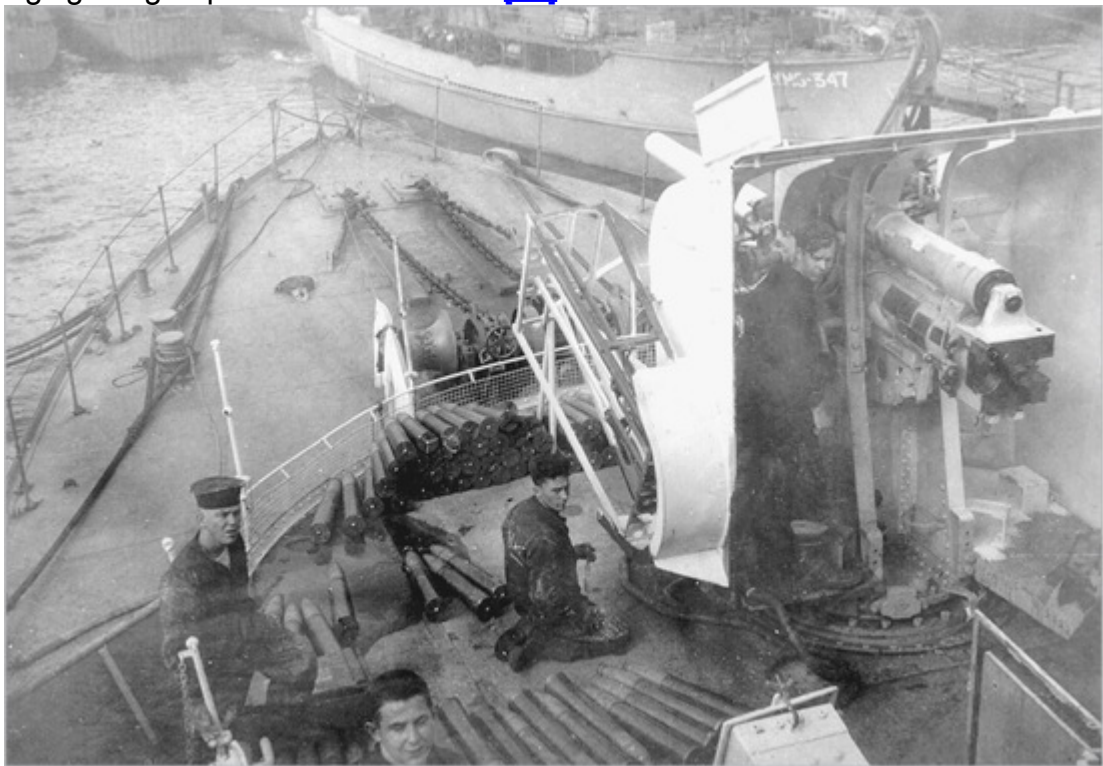
While in Oban, a boat regularly came alongside *Trentonian* with a signal, envelope, or parcel for the skipper. Lieutenant Harrison would sign for these personally and send replies as required. Harrison spent most of the time in his cabin; the crew saw very little of the old man, or of the new navigating officer.

Oban harbour was very busy and was filled with a large number of old ships, including some Royal Navy ships from the First World War and earlier. The crew identified the battleship HMS *Centurion*, commissioned in May 1913. *Centurion*, along with the old cruiser HMS *Durbam* and the Royal Netherlands cruiser HNLMS *Sumatra*, had been stripped and reduced to floating hulks, as had many old merchant ships.

While in the harbour, a few of the crew were required to go ashore. Signalman Jack

Harold was sent to take some signals for the navigator to the local navy headquarters and Leading Steward Roy Evans needed to wash the officers' laundry as the washing machine from the city of Trenton had not yet caught up to the ship. The load was quite large and Evans received permission to take someone with him. Able Seaman George Hayward went along and all three were given strict instructions; they were not to tell anyone which ship they were from, where they had come from, or where they were sailing to. If anyone asked where they were going, they were to reply, "We are going to the laundry" — nothing more. They were to complete their duties and take the morning harbour boat back to the ship.[\[34\]](#)

Unfortunately — or conveniently — the sailors missed the early boat back to the ship and had to wait several hours for the next one. The three enjoyed lunch at the local hotel and went for a stroll through the lush green countryside, eventually finding the old castle they had passed earlier. The trio climbed the castle ruins, using a lead cable to assist themselves up onto the walls. They were berated by a thickly accented Scotsman when they climbed down for possibly damaging the electrical cable to the aircraft warning light high up on the castle walls.[\[35\]](#)



Before departing Londonderry on May 23, 1944, Trentonian took on a full load of ammunition. Piled like cord wood, the rounds were temporarily stored by the gunners in the ready-use lockers on the forward gun deck. The remainder went below to the four-inch magazine.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Harrison was able to send a letter to Hazel Farley giving a progress report of the ship and crew.

Your letter of April 22 unfortunately didn't arrive at Halifax in time but we eventually received it. All wish me to thank you once again for your good wishes.

We have no more pictures of the ship's company onboard, but I have today written to the photographer, Mr Hayward, 11 Buckingham St. Halifax. I have asked him to forward six copies so you should receive them soon after this letter.

It was very good of you to go to so much trouble about the victrola but I'm afraid like a lot of other things, we shall have to "wait and see" before we can tell you when and where to send it.

I'm sure both yourself and the pupils will soon be starting to look forward to your summer holidays after a term of hard work. Time certainly has flown since the

Trentonian left Kingston and winter is now a thing of the past.

We have not had many changes here. The Navigating Officer, Paul Parre, who I think was on the ship the day that you were, had the misfortune to break his leg a couple of weeks ago. So we left him behind in a U.K. port. His leg is doing well and will be quite alright again shortly.

Otherwise the crew is the same as on the picture. They have been conducting themselves very well indeed and their ship is gaining quite a good name in all the ports we call at, in consequence, they have lots to grumble about so are perfectly happy. A good old "growl" is a great pastime and gives them something in common.

Well, I hope we still stick together. I'd like to bring everybody back to Canada that left with us and I am sure that we will manage it.

My warmest regards to all the teachers and pupils. [36]

The last paragraph of Harrison's letter sheds a clue to the anticipated dangers involved in their next job and his concern for his men.

On May 29, the crew had a reprieve from the boredom of being confined to the ship;

Stoker Bruce Keir had his twentieth birthday and the crew held a party to celebrate.

When an opportunity for celebration arose, the men would take it on themselves to share their daily grog ration with the celebrator. For truly important events, or for very close shipmates, they might give away their entire ration or maybe choose to give gulps or sippers — these terms are almost self-explanatory, being a gulp or a sip of a ration — for the celebration. The rum for the grog was very thick and well above the regular 40 percent alcohol, so even sippers from a large group of shipmates could have some very effective results. [37]



Lt. Harrison (left) on Trentonian's bridge with the new navigation officer, Lt. John Macbeth.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Tom Farrell.

As the men learned their respective trades, the young ordinary seaman would be promoted to the rank of able seaman. Ordinary Seaman Harold Salmon recalls the day he was told to report to the commanding officer's cabin. Not knowing why he was called, the young sailor knocked on the skipper's door and was told to enter. Lieutenant Harrison looked up at Salmon as he stood at attention and then informed him, "Congratulations, you have been promoted to Able Seaman." The skipper shook his hand and sent the sailor on his way. News and rumours travel fast in a ship, for outside of the skipper's cabin was the leading seaman who had ordered Salmon to the masthead in Bermuda. In his hand were a paint brush and a can of paint. The LS thrust

the items into Salmon's hands and quietly pointed aloft.[38]

The harbour at Oban continued to fill with ships. They were mostly old, worn-out merchant and warships, stripped of guns and fittings. On May 31, *Trentonian's* crew was ordered to stations for leaving harbour. The ship was to sail with its first convoy in English waters.[39] Lieutenant Harrison was the senior officer of the escort force now assembled in Oban and *Trentonian* was joined by *Mayflower*, *Drumheller*, *Rimouski*, and its old chummy ship from Halifax, *Lindsay*. The escort was also joined by the RN corvette HMS *Nasturtium*.

The escort ships left the harbour first, sweeping the approaches for submarines with asdic, while the ships of the convoy came out of the harbour and took up their positions one at a time. Suddenly, one of the lookouts called out and the crew watched as the black steel hull of a submarine surfaced almost beside *Trentonian*.[40] There was no time to close up to action stations, but as the submarine broke the surface it was immediately identified as a Royal Navy submarine. The submarine's skipper knew with all the asdic activity and a convoy forming above, his submarine was better off on the surface than being an unidentified asdic contact, open for attack.



*AB W. Becker takes the time to work on his art. The painting is a scene of a sister corvette on the North Atlantic. AB Harold Salmon liked the painting, so Becker gave it to him and at Salmon's request changed the pennant number on the side to *Trentonian's* K368.*

Photo courtesy Directorate of Naval History and Heritage, neg. JT-456.

Sixty ships of all types made up *Trentonian's* convoy.[41] As had been suspected, the convoy was made up of the old ships in the harbour that the crew of *Trentonian* described as old derelicts, rust buckets not fit to float, and scrap heaps that must have been dredged up from the previous war. Slowly the convoy made its way south and into the Irish Sea.

The convoy continued on a course to the south, *Trentonian's* crew not knowing their destination, at the grand speed of five knots. The waters around Great Britain were extremely busy and the convoy passed several others making their way between ports. On June 3, 1944, as the convoy left the Irish Sea, Signalman Jack Harold heard a tremendous roar from the deck above his mess followed by an explosion away from the

ship. As the men rushed out onto the deck to see what was happening, they found the skipper had ordered the hedgehog fired and the mortars had exploded on the ocean bottom. The hedgehog was not to be reloaded.

As the convoy rounded Land's End and headed into the English Channel, they were passed by two battle fleets — one British and one American — and three separate flotillas of fast destroyers. Signalman Jack Harold remarked, "One cannot help but feel a thrill, indescribable at seeing such a magnificent display of Allied naval power."[\[42\]](#)

Despite the excitement of passing the grand battleships, sleek cruisers, fast destroyers, and aircraft of all types flying overhead, *Trentonian* and the convoy continued on their course at five knots.

On June 4, Signalman Jack Harold brought a message to Harrison from Allied Naval Command Expeditionary Force (ANCXF). It simply read, "exercise postponed twenty-four hours, and anchor in Poole Bay."[\[43\]](#) The skipper ordered the course change and the convoy headed towards Poole Bay.

The next day, June 5, 1944, Lt. Harrison called the crew together and informed them what they were about to do. The invasion of Europe was less than twenty-four hours away and *Trentonian* was going to the beachhead.

Signalman Jack Harold, reflecting on what the skipper told them, decided to keep a diary. His first entry is as follows:

The Old Man called the crew together for a "pep talk" on what is about to happen. I am going to have a ringside seat to the biggest thing in warfare that man has ever conceived or attempted. We are now in the English Channel, shepherding our convoy like a big wandering flock of sheep under the watchful eye of British fighter and bomber aircraft. This strip of water will in a day or two without a doubt become the hottest spot on earth. And I shall be at the very vortex of this man-made hell! In case I do not survive perhaps someday someone will say, "He died doing his duty!" It has been estimated that 85% of the men taking part in this invasion will not come out of it. Well everyone is hoping that he will be one of the 15% left but also resolved to go down fighting if he is not.[\[44\]](#)



*This odd assortment of derelict ships led to a great amount of speculation amongst the crew as to why these ships were so important that they needed to be escorted by *Trentonian* and the crew confined to the ship.*

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

6: The Invasion

Apart from fierce fires started by the shelling and the bombing, the French country side looks very peaceful and beautiful. In peacetime I would have loved to have come here and spent a holiday.

— Able Seaman Jack Harold, RCNVR, signalman, HMCS *Trentonian*

The crew listened to Lt. Harrison intently as he explained: this was the invasion of Fortress Europe, the operation was called Overlord and the naval portion Operation Neptune.

Operation Overlord was a five division frontal assault from landing ships and landing craft that was to take place off Normandy in the Bay of Seine, between the eastern shore of the Cotentin Peninsula and a point east of the River Orne and west of Le Havre. Operation Neptune was to secure a lodgement in France from which further offensive operations could be developed.[\[1\]](#)

The initial objectives of the assault were the isolation of the Cotentin Peninsula, so that the French port of Cherbourg could be attacked from the rear, and the capture of the French towns of Carentan, Isigny, Bayeaux, and Caen.[\[2\]](#)

Trentonian was to take their convoy to the heart of the invasion area. Lieutenant Harrison explained that the greatest threat now was from German mines, E-boats, and aircraft — the chances of U-boats getting through the defences were minimal.

The crew now worked on a two-watch system. Half the crew was closed up at their stations at all times, while the other half ate or slept. This was done in four hour shifts — on duty for four hours and off for four hours. The advantage of this system was that the ship was ready to come to immediate action and each sailor was not worked for long periods. However, the down time was equally short so there was little opportunity for rest or proper sleep.

Harrison ordered all ready-use mortars for the hedgehog stored in the magazine below. If *Trentonian* was hit by a bomb, he did not want high explosives on deck.

As the skipper was addressing the crew, over one hundred flying fortresses passed over the ship heading towards France.[\[3\]](#) Anti-aircraft operations were suspended; the crew were not to fire on any aircraft as almost all overhead were assumed to be friendly.

That evening, *Trentonian* and the other escorts, *Mayflower*, *Drumheller*, *Rimouski*, *Lindsay*, and *Nasturtium*, entered Poole Bay with their convoy and anchored.[\[4\]](#)

Trentonian remained on duty patrolling for E-boats — the escort ships would take turns performing picket duty, patrolling the convoy.

The activities in Poole Bay gave the crew their first glimpse of the size and scope of the invasion. It appeared to them that every ship afloat was there: battleships, cruisers, destroyers, corvettes, minesweepers, and the multitude of merchant and troop ships.

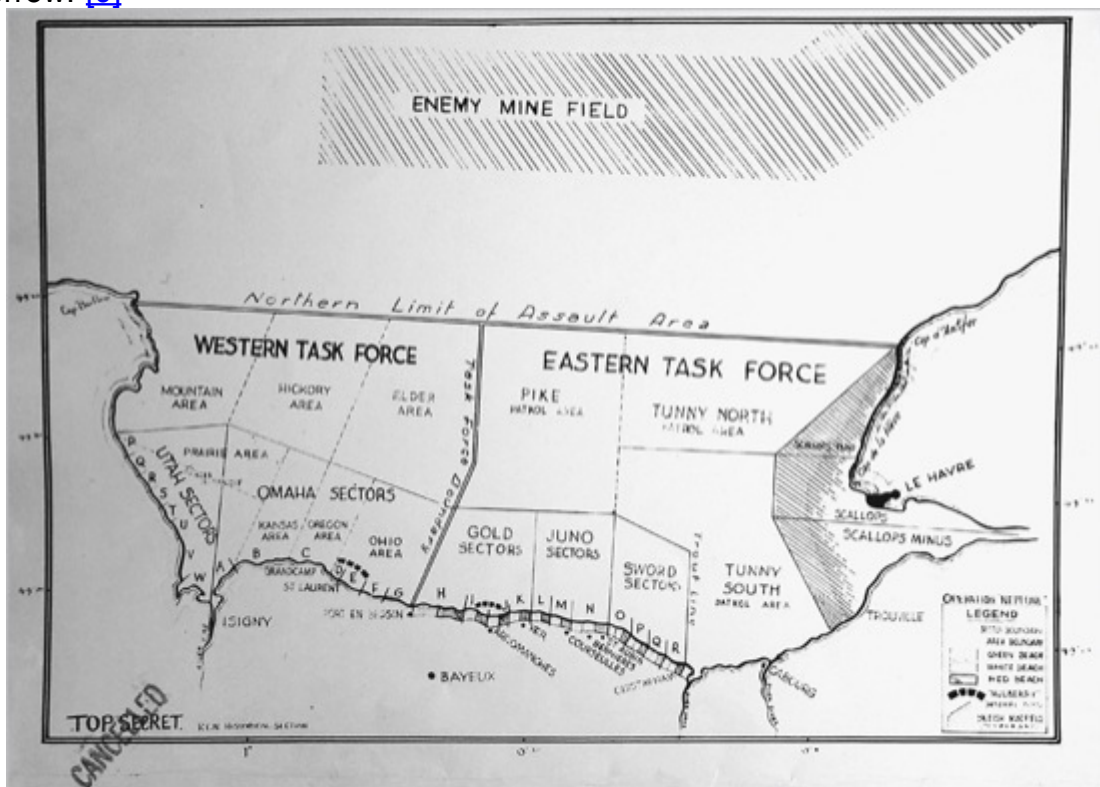
Signalman Jack Harold remarked in his diary, "If the tyrant of Germany, Hitler, could even conceive a quarter of the Allied strength that is being massed for this invasion, I feel he would quake with fear to the very depths of his fowl *[sic]* black heart."[\[5\]](#)

With *Trentonian*'s picket duties complete, as senior officer of the convoy, Lt. Harrison assigned the next escort to picket duties and anchored his ship in Poole Bay. That night some of the crew took to writing letters home while others wrote wills.[\[6\]](#) The mood in the ship was a mixture of excitement and expectation, and adrenalin was running high. With the mess decks crowded, the tension became unbearable for two of *Trentonian*'s crew members and a fight broke out. The two battling parties were separated by their mates before anything serious could happen.[\[7\]](#)

The moon was almost full, but the crew could see an obvious glow on the horizon coming from the French side of the English Channel. They knew the bombing had already started. They also knew their turn to head into the battle was coming. The ships of their convoy took on a new importance, no longer were they the old derelict pieces of

scrap iron they once begrudgingly described. Speculation amongst the crew was these ships would die a hero's death at the entrance to various harbours along the French coast. They surmised the ships would be sunk, blocking the harbours, trapping the enemy's ships, E-boats, and submarines so the Allies could destroy the entire German fleet.[8]

During the night the big battleships, cruisers, and destroyers made their way out of Poole Bay and towards France. They were followed by the troop ships and landing ships. Telegraphist Tom Farrell remembers watching them leave the sheltered anchorage; many of the large ships had barrage balloons secured to them with long steel cables to prevent German aircraft from coming too close. The sea was rough and he could see the smaller landing craft bouncing over the waves with their soldiers being tossed about and wondering, "How many of these men would still be alive at this time tomorrow." [9]



*The original planning map of the invasion area showing the designated patrol areas and beach designations.
Map credit: Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, box 83, file 81/520/1650, D-Day — Neptune Maps.*

The next morning at 0400, June 6, 1944, when Signalman Jack Harold came on duty for his morning watch, he could see bright flashes on the eastern horizon and hear the continuous drone of hundreds of aircraft flying overhead. Once the sun started to rise the crew watched as large formations of aircraft flew by, fighters, bombers, and cargo planes, all flying towards France. They also watched as planes returned, no longer in the pristine formations and some obviously damaged.[10] Later in the morning, a radio news broadcast was sent over *Trentonian's* PA system stating the invasion of Europe had begun and thousands of Allied soldiers had landed.

To minimize the risk to the crew, Harrison ordered the men living in the lower mess decks to pack any essential gear, clothes, and hammocks and move into the upper messes. The watertight hatches to the lower mess decks were then secured and no one was allowed back into them. Lieutenant Harrison did not want anyone trapped sleeping in the lower mess decks.[11] This made the space for the crew extremely cramped; the mess decks were normally very tight, with each man being allowed a few inches of personal space. As Telegrapher Vince Hadley described, "the mess deck was fourteen

by twenty-two feet and normally twenty-two of us would live there.”^[12] Now there were twice as many men in the same space.

News of the invasion was sporadic and came from what they could hear on the radio announced by the BBC. Throughout the day they watched as ships took up their anchor and left the bay while hundreds of aircraft flew overhead. Some complained; being kept in the dark led to harmful rumours and unfound speculation as to how the invasion was proceeding.^[13] The big question was always on their minds, was the invasion succeeding or failing?

Trentonian’s turn to leave Poole Bay with its convoy and escorts was scheduled for late in the afternoon. Just before departure Lt. Harrison called the crew together. He informed them of the situation on the other side of the Channel: the air and naval bombardment had been successful and the troops were now proceeding inshore.^[14]

Trentonian was just one of 122 Canadian ships and landing craft to be assigned to Neptune, including fifteen destroyers, eleven frigates, nineteen corvettes, sixteen minesweepers, fifteen motor torpedo boats, two landing ships, fourteen assault landing craft, and thirty infantry landing craft. Originally scheduled to begin on June 5, to take advantage of the moon and tides along the French coast, the invasion had to be delayed twenty-four hours due to severe weather. During the night, airborne troops were parachuted into France to protect the invasion from counter-attacks by the German army. Several areas along the French coast were bombed by the air force to prevent the Germans from realizing that a single area was being concentrated on for the invasion.

Under the cover of darkness, the Canadian minesweepers took part in sweeping ten channels from a central rendezvous point designated “Area Z.” This gave safe passage for the bombardment force, made up of battleships, monitors, cruisers, and destroyers — including Canadian V-class destroyers *Sioux* and *Algonquin*. Anchoring off the beaches before dawn, the ships bombarded the German gun emplacements and fortifications that the French resistance had identified along the coast and inshore. The invasion force followed, transporting 160,000 troops in a variety of landing craft, landing ships, and troop ships, to the five invasion beaches (the Canadians were assigned Juno beach). The element of surprise was absolutely essential to the success of the first wave of the invasion. All of these preparations had been done with the upmost secrecy and deception, with the final hours executed under the cover of darkness. The German soldiers guarding the coast of Normandy watched the sun set on an empty stretch of water, and would be astonished to see over four thousand Allied ships standing off their positions as dawn broke on the morning of June 6, 1944.

As the initial wave of soldiers fought their way off the beach, other soldiers were arriving in LCI(L)s, Landing Craft Infantry Large, almost the size of a small ship at 160 feet long and each capable of holding over two hundred soldiers. The LCI(L)s would run their bows onto the shore and the soldiers would disembark from ramps located on either side of the vessel.

The soldiers of the Third Canadian Division landed on Juno beach at 0755; the division was comprised of 14,000 men from infantry, armour, artillery and support units from across Canada. The beachhead was divided into two sectors, designated “Mike” and “Nan.” Mike sector was near the French village of Courseulles-sur-Mer on the west and Nan sector was in the east near the villages of Bernieres and Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer. Initially, the resistance was minimal, but as the Germans reorganized, the fighting became fierce. Opposing the Canadians were eight thousand German soldiers with twenty batteries of heavy and medium guns fortified with pillboxes and other hardened fortifications. The approaches from the sea were heavily mined and the sea wall from the beach was twice as high as the one at Omaha beach. Juno beach was considered to be the second most heavily defended beach of the invasion.

The first wave of Canadians experienced almost 50 percent casualties but was still able to press forward, securing the beachhead in just over an hour. By noon the majority of the Third Canadian Division was ashore and moving inland. By 1800, the village of Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer was captured by the North Shore Regiment, and over the next few hours, Courseulles-sur-Mer and Bernieres were captured as well.

The Canadian units advanced almost ten kilometres from the beach, penetrating further inland than the Americans and British, and were the only Allied forces to reach their objectives during the first day of the invasion. The human cost on that first day was almost one thousand Canadians killed or wounded.

The ships of *Trentonian's* convoy were to be sunk off the invasion beaches to form an area of sheltered water off each of the five beachheads.^[15] Each sheltered area was called a "Gooseberry"; their purpose was to provide an area for landing-craft operations and to provide shelter for small craft in rough weather.

The convoy had been designated into three sections, named CornCob I, CornCob II, and CornCob III. All sixty ships were to be escorted to the invasion area; each convoy ship was assigned to one of the five beachheads. The Canadian beachhead at Juno, Gooseberry 4, had eleven ships assigned to it.

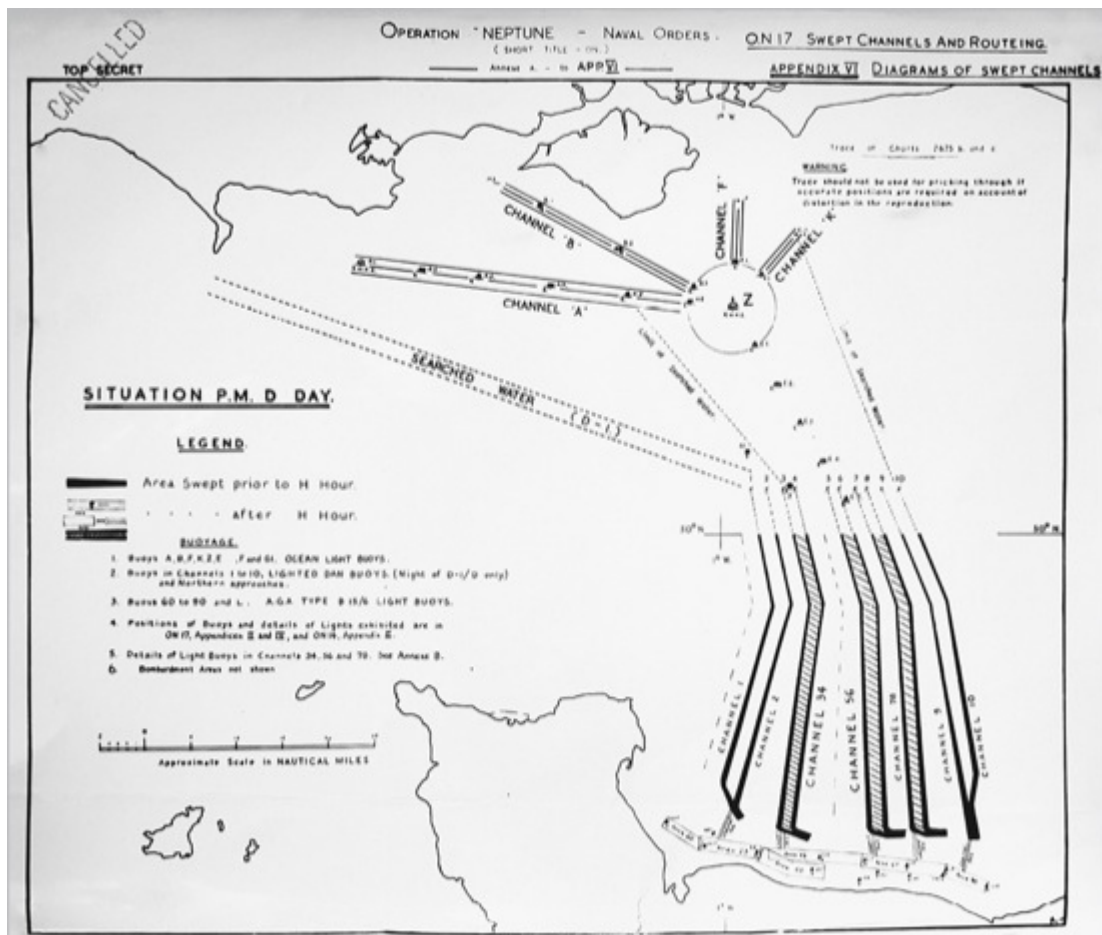
The timetable for Overlord started when *Trentonian* left Oban, Scotland on May 31. This was the very first movement of ships and set in motion all the plans in the complex invasion schedule. It could be argued that *Trentonian* was the spearhead of the invasion of Normandy.

Now Harrison's reaction to Lt. Parre's broken leg became obvious. When they arrived in Londonderry, the skipper and the navigator had been whisked away for several days to be briefed on the invasion. Parre had committed to memory all the movements of *Trentonian* and where the ship was to be in the complex timetable of the invasion. With Parre's injury, his replacement, Lt. MacBeth, had days to learn what Parre had weeks to prepare.^[16]

Trentonian picked up its anchor and started to escort Cob I and Cob II sections of the convoy out of Poole Bay at 1607.^[17] The crew was closed up to action stations as the other escorts and old ships started across the English Channel.

Trentonian and escorts *Mayflower*, *Drumheller*, *Rimouski*, *Lindsay*, and *Nasturtium* proceeded slowly into the Channel and, as darkness fell, the sky ahead of them was lit by flashes of gunfire, star shell, flares, and tracer fire. With each passing minute, *Trentonian* crept closer to the battle that was unfolding ahead. The convoy arrived at Area Z ahead of schedule and Harrison ordered the convoy turned to circle away at 2250, to delay their entrance into the swept channels.^[18]

Trentonian's convoy reached the swept channels of the assault area at 0540 on June 7. Cob II was split in two and each section was sent to the American Gooseberries. Cob I was split into three sections and proceeded with the two sections destined for Gooseberry 4 off Juno Beach and Gooseberry 5 off the British beach.^[19] The commodore for Gooseberries 4 and 5 was in the convoy in the freighter *Manchester Spinner*.



Original planning map indicating the channels swept by the minesweepers late in the afternoon of the first day. The ten individual channels have been increased in size and combined and navigational buoys are being laid.

Map credit: Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, box 83, file 81/520/1650, D-Day — Neptune Maps.

Trentonian then returned to the remaining section of Cob I and escorted it to Channel 56 for the Commodore of Gooseberry 3 in the freighter *Alynbank*, at 0700. This left HMS *Nasturtium* to escort Gooseberry 3 to the British Gold Beach off Arromanches. *Trentonian* then returned to Channel 78 to escort the two sections of Cob I to Juno and Sword Beachheads. [20]



This photo was taken from the port side of Trentonian's bridge on the morning of June 7, 1944, as it approached the invasion area. Artist Marc Magee used this photo in his painting for the cover of this book.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

At 1025, *Trentonian* was requested by the commodore of Gooseberries 4 and 5 in *Manchester Spinner* to contact the Mulberry tugs inshore and she proceeded ahead of the convoy to the beachhead.^[21] *Trentonian* located the tug close inshore and led the tug to the commodore, dropping anchor alongside *Manchester Spinner* off Juno Beach at 1155 in the morning of June 7, 1944.^[22]

Able Seaman George Hayward recalled that, while they were anchored, *Trentonian* was near HMS *Roberts*, a ship classed as a monitor, similar in size to a cruiser, but mounting a single turret with two fifteen-inch guns. The soldiers onshore would call for artillery support and *Robert's* guns would roar to life. Each time she fired, the concussion would shake *Trentonian*, knocking out the lights and breaking dishes.^[23]



Two large landing ships moving towards the beaches in Normandy. The near landing ship is heavily armed with anti-aircraft weapons, while the second ship is fully laden with trucks and equipment.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Able Seaman Jack Scott commented on a troop ship that passed *Trentonian* with soldiers filling its decks, heading for the beachhead, "They recognized the maple leaf on our stack [funnel] and they started to cheer. The troop ship was carrying a French

Canadian Army unit.[\[24\]](#) We then cheered them back.”

Stoker Bruce Keir recalled the troop ship anchored next to *Trentonian*. The air was filled with the rumble of the steel anchor chains sliding over its deck. Then sirens and a steady stream of orders over the PA system, calling the soldiers to the landing craft. Once again the air was filled with the noise of the landing craft being launched from the ship’s deck, followed by the steady rumble of the big diesel engines in each boat. Keir and his shipmates watched as the Canadian soldiers scrambled down the nets into the waiting craft alongside. They could hear the curses, as the soldiers were tossed against the steel side of the troopship and thrown on the decks of the bobbing landing craft.

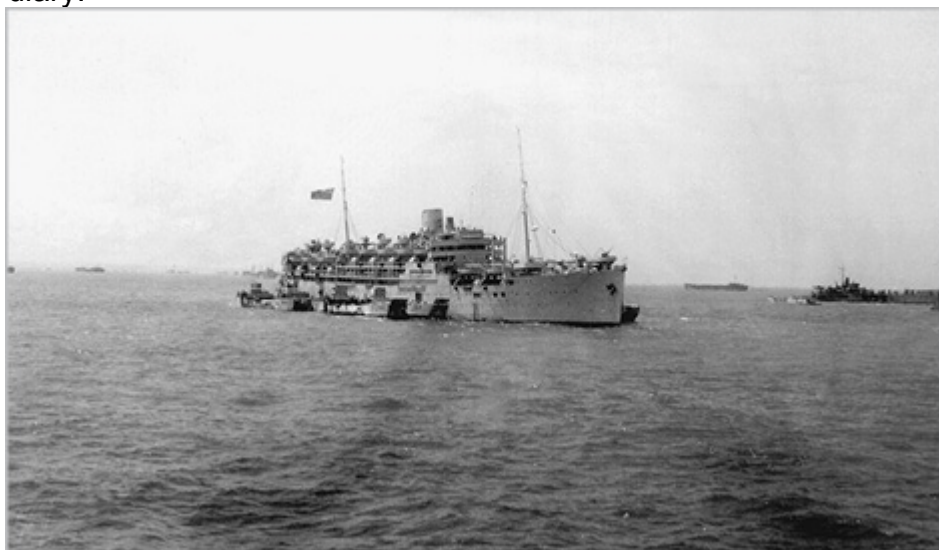


HMS Roberts classed as a monitor, on June 7, 1944. The ship is the size of a cruiser but mounted with a battleship turret. It is designed to anchor off-shore and bombard enemy positions with heavy fifteen-inch guns.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

This activity culminated with the roar of the landing craft engines as they all started their race toward the beach. The crew of *Trentonian* gave their army brethren one final cheer. As the men in *Trentonian* looked back at the troopship, they were amazed at the change from only moments ago. The large ship, so full of activity and noise only moments ago, now bobbed silently from its anchor, a ghost ship, empty of life. Keir wondered how many of those men would still be alive by tomorrow?

While the tugs distributed the CornCob ships into line to start forming Gooseberry 4 (Juno beach) and Gooseberry 5 (Sword beach), *Trentonian* remained at anchor. Signalman Jack Harold took the opportunity to write his first impressions of the assault area in his diary.



French-Canadian troops transferring from their troop ship to landing craft.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

This morning we came in sight of the coast of France. We closed up to action stations in

readiness for anything. However, not a great deal happened. I have never seen so many ships in my life. There were corvettes, destroyers of all classes and types, cruisers light and heavy, battle cruisers and battleships, but everything was surprisingly quiet. Bombers and fighters were continuously roaring overhead, on their missions of destruction. Every now and then the air was shattered by the bellow of the big guns. The capital ships are of course still smashing hell out of the shore defences. Troops are pushing their way inland at a fair pace but it is up to the Navy and the Air Force to more or less weaken the enemy's resistance.[\[25\]](#)



The landing craft carries the French-Canadian soldiers to Juno Beach.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Trentonian weighed anchor at 1350 and escorted tugs to the ships of Gooseberry 3.[\[26\]](#) The ship remained in the area while the CornCob ships were laid in line and scuttling operations began. Stoker Sid Coates recalls that the sea was still very rough and there was great difficulty in getting the blockships lined up straight.[\[27\]](#) The ships had explosives placed in them to scuttle them in position. They were manned by a skeleton crew who were taken off prior to the charges being detonated. When HMS *Centurion* was sunk in position, its crew of around seventy-five men were taken off in small boats before the charges sent the ship to the sea floor. A German gun position within site reported that a British battleship had exploded and sank with heavy loss of life, as only a few men of the one thousand or more crew were seen to abandon the ship.



A landing ship discharging men and material to the beach.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

At 1600, *Trentonian* departed the invasion area with *Drumheller* and *Mayflower*, escorting the CornCob convoy commodore in *Durban*^[28] to join the third section of the CornCob convoy, Cob III, still on the north side of the English Channel. The small group joined Cob III at 2300 that night and the remaining blockships were split into five sections,^[29] one for each of the Gooseberries located in the invasion area. They proceeded back across the English Channel, entering Channel 78 at 0240 in the morning of June 8, 1944.

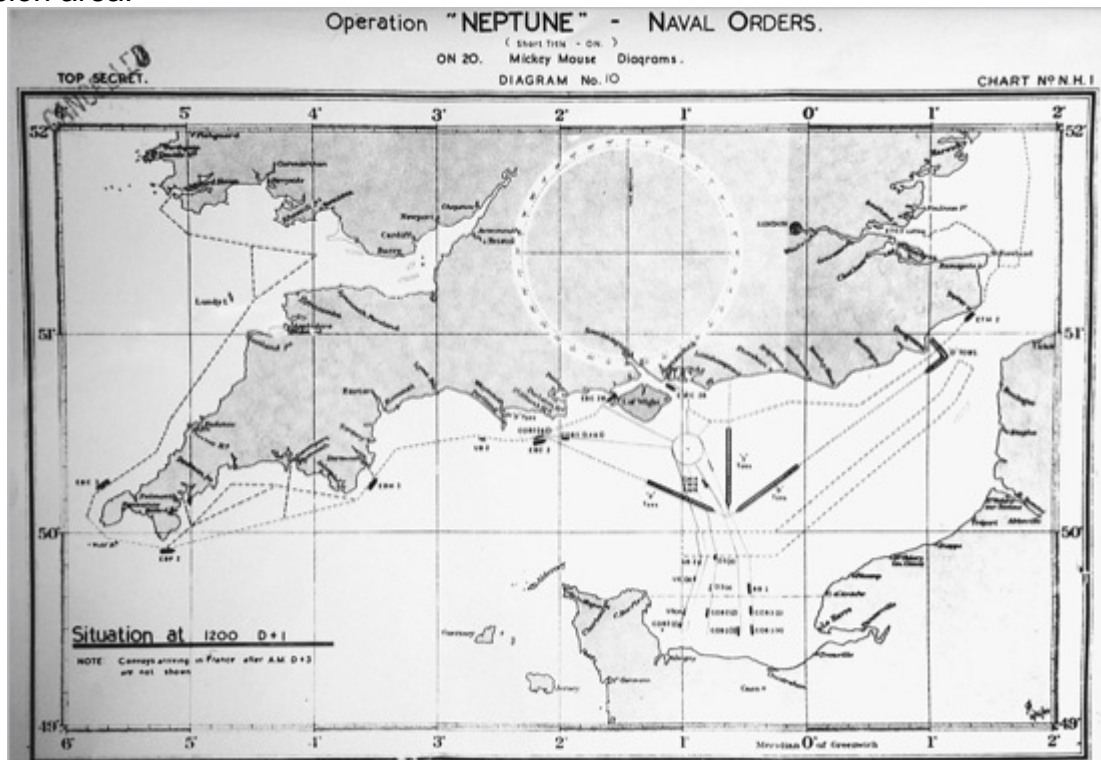


HMS Durban, a D-class light cruiser built in 1921, was destined to become part of the breakwater to protect the beaches of Normandy.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Trentonian led the old Dutch cruiser *Sumatra* and a section of Cob III south through the channel.^[30] Harrison received instructions from the captain southbound to lead his

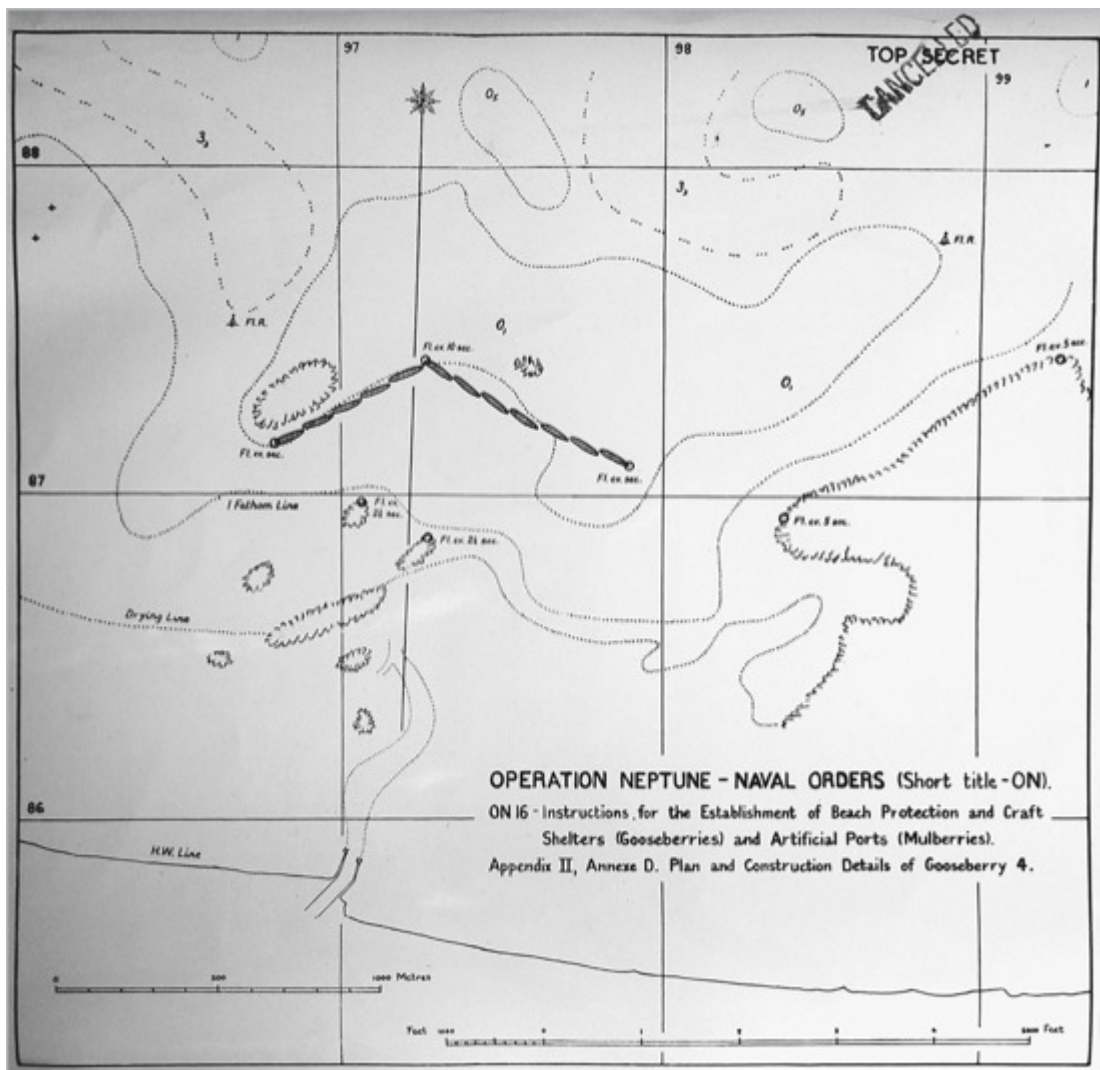
convoy to the anchorage.^[31] With the sheer volume of ship traffic at the invasion area and in the English Channel, all movement north and south was controlled by two commands, captain southbound into the assault area and captain northbound out of the invasion area.



Original planning map of the invasion area at 1200 on the morning after the initial invasion. CornCob I and CornCob II sections of the convoy are being distributed along the beachhead and CornCob III section is waiting on the opposite side of the channel.

Map credit: Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, box 83, file 81/520/1650, D-Day — Neptune Maps.

Trentonian once again anchored off the French coast at 0930 and contacted Juno beach headquarter's ship, *Hilary*, to notify the authorities of the arrival of Cob III.^[32] While at anchor Signalman Jack Harold wrote in his diary, We went back half way across the Channel last night and got the other cob. We have now brought them to the French coast and are standing by them. The heavy ships are still pounding the shores and towns from beside us here. The air is constantly reverberating with the roar of their guns. There was enemy activity here last night and a couple of ships were sunk. A few minutes ago we passed a frigate or destroyer escort which was smashed in half with her bows and stern sticking out of the water at a rakish angle. Her survivors were rowing about in a whaler. Our work here is I think just about finished. I imagine we will sail for England this afternoon, our destination Portsmouth. I hope we get some shore leave. The communications branch has been on sea watches since the twenty-third of May. This has been a trying ordeal for all of us. Not so much so, though, as the Army. They are the ones who are in there doing the actual fighting. They will be needing all the support we can give them and more. That is why I think we will be operating here in the Channel for a while. That however remains to be seen. Apart from fierce fires started by the shelling and the bombing, the French country side looks very peaceful and beautiful. In peacetime I would have loved to have come here and spent a holiday. Maybe someday when the Nazi smudge has been completely erased from the map of Europe...^[33]



Original planning map indicating the disposition of the block ships designated for Gooseberry 4, located at Juno Beach.

Map credit: Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, box 83, file 81/520/1650, D-Day — Neptune Maps.

The wrecked ship was HMS *Lawford*, a Royal Navy Captain-class frigate converted to a headquarters ship for the invasion. She was bombed and sunk off Juno beach during the early morning hours of June 8; thirty-seven of its crew were killed in the attack.

At 1100, *Trentonian*, under instructions from the CornCob commodore in HMS *Durban*, escorted two merchant ships to Gooseberry 4 off Juno beach.[34]

Able Seaman Jack Scott reflected that the galley had been closed while escorting the CornCob convoys during the initial invasion and the crew ate hard tack (a hard biscuit) and coffee.[35]

With their convoy duties complete, Lt. Harrison gave orders for *Trentonian* to leave the assault area. At 1235, they sailed for Portsmouth with *Louisburg* (II) in company.[36]

Stoker Bruce Keir remembers standing at *Trentonian's* rail while the ship slowly made its way through the fleet of ships anchored off the French coast. His last memory of that initial trip was watching *Trentonian* gently slip through the water, away from the Normandy beaches, and watching the body of an American soldier silently floating down the side of the ship, still with a lifejacket on, a bird stripping the flesh from the dead soldier's exposed face.[37]



*View from Trentonian on June 8, 1944. Stoker Bruce Keir wrote on this photo, "D-Day — Just some a few of the 4,000."
Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.*

7: A Deadly Mistake

***Trentonian* was ordered to submit a report to naval authorities but the incident never was made public. All concerned appeared to write it off as one of the tragic accidents of war** [\[1\]](#)

— Lt. Jack MacBeth, RCNVR, navigating officer, HMCS *Trentonian*
After an uneventful crossing of the English Channel, *Trentonian* anchored off Portsmouth at 1925 on the evening of June 8, 1944. With a break from the rigors of the past several days, Signalman Jack Harold wrote in his diary, We are now anchored in Portsmouth Harbour. There are almost as many ships here as there are at present on the coast of France. There is everything from ML's to battleships here. We are not going to get ashore, I'm afraid. Sigs, tels, and coders are of course still on sea watches for the 17th consecutive day. We are going slowly mad, I think. However the big show seems to be over for us, unless they keep us here in the channel to keep the supply lines open. [\[2\]](#)

Trentonian remained anchored for the next three days; the crew were given a rest, but not leave to go ashore. The galley reopened for hot meals and the men living in the lower mess decks were allowed to move back there. The ship was resupplied and work parties detailed to clean and make minor repairs.

The ship's mascot, AB O'Brian, served as a welcome diversion. Several of the men took the opportunity the downtime afforded them to teach O'Brian a few tricks, and there was always a sailor ready to spoil him. The dog had found his sea legs and often sat happily on one of the ammunition lockers on the bridge while the ship was sailing. Whenever any shooting started, he would hide below decks. [\[3\]](#)

Over the course of the three off days, the crew watched the busy harbour of Portsmouth. Ships returned from the invasion area for supplies and other ships left with fresh troops. Hospital ships returned with their bright white paint with red stripes and crosses which protected them from enemy attack.

Enemy activity near the invasion area continued. *Sioux* sank a German E-boat in defence of the invasion forces near Barfleur, between the American sector and Cherbourg, on June 11. [\[4\]](#)



HMCS Prince David, an infantry landing ship, at Portsmouth June 8, 1944. Many of the ships allocated to the initial phases of the invasion had to return for supplies. All of Prince David's landing craft were damaged, sunk, or beached during the first day and required replacements.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

At 2100 on the evening of June 11, the crew was closed up to stations for leaving harbour and *Trentonian* headed out. [\[5\]](#) At 0215 the next morning, *Trentonian* rendezvoused with two British cable ships, HMTS *Monarch* and HMTS *St. Margaret*, and the cable barge *Norman*, already under escort of the British corvette HMS *Dianthus* and anti-submarine trawler HMS *Hugh Walpole*, off The Needles off the Isle

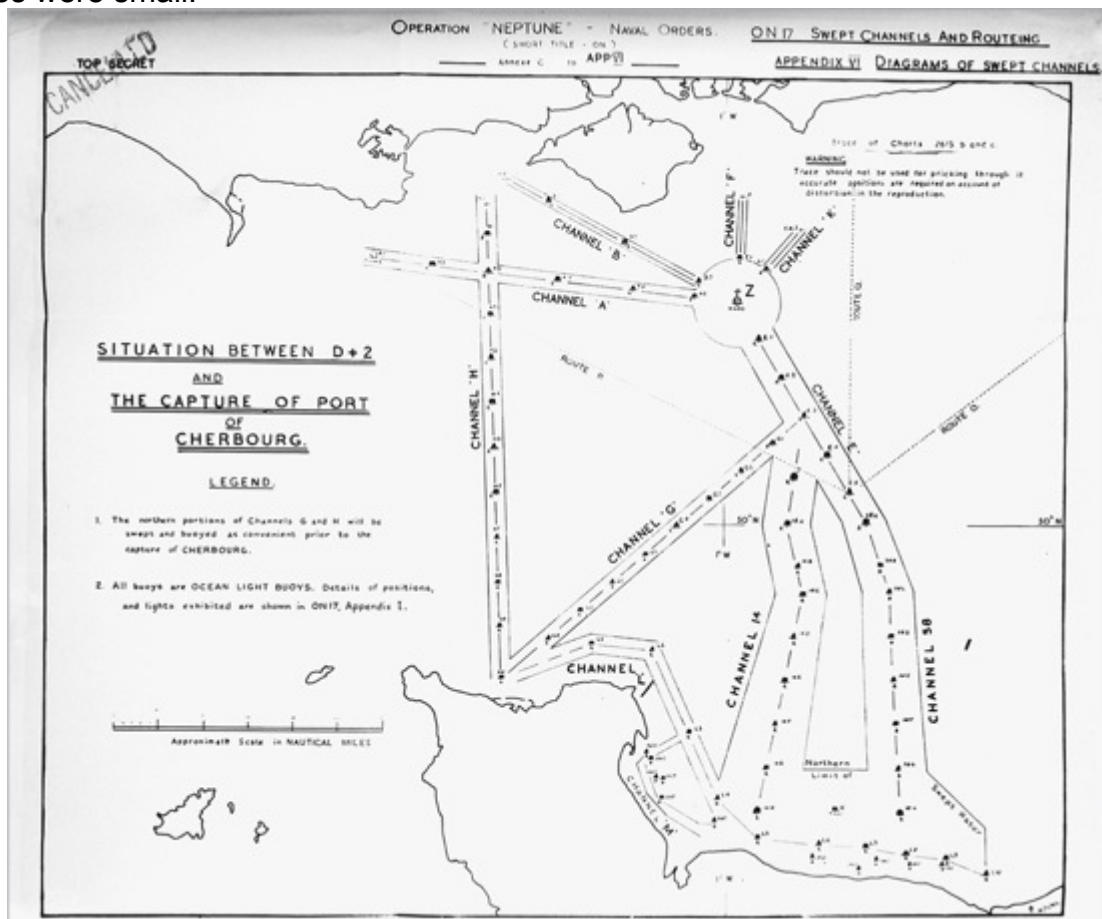
of Wight. The two cable ships each had a barrage balloon to deter air attacks. *Trentonian* took over command of the small group as senior officer. [6]



A hospital ship arriving at Portsmouth from Normandy.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Escorting the cable ships was one part of a secret plan and was given the highest priority. An underwater communications cable was to be laid from England to Normandy. This would allow rapid, secure communications to the invasion forces; radio messages could be intercepted, but the chance of the enemy tapping into underwater cables were small.



Original planning map of the invasion showing the situation by the end of the second day of the invasion. The map indicates the swept channels and navigation buoys along the channels.

Map credit: Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, box 83, file 81/520/1650, D-Day — Neptune Maps.

The second part of this operation was called PLUTO (Pipe Line Under The Ocean). This program intended to lay underwater fuel pipelines from England to France. The timeline and successful completion of both of these projects would shorten the war; unlimited fuel for the army to push forward and secure communications for planning operations would give the Allied forces a huge advantage.

By 0310, *Trentonian* had begun escorting the cable ships towards their destination. *St. Margaret* laid its cable first. The cable ships travelled at the slow speed of five knots while they carried out their work. *Trentonian* escorted them closely, circling at a distance of between five hundred and seven hundred yards.^[7]

The cable ships were not technically naval vessels, but they were operated by the British Admiralty. Only a few were available to maintain and provide communications links around the world, so protection of the cable ships was paramount and they often had their own escort assigned to them. They were manned by retired Royal Navy men, some considered too old to fight in this war, but who still wanted to do their part.^[8] *Norman* reported that its steering gear was disabled at 0420 and *Hugh Walpole* was detailed to take it in tow. *Dianthus* provided a close escort for the two ships while a tow line was passed between them and they rejoined *Trentonian* and the cable ships. Signalman Jack Harold commented, "This is more or less a dull job not fitting for a ship of war, spinning circles around this small collection of slow ships. Other corvettes have engaged the enemy and are doing the really important jobs of bringing the troop and merchant ships across."^[9]

Dianthus and *Hugh Walpole* with *Norman* in tow rejoined *Trentonian* at 1200^[10] and the group continued towards France.

St. Margaret extended its cable at 1315 and the job of securing the end of the cable to a buoy began.^[11] This is a difficult process that takes many hours. After *St. Margaret* secured the cable, *Monarch* was to pick it up and secure it in that ship's hold. While this went on, the two corvettes would perform close anti-submarine sweeps around them.

The tedium of the slow convoy was finally broken at 1340. Harrison later wrote in his report, "Bomb dropped by high-flying aircraft, one mile from cable ships."^[12] Word passed through the ship that three aircraft had been spotted nearby and the crew filtered on deck to watch. Signalman Jack Harold wrote of the event in his diary, This afternoon when I was on watch, three aircraft came in sight. They were reported to the bridge but little attention was paid to them. However it soon was. Suddenly there was a tremendous explosion and a huge geyser of water mushroomed up about a quarter mile on our port quarter and just ahead of a convoy of LST's which were proceeding serenely on their way to France. Then and not before were they identified as Focke Wulf FW190 aircraft and definitely not friendly. I'm damn glad that 500kg bomb didn't come any closer. I think in fact that two of them dropped bombs, both hitting simultaneously. However, right after them came about sixteen Spitfires and drove them off. We had no more trouble of that kind.^[13]



HMTS Monarch, a cable ship, in 1934. The cable ships laid and maintained undersea telephone and telegraph cables throughout the world and were a prize target of the enemy.

Photo courtesy of Porthcurno Telegraph Museum.

At 1600, *St. Margaret* had buoyed its end of the cable and *Monarch* began picking it up. *St. Margaret* and *Norman*, still in tow by *Hugh Walpole*, were sent back to Portsmouth under the close escort of *Dianthus*.^[14] This left *Trentonian* with *Monarch* for the final phase of the cable lay to France. *Monarch* remained motionless while its crew joined the cable. *Trentonian* served as a screen while this operation took place.^[15]

At 1645, *Trentonian*'s crew was called to action stations. A hydrophone effect that sounded like a torpedo moving left to right had been picked up. There were no surface craft on the bearing of the contact, and although asdic conditions were reported as very good, no echoes were heard that would indicate a submarine in the area.^[16]

Lieutenant Harrison ordered *Trentonian*'s speed increased to sixteen knots and streamed the CAT (Canadian Anti-Torpedo) gear. This was a metal device designed to create noise while being towed behind a ship. The German Navy had developed an acoustic torpedo that could home in on the engine noise; the CAT gear was an inexpensive and simple counter-measure — it made more noise than the engines and so would draw torpedoes to it.

Trentonian patrolled a line between *Monarch* and the contact. They dropped three depth charges set shallow in an attempt to gain a positive asdic contact, all to no effect.^[17] The hydrophone contact slowly faded and was eventually lost. After about thirty minutes, Harrison ordered the CAT gear hauled in, speed reduced, and the crew secured from action stations. *Trentonian* resumed its close escort of *Monarch*.^[18] *Monarch* finally began to move again at 2000, and the two ships once again made their way towards France. Harrison wrote in his report, "Cable joined, 'Monarch' proceeded with lay. After dark carried out circular patrol around 'Monarch,' distant about 700 yards, A/S listening watch. Responder Type 253 switched on. Heavy A.A. fire all around at various distances, also star shells."^[19]

At midnight, Harrison made another note in his report, "Picked up Hydrophone Effect on starboard beam, probably E-Boat. This contact was immediately engaged by four escort vessels that were passing, bound north, and was not heard again. Carrying out circular

screen around MONARCH, distant 500–700 yards, speed 11 knots. Star shell and tracer being fired all around the horizon.”[20]

Tensions were growing in *Trentonian*. The “dull and tedious” escort job that had gone on for twenty-one hours had provided the crew with several moments of true excitement. They’d made contact with the enemy in the air, on the water, and, possibly, underwater. The only contact not yet made was with shore batteries, and that possibility was growing as the ships approached the coast of France. Lieutenant Harrison ordered extra lookouts posted around the ship.[21]

The two ships were alone in the darkness, but hundreds of Allied ships were around them. There was a constant flow of traffic travelling to and from the invasion area. Protecting and patrolling the invasion were several destroyers, frigates, and motor torpedo boats, each assigned to a group and given a precise area to patrol for U-boats, enemy surface ships, and aircraft.

Near *Trentonian*’s position, a group of four American destroyers were on patrol. At 0100 the closest destroyer to *Trentonian* was USS *Plunkett*. Its commanding officer, W. Outerson, commander, USN, noted in their log:

Steaming as before. At about 0100 13 June this vessel was in Station 28 on the Dixie Line as a unit of the screen for the Western Area. At this time a good deal of activity was apparent to the northward and many star shells were observed in this area throughout the earlier part of the night. At about this time two targets were picked up bearing about north. Conversation on the TBS and TBL intercepted prior to this had led me to expect the appearance of our own forces in this sector and these targets were assumed to be friendly. [22]

At 0203, *Plunkett* heard a query by USS *Davis*, the destroyer next in line to it, raising some questions about the two radar contacts they had assumed friendly. A reply was given but the message was not heard in *Plunkett*. [23] This raised doubts for Outerson and, with the range between the two groups at nine thousand yards, the time for answers was shrinking.

Outerson ordered *Plunkett* to fire star shell over the two radar contacts at 0230. The range was now only 4,500 yards and closing rapidly. The ship’s log reports the star shell failed to work properly due to the close range. A second spread of star shell was fired about two minutes later, *Plunkett*’s skipper noted, “due to personnel error was fired too low and hit the water before illuminating.” [24]

At the same time, Harrison noted in *Trentonian*’s report, “Course of ‘Monarch’ approximately 190 degrees. Several destroyers having been seen on either bow at some distance, two or three star shells fired over cable ship and escort from an ahead bearing. ‘Trentonian’, at the time of illumination was crossing ‘Monarch’s’ bow, starboard to port.” [25]

With the range between the ships rapidly closing, *Plunkett* made another attempt to contact the two ships, this time flashing the minor warship challenge at the nearest ship. It is not known if *Monarch* received this signal. Unknown to the American destroyer, *Monarch*’s orders were to follow a lighted signal from shore and not respond to it. *Plunkett* was in the same location as the expected signal on the French coast.

Signalman Jack Harold believed the lighted signal from the beach was the same small ship signal flashed from *Plunkett*. [26] The signal was repeated three times, ten seconds apart, and after one minute with no response, *Plunkett* opened fire at three thousand yards. [27]

Harrison noted at 0235, “‘Trentonian’ on port quarter of ‘Monarch,’ distant approximately 600 yards. Firing commenced on a bearing of 160 degrees. No gun flashes were seen. Shells were heard, apparently close, afterwards passing between the two ships, then coming directly towards ‘Trentonian.’ All shots fired at or near ‘Trentonian’ were high, except two or three which struck the water ahead and one which passed between the

funnel and the pom-pom platform.”[28]

With no challenge from the nearby destroyers seen in *Trentonian*, it was thought the incoming fire was from a German shore battery engaging an Allied ship off the French coast. Some of the off duty crew were awoken by the sound of the incoming fire. They thought the ship was once again alongside one of the battleships and tried to go back to sleep.[29] Telegraphist Tom Farrell recalled, “I slept through the whole mess and was not aware of what had gone on till I lined up for breakfast and found a bunch of strange faces in line.”[30] Another crew member reported not knowing what had happened until he was awoken from his sleep and asked, “Do you have any clothes for the survivors?”[31]

Harrison ordered *Trentonian* closed up to action stations. Gun crews manned their guns, but all other men were ordered to remain inside the ship. Realizing his ship was being engaged by the American destroyer, Harrison refused to allow the gun crew to return fire. [32]

Harrison ordered the recognition lights to be flashed on and off. Aboard *Trentonian* it seemed as if the fire was then redirected solely at *Monarch*. As the shells started to smash into the cable ship, the sounds were overwhelming. The barrage balloon above the cable ship came crashing down on its decks; the whine of the shells was overpowered by the constant piercing shrill of *Monarch*’s steam whistle.[33]

Lieutenant Harrison ordered *Trentonian* turned broadside to show a better silhouette to the attacking ship, and reduced speed to eliminate any possible bow wave[34] in hopes of a friendly identification being made. The fire on *Monarch* appeared to switch back to *Trentonian*. Again the shells missed, spraying *Trentonian* with geysers of water. With the range now reduced to one thousand yards, Harrison was seen leaning out over the bridge railing, shaking his fist, and yelling, “Damn poor gunnery for such close range!”[35]

By now the signalman on *Trentonian*’s bridge was signalling Morse code to the American ship while the radio operators tried tell the American ship to cease fire.[36]

The range closed to six hundred yards. Harrison changed course to place *Trentonian* broadside between the two ships and ordered every light in the ship turned on and left on permanently.[37] As soon as the lights were observed, *Plunkett* ceased fire. Commander Outerson reported in *Plunkett*’s log, “After about a minute and a half or two minutes recognition lights were observed on the second vessel and fire was ceased.”[38]

Lieutenant Harrison noted in *Trentonian*’s report, “Fire slackened off and finally ceased about 0245.”[39] As the noise of the attack stopped, the deafening shrill of *Monarch*’s steam whistle carried on.

It was estimated that *Plunkett* fired approximately eighty rounds of five-inch ammunition at the two Allied ships. *Monarch* bore the brunt of the attack; *Trentonian* suffered several near misses and was undamaged.

Trentonian increased speed to thirteen knots and proceeded towards the damaged *Monarch*. The ship had to alter course and turn on its navigation lights to avoid a collision with the American destroyer that was closing rapidly with the cable layer.[40]



HMTS Monarch following the accidental attack by USS Plunkett on June 13, 1944. Monarch's bridge and upperworks were completely destroyed.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Still screening *Monarch*, at 0251 *Trentonian* stopped to lower its whaler to investigate lights in the water.^[41] Lieutenant Jack Macbeth, *Trentonian's* new navigating officer, was ordered to pick up the men who had been blown off the cable ship; the lights in the water were from their life jackets.^[42]

Monarch's whaler had been launched with survivors of the attack and made its way toward *Trentonian*. The whaler had been severely damaged in the attack and was sinking as rapidly as the boat's crew could row. *Trentonian's* crew desperately encouraged them on, but the whaler sank completely as it came alongside.^[43]

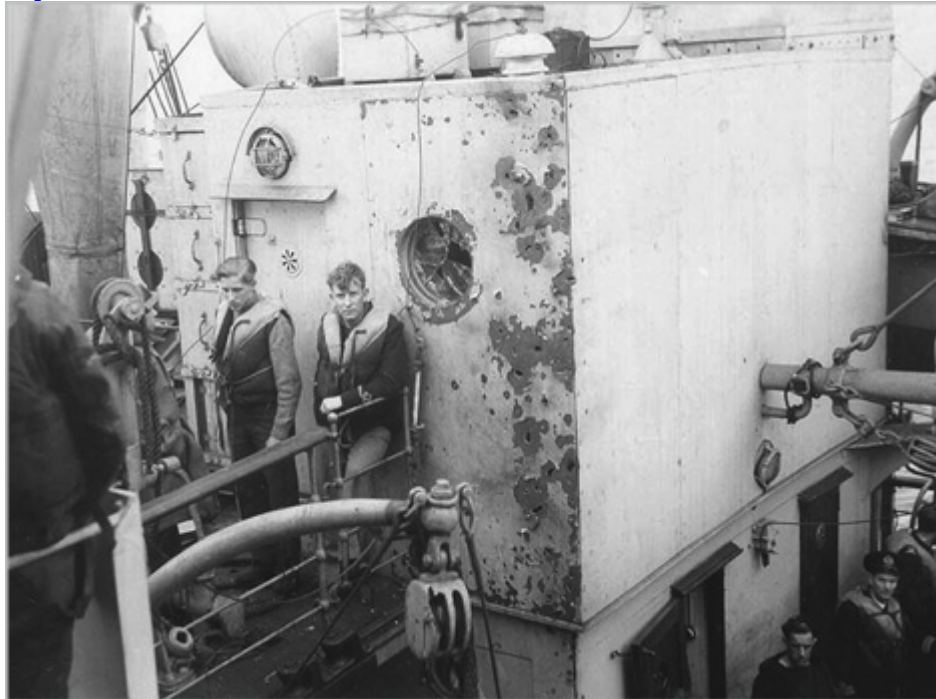


The damage to Monarch was extensive. The broken structure to the right of the photo is Monarch's bridge. The

communications cable was cut and lost into the Channel.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Lieutenant Macbeth was then ordered to take *Trentonian's* whaler to *Monarch* with a boarding party.^[44] When they arrived in the cable ship, they found it had been severely damaged and the whistle had been turned off. Two men, the first mate and one seaman, had been killed, and more than thirty were wounded, several seriously, including *Monarch's* master, Captain Troops. Most of the crew on the bridge had been killed or critically injured. Macbeth returned to *Trentonian* with three of the wounded.^[45]



Monarch's radio compartment, riddled with splinter damage.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

At 0335, *Trentonian* anchored near *Monarch*. The American destroyer sent a boat over to *Trentonian*.^[46] While its crew was refused entry, a young American ensign asked to see the captain and was escorted directly to Lt. Harrison on the bridge. Harrison acknowledged the young man with a nod and didn't speak while the ensign identified his ship as the American destroyer USS *Plunkett* and admitted they were the ones who had fired on *Trentonian*.^[47]

The young officer explained that his captain had challenged the two ships repeatedly and only opened fire when the challenge had not been returned^[48] — Commander Outerson had thought the two ships were German E-boats.^[49] Harrison stood, staring with silent rage at the American officer and allowed his XO, Lt. Kinsman, to ask the questions.

It did not take long for word to pass to the crew that this officer and the boat crew alongside were responsible for shooting at them. Several of *Trentonian's* crew lining the rails above the boat crew had to be physically restrained.^[50] as they were more than willing to bring the American sailors aboard to teach them a lesson they would never forget.

Once the American ensign left *Trentonian's* bridge and the boat was away, Harrison finally spoke. Witnesses on the bridge state he was full of rage, demanding a court martial, stating "how could they mistake us for E-boats, we are twice the size, the cable layer is even bigger, trigger happy, he's going to kill somebody...."^[51]

The group of ships was joined by a second American destroyer; USS *Davis* was next in the patrol line to *Plunkett*. *Davis* anchored in the area and sent its doctor over to

Monarch to join *Plunkett's* doctor and *Monarch's* own in caring for the wounded. Able Seaman Harold Salmon from Hamilton, Ontario, remembers the doctor from *Monarch* doing a tremendous amount of work among the wounded while seemingly impervious to his own bad back wound. He was also one of the "oldsters," with his age estimated in the seventies.[\[52\]](#)

Lieutenant Macbeth was sent back to *Monarch* with the whaler, a repair party, and two of *Monarch's* officers at 0345.[\[53\]](#) Macbeth returned to *Trentonian* an hour later and reported the damage to the cable ship. *Monarch* was seaworthy, but its steering gear and compass had been shattered.[\[54\]](#) The ship was listing crazily and the bridge had been ripped to shreds. The ship's funnel and hull looked as if a huge bomb had burst overtop.[\[55\]](#)

The all-important underwater communications cable had received a direct hit near the winch. The severed end of the cable had sunk to the bottom of the English Channel.[\[56\]](#) Damage control and repairs to *Monarch* continued through the early morning hours. Its wounded were treated, and one man was transferred into *Plunkett* for further care.

Plunkett's doctor reported,

At about 0450 on 13 June this ship received one casualty from British Merchant Ship "Monarch". Cummings, James, Quartermaster, RN, shrapnel wounds of the left arm and left upper and lower leg. Shock, and possible internal injuries. Treatment: Wounds cleaned, sulfanilamide powder sprinkled in wounds. Sterile dressings applied. Patient given 2 units (500cc) of blood plasma, 2.5 cc Tetanus Toxoid. Transferred to: 6-13-44 Patient transferred to HMS[sic] Corvette #368 for further transfer to hospital ship. Condition Serious.



Crew transferring Monarch's skipper, Captain Arthur Troops, to Trentonian with a critical head injury.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Trentonian made several attempts to obtain further medical assistance from hospital landing craft in the area without success.[\[57\]](#) Many of *Trentonian's* crew provided care for the wounded. Sick Bay Attendant Allen Singleton was mentioned as providing outstanding care for the wounded.[\[58\]](#)

As the sun rose, the extent of the damage to *Monarch* could be seen. Its superstructure was devastated; holes from shrapnel had pierced every part of the ship. The bridge had been completely destroyed and carried away. The standing rigging was smashed beyond repair, and everywhere the sight was of blood, wounded, and the dead.[\[59\]](#)



The body of Captain Eric Troops, Monarch's Skipper, transferred from Trentonian.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Just before 0700, USS *Plunkett* transferred five wounded to *Trentonian* and its doctor treated five wounded in *Trentonian*. USS *Plunkett* and USS *Davis* departed the area at 0712 and resumed their normal patrol.[\[60\]](#)

By 0724, *Trentonian* had weighed anchor and made fast to *Monarch*. The uninjured and slightly injured crew were returned to the cable ship. A total of ten seriously wounded men were transferred into *Trentonian*,[\[61\]](#) including Captain Troops, who was unconscious from a severe head injury and not expected to survive.[\[62\]](#) He was placed in Lt. Harrison's day cabin on the main deck and made as comfortable as possible. He remained under the constant care of *Monarch*'s doctor and SBA Singleton.

At 0810, *Trentonian* slipped its lines from *Monarch* and the two ships started to Portsmouth.[\[63\]](#) *Monarch* was now under the command of its third officer, as all other senior officers were either dead or critically wounded. The cable ship had to be steered by hand and was somewhat wild, but was able to move under its own power.[\[64\]](#)



*Three men were killed and thirty wounded, ten seriously, from *Monarch's* crew.*

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

As feared, after a twelve-hour battle for his life, *Monarch's* master, Captain Arthur Eric Troops, died of his wounds at 1400.[65]

Monarch signaled *Trentonian* at 1430 that the ship was taking on water.[66] The weather was deteriorating and the wind and sea was picking up, making *Monarch* difficult to control and the crossing of the Channel more uncomfortable for the wounded.[67] An hour later *Monarch* reported that the water was under control.[68] By 1600, the two ships were off Nab Tower, near Selsey, waiting for a tug to arrive.[69] The tug arrived and secured to *Monarch* by 1630. *Trentonian* came alongside, took off all the wounded from *Monarch*, and sailed directly for Portsmouth at 1700.[70] The stricken cable ship was taken in tow and was eventually beached in Portsmouth to have the damage assessed.

Trentonian arrived in Portsmouth at 1755 and secured alongside Pitch House Jetty.[71] A long line of military ambulances were waiting for them, along with doctors and nurses.[72] First to leave the ship was the body of Captain Troops. He was gently carried across *Trentonian's* gangway and placed in a waiting ambulance. Those crew members not detailed to assist the wounded lined *Trentonian's* rails watching the sombre activities on the jetty. The ship's mascot, A.B. O'Brian, joined his shipmates at the gangway.

All the wounded had been removed from the ship by 2000, and *Trentonian* cleared Pitch House Jetty and anchored in a remote section of Portsmouth Harbour.[73] Several dignitaries, "stuffed shirts" as described by the crew, boarded *Trentonian*. The crew was gathered together, and in no uncertain terms they were told to keep their mouths shut and not discuss this incident with anyone.[74] Incident reports were filed, but the court martial that Harrison had demanded never took place; the entire event was kept secret.

The death notices sent to the families of the men killed in the attack had no details of the circumstances. Captain Troops's family had no knowledge of the events of his death until they contacted the author of this book in 2002. This tragedy was first reported publically in Canada on December 19, 1953, when an article appeared in the *Ottawa Journal* written by reporter Jack Macbeth, who had been the navigating officer in *Trentonian* nine years earlier.

Signalman Jack Harold wrote his final entry in his diary for the day. "We are now anchored in Area 7, near Cowes on the Isle of Wight. I actually got a glimpse of some women when we were at the Jetty! It is the first time the ship had been tied up instead of anchored since the 23rd of last month, three weeks ago. As yet I haven't set foot ashore in England." [\[75\]](#)



*The crew of Trentonian gathers around the gangway after the wounded had been moved ashore.
Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.*

8: Invasion Operations

There has been very little activity — a few depth charges dropped, a few star shells fired at suspicious radar pips and we saw a destroyer bombed and a pilotless aircraft shot down. Apart from that nothing has occurred in our area.

— Able Seaman Jack Harold, RCNVR, signalman, HMCS *Trentonian*

The crew of *Trentonian* was once again confined to ship. Anchored in port, they were close enough to see and smell the land, but too far to step ashore. They used this brief stand-down time to resupply and clean the ship. There was also time for some much needed rest — with *Trentonian*'s operations so close to the enemy, the crew had been working continuous sea watches of four hours on and four hours off watch. Safely in harbour now, that schedule was relaxed.

Even the ship's mascot, A.B. O'Brian, did not attempt to jump ship while they were secured to the jetty. The little dog had truly become a full member of the crew. For many of the younger sailors in the ship, O'Brian was a simple and powerful attachment to home.

Personal hygiene, however, had become a bit difficult; the machinery for producing fresh water was again not working and therefore water was at a premium. Water use was again prioritized; the boilers and engines had the highest priority, followed by cooking, then toilets. Hygiene was last.

While in harbour, *Trentonian* received a welcomed addition to its crew in the form of Surgeon Lt. G.P. West, Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (RNVR). *Trentonian* now had its own doctor.[\[1\]](#)

On June 15, Harrison received orders for *Trentonian* to proceed to Selsey to meet with a convoy. Along the way, they were to take on fuel from the tanker SS *Teakwood*.[\[2\]](#)

Trentonian secured alongside the large tanker and fuelling operations commenced. A large, six-inch hose was passed from *Teakwood* to the much smaller *Trentonian* and secured to the standpipe. Fuel was then pumped from the tanker's holds to the corvette's fuel tanks. The ship's fuel was very thick and had to be warmed to allow it to flow through the pipes.[\[3\]](#) During fuelling operations, smoking was not permitted.

The entire operation was routine for the crew, and a group of sailors was detailed to stay with the hose and standpipe to ensure all went smoothly. A small party remained on the bridge, as *Trentonian* was to depart the tanker as soon as fuelling was completed. The ship's mascot, A.B. O'Brian, was in his usual place on the bridge as well.[\[4\]](#)

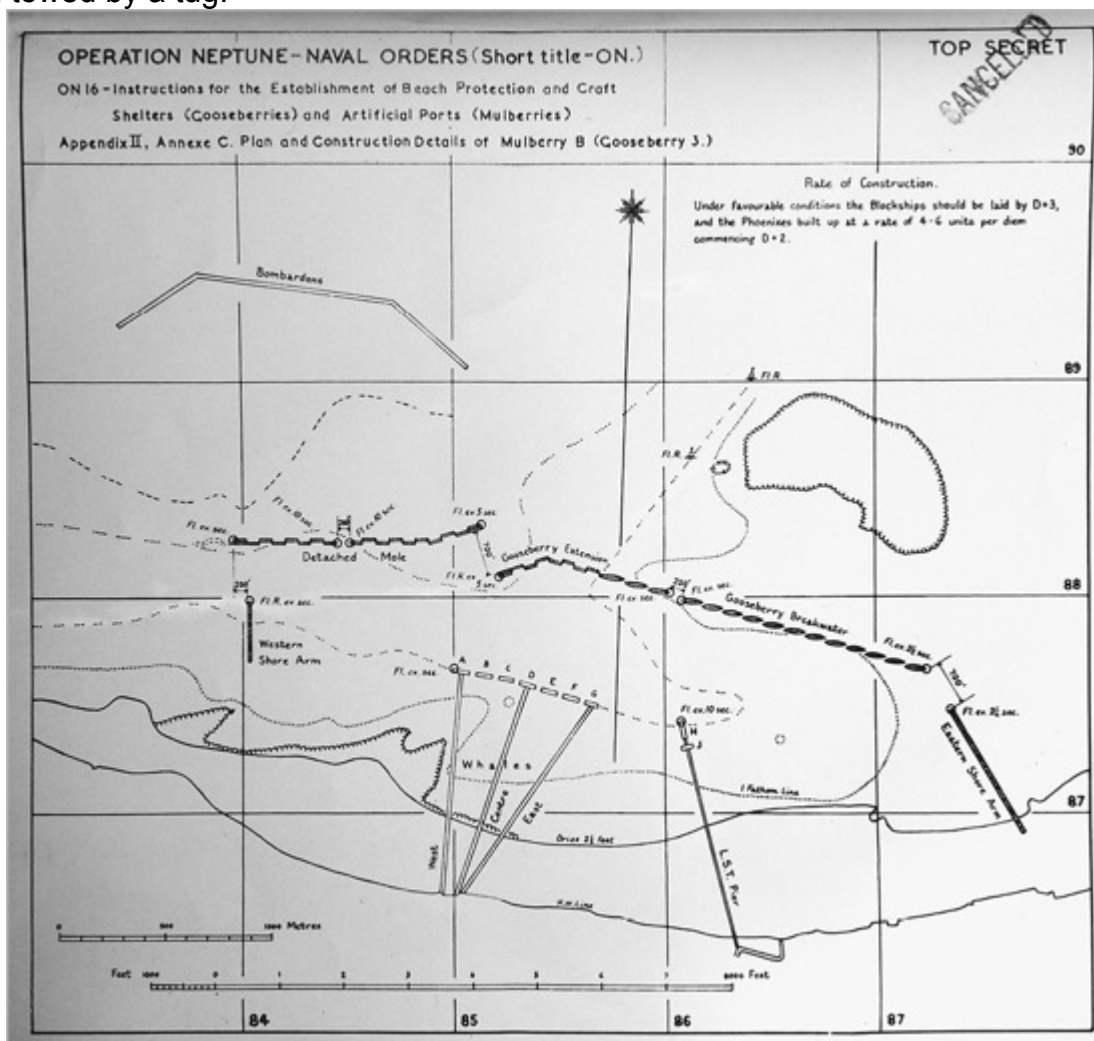
While *Trentonian* was alongside the tanker, a group of American destroyers came through the area at speed. This created a very large wake that hit *Teakwood* and *Trentonian*. The oiler was several times larger than the corvette and so was not affected, but *Trentonian* was tossed about. This caused the fuel hose to rub between the two ships and burst. Hot bunker fuel sprayed from the broken end of the hose and covered *Trentonian*'s bridge, asdic hut, and upperworks as far back as its funnel.[\[5\]](#)

The three sailors stationed on *Trentonian*'s bridge dove for cover, but not before they and O'Brian were covered in the heavy fuel. The ship's decks and ladders were now treacherous with the slick fuel covering every surface.[\[6\]](#)

With no fresh water available, the three men were given sea water and solvent to clean themselves and O'Brian. Signalman Jack Harold was one of the three men, and states, "No matter how hard we scrubbed the oil went into our pores and stayed for days."[\[7\]](#) This second hardship caused by Americans to *Trentonian* did not improve the attitude of the men towards their allies. The ship was cleaned and sailed to Selsey, anchoring in the area at 2047.[\[8\]](#)

By 2210, *Trentonian*'s convoy was formed up. They left Selsey and proceeded towards France.[\[9\]](#) The convoy consisted of large, floating concrete blocks of various sizes,

each towed by a tug.



Original planning map of the proposed construction of Mulberry B off Gold Beach in the British sector at Arromanches. Trentonian was assigned escort duties to bring the prefabricated pieces of the Mulberry to Normandy.

Map credit: Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, box 83, file 81/520/1650, D-Day — Neptune Maps.

Part of the plans for Overlord was the construction of two artificial harbours off the invasion area. The harbours were needed to land troops, supplies, equipment, and material. It was decided in the early planning stages of Overlord that to attack and capture a port would be too costly in lives and time, as any port would be heavily defended. And even if the attack was successful and the port was captured, the facilities would likely be destroyed either during the attack or by the enemy in retreat, rendering it useless for several months.

The two harbours were to be the size of the Port of Dover and needed to be operational by three days after D-Day. They were located at the American Omaha beachhead, codenamed Mulberry A, and at the British Gold Beachhead, codenamed Mulberry B. Once under construction Mulberry B became known as Golden Arrow, referring to Gold Beach at Arromanches.

This was an undertaking of daunting proportions. What would normally take years to construct needed to be built and operating in three days — and it had to be done in two separate locations at the same time. The solution to this problem was planning, prefabrication, staging, and, above all else, secrecy. All of the elements used to construct the Mulberry harbours were built in England and designed for ease of transport and rapid assembly.

The artificial harbours were designed to be built in stages on a strict timetable. The first

operation was the delivery and construction of the five Goosberry breakwaters at each of the beachheads. This was *Trentonian's* duty when she arrived off Normandy in the early hours of June 7 with its CornCob convoys.

The breakwaters were then reinforced with large concrete caissons, codenamed Phoenixes. The Phoenixes were constructed in England and then sunk in various harbours and bays to hide them from the Germans. When needed, they were refloated and towed to the beachhead to be sunk again. There were six sizes of caissons, ranging from two to six thousand tons.

Outside of the Goosberry breakwaters were long floating breakwaters called Bombardons. Constructed of steel and two hundred feet long, these were towed across the Channel, joined together, and then anchored outside of the Mulberry harbours. The Bombardons formed a deep-water anchorage outside of the Mulberry harbour. Within the Mulberry harbour, the facilities consisted of two areas, a long LST pier with a ramp at the end for the landing ships to secure and unload cargo, and a spot for ships to unload cargo directly onto a pier. This consisted of a series of large floating pontoons, codenamed Spud Pierheads. Each was two hundred feet long and sixty feet wide, and had four legs that could be extended below the pontoon and secured to the seabed, allowing the pontoon to float freely with tide and waves.

The Spuds were joined to the beach by three long floating bridge sections called Whales. The Whales floated on a series of small pontoons called Beetles. Each Beetle was anchored to the seabed with a newly designed Kite anchor.

Trentonian arrived off the invasion area at 0900 on June 16 with its convoy of Phoenixes in tow.[\[10\]](#) This was the first time the crew had been back to Normandy since leaving the beachhead on June 8. Activity in the invasion area was intense, the army had moved inland, but men, material, and supplies were still being moved ashore. *Trentonian* discharged its convoy and quickly returned to Selsey. Three more times over the next two days they escorted convoys of Mulberry tows to France to aid in construction of the harbours. After the fourth convoy arrived off the beachhead at 1310 on June 19, Harrison was ordered to Portsmouth[\[11\]](#) to take on fuel.[\[12\]](#)



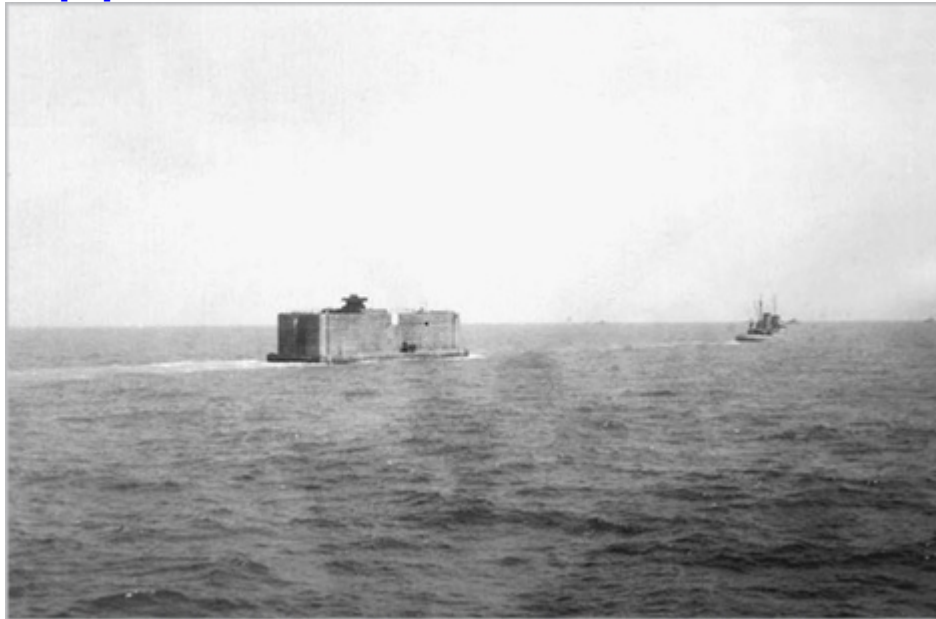
With such a large number of vessels operating, Juno Beach was marked with a lightship to aid in the safe navigation of the shipping traffic. Artist Marc Magee used this photo for the scene on the left side of his painting.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Trentonian anchored in Portsmouth just after 2000[\[13\]](#) and the crew was able to stand down and get a short rest. Rumours started to circulate through the ship concerning the order to fuel. *Trentonian* still had 84 percent of its fuel left from the previous fuelling.

An order to top up could only mean one thing; they were being sent somewhere else. That place was subject to much debate. With the success of the invasion and the number and variety of ships in harbour with them, they speculated the Allies must be opening another front in addition to Normandy. Popular thought amongst the crew was that they were going to Norway. [14]

Surgeon Lt. West had time to survey the sick bay and all the medical equipment. SBA Singleton had kept it well-organized and stocked for the procedures he was capable of performing, but equipment was not available for a doctor's work. It fell to West to re-equip and organize the sick bay for more advanced medical procedures. He ordered medicines, instruments for minor surgery, plasma, saline, and the apparatus for its administration. [15]



The Mulberry harbours were reinforced with large floating cement caissons, codenamed Phoenixes. Prefabricated in the United Kingdom, each had to be towed to Normandy and then sunk in place.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

The night of June 19 turned out to be a difficult one for the entire Allied operation in the English Channel. A major storm hit and lasted three days. The artificial harbours were designed to resist the worst possible summer storm, but this storm had the strength of the worst winter storms to hit the English Channel. Mulberry A at the American Omaha beach was completely destroyed. Mulberry B was also damaged, though it was still operational. It was decided to abandon Mulberry A and reinforce Golden Arrow at Arromanches.

Trentonian and its crew rode out the storm in the protected anchorage of Portsmouth. Signalman Jack Harold took a few minutes to write up the events of his last few days in his diary:

We are now at anchor back in Portsmouth after seven trips across the Channel altogether. In the past six days we have been operating out of Selsey, escorting convoys of Whales and Phoenix roadways across to France. There has been very little activity — a few depth charges dropped, a few star shells fired at suspicious radar pips and we saw a destroyer bombed and a pilotless aircraft shot down. Apart from that nothing has occurred in our area. Ashore, the Canadians and Americans and others are still pushing steadily onwards but progress is slow.

This had been a very busy time for the crew. In the past four days they had escorted six convoys between England and France, once again standing continuous sea watches of four hours on watch and four hours off. The rumour of a new front opening in Norway was met with excitement and conjecture, but another rumour going through the ship

was met with frustration — again, there would be no shore leave for the men. Since the refuelling incident, the men had noticed that AB O'Brian had been becoming fatigued and was not his usual lively self. This was followed by vomiting and a fit of nastiness, barking, growling, and snapping. O'Brian was getting sick.[\[16\]](#) *Trentonian* rode out the storm for the next two days. On June 22, the weather started to clear and the rumour of going to Norway was proven wrong. Late that night, at 2235, *Trentonian* sailed for St. Helen's Roads, where they anchored an hour later[\[17\]](#) and waited for their next invasion convoy. During the night AB O'Brian had a seizure. His keeper, Arthur Slater, had to use the heavy asbestos gloves he used to change the hot gun barrels to control the dog. AB O'Brian was now losing weight and was sleeping more.[\[18\]](#) At 0500 on June 23, *Trentonian* escorted a coastal convoy into the English Channel. They returned to Portsmouth at 0847.[\[19\]](#) Portsmouth was crowded; every space that could hold a ship was utilized. While making their way through the harbour, the crew noted that *Alberni*, a corvette they had worked alongside several times out of Halifax and in the United Kingdom, was anchored in the yacht club basin and surrounded by yachts. Harrison's personality included a light-hearted side; he knew *Alberni's* skipper well and they were old friends. Able Seaman George Hayward was stationed on *Trentonian's* bridge and remembers Harrison signalled *Alberni*, "When did you join the yacht club?" *Alberni* did not reply.[\[20\]](#)

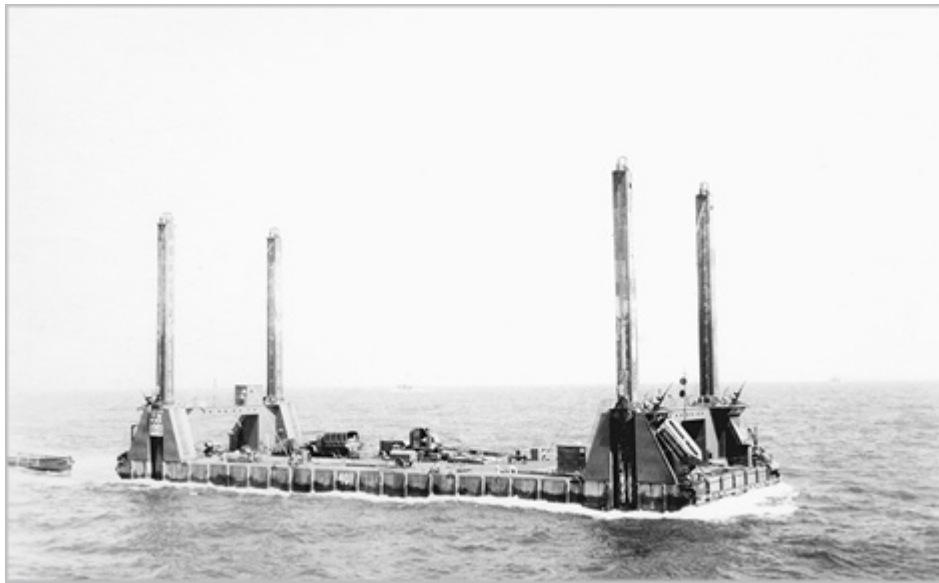


HMS Belfast off Normandy in June 1944. Belfast has been preserved and now rests as a museum ship in London, England.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

Trentonian departed Portsmouth at 1900 on the twenty-third and headed to Selsey where it joined a convoy of Mulberry tows at 2330 and proceeded to escort the convoy to France.[\[21\]](#)

The ship's beloved mascot's condition continued to deteriorate; the men speculated that his illness must be a result of the fuel spill. On this trip across the Channel, he had a massive seizure. AB O'Brian died shortly after.[\[22\]](#)



Part of the Mulberry Harbour known as a Spud Pierhead.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

The passing of O'Brian hit the crew hard. The little dog had voluntarily joined their ship when they first arrived in British waters and had been a constant amongst the crew, always there, always playful, and a constant reminder of joy, happiness, and above all else, home.

The crew gathered together. The hammock that had been made for him to sleep in was brought up with AB O'Brian's body delicately sewn in, a round from the aft gun was placed at his feet. A few words were said and then his keeper, Arthur Slater, carried the tiny bundle to the railing. AB O'Brian was buried at sea.[\[23\]](#)

Trentonian arrived off the French coast at 1238 on June 24 with its latest convoy and then returned to Portsmouth, arriving there at 2148.[\[24\]](#) Once again, word was passed through the ship that there would be no shore leave. Some of the men blamed the skipper while others blamed the stuffed shirts that came aboard after the friendly fire incident with the Americans. Several of the crew remarked that they swore the crew to secrecy and now they were making sure the crew keep quiet by not letting them ashore. They weren't even allowed to be secured to a jetty — they were again at a distant anchorage. The men in *Trentonian* had not stepped ashore for leave since May 22 in Londonderry. During that time they were continually employed in operations in support of the invasion.

A party was planned for the next day to blow off steam, but also to let the skipper and the officer's know they needed a break.[\[25\]](#) After much discussion it was decided to hold a wedding. The crew set aside their rum rations in preparation.

The party began after the noon grog issue on June 26. Able Seaman Stan Bennett of Conception Bay, Newfoundland, was selected as the bride and given a mop for a wig. Able Seaman Jim Rickard from Port Arthur, Ontario, was the groom.[\[26\]](#) Officiating over the ceremony as parson was Acting Petty Officer Ray Lounsbury from Vancouver, British Columbia. The ring bearer was Able Seaman Wilfred Thompson, also from Vancouver.



Trentonian's crew blows off some steam with a mock wedding. Reading from the good book of seamanship, LS Raymond Lounsbury in the black toque acts as Padre, AB Jim Rickard is the groom with his back facing the camera, the mop top bride was AB Stan Bennett, and the ring bearer is AB Wilfred Thompson.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Tom Farrell.

Nearly the entire crew turned out for the festivities, while the officers watched from the bridge. Parson Lounsbury read the service from the good book of seamanship.^[27] After the ceremony was complete, pictures of the bride and groom were taken and the entire off duty crew sat down to enjoy two days of grog issue. Several of the men fondly remember the *beginning* of this party.

At 0155 on June 27, *Trentonian* sailed out of Portsmouth Harbour. The ship joined its next convoy of Mulberry tows in the English Channel and escorted them to France. They delivered the convoy safely to Arromanches at 1625 and returned to Portsmouth by 2254 the same day.

On June 28, there was cause for true celebration; Harrison announced that shore leave was to commence, with half the crew going ashore that night with the remaining men to go ashore the next night. The party had achieved its desired effect.^[28]

In short order the dress uniforms were out, cleaned, polished, and the men ready to go ashore. This being their first shore leave in England, the men couldn't wait to get off the ship. As soon as they were cleared to leave, the men were down the gangway and off into Portsmouth.

The men on duty remained in *Trentonian*, standing their watches and waiting for the men on leave to return. With so many days at sea, it was expected that the men would blow off some steam. This was confirmed when two crewmen returned under escort and in handcuffs.

The authorities explained to the officer-of-the-watch that the two had been celebrating with enthusiasm and had attempted to take a trolley for a drive. They were quite intoxicated when they were picked up by the shore patrol. Taking pity on the sailors, the patrol took the men to the local hospital to sleep it off, at which point the crewmen took exception to the doctor performing his examination. The sailors grabbed the doctor's hammer and forcibly tried to check his reflexes. When the two sailors tried to head for the door, they became sidetracked with a little nurse chasing.^[29]

The officer-of-the-watch took charge of the two men. The handcuffs were returned to the shore patrol and the men were taken below to sleep it off. Both men were charged

with disorderly conduct and would stand before the skipper on defaulter's parade in the morning.

The overindulgence of shore leave was not restricted to the ratings. Later that night two officers returned to the ship staggering along the jetty. On arriving, the two gentlemen had reached the polite stage of inebriation and stood at the foot of the gangway discussing who should go first, "After you. No Sir, after you." Once the decision was made, the two officers started to climb the gangway and promptly toppled over the rail together into the water below. They were immediately fished out of the water by the duty watch and the now drastically sober officers were ushered to their cabins.[\[30\]](#)

More good news came to the ship from the English Channel on June 29. *Huron* and HMS *Eskimo* had attacked and sunk two German ships off the Channel Islands.[\[31\]](#) This increased the mood of the men readying themselves for their turn to go ashore. Also included in the news: the French port of Cherbourg had been surrendered to the Allies.



On completion of the formal ceremony, the celebration began with shredded newspaper to be thrown in place of rice.

Photo credit: SBA A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

The two ratings brought to the ship the night before were paraded before Lt. Harrison for morning defaulters. With caps in hand, the two remorseful ratings marched up to the skipper and the charge was read. Feeling the effects of their indulgence, the men expressed their regret for the evening activities. Harrison showed his compassion and willingness to protect his men; he dismissed the charges, justifying their exuberance to youth and just having fun after a long period of continuous work.[\[32\]](#)

In the morning mail was a message for Harrison. *Trentonian* had been operating overseas since early May and they were now eligible to sell duty-free items in the canteen.[\[33\]](#)

Included with this message were orders for Harrison to make steam and get underway. The much anticipated shore leave for the remaining men was cancelled and *Trentonian* sailed for Dungeness, near the Strait of Dover, at 1338.[\[34\]](#)

Trentonian's operations from Portsmouth where now concluded. The ship was to continue support of the invasion from a new port and would be based from Sheerness in the Thames Estuary. This placed *Trentonian* in the heart of what had become the most dangerous place in the world for ships, the Strait of Dover.

9: Buzz Bombs and Shore Leave

We have just had a short spell in port and all the crew had two days leave which the majority chose to spend dodging “Buzz Bombs” in London. Previous to that nobody had been off the ship for 42 days, since 22nd of May, so the break did a lot of good.

— Lt. W.E. Harrison, RCNVR, Commanding Officer, HMCS *Trentonian*

During the war the Strait of Dover was considered the most dangerous place to be. It is the closest point of land between England and the French coast and was heavily defended on both sides with aircraft and shore batteries. The Germans placed some of their largest guns within easy range of the Strait and fired on any ship that ventured into these hotly contested waters.

As *Trentonian* approached the cliffs of Dover, one of the German's new secret weapons, the V1 rocket, passed near their position. The V1 rockets, or Buzz Bombs, were a real threat to the Allies. They were faster than a fighter plane and, so, difficult to shoot down. The initial counter-measure to them was to shoot everything at it and hope you hit. This created a problem as all those rounds of ammunition came back to earth and showered steel wherever they fell.

Signalman Jack Harold was on *Trentonian's* bridge when the sighting was made. Later he made the following entry in his diary,

Last night, the other half of us, including myself were to get ashore. Instead we were ordered to raise steam and proceed to Dungeness, about 15 miles from Dover. On our way there I saw my first pilotless flying bomb or V1 as the Jerry's call them. Contrary to popular belief, these fiendish machines are driven by rocket power. We heard this one before we saw it, a deep throaty snarl echoing back from the high chalk cliffs of Beachy Head. It was above the clouds and was crossing our bows from port to starboard. Suddenly it shot into sight going like a bat out of hell for the English coast, with two very determined looking Spitfires on its tail. I leapt to my telescope, focused it on the bomb, and then announced my discovery that it was rocket propelled to everyone on the bridge in general. I was immediately set upon by the Captain, the Jimmy, Straw and others. “No rocket ever sounded like that. They make more of a swish. That is the flame from where the Spits shot at it and hit it.” However I stuck to my opinion and later basked in my glory of being right. As I watched the “thing,” the two Spits opened fire on it with all they had. Suddenly it twisted over on its back and went into a long steep plunge. It hit the water with a flash and a column of water that suggested the crack of doomsday. When the mass of water subsided, I waited for the concussion, timing it with the sweep second hand on my watch. When the sound of the explosion came it was deafening, even at a distance that I computed to be about three miles. The Spitfires swooped triumphantly over the spot where their prey had vanished and then resumed their patrol.^[1]

Able Seaman George Hayward recalls being on duty on *Trentonian's* bridge when they received a signal from shore, “You are not, repeat not, to open fire on flying bombs.”

The message was passed to the skipper. Harrison, with a straight face, calmly told the signalman to reply, “Ask them if we can drop depth charges.”^[2] *Trentonian* arrived at Dungeness at 2050 and anchored, waiting for its convoy. At 0100 on June 30 the ship left with its convoy en route to France.^[3]

Harrison filed his monthly report along with a letter of monthly expenditure of ammunition. During the month of June 1944, *Trentonian* had used four rounds of four-inch star shell and four fuses, three depth charges, three primers, three detonators, and three depth charge pistols. They had also used sixty rounds of twenty-millimetre shells for the oerlikons.^[4]

Trentonian anchored off Arromanches just after noon on July 1, 1944, and discharged

the convoy of Mulberry tows. *Trentonian* joined HMS *Buttercup*, a Flower-class corvette, and the two ships started back across the English Channel at 1748 towards Portsmouth.[\[5\]](#)

Just before midnight they left *Buttercup* near Nab Tower off Selsey and joined *Calgary* just after 0200 on July 2. The two ships then proceeded through the Strait of Dover towards Nore, near Sheerness.[\[6\]](#)



LS Gordon Harley, AB Arthur Slater, and AB Stan Bennett, *Trentonian*'s aft two-pounder pom-pom gun crew. The men painted the names of their girlfriends on the inside of the gun shield.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

Around 1310, *Trentonian* left *Calgary* and proceeded to join *Prescott*.[\[7\]](#) The ship met *Prescott* and a convoy of Mulberry tows at 1920 and proceeded to France.[\[8\]](#) Twenty minutes later, *Trentonian* had to detach from the convoy.[\[9\]](#) Ordinary Seaman Robert Cathrine of Windsor, Ontario,[\[10\]](#) had developed a medical problem that was beyond the care the ship's doctor[\[11\]](#) and needed to be hospitalized immediately. The ship headed to New Haven at speed.

Trentonian rejoined *Prescott* and the convoy at 2300 that night and continued towards France.[\[12\]](#) After leaving the convoy off the Juno Beach Light Vessel at 1310, they headed back across the Channel on July 3.[\[13\]](#)

The two ships arrived in Sheerness at 0610 on July 4.[\[14\]](#) As *Trentonian* docked alongside *Prescott*, the two ships banged together, knocking off a ventilator intake and tearing off a length of *Prescott*'s railing. To the amazement of *Trentonian*'s crew, instead of being upset, *Prescott*'s crew were quite pleased.[\[15\]](#) They suggested *Trentonian* back up and take another run at their ship; they were quite willing to have their entire port side stoved in.

Apparently, *Prescott*'s skipper had been trying to speed up a refit for his ship. Routinely he would set depth charges shallow, knocking the ship with each explosion, loosening the hull plates, causing the pumps to run continuously to keep the water out of the tiller flats.[\[16\]](#)



HMCS Trentonian, freshly painted in July 1944. The davits have been swung out and the ships whaler lowered.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Surgeon Lt. West left the ship and was replaced by a Canadian doctor, Surgeon Lt. R. Gourlay, RCNVR.^[17] Dr. Gourlay noted the condition of the sick bay when he reported to the ship, "When I joined the ship I found the sick bay inadequately equipped with medicines, instruments for minor surgery, and completely lacking in plasma and saline and the apparatus for its administration."^[18] The equipment that Surgeon Lt. West had ordered had not yet arrived.

Trentonian moved to the basin in Sheerness for boiler cleaning on July 5.^[19] The process laid up the ship for five days, during which time the crew cleaned the ship and made minor repairs.

Trentonian had been in continuous operations since arriving in the United Kingdom and had not been painted since Halifax. Once again, *Trentonian* was looking quite shabby so the crew was turned out for "chipping and scraping" and painting duty. This time, an entirely new camouflage scheme was given to *Trentonian*. A large, dark grey wave was painted on an angle from the bow past the funnel and the pendent numbers were made black, outlined in white. Everything below the wave was medium grey while the top structures above were light grey.

Only half the crew was required to perform these tasks, so an extended shore leave was given. The men that had leave in Portsmouth on June 28 were to remain in *Trentonian* while the other half of the ship's company were given two days' leave — their first in forty-five days. Many of the men spent their leave in London.

London gave the men an opportunity to get away from the ship, eat in a restaurant, have a beer in the pubs, and explore many of the sites that the city had to offer. They also enjoyed the opportunity to sleep in a bed, not a hammock swinging from the deckhead.



While on leave, the crew took in the sights of London. SBA A. Singleton snapped these photos of Buckingham Palace and the magnificent fountain at Victoria's Memorial.

Photo credits: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

For most of the men, their primary memory of leave in London was not what they had looked forward too, but what they saw, heard, and experienced. The damage and carnage from the Buzz Bombs hitting the city is forever etched in their memory. AB Jack Harold wrote in his diary:

The other day I had the good fortune to get to London and was amazed at the damage done by these "harmless" flying bombs. They have a peculiar effect. There is hardly any crater made, but the blast seems to shake all the insides out of the buildings leaving the walls practically intact. There were many of these hollow shells, with their floors and roofs all lying in the basements. In the pubs I managed to glean a few stories from the London citizens. Two of the most prominent in my mind are the following. I was talking to a Royal Artillery man one night and he said that one of his main theories on the antics of these infernal machines was contrary to the idea that they dive and explode as soon as their motors cut out, they will sometimes cut out and dive, then start up again and fly

around some more. He said he saw one cut out then [continue] on again and fly in a circle four times before it finally crashed and exploded, killing three people and injuring a score more. Another tale I heard came from the lips of a middle aged baggage checker at the Beaver Club, just off Trafalgar Square. It was about one o'clock in the morning and I was getting my attaché case and exchanging a few pleasantries with him. Suddenly the sirens commenced their spine chilling wail. Their moan had hardly died away when I could feel rather than hear the snarling throb of a V1 almost overhead. I looked at the checker and thought he was going to pass out. He was pale and perspiration stood out on his forehead and his hand shook so he almost dropped my check stub. After the bomb had passed beyond earshot I got his story from him. The Sunday before, he was preparing to leave the house to go to church when the alert sounded. He heard no sounds from overhead however, so he opened the door and stepped out onto the front steps. Next thing he knew, he was lying over on the next lawn on his back, with nothing on but the sleeves of his suit coat. His injuries fortunately were superficial and the day I was talking to him he was completely recovered except for an understandable deathly fear of the V1 's distinctive and unmistakable roar.[20]

The first group of men started to return to the ship from shore leave on July 7 and, just as quickly, the second half of the crew left for their turn ashore. There must have been some unwelcome excitement on return from shore leave as one of the crew was sent for a few extra days of unwanted leave — to the senior naval officer in Selsey for punishment.[21]

Lieutenant Harrison used this time to catch up on the administrative operations of his ship and filed a complete nominal list of the crew.[22]

The remainder of *Trentonian's* men returned to the ship on July 9, and boiler cleaning, maintenance, and repairs were completed. *Trentonian* moved from the basin and secured to a buoy in the harbour at 1515 on July 10.

On July 11, Lt. Harrison updated the citizens of Trenton in a letter to Miss Farley.

Thanks for your letter of the 1st of June which I just received. Also a parcel of records arrived today in very good condition. We have now got a gramophone or rather a radiogram which is connected up with five loud speakers in different parts of the ship, so everyone gets the benefit of either broadcast or records. So far we have had rather a scarcity of records and the same thing came over and over again, but now we shall have lots of variety. I must congratulate whoever chose the records. I have just been looking through them and all the sailors favorites are there. I can hear "Waltzing Matilda" now as I write. This evening we will broadcast them through the loudspeaker on the mast so the ships alongside will get the benefit. The Victrola has not yet turned up but it will probably arrive sometime.

We have just had a short spell in port and all the crew had two days leave which the majority chose to spend dodging "buzz bombs" in London. Previous to that nobody had been off the ship for 42 days, since 22nd of May, so the break did a lot of good.

As you probably know, we took part in the invasion of Normandy and although it wasn't as exciting as we expected it to be, there was great deal of hard work attached to it and to subsequent operations which are not of course yet finished. The censors have very kindly told us that we can divulge the fact of being connected with the invasion and I think full advantage has been taken of the lifting of this restriction, so you have probably heard some highly coloured tales which would perhaps conflict with our rather monotonous recollections.

Our mail is still very scrappy some letters come in a couple of weeks and others take five or six weeks. However, I suppose we're lucky to be getting so much. When the North African business was taking place, we didn't get any mail in the Mediterranean for about three months. This has been a big improvement.

Please tell the Grade X pupils how much we appreciate the records. They are really

very popular already although they haven't all been tried yet. Thanking you all.[\[23\]](#)



AB Jack Harold in Trafalgar Square in London.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Jack Harold.

On the morning of July 13, *Trentonian* sailed across the Thames Estuary, arriving at Southend at 1140 to await its next convoy.[\[24\]](#) This next escort was a coastal convoy, and *Trentonian* left Southend with it at 2030, passing through the Strait of Dover en route to Spithead off the Isle of Wright near Portsmouth.[\[25\]](#) A common practice by the escort ships was to attempt to conceal the convoys from the German shore batteries. Stoker Sydney Coates recollects, "The Germans had what they called 'Big Berthas.' These were guns on the coast of France and they would shoot at our convoys with

these Big Berthas. Consequently, we would go ahead of the convoy and lay a smoke screen in front of the convoy so at least they were unable to see us.”[26] *Trentonian* arrived off Spithead with the convoy at 0400 on the morning of July 15. The ship remained at anchor the rest of the day and most of the next. Some of the crew were able to get ashore in Portsmouth. When they returned to the ship, they informed the rest of the crew of seeing several buildings that had been destroyed by Buzz Bombs since their last visit.[27]

At 2245 on July 16, *Trentonian* headed to its rendezvous with its next convoy. They reached it at 0200 on July 17. Once again this was a three-knot convoy of Mulberry tows destined for the French coast.[28] AB Jack Harold summed up the tedium and routine felt by the crew when he noted in his diary, “We are dropping our anchor off the French coast after having completed our twelfth voyage across the channel with those dammed cement blocks. God knows how long this will go on.”[29] *Trentonian* arrived with its convoy off Arromanches at 1947 that night.[30]

Trentonian remained at anchor off the French coast overnight. At 0755 on July 18, they joined *Baddeck* and a Royal Navy corvette, HMS *Abella*, to escort convoy FTM 41 to Southend (FTM was the designation for convoys originating in Seine Bay, France, going to Southend).[31] The convoy consisted of nine new liberty ships. The liberty ships were capable of travelling at a fast speed, a welcome relief from all the slow convoys *Trentonian* had been escorting. The addition of two more escorts also provided the opportunity to be more aggressive when an asdic contact was made.



Damage from the V-1 rockets during the Blitz in London.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

During this trip, several asdic contacts were made. Signalman Jack Harold commented, "On our return trip from France to England, we had a convoy of nine-knot liberty ships, a divine blessing after those cursed three-knot tows. During the afternoon and evening we had a few good pings, but only investigated two of them. We dropped one depth charge on each and a small oil slick came up. However, it was decided that they were only submerged wrecks. These quite often give off a very metallic- and sub-like ping, and exude oil if attacked with charges."[\[32\]](#)

Trentonian, *Baddeck*, and HMS *Abella* arrived with FTM 41 at 1040 on the morning of July 19 with no further asdic contacts.

Trentonian and *Baddeck* returned to Sheerness and secured alongside each other. Camaraderie among the crews could always be found; sailors often found an old shipmate, classmate, friend from home, or sometimes a cousin or relative serving in the other ships. Signalman Jack Harold found an old friend in *Baddeck*, "We were alongside *Baddeck* in Sheerness and I was talking to a Sig. (Signalman) who had been in my class in '42 . He said they had carried out four hedgehog attacks in the channel and they have been here no longer than we. One would almost be led to believe that our Old Man doesn't give a damn if he gets his other half ring or not. Lord

knows he's due for it." [33] *Baddeck* had carried out several hedgehog attacks and had engaged several German E-boats on June 13, the same night *Trentonian* had been shot at by the Americans.

There was a personnel change for the officers on July 20. The navigating officer, Lt. Macbeth, who had been temporarily appointed to *Trentonian*, was transferred to join the fast motor torpedo boats of the Twenty-ninth Canadian Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) flotilla. Lieutenant Ralph P. Abbott of Oakville, Ontario, was appointed as the new navigating officer. [34]

Trentonian sailed for Southend at 1330 on July 21 and arrived an hour later to wait for its next convoy. During the night several flying bombs were heard overhead. [35]

Trentonian was joined by *Calgary* as senior officer and the two ships escorted a convoy of coastal ships and Mulberry tows away from Southend the next day. [36] The trip was slow and tedious but provided some excitement for the crew. Signalman Jack Harold documented the events that occurred early in the morning of July 23 while in the Strait of Dover in his diary:

Last night we sailed out of the Thames Estuary with an extremely slow convoy of two cement blocks and a few LCT's and coasters. During the night a few flying bombs passed over, but the shore batteries have recently developed a technique in dealing with these menaces, and very few of them are getting far inland. This morning however an air of excitement reigned for a while. During a ten minute period about half an hour ago, six V1's passed overhead in the direction of the mainland. The shore batteries (heavy 3.7 ") opened up on them as soon as they got in range, which means they were directly above us. One of their shells scored a direct hit on a bomb and it exploded with a deafening roar and flash that could be seen for miles up and down the south English coast. We were ordered not to venture on the upper deck without a helmet on. Such a warning as this, of course, brought us all up on deck to see what was going on. A number of us were standing on the after boat deck when suddenly a loud purring shriek told us that a shell from one of the shore guns was approaching a little closer than we thought was necessary. In fact it passed over the engine room hatch, not fifteen feet from where we stood and exploded in the water about fifty yards on our port beam, shooting a column of water high in the air. Most of us who had been lured up on deck by the thought of seeing some fun, scampered below and were gone almost before the shell exploded. It was soon followed by another, which passed over at almost the same spot, and which led us to believe those crazy kippers were attempting to shoot the maple leaf off our funnel. That was the last one to bother us and we are now out of range of those goofs at Dover. (That is where we were when the above incident took place.) [37]

Later that afternoon, *Trentonian* gained another asdic contact and Harrison ordered a depth charge attack. Signalman Jack Harold noted the event and his personal feelings about the results:

The action station bells clamored loudly for us to close up. We did so. Another ping. Another depth charge. Damn it, I think the old man and the A/S Officer must be buying all the depth charges themselves on this tanker. I'm getting pretty sick of this one charge business. Anyone with a sense of grey matter can see that one charge instead of starting any Doppler effect as they seem to think it will, will merely cause the U-boat to bottom and shut everything off until we go away.

Dropping one depth charge was a common practice. If the asdic had a weak or undetermined contact, the escort would drop the charge in the area of the contact to stir up the water with the intent of gaining a stronger asdic contact. The asdic signal could be masked by different water conditions including layers of cold water. Usually the asdic contact was lost when the disturbance from the depth charge settled.

Trentonian and *Calgary* delivered the convoy to the French coast at Arromanches at

1740 on July 24. The two ships returned to Sheerness at 1350 on July 25. The next few days were spent in harbour and leave was once again given.

On July 27, Lt. Harrison sent a request that an Officers Selection Board be convened for Signalman Jack Harold.^[38] Harrison had watched this man's performance since he joined the ship in Quebec City and recognized in him the potential of becoming an officer. The skipper had previously sent Harold over to *Kitchener* in early March for what Harold had thought a short assistance assignment. In fact, he was being observed for potential selection as an officer.

Mail arrived for the crew and Leading Seaman William Jacobs from Ottawa, Ontario, received a disturbing letter from home. His wife had become seriously ill. He approached the skipper and Harrison sent an immediate request for Jacobs to be assigned to any ship returning to Canada for compassionate reasons.^[39]

The sick bay material ordered by Surgeon Lt. West in June finally arrived. Surgeon Lt. Goarlay stocked the sick bay and remarked, "This order adequately stocked the sick bay in medicines, instruments for minor surgery, and plasma for serious casualties. Some major surgery could be done with the equipment on hand if the necessity ever arose. With all this equipment certain alterations in the sick bay became necessary." A defect list was tendered and changes were to be performed at the next boiler cleaning.^[40]

Even with a doctor in the ship, dental care was very difficult, as dental units were not easily accessible, causing any sailor with a tooth problem to suffer until it became unbearable. On July 28, *Trentonian's* doctor had to send one of the men to HMS *Wildfire* for extraction of all his teeth. Following the procedure, the sailor was sent to the Canadian Manning Depot *Niobe* as unfit for sea duty.^[41]

Harrison took advantage of the few days reprieve to update the citizens of Trenton with the progress of their ship in a letter to Miss Farley:

Your airgraph letter arrived on board today. I note that the electric washing machine has been forwarded to Halifax. The procuring of this machine was indeed a praiseworthy achievement on your part and on the part of all that helped.

I only hope that when it is received, that the entire ship's company will be truly appreciative of the value of the gift and of the work and trouble you and the other good "Trentonian's" have had in order to procure it for them. They are still getting the most out of the records and as I mentioned in my last letter the selection was inspired as all are popular. I imagine the gramophone and washing machine will be held in Halifax until our return, on account of their bulk. It is hoped that our return is not too far distant but as yet we have no idea of when it will be. The ship's company are having a much easier time now and a good deal of shore leave. Practically all of them have braved the "doodlebugs" and made a trip to London.

Lieutenant Parrè is, I believe out of hospital now and convalescing up in Scotland. I think his leg is going to be quite alright, but he was rather annoyed at missing the invasion.

I am glad to hear that our ship's company made an impression in Londonderry that travelled back as far as Trenton. Although they haven't had a great deal of opportunity to prove their worth in any great fashion, they have worked very hard so far and have become very efficient.

The weather here is very pleasant at this time of year and although we have no 92° of temperature it has been quite warm today. I'm afraid that when the winter comes it will be another matter. The ship hasn't been tossed about since we came over here so we will all have to get our "sea legs" anew.

Here's hoping that you are still enjoying your holiday and not working too hard in the garden.^[42]

Trentonian departed Sheerness at 1355 on July 30 for the one-hour voyage to

Southend. They departed for France after 2000 that night with a coastal convoy and Mulberry tows.[\[43\]](#)

This trip to France was not without incident. *Trentonian* was fired on again, this time from the big German rail guns on the occupied French coast. Harrison ordered his ship to lay a smoke screen to conceal the convoy.[\[44\]](#) None of the shells found their intended target and the convoy passed through the Strait of Dover unmolested.[\[45\]](#) For the crew, the attack provided a sense of relief and a bit of fun. They had been strafed by Spitfires from the Royal Air Force during working up exercises for the invasion, attacked by the United States Navy off the invasion area after D-Day, and shelled by the British Army in the English Channel. It was about time the Germans took a few shots at them!

Trentonian arrived off the Juno Light Vessel at 1928 on August 1 and discharged the convoy before heading back towards England.[\[46\]](#)



Trentonian takes in tow these two drifting fuel barges while in the Strait of Dover.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

At 0135 on August 2, *Trentonian* picked up its next convoy at Piccadilly Circus, the mid-Channel rendezvous point, and escorted them to France. They arrived off St. Laurent at 1648. Once again, the convoy was left off the coast and *Trentonian* headed northward.[\[47\]](#)

That night, at 2241, *Trentonian* received orders to search for an aircraft that had crashed into the Channel. Harrison ordered the ship's course changed and they arrived in the area within twenty minutes. They commenced an expanding box search of the location.[\[48\]](#) The klaxon alarm sounded, clearing lower decks; the men lined the rails, all eyes hoping to see some sign of life in the darkness.

Early on August 3, *Trentonian* was joined by HMS *Pytchley* a Hunt-class destroyer escort. *Pytchley* took charge of the search as senior officer and the two ships continued searching for the crew of the missing aircraft until the search was abandoned at 0147.[\[49\]](#) No sign of the aircraft or the crew was found.

The crew stood down and returned to normal watches and *Trentonian* resumed its course northward. Passing through the Strait of Dover and arriving at Sheerness at 1325 in the afternoon.

The crew were given a twenty-two hour stand down to rest and resupply their ship before sailing from Sheerness at 1530 on August 4. They crossed the Thames Estuary and anchored four hours later at Southend-on-Sea to await their next convoy.[\[50\]](#)

While waiting for their convoy, one of *Trentonian*'s crew suddenly became very ill, with sharp pains in his lower right side of his abdomen. Surgeon Lt. Gourlay examined Able Seaman Weldon Runtz from Arnprior, Ontario, and found him to be having a severe appendicitis attack. Runtz was immediately transferred to hospital at the Westcliff Sick Quarters.[\[51\]](#)

With the medical emergency over, *Trentonian* departed Southend at 2015, escorting a coastal convoy towards Dover.[\[52\]](#)

The next morning, August 5, 1944, *Trentonian* found an abandoned barge in the Channel and took it in tow.[\[53\]](#) Manoeuvring *Trentonian* to the drifting barge proved difficult and time-consuming. Once secured to the barge, the crew realized they were sitting inside a mine field. Stoker Bruce Keir recalls that the crew was closed up and everyone posted on lookout. One of the petty officers came around and handed out rifles. Bruce had a rifle thrust in his hands and was instructed, "Don't shoot anything until ordered!" This was the first time he had held a rifle since basic training.

As the ship started to move with the barge in tow, the entire crew watched as one mine slowly passed down the length of the ship. The mine was too close to detonate with gun fire, since the resulting explosion would have severely damaged the ship. Once clear of the mine field, normal operations returned.[\[54\]](#)

By 0900, the convoy was off Dover and the barge was given to tugs there. *Trentonian* also detached a floating dock that had been taking on water from the convoy and sent it for repairs.[\[55\]](#)

Trentonian and its convoy passed through the Strait of Dover without incident. At 0215 on August 6, the ship came across another drifting barge and once again manoeuvred to take the barge in tow. This time the operation went smoothly as no mine field was present.[\[56\]](#)

Trentonian anchored off Spithead on the Isle of Wight at 0715, after detaching its convoy to Plymouth.[\[57\]](#) With less than twelve hours rest, *Trentonian* departed at 0625 on August 7 with HMS *Lark*, a modified Black Swan-class sloop, and proceeded to Plymouth.[\[58\]](#)

Trentonian's trip to Plymouth marked the end of its invasion operations. The focus of the convoys was changing from support of the invasion to support of operations in France. This had been an exceptionally busy period for the ship and crew. They had escorted more than twenty-two convoys in just over eight weeks. They had been fired on by friend and foe and had not lost a single ship under their escort. The crew had undergone extended periods of continuous employment, with little or no rest and minimal shore leave.

During this period of intense activity, *Trentonian* earned the Battle Honour, Normandy 1944.

10: Post-Invasion Operations

I am glad to hear that our ship's company made an impression in Londonderry that travelled back as far as Trenton. Although they haven't had a great deal of opportunity to prove their worth in any great fashion, they have worked very hard so far and have become very efficient.

— Lt. W.E. Harrison, RCNVR, Commanding Officer, HMCS *Trentonian*
Trentonian and *Lark* arrived in Plymouth and anchored at 1640 on August 7, 1944, and waited just over an hour for their convoy. Their orders were to escort a coastal convoy to the west, up the coast to Milford Haven.^[1]

Trentonian had not been in these waters since the end of May when they had escorted the CornCob convoy to Normandy for the invasion. The waterways were busy, with convoys proceeding up and down the coast. From Plymouth, *Trentonian* passed Lizard Point, referred to as "the Lizard," then round Land's End before turning north and following the Cornwall coast. They then crossed the Bristol Channel and arrived at Milford Haven.

This was still a dangerous area to operate in; German U-boats and mines were a constant danger. The channels were marked and close attention was paid to navigation. Mines had been laid by the Allies to restrict the U-boats from operating freely along the coast and the Germans had laid mines in the channels to attack the Allied shipping.

Trentonian arrived safely with its convoy in Milford Haven at 1645 on August 8.^[2] This was to be its home port, as *Trentonian* was assigned to the Forty-first Escort Group. After the ship was fuelled and provisioned, the crew was given leave.

Surgeon Lt. Gourlay reported to Harrison that he had some concerns over fresh provisions for the crew. He said that it was difficult to get fresh fruit and vegetables and particularly a source of safe, fresh milk. He noted, "I advise strongly against the purchasing of fresh milk in Milford Haven, for although it is pasteurized, it is distributed in a most unsafe, unsanitary manner."^[3]

The next morning brought news of an action the night before. *Regina* had been sunk during the night off the coast of Cornwall. Thirty of its crew had been killed and many more wounded.

Despite the successful invasion, the threats to the Allied convoys were still as real and dangerous as they had been earlier in the war. Though no longer based in the Channel, *Trentonian* was still escorting convoys along the Cornwall coast, through the English Channel, and to France. The potential for an attack from U-boats or enemy aircraft was present along the entire route. Closer to France the threat of E-boats increased and mines laid by aircraft, E-boats, or submarines could sink a ship without warning.

The format of the convoys changed at this time. In the days following the invasion, larger convoys transporting huge quantities of material were needed. Now that the invasion was complete, smaller convoys arriving at regular intervals were required to support operations in France. The designations of the convoys were changed; convoys sailing from the area of the Bristol Channel were designated EBC (Bristol Channel to the Beaches) and return convoys were FBC (Beaches to Bristol Channel). Convoys sailing from the Thames Estuary were designated ETC (Thames Estuary to the Beaches) and return convoys were FTC (Beaches to Thames Estuary).^[4]

To accommodate the new needs, convoys consisted of smaller numbers of merchant ships, between ten and twenty, with an escort of only one or sometimes two corvettes. The job of the escort was to get the convoy to the destination; the protection of the convoys was left to the escort groups made up of frigates and destroyers. If a U-boat was known to be in the area, the escort groups would move in to hunt the submarine to exhaustion, allowing the convoy to move on to the intended destination.^[5]

This arrangement relegated *Trentonian* and the other escort corvettes to the status of

work horses, slugging back and forth from the beaches in Normandy to the various ports in the United Kingdom. All the while, the frigates and destroyers of the escort groups received the glory of the hunt.

After two days' rest, *Trentonian* sailed from Milford Haven at 0905 with thirty-seven merchant ships designated convoy EBC 68.[6] This being a large convoy, *Trentonian* was assisted by two old chummy ships, *Moose Jaw* and *Lunenburg*[7] ; *Trentonian* and *Moose Jaw* had escorted many convoys together, and *Lunenburg* was the first corvette Harrison commanded. This was the first Harrison had seen of his old ship. He studied *Lunenburg* closely and saw it looked very different since a refit that extended the ship's fo'c'sle.

The convoy arrived safely off Normandy at 1710 on August 12.[8] *Trentonian* anchored in the vicinity of HMS *Capetown*, an old C-class cruiser now used as a convoy control ship in the American sector. The next day, *Trentonian* and *Moose Jaw* departed Normandy with convoy FBC 53 at 1204.[9] The convoy consisted of twenty-six merchant ships bound for the Bristol Channel. They arrived safely on the morning of August 15 and *Trentonian* anchored in Milford Haven at 1025.[10]



Trentonian at anchor in Milford Haven, August 1944. Artist Marc Magee used this photo of the ship for his painting on the cover of the book.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Trentonian remained at anchor in Milford Haven for the next three days.[11] The crew was given time to pay some close attention to their ship and enjoy time ashore. News of an engagement on the night of August 14 reached the ship. *Iroquois*, as part of the Tenth Destroyer Flotilla, had engaged several German ships off La Rochelle in the Bay of Biscay, sinking a German minesweeper.[12]

Lieutenant Harrison had not yet received a reply from his enquiry for LS W. Jacobs, whose wife was seriously ill. Harrison sent another request for immediate compassionate leave to Canada for Jacobs while in Milford Haven.[13]

At 2100 on August 18, *Trentonian* moved to the harbour approaches and anchored to await its next assignment.[14] The next morning the convoy was formed up early and the ship departed at 0635 with convoy EBC 77.[15] The convoy consisted of eighteen merchant ships and assisting with the escort was the Free French corvette *Aconit*. They were to proceed to The Solent, an area of water separating the Isle of Wight from the mainland, where the convoy would be split.

Trentonian and *Aconit* arrived with the convoy at 1918 on August 21 and anchored near Spithead.^[16] They remained at anchor for the next twenty-four hours while thirteen ships were removed from the convoy and another twelve joined. More news of the war reached the ship. Several actions had taken place over the days *Trentonian* had been at sea. A Canadian escort group had sunk two German U-boats,^[17] but there was no celebration as news of the tragic loss of *Alberni* also came through. *Alberni* had been performing an anti-submarine sweep along the channels approaching Normandy. "Hands to dinner" had just been piped when, four minutes later, a torpedo slammed into her port side. The ship sank in twenty seconds, trapping most of her crew in the mess decks. Fifty-nine of *Alberni*'s crew were killed.^[18] The crews of *Trentonian* and *Alberni* had worked closely together since Bermuda and Harrison was a close friend of its skipper.

The convoy departed Spithead at 2207 on August 22 and continued to France with *Trentonian* as the sole escort.^[19] They arrived off the American sector of the French coast at 1300 on August 23 without incident.^[20]

Trentonian immediately turned around and sailed with convoy FBC 62 to the Bristol Channel.^[21] The convoy consisted of thirty-one merchant ships and *Trentonian* was again the sole escort. All arrived safely on August 25 and *Trentonian* anchored at Milford Haven at 1852.^[22]

A message was received concerning LS Jacobs's wife. It simply read, "W. Jacobs request for compassionate leave not recommended, wife fully recovered."^[23] There were no details of any sort, leaving the poor sailor still wondering what had happened. *Trentonian* was due for a boiler cleaning. The ship moved into the basin and secured to the fish processing docks on August 26 at 1105.^[24] They would remain at the fish dock for eleven days.

Dock space in Milford Haven was at a premium. Prime dock space was being used for supply ships, repairs, and, in *Trentonian*'s case, boiler cleaning. Despite the presence of warships, the fish docks were still in use by those they were intended for. Throughout the day the fishing boats would come alongside the dock just ahead of *Trentonian* and unload their cargos of fresh-caught fish.

The fish were gutted, cleaned, and their heads and tails removed on the dock before the meat was taken into the plant for processing. At the end of the day, the leftovers on the dock were simply shovelled into the water. Unfortunately for the crew of *Trentonian*, this was an unusually warm August. It did not take long for the entire ship to fill with the odour of dead and decomposing fish.

This is an instance where every crew member shares the exact same recollection of events. They all remark how delicious the fresh fish was when Harrison ordered the depth charge dropped on the school of fish off the Grand Banks. However, after this experience at the Milford Haven docks, fish was never again served in *Trentonian*.^[25] Despite the smell, work continued and the crew was turned out to clean ship and perform maintenance and minor repairs. Boiler cleaning provided an opportunity to bring the ship back to a high state of readiness.

One of the items on the defect list was the galley floor. Surgeon Lt. Gourlay had identified the smooth steel deck of the galley as a serious hazard to the cooks while in any sort of a sea, especially when the floor was wet or greasy. New suntax flooring was installed over the bare steel deck. The size of the ventilation fans was increased as the doctor had noted that ventilation was inadequate and circulation of fresh air was insufficient; the galley atmosphere was both unhealthy and unpleasant during the warmer months of the year.^[26]

Also on the defect list was the ventilation fan for the engine room. It was found to be too small and in constant need of repair; even when operating properly, it could not provide enough cool air for the men working in the hot space of the engine room to be safe.^[27]

Time was also given to make the ship's appearance presentable again. The paint they had used in July had been of an inferior quality and much of it had been washed away by the salt and the sea. Rust stains were showing all over the hull, making the ship look quite old. The men were again turned out to chip and scrape and lay on a new coat. The ship's camouflage was changed to a "false hull" pattern; overall a light grey, with a medium grey smaller hull shape painted on the sides. The camouflage was designed to give the appearance of a smaller ship.



*A work party, with a Maple Leaf fan, from *Trentonian* takes a break during boiler cleaning in Milford Haven.*

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

Harrison knew that all work and no play would not bring his crew to a high degree of readiness, so the opportunity to give extended leave was taken. Half the crew were rotated through several days of leave. Once again, some took the train to London to enjoy the sights and sounds that the city had to offer. Others visited family and relatives in England, and some stayed closer to the ship and explored Milford Haven.

Radar Artificer Joe Gosskie from Birnie, Manitoba, found a way to enjoy extra shore leave. His shipmate, Colin Harvey, from Seal Cove, Nova Scotia, was married. Joe described his friend as "living on Halifax time"; he had no interest in going ashore. So Joe would give Harvey five pounds in exchange for his shore leave.[\[28\]](#)

September 1, 1944, brought good news for one of *Trentonian's* crew. Harrison's request to have Signalmen Jack Harold become an officer had been accepted and Harold was to commence officer training at King's College in Halifax. The soon-to-be-ex-signalsman was transferred to the Canadian manning depot *Niobe*, in Scotland, to await return to Canada.[\[29\]](#)

Not all shore leave ended with fun and celebration. On occasion, problems would arise, not always due to the actions or fault of the crew. The community would welcome and respect the visiting sailors, but on occasion they would come across an individual who would take advantage of a man who had enjoyed his leave a little too much. This was evident on September 4 when Able Seaman D.J. Sinnott returned to the ship with a broken nose and a deep laceration. He was admitted to St. Albans Military Hospital for treatment.[\[30\]](#)

Trentonian completed boiler cleaning on the morning of September 5 and was moved to the degaussing range at 0800.[\[31\]](#) Degaussing is the process of reducing the

amount of magnetism in the ship's metal hull. The procedure was complete by 1115 and the ship was moved out to the harbour and secured to a buoy.[32]

This move got *Trentonian* away from the fish dock, but it would take some time for the foul odour to air out of the ship — some of the crew feared the smell of rotting fish would never leave.

September 6 was spent getting *Trentonian* cleaned and resupplying the ship for active duty.

Harrison received orders on September 7 to sail for The Mumbles, south of Swansea, on the north side of the Bristol Channel. *Trentonian* slipped from its mooring at 1625 and anchored in Mumbles Roads at 2045[33] to await their next convoy. That was EBC 97, sailing from Swansea to Normandy with twenty-two merchant ships. *Trentonian* was joined by its sister corvette, *Summerside* and the convoy formed up and departed Mumbles Roads at 1200 on September 8.[34]

While in the English Channel on September 9, *Trentonian* was detached from the convoy,[35] leaving *Summerside* to escort the merchant ships to Normandy. The ship joined convoy FBC 76, already en route from Normandy to Swansea. FBC 76 consisted of twenty-four merchant ships under the escort of the Royal Navy corvette HMS *Petunia*. *Trentonian* arrived in Swansea with its portion of the convoy at 1302 on September 10 and berthed at the South dock.[36]

Trentonian was rarely secured to a dock, and when it was, the ship wasn't alone. This time was no exception; two other ships were secured alongside the dock with it, and *Trentonian* was the outermost ship. Harrison took advantage of being secured to the dock and granted shore leave.



AB Robert Powell and LS John Founier assist a "sick" friend from Moose Jaw back to his ship.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Some of the men, knowing their shipmates left behind on duty would not get ashore, took it upon themselves to ensure those left in the ship would be able to enjoy this brief time in port. On the way back from leave, a keg of beer was "liberated" from the back of one of the local pubs. The metal keg was unceremoniously rolled along the cobblestone road to the ship; the noise drew a great crowd of men to the rails of the three ships. The sailors watched as the keg was rolled up the gangway and across the first and second ships to *Trentonian*'s deck. Without losing a moment, a fire axe was brought out and the steel barrel broached. It was at this point they realized they should have given the beer a chance to settle from the long roll to the ship. As beer sprayed about

the ship, the men responded to the emergency as quickly as if action stations had been sounded. They grabbed buckets, mess tins, and anything else that would carry liquid. The frothy beer was quickly distributed between the men of the three ships. With a total of almost three hundred men, no one sailor had enough beer to get drunk, but all agreed it was a great time had by all.

Once drained of the precious liquid, the keg was pushed over the side. The single hole was not enough to sink the evidence and the barrel remained floating alongside *Trentonian*. The irate owner of the pub showed up at the ship with the local authorities demanding compensation for the liberated keg. Lieutenant Stephen, as officer-of-the-day, greeted the authorities. Somehow he had not seen or heard the keg's arrival, nor the festivities that had occurred aboard the ship. But there was no denying the evidence floating alongside. After investigation, each man in the three ships was fined three shillings to make compensation to the owner of the pub. Most of the men agreed this was a small price to pay for an enjoyable evening.[\[37\]](#)

The ship did not stay alongside for long. Less than twelve hours later, *Trentonian* departed south dock and anchored at Mumbles Roads in the early hours of September 11[\[38\]](#) to meet with its next convoy. This was EBC 100, a smaller convoy of thirteen ships consisting of merchant ships from several nations, including Britain, the United States, Poland, Holland, and Norway. Assisting *Trentonian* was the Free French corvette *Renoncule*. This truly multi-national convoy departed at 0730.[\[39\]](#)

On the morning of September 12, while the convoy was rounding Land's End and turning into the English Channel, two drifting oil barges were spotted off Wolf Rock. *Trentonian* detached from the convoy at 0800 to take the barges in tow.[\[40\]](#) It towed the barges to Falmouth, arriving at 2040, and, once clear, departed immediately to join convoy FBC 79.[\[41\]](#)

Trentonian joined FBC 79 at 0300 on September 13.[\[42\]](#) The convoy was made up of twelve merchant ships already escorted by *Summerside*. The convoy arrived at The Mumbles near Swansea at 1140.[\[43\]](#) Wasting no time, Harrison departed ten minutes later for Milford Haven. *Trentonian* arrived in its home port at 1906 and secured to a buoy in the harbour.[\[44\]](#) *Summerside* was slated to return to Canada on September 17 for refit; its crew began preparations to depart the United Kingdom.[\[45\]](#)

After seven days of continuous work, the crew had twenty-three hours of rest. During this time the ship was restocked and the usual "hands to cleaning stations" and maintenance duties occurred.

At 2015 on September 14, *Trentonian* slipped from the mooring buoy and proceeded to Dale Roads, east of Milford Haven, anchoring there forty-five minutes later to wait for its next convoy,[\[46\]](#) EBC 104. This consisted of eighteen merchant ships, and *Trentonian* was joined by *Moose Jaw* to share the escorting duties. The convoy departed at 0730 the morning of September 15.[\[47\]](#)

Rounding Land's End, the convoy and escorts proceeded into the English Channel, and *Moose Jaw* was detached to escort a convoy back to the Bristol Channel. *Trentonian* escorted EBC 104 to Normandy and anchored off the control ship HMS *Capetown* in the Western Area on September 17 at 1730.[\[48\]](#)

Able Seaman George Hayward recalls that once anchored he was on duty as quartermaster. His post was above the galley and the cooks were preparing supper. The smell coming up from the galley made him hungry, but he would have to wait until after his watch was over for supper. Hayward called down to the cooks and asked if they would pass up a sandwich to hold him over. He had just taken a bite of the second half of his sandwich when the officer-of-the-watch came on deck. Seeing Hayward eating on duty, he instructed the sailor to "get rid of it." Hayward stuffed the remaining sandwich into his mouth and swallowed. The officer then informed Hayward he was now on charge.

The next morning, AB Hayward appeared before the executive officer for defaulters; the charge was read out, "Direct Refusal of an Order." Lieutenant Kinsman gave Hayward an opportunity to speak on his own behalf, to which the sailor replied, "He told me to get rid of the sandwich and I did — I ate it." Naturally, getting rid of it meant throwing the sandwich over the side for the fishes.

During defaulters, the coxswain acts on behalf of the ratings. Chief Petty Officer Roberts spoke up on Hayward's behalf, "If the lieutenant wanted AB Hayward to throw the sandwich over the side, he should have stated it in his order. Hayward did exactly as he was ordered; he got rid of the sandwich."

Upon hearing all arguments, Lt. Kinsman dismissed the charge.[\[49\]](#)

Trentonian remained anchored off the French coast until late morning. The ship departed with convoy FBC 86 at 1100 on September 18[\[50\]](#), the sole escort of nine merchant ships bound for the Bristol Channel. The trip was uneventful and the convoy arrived at Milford Haven on September 20. *Trentonian* secured to a buoy in the harbour at 1145.[\[51\]](#) The ship remained in the harbour for the next two nights, giving the crew time for a run ashore.

While in harbour, an order was given that many of the crew were not looking forward to: it was time for everyone to receive vaccinations. War comes hand-in-hand with pestilence and disease, and with the armies working their way inland and the opening of French ports, there was no longer a barrier of water to protect the men from the diseases from the continent. Surgeon Lt. Gourlay had the entire crew formed up for "Needle's Parade." Some of the men tried to avoid the duty given them, but eventually the entire crew received their vaccinations.[\[52\]](#)

On September 22, *Trentonian* received orders for the next convoy. Harrison ordered the mooring buoy slipped and the ship proceeded to Dale Roads, anchoring there at 1845.[\[53\]](#)

This was one of *Trentonian's* smallest convoys. Designated EBC 112, it consisted of only two ships. What should have seemed like a small and tedious job was met with a great deal of excitement; this convoy was going to Cherbourg! It would be the first time *Trentonian* went to a French port. The two ships of the convoy formed up and left for France at 0752 on September 23 with great anticipation.[\[54\]](#) Suddenly, the discomfort of the Needle's Parade seemed worthwhile.

Although the convoy was small, it did not make any better speed than the larger convoys. *Trentonian* arrived with her two ships off the breakwater at the entrance to Cherbourg on September 25 at 1855. The two merchant ships entered the harbour while Harrison gave orders to drop anchor outside of the breakwater.[\[55\]](#)



The entire crew of Trentonian lines up for vaccinations.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Cherbourg had been heavily damaged by the Germans prior to surrender and facilities were only available for a limited number of ships. The crew were not allowed ashore; they could only watch from the rails the activity of the French port in the distance. There would be no visit to Cherbourg; no French sidewalk café, no French wines, and above all else, no French girls.

The next morning, September 26, *Trentonian* picked up its anchor and left Cherbourg with convoy FBC 94 at 0756.^[56] The convoy consisted of ten merchant ships and *Trentonian* was the sole escort. The ship discharged the convoy at Milford Haven on September 28 and secured to the oiler to take on fuel at 1325.^[57]

The next three nights were spent in port. Stoker Norman Sharp recalls a run ashore when one of his shipmates asked him to pick up a bottle of whiskey for him. When Sharp arrived at the gates to the dockyard, he was stopped by a police officer. The bobby asked if he had any booze on him and Sharp stated he did. The bobby said he couldn't take the bottle past the gate; it would be confiscated. Sharp explained to the officer that it was for someone else and it was only a small bottle. Unmoved, the police officer said he was still going to confiscate it.

The stoker was unwilling to give up the bottle and so moved to the grass and proceeded to drink the whiskey. In due time the bottle was empty and Stoker Sharp started to walk to the ship. By the time he climbed the gangway into *Trentonian*, the alcohol had taken full effect and he staggered up the gangway. The next day he was on defaulters in front of the skipper for drunkenness. Lieutenant Harrison had a reputation of being generous with his men and Sharp received only a verbal reprimand.^[58]



Trentonian anchored outside of Cherbourg, France, in its "false hull" camouflage scheme, September 1944. The pennant number has been partially removed by censors.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Trentonian returned to duty at 1825 on October 1, 1944, leaving Milford Haven for The Mumbles, south of Swansea. They arrived at 2359^[59] to meet their next convoy, EBC 121, another small convoy of eight merchant ships. They formed up and were underway by 0938 on October 2 with *Trentonian* as sole escort.^[60] The transit to France took two days. *Trentonian* arrived off Cherbourg at 0920 on October 4 and anchored in the entrance to the harbour.^[61] The next convoy was not due to depart until the next day, so Harrison gave the crew leave to go ashore.



A heavily shelled German fortification in Cherbourg harbour.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.



Cherbourg's waterfront after the port was liberated.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Leave was given to each group in four hour increments, with half the crew going in the morning and the other half in the afternoon. The men received very specific instructions; they were to travel in large groups at all times and they were not to accept or purchase any wines or spirits. The harbour had been recently occupied by the Germans and there was still a fear that enemy soldiers could be hiding in the port. French sympathizers were rumoured to be poisoning the alcohol of the Allied soldiers. [\[62\]](#)



Few civilians wandered the streets of Cherbourg as can be seen in this photo with U.S. soldiers, sailors, and members of the Women's Army Corps on the sidewalk.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Tom Farrell.



Members of Trentonian's crew gather around a central fountain in Cherbourg.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Stoker Norman Sharp and several other men were pulled aside from the rest of the crew and assigned to shore patrol. His group was chosen because they had served with the Canadian army before joining the navy. Each was issued a rifle and told to watch out for his shipmates, but mostly they were to keep the sailors out of trouble; there was already a strong presence of American military police and French gendarmes to protect the port.[\[63\]](#)

The port facilities were heavily damaged and under repair; many of the houses, stores,

and buildings of the community were still very much unusable. This was not the tourists' paradise that France held the reputation to be.^[64] Only a few stores and cafés were open, though this did not matter so much as the crew were not to visit the cafés. The men used their time to wander the streets and sightsee. The people were reasonably polite, but most of the crew could not speak French so conversation was limited.^[65]



Two of Trentonian's crew rejoin the group after finding a store open.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

One common memory among the crew was of walking the streets of Cherbourg and seeing a truck-load of German prisoners drive by. For many of the men, this was the first time they had seen the enemy.

Stoker Sharp recalled while patrolling the streets of Cherbourg he came across a unit of American soldiers guarding Germans still held in temporary pens. The Americans were

impressed that Canadians were in the port. They exchanged details on what their unit and ship had been doing. When Sharp described *Trentonian's* activities, an American soldier from the deep South exclaimed, "You're not bird turdin!" [66]



Entry to the cathedral in Cherbourg was restricted while the debris from the recent battle and liberation of the French port was removed.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Tom Farrell.

Once back aboard *Trentonian*, the overall consensus amongst the men was that with most of the stores closed and the cafés off-limits, the trauma of going through the Needle's Parade was not worth the run ashore. [67]

Trentonian departed Cherbourg the next morning at 0805 with convoy FBC 103. The convoy consisted of four merchant ships and arrived safely at Milford Haven on October 7 at 1355. [68]

On arrival at Milford Haven, a message was given to the executive officer, Lt. Kinsman.

He was to report immediately to HMS *Osprey* to take part in an anti-submarine course. Lieutenant Geoffrey Scott of Westmount, Quebec, was transferred to *Trentonian* and became acting executive officer.[\[69\]](#)

While *Trentonian* was in port, the focus of the convoys changed once again; the opening of Cherbourg marked the end of the EBC/FBC designations. During the previous nine weeks, *Trentonian* had escorted two hundred and fifty-seven merchant ships in fifteen convoys without the loss of a single ship.



A truck of captured German soldiers passing the crew of Trentonian in Cherbourg
Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

11: The Admiral's Inspection and Praise for *Trentonian*

I propose to commend Lt. W.E. Harrison, for the manner in which he carried out an arduous duty as escort to PHOENIX 194 and 195 in circumstances of very considerable difficulty...

— Rear Admiral B. Fairbairn, flag-officer-in-charge, Milford Haven

With the opening of Cherbourg as a port, material and men could be landed on docks in larger quantities than at the Mulberry harbours. Once again the focus of the convoys shifted, and a new system of designating them was put into place.

Convoys originating in the Bristol Channel sailing to Cherbourg were designated BEC with the return convoy from Cherbourg to Bristol Channel designated EBC. Convoys originating from the Thames Estuary sailing to Cherbourg received the designation of TMC, and the return convoys were designated MTC.[\[1\]](#)

Although the designations changed, the work was the same. The convoys remained small, with usually a single corvette escort to drive the merchant ships to their destinations while the destroyers and frigates hunted the U-boats.

After a few days rest and some shore leave, *Trentonian* sailed from Milford Haven at 1430 on October 10, 1944, and anchored at Mumbles Roads at 1910[\[2\]](#) to wait for its next convoy.

Convoy BEC 2, consisting of five ships, was formed up and underway by 0800 on October 11. They sailed from The Mumbles and crossed the Bristol Channel under a threatening sky. By 1355, the merchant ships were taking shelter from the increasing storm near Clovelly, close to Hartland Point. *Trentonian* was detached from the convoy and proceeded to Milford Haven and anchored at Dale Roads at 1830.[\[3\]](#)

The storm was considerable. *Trentonian* was unable to enter the harbour at Milford Haven until 0815 on October 12. The next day, the ship once again had to leave Milford Haven and return to Dale Roads to avoid being damaged. It wasn't until 1050 on October 14, with the storm starting to abate, that *Trentonian* returned to Milford Haven.[\[4\]](#)

Able Seaman Runtz returned to *Trentonian* on October 15 after recovering from his appendicitis surgery. He arrived in time to join his ship for its next assignment.



Phoenix 194 is towed to Normandy. The size of the caisson is deceiving in this photo as the tug is closer to Trentonian.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Their next escort duty was more in line with the jobs they had performed during the

invasion. Two Phoenix tows had to be moved to Normandy. Both were large-sized cement blocks, requiring two tugs each and a crew of six men to maintain the tow lines on the caisson. A large tent was erected on the top of the cement caisson to provide shelter and accommodations for the men during the voyage.

Trentonian departed Milford Haven at 1735 on October 15, escorting tugs *Saucy* and *Hesperia* towing *Phoenix 194*. At 1900, it left the group to contact tugs *Director* and *Blackrock*, escorting *Phoenix 195* approximately ten miles ahead. Harrison instructed the tugs to reduce speed to allow *Phoenix 194* to join.^[5]

By 2200, both tows were close together and Harrison ordered them to make best possible speed. Sea conditions at the time were a Force 4–5, with waves between three and six feet high and winds south by southwest between eighteen and twenty-four miles per hour.^[6]

Trentonian spent the rest of the night and the next morning sailing between the two tows. Weather conditions deteriorated overnight, and by 1030 on October 16, sea conditions had increased to Force 6, with waves of ten feet and winds twenty-seven miles per hour from the west-southwest. *Director* with *Phoenix 195* entered Barnstaple Bay on the Cornish coast for shelter. Harrison remained with *Saucy* and the other tow about twenty miles behind, not arriving in Barnstaple Bay until 1500. Sea conditions remained at Force 6 and the wind had changed to west by south with sea and swell increasing rapidly.^[7]

By 1705, both tows were once again joined off Clovelly, *Director* and *Blackrock* were anchored with *Phoenix 195*. A heavy swell was entering Barnstaple Bay and the winds were increasing now from the west-northwest. With the sea conditions as they were, the bay no longer offered any shelter from the approaching storm and Harrison ordered both tows to make for Lundy Island, the only point of shelter along the entire coast.^[8] *Saucy* and *Hesperia* turned *Phoenix 194* towards the island while *Blackrock* reported that its steering gear was defective and that it would join once repairs were made. *Trentonian* remained with *Saucy*, escorting the tow.^[9]

The wind and sea conditions remained unchanged during the evening and *Saucy*, *Hesperia*, and *Phoenix 194* arrived off Lundy Island around 0015 on October 17. *Hesperia* anchored with the tow while *Saucy* cast off, unable to shorten its tow line.^[10]

During the night *Director* and *Blackrock* started towards Lundy Island but were forced to turn back to Barnstaple Bay at 0925 due to wind and sea conditions. They arrived in the bay and anchored at 1500 and remained there with *Phoenix 195* to wait out the storm.^[11]

During this time, *Hesperia* was unable to find much shelter for *Phoenix 194*, as they had to remain clear of anchored shipping already sheltering in the lee of the island. The wind had veered to southwest and remained at a Force 6; the tide was very strong and caused *Phoenix 194* to completely swing around *Hesperia*, fouling the tug in the tow line. *Saucy* was able to connect to the tow and cleared the cement caisson of *Hesperia*, but during the operation *Saucy*'s small towing gear broke free of its deck and was carried away.^[12]

During the evening the wind and sea conditions continued to deteriorate. By midnight the sea state had increase to Force 7–8, with waves as high as eighteen feet and winds veering from southwest to west-southwest at forty-two miles per hour. Just after midnight, when the tides turned, *Hesperia* was again fouled in the tow line when *Phoenix 194* swung around the tug. *Saucy* was unable to assist this time due to the loss of its gear.

Hesperia was forced to weigh anchor to clear itself of the tow line. In doing so, the tug and *Phoenix 194* were blown two-and-a-half miles clear of the shelter of Lundy Island. *Hesperia* reported to Harrison that they could hold position with engines, but after the

flood tide gained in strength and the winds increased, the ship was forced eastwards.[\[13\]](#)

By 0800 on October 18, *Hesperia* was hove to twelve miles from Lundy Island. With the turn of the tide, sea conditions had rapidly deteriorated. The conditions were at Force 9–10, with waves almost thirty feet high and winds gusting at over sixty miles per hour. *Saucy* could not connect a tow line, as the waves were breaking halfway up the forward side of the caisson.[\[14\]](#)

Trentonian, *Hesperia*, *Saucy*, and *Phoenix 194* remained in these positions throughout the morning. At 1207, the tow line parted and the cement caisson began to drift. *Saucy* closed the caisson and instructed the crew of the *Phoenix* to standby to attempt to get a second tow line connected. *Phoenix 194* had blown beam on to the wind and was rolling heavily, the men were just barely able to keep a footing on the leeward platform of the caisson.[\[15\]](#)

It took just over an hour to get the tow line aboard the *Phoenix*, and then the six-man crew started to pull the heavy tow line foot by foot onto the cement block. Harrison later wrote in his report, “the crew of the unit and the six men on the platform commenced what appeared to be an extremely difficult and dangerous operation, the hauling up and connecting of *Saucy*’s heavy towline.” Despite the daring effort of the men on the platform, at 1420 the tow line parted once again, under the strain of the waves and wind. *Saucy* took up the tow line and stood clear of *Phoenix 194*, allowing the men of the caisson to rest.[\[16\]](#)

Late in the afternoon the sea state had diminished enough for *Saucy* to get close to *Phoenix 194* and pass a heaving line on board the free-floating caisson. This time the operation was successful and the tow line was connected by 1827. They reported to *Trentonian* that the ship did not have the power to tow the large cement block but would endeavour to hold it up to the gale.[\[17\]](#)

Over the next hour and an half, the weather deteriorated and returned to a Force 9–10. The tow line parted once again and *Phoenix 194* was adrift. Harrison ordered the crew of the *Phoenix* off the caisson, and a lifeboat from Appledore, on the coast, moved in and took the crew to shore for a much needed rest. The courageous crew of *Phoenix 194* had been fighting the sea and winds while trying to keep their caisson under tow for over thirty-eight hours with nothing but a tent to protect them.[\[18\]](#)

Lieutenant Harrison would later remark, “Great credit is due to the six men who formed the original crew of *Phoenix 194*. The skillful and courageous ship-handling displayed on the afternoon of the 18th by the commanding officer of HM Tug *Saucy* would have been to no avail without the efforts of these men. To the onlooker it seemed that they performed the impossible and although the tow line that they had made fast did not last very long, the fact remains that they had done well to secure it.”

The caisson was allowed to drift through the night. *Trentonian*, *Hesperia*, and *Saucy* remained with the concrete block to warn other ships, as there were no running lights on the *Phoenix* and it posed a navigational hazard. Visibility was reduced, with intermittent rain squalls, and the sea state remained at Force 9–10 with westerly winds for most of the night.[\[19\]](#)

By 0700 the morning of October 19, the wind and sea were starting to abate. *Hesperia* attempted to grapple the tow line that had broken the day before, but found the grapple hooks were not strong enough to support the heavy tow line.[\[20\]](#)

The sea state had reduced to a Force 6–7 by 0952, but conditions still did not permit landing a boarding party onto the drifting *Phoenix 194*. *Trentonian* steamed to the west to search for the Dutch tug *Hudson*, reported en route with extra tow lines and ten naval ratings to crew the *Phoenix*. *Hudson* was sighted and directed to the *Phoenix* by 1100.[\[21\]](#)

Hudson arrived and lay off *Phoenix 194* at 1225. Harrison instructed the skipper of the

Dutch tug to put the ten ratings on board the caisson as soon as practical.[22]

By 1250, *Hesperia* closed with *Phoenix 194* and succeeded in putting one of her officers on the caisson. *Hudson* then closed in as well and put three of its own crew onboard, but none of the ten naval ratings. The smaller Dutch tug managed to get a small line on board *Phoenix 194* and attempted to tow the large concrete caisson.[23] Unfortunately, the only effect *Hudson's* line had was to interfere with the larger tug's attempt to connect a proper tow line. Harrison ordered *Hudson's* ten naval ratings to board the caisson; the ship was then to clear away. The intent was to connect the largest tug first and the men were needed to get the heavy tow line from *Hesperia* attached. After several direct orders, *Hudson* landed the ratings on the caisson and *Hesperia's* tow line was secured. Shortly after, *Saucy* also secured a line to *Phoenix 194*. [24]

At 1455, towing resumed after both tugs were properly connected and they proceeded towards Barry Roads. An hour later the Royal Navy trawler HMS *Inverforth* arrived to assist.[25]

At 1600, *Hudson* closed in on *Phoenix 194* and took off one of her crew, who had been left aboard, and the officer from *Hesperia*. *Trentonian* closed with *Hudson* at 1633; Harrison ordered the boat crew closed up and sent the whaler to pick up the officer from *Hesperia*. [26]

Lieutenant Harrison later remarked about the actions of the Dutch tug in his final report, "The peculiar actions of Tug *Hudson* when ordered to put the party of Naval ratings on the *Phoenix* may have been due to an imperfect knowledge of English on the part of her Captain or, on the other hand, it may have been due to visions of salvage claim. It might also have been the case that his men were more enterprising or active than the Naval party and jumped whilst the others hesitated. At any rate, he appeared loath to carry out his instructions until driven to it." [27]

Hesperia and *Saucy* continue to successfully tow *Phoenix 194* for several hours, but the ordeal was not yet over. At 1710, there was a noticeable list of about fifteen degrees on the caisson and towing was stopped to check its seaworthiness. On examination, it was found that *Phoenix 194* was filling rapidly and was in danger of sinking. [28]

Trentonian closed with the caisson while *Inverforth* came alongside *Phoenix 194* at 1725 and took off eight of the ten naval ratings. Harrison once again lowered *Trentonian's* whaler and was standing by to rescue the remaining two sailors. [29]

Inverforth became fouled in the two tow lines; if the cement caisson suddenly sank, the size and weight of it was more than sufficient to drag *Inverforth* down as well. The tow lines were cut and the trawler was able to make its escape. [30]

A few minutes later, *Trentonian's* whaler came alongside *Phoenix 194* and took off the last two naval ratings. Once aboard *Trentonian*, the senior rating reported a large hole, about six feet in diameter, had formed in the cement. [31]

By 1745, *Phoenix 194* was listing at sixty degrees and was settling in the water slowly. At 2020, *Trentonian* received orders to proceed to Barry, and left *Inverforth* to mark the wreck with DAN buoys once sunk. *Hesperia* and *Saucy* remained with the caisson awaiting orders. [32]

Phoenix 194 proved to be just as stubborn in sinking as it had been resistant to towing. Four hours after *Phoenix 194* started to take on water, *Saucy* reported that the caisson had finally sunk. The tugs were then ordered to proceed to Barry. [33] This was *Trentonian's* first vessel lost, not in action with the enemy, but in a battle that has been fought by every sailor throughout history, a battle with the magnificent power of the sea.



Trentonian's whaler is ready to rescue the remaining crew of Phoenix 194.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

On receiving Lt. Harrison's report following the event, Rear Admiral B. Fairbairn, FOIC, Milford Haven, remarked, "I propose as the Administrative Authority, to commend Lieutenant W.E. Harrison, RCNR, for the manner in which he carried out an arduous duty as escort to PHOENIX 194 and 195 in circumstances of very considerable difficulty, and for the excellence of his report which reflects good seamanlike knowledge with a clear appreciation of the situation."[\[34\]](#)

Rear Admiral Fairbairn went on to state that he would send a letter to captain-in-charge, rescue tugs, in order that the commanding officer of HM Rescue Tug *Saucy* and his crew may receive the necessary recognition, by way of commendation, for their actions.[\[35\]](#)

Fairbairn finished his letter: "the Naval Authority in charge of manning Phoenix for coastal passage may be informed of the particularly good work performed by the original crew of *Phoenix 194*, so that their special efforts shall not pass unrecognized."[\[36\]](#)

Trentonian was given two days of rest — "rest" in the sense of not escorting a convoy. The ship had to be put back together after the storm: repairs made, maintenance performed, provisions resupplied, and all the other little tasks that kept the ship running. There was some good news from the war effort. While *Trentonian* was fighting the elements on October 16, two Canadian River-class frigates, *Annan* and *Loch Achanalt*, attacked and sank the German submarine *U-1006* off the Faeroe Islands.[\[37\]](#)

On October 22, *Trentonian* left Barry Roads escorting the six-ship convoy BEC 13. They sailed to Cherbourg without incident, arriving at the French port on October 24 at 1102.[\[38\]](#)

On October 25, Lt. Harrison received a naval message that the ship's doctor, Surgeon Lt. Gourlay, was to be appointed as the Canadian medical liaison officer on the staff of flag-officer-in-charge, Milford Haven, to look after His Majesty's Canadian ships.[\[39\]](#)

The next morning *Trentonian* sailed from Cherbourg with convoy EBC 16. The nine merchant ships arrived at Milford Haven on October 27 at 1255.[\[40\]](#) Once the ship had anchored, a messenger came aboard and the signal was passed to Lt. Harrison, "Prepare for FOIC Milford Haven inspection this afternoon."

Rear Admiral Fairbairn, FOIC Milford Haven, was coming to inspect *Trentonian*. The crew was immediately turned out to clean ship and prepare every space for the admiral's arrival. The men worked at a ferocious pace; there was only a short time to

prepare the ship for inspection. They had just had a difficult two weeks, with the storm and sinking of *Phoenix 194* and back-to-back convoys since then; little time had been available to keep the ship polished.

The crew rose to the task given them. This was the first time they had been inspected by Rear Admiral Fairbairn and they made certain that his impression was going to be of a professional crew with a "pusser and tidly" ship.

Cleaning stations complete, the crew prepared themselves. Razors and irons were broken out as the men cleaned themselves and prepared their number one uniforms. A lookout was posted to watch the jetty for the admiral's departure from shore. At the first sign of movement on shore, the lookout gave the warning; the mess decks were cleared and the men waited at their stations for the admiral's arrival.

The admiral arrived by boat and climbed the ladder into *Trentonian*. Lieutenant Scott, as acting executive officer, gave the order to the piping party to "pipe the side," and the sharp shrill of the bos'n's pipes pierced the air. Lieutenant Harrison saluted and greeted Rear Admiral Fairbairn as his feet touched the deck. Harrison introduced his officers and the admiral commenced his inspection.

The officers retired to their respective departments while Rear Admiral Fairbairn, Lt. Harrison, Lt. Scott, Chief Petty Officer Roberts, and the admiral's entourage moved through the various compartments, inspecting each space, and taking the time to speak to the men.

Once the inspecting party had moved through the ship, Harrison invited Rear Admiral Fairbairn to his cabin while the remainder of the party retired to the wardroom. Once alone, Harrison offered refreshments to the admiral. Fairbairn informed Harrison that the purpose of his visit was not just to inspect *Trentonian*, but to pass on his personal praise for a job well done during the exasperating storm and the difficult events *Trentonian* had gone through while escorting the Phoenix tows and rescuing the crew of *Phoenix 194*.

With the official business concluded and pleasantries over, Lt. Harrison accompanied Rear Admiral Fairbairn and his party to the gangway. The entourage departed first, leaving the admiral on deck to make his final comments to *Trentonian's* skipper. Then he too descended the ladder back to his boat. Lieutenant Scott ordered the piping party to pipe the side.



Admiral Fairbairn moves through Trentonian inspecting the ship and the crew.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

Harrison turned to Lt. Scott and asked his XO to gather the men. He informed the crew of the intent of the inspection and passed on the admiral's comments. The skipper ordered two bottles of beer for every man from the spirit locker.

The crew took the opportunity to get a few photos while everyone was in their number one uniform — a rare event in *Trentonian*. Even when half the crew was going ashore on leave, the other half was still in regular work dress. Sick Bay Attendant Art Singleton picked up his camera and arranged the crew by divisions.

This was an opportunity to celebrate; they had just received the personal praise of the FOIC Milford Haven. But more importantly, they were each given two bottles of beer for their efforts. During the celebration, regular ship business had to continue. That evening, there were a few changes in the crew. Lieutenant Kinsman returned to *Trentonian* after successfully completing his anti-submarine course. Lieutenant Scott, who had been acting executive officer in Kinsman's place, was transferred to

Trentonian's sister ship, *Lindsay*.

Surgeon Lt. Gourlay left the ship to start his new position as Canadian medical liaison officer, on the staff of flag-officer-in-charge, Milford Haven.^[41] *Trentonian* did not receive a replacement doctor, leaving SBA Singleton responsible for the medical care of the crew once again. Gourlay remarked in his final report to Lt. Harrison, "Singleton has shown himself to be capable and has passed his Leading Sick Bay Attendant exams with good marks."^[42]

12: Operations to Cherbourg

We are having a fairly agreeable time over here, the weather is a bit miserable at times but we can't complain. The chief question now is, "How much longer," of course, but there is not much indication of us returning in the near future.

— Lt. W.E. Harrison, RCNVR, Commanding Officer, HMCS *Trentonian*

The morning of October 28, 1944, *Trentonian* sailed from Milford Haven for Cardiff, Wales. The ship arrived there at 1720 and secured to the east dock for boiler cleaning and to touch up its paint.[\[1\]](#)

There had been a consensus among the crew that *Trentonian* would be returning to Canada for a refit in November. It is possible for rumours to be true, but plans change. The corvettes assigned to the invasion were in fact scheduled to begin refits in Canada starting in October,[\[2\]](#) but demands for escorts in the United Kingdom and delays at the Canadian shipyards postponed *Trentonian's* refit.

This left the Canadian corvettes operating at less-than-peak efficiency. *Lindsay* had strong vibrations in its hull, which interfered with its asdic operations, *Louisburg* had boiler defects, and *Port Arthur* had some five thousand rivets loose in its hull that required replacement.[\[3\]](#)

The crew of *Trentonian* had done an exceptional job of keeping their ship maintained; therefore, the refit was scheduled after those for most of the other invasion corvettes, sometime after the New Year. This was confirmed to the men when word passed through the ship that Lt. Stephen's Christmas wedding had been postponed to around Easter.[\[4\]](#)

While in Cardiff, repairs were performed to the ship. The sick bay was given an extensive renovation to store the medical equipment it required and to make it more practical to assess and treat the sick and injured.[\[5\]](#)

The petty officer's mess, located in the stern of the ship, required better ventilation. A larger fan was installed, along with more air outlets in the ducting and new lining on the bulkheads to improve the temperature in the mess.[\[6\]](#)

Lieutenant Harrison took advantage of the boiler cleaning to give half the crew a seven day leave from the ship.[\[7\]](#) These men spent their extended leave visiting family or going to London. The remaining men were allowed short runs ashore in Cardiff.

Able Seaman Gordon Gibbons of Acton, Ontario, remembers one night when he was quartermaster posted on the gangway. One of his shipmates returned from leave very excited. The sailor had truly enjoyed his evening out and was "three sheets to the wind." He wasted no time in showing Gibbons the gold ring he had pierced into his ear, just like a real pirate. All Gibbons could see was a trail of blood down the sailor's neck and uniform collar — someone had stolen the large gold earring by pulling it from his ear on the sailors walk back to the ship.[\[8\]](#)



HMCS Trentonian in Cardiff for boiler cleaning, October 1944.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

Cardiff was a much larger port than Milford Haven and afforded the crew more options for recreational facilities, shopping, and entertainment. Able Seaman Hayward recalled a shopping trip in Cardiff where he tried to find size twelve shoes for his friend AB Runtz. Runtz must have appeared as a giant to the local citizens; after a long search, only one store was found that carried shoes large enough to fit him.^[9]

Another sailor recalls with some annoyance how his evening leave had been abruptly ended by a senior shipmate. Able Seaman Harold Salmon had been enjoying his evening at one of the local pubs in Cardiff. That enjoyment had been heightened by the beverages served at the pub. He was sitting contently at his table, considering himself to be a man of the world, even though he was only nineteen at the time, while entertaining two young ladies who listened attentively to his every word. Rosy-cheeked, he was considering his options for the rest of the evening. Several of his shipmates arrived at the pub and, after the bartender had a few words with the sailors, the leading seaman came over and forcibly removed the young ladies—not only from the table but straight out the door.



Bruce Keir wrote on this photo "HMS Pink, Cardiff, October 1944." Pink was a Flower-class corvette damaged by a torpedo from U-988 on June 27, 1944 and declared a total loss. The charring from the fire is clearly visible on the hull. This picture demonstrates the size of the corvettes, on the dock beside Pink is a replacement gun barrel for the battleship HMS Rodney. Further perspective can be seen by the Trentonian crew member sitting behind the crates and beside the massive gun barrel.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

The rosy cheeks of the young sailor became red as he stood his ground and accused the leading sailor of spoiling his night. With that, his mates escorted him back to the ship. The next morning Salmon confronted his senior. The old sailor simply put a hand on the young man's shoulder and explained, "I did it for your own good, to save you from a life of sin." The two ladies enjoying the company of the naive young sailor were introduced to his shipmates by the bartender as very disreputable ladies of the evening.^[10]

On November 7, 1944, Leading Seaman Aubrey Wells from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, was sent to the RN sick quarters at Cardiff. He had become very ill and was later transferred to the larger Royal Air Force Hospital at St. Athan for more definitive care.^[11]

By November 11, boiler cleaning, maintenance, and painting were complete, and the men on extended leave had returned to the ship. Lieutenant Harrison took the time to update Miss Farley and the citizens of Trenton on how their ship was doing:

Thank you for your letter of Oct. 18th also card which arrived the same time. I'm glad that you got the photographs alright.

We are having a fairly agreeable time over here, the weather is a bit miserable at times but we can't complain. The chief question now is, "How much longer", of course, but there is not much indication of us returning in the near future.

Your list of things which are on our way to us sounds very generous indeed. You and your friends are spoiling us all.

As far as magazines are concerned the favorites are still such as "American Colliers," "Red Book," "Saturday Evening Post" and as there are five messes, five copies would be greatly appreciated. Half the ship's company have had seven days leave recently and have spent it in different parts of this country. They are getting to know their way around now, and, I think, feel quite at home in Britain.

We have had the good fortune to spend a couple of weeks recently at a large seaport town where they all had a very good time.

Our regular base is only a small place and I think they have got a bit fed up with it.

There are several other Canadian Corvettes with us and they see their friends on the

other ships pretty frequently so that's quite a break.

Here's hoping you all enjoy a Very Happy Xmas and a good holiday at the end of the year.[\[12\]](#)

By the afternoon of November 12, *Trentonian* was once again looking like the fighting ship it was and was ready to get back to work. They left the dock at Cardiff at 1522 for the short sail to Barry Roads, arriving there at 1642.[\[13\]](#)

The next morning *Trentonian* sailed with the four-ship convoy BEC 35 at 0645.[\[14\]](#)

They arrived at Cherbourg at 0515 on November 15 without incident.[\[15\]](#)

Trentonian's duties had now become routine for the crew: pick up a convoy in the Bristol Channel, sail two days to Cherbourg, overnight in Cherbourg, and sail two days back to Bristol Channel with another convoy, followed by one or two nights rest in Milford Haven.



The Canadian hospital ship Lady Nelson leaving Cherbourg Harbour, October or November 1944.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

This return from Cherbourg began just like the others. *Trentonian* departed at 0853 on the morning of November 16 with convoy EBC 38. The weather was ideal for sailing; Force 2 with winds from the west-northwest at six miles per hour and waves of half a foot.[\[16\]](#) *Trentonian* was the sole escort and the convoy consisted of ten vessels of various types, including tugs and a large floating crane. The convoy had a smooth crossing of the English Channel and arrived at The Solent by 1700. The weather remained a very comfortable Force 2.[\[17\]](#)

Four ships were detached from the convoy, including the floating crane. Eight ships, four LSTs, and one LCI joined the convoy from The Solent; the convoy was now nineteen vessels. Assisting *Trentonian* with the escort was Motor Launch 1465.[\[18\]](#) The commodore of the convoy was in the US liberty ship *Oliver Evans*. The convoy continued on course for the Bristol Channel.

At 1745, Tug ST 696 reported to *Trentonian* that it was experiencing engine trouble and requested permission to detach from the convoy. Harrison ordered the tug to proceed to Weymouth and ST 696 followed astern of the convoy.[\[19\]](#)

During the evening the weather started to increase. By 1920, it was at a Force 5 and the winds had moved to south-southwest and increased to twenty-two miles per hour with waves now at six and a half feet.[\[20\]](#)

The convoy was off Portland Bill at 2100 when *Trentonian* received a radio signal from Tug ST 696. In plain language they stated that they were lost; the compass was not

correct and the tug was taking on water and in danger of sinking. The master of the tug did not know his position and, with visibility now at one to two miles, a visual position could not be ascertained.[21]

Trentonian turned about to follow the convoy's previous course and attempt to locate the distressed tug. At 2115, Harrison signalled for a pilot boat to be sent out from Weymouth to assist the tug with navigation. The master of Tug ST 696 was sending a constant stream of radio signals to the effect that he did know what direction to steer and that he was making water to a dangerous level.[22]

Contact was made with the tug at 2300; Harrison escorted ST 696 to Portland Harbour, as the master of the tug seemed incapable of following any navigational directions and a pilot boat had not been sent out to assist. *Trentonian* brought the tug to visual distance of the harbour[23] before leaving to rejoin the convoy at 0040 on November 17. Harrison noted in his report, "Proceeding to rejoin convoy. Wind southerly, Force 6, increasing. Moderate to rough seas, showery, visibility from two to ten miles. Passed several ships apparently straggling but could not establish visual signal contact." [24]

The weather in the Channel continued to deteriorate, with wind speeds rising to twenty-seven miles per hour and waves as high as ten feet. At 2115, *Trentonian* came across the Royal Navy trawler *Transvaal* west-southwest of Portland Bill. The trawler had left the convoy and was heading in the direction of Portland Bill.[25] The two ships exchanged identities by visual signal and then the following by signal lamp:

Transvaal — I have serious trouble with engines. Where can I go for repairs? Are you an escort?

Trentonian — Yes

Transvaal — Were you with last convoy?

Trentonian — Yes. You should go to Portland for repairs.[26]

Harrison noted in his report after the brief conversation with the trawler, "*Transvaal* proceeded toward Portland Bill. Wind was then SSE, Force 6–7, sea rather rough. Portland Bill light could only be seen occasionally, as visibility varied owing to rain.

Transvaal did not appear to be making exceptionally bad weather of it and was making fair speed." [27]

Trentonian rejoined the convoy by 0255 and passed through it, noting that the ships were becoming widely scattered. Several were heaving to, to wait out the storm. The convoy commodore's ship, *Oliver Evans*, was under-ballasted and having difficulties in the worsening weather. The weather was now at Force 8 with winds of forty-two miles per hour from the southeast and rolling waves of eighteen feet, visibility was reduced to two thousand feet and less. *Trentonian* hove to near the commodore's ship to ride out the storm.[28]

At 0820, *Trentonian*'s radar broke down. With daylight, visibility had increased to six thousand feet. Harrison ordered the ship's course towards land to verify their position. The storm continued at Force 8, with the winds moving to southwest by south with rough seas and heavy swell.[29]

Trentonian made land at 1145 near Dartmouth. Visibility had increased to one to two miles, but the weather had continued to deteriorate, now at Force 9, winds southwest by south at fifty miles per hour and waves at twenty-three feet with rough seas and heavy swell.[30]

Harrison altered course to the east to search Lyme Bay for convoy ships taking refuge there. Contact was made with two ships and two LSTs, including the commodore in *Oliver Evans*. *Trentonian* proceeded to lead them towards Torbay. *Oliver Evans* and the two LSTs were handling with difficulty and progress was very slow.[31]

The group of two ships, two LSTs, and *Trentonian* arrived at Torbay at 1527. They anchored in the shelter of the bay for the night.[32] While there, Harrison received word

that a sailor in one of the merchant ships had become very sick. He ordered *Trentonian*'s boat crew to the merchant ship to offer assistance. The offer of medical help was curtly refused and *Trentonian*'s boat crew returned. Harrison was enraged at the master of the other ship — he had put his own men at risk for nothing.[\[33\]](#)

During the night the storm started to abate, and by 0750 on the morning of November 18, it had reduced to a Force 4-6[\[34\]](#) and visibility had increased substantially.

Trentonian left Torbay to search to seaward for ships. There had been several convoys in the English Channel during the storm and many ships had been scattered, with the weather improving the escorts were now trying to locate their ships and re-establish the convoys.

Trentonian located one of the other ships and one more LST. Harrison ordered the ship they had found to join the convoy now leaving Torbay and the LST to proceed to Falmouth. *Trentonian* rejoined the convoy off Dartmouth at 1100. Weather was now at Force 4, with the winds still southwest by west and a heavy swell.[\[35\]](#)

At 1420, *Trentonian*'s convoy, now off Plymouth, detached one ship and one LST and was joined by a group of five ships under escort of RN trawler HMS *Leeds United*.[\[36\]](#)

The convoy was off Falmouth by 2005 and the weather was once again worsening. Now back to a Force 6 with a good forecast. The convoy commodore reported that his ship, *Oliver Evans*, was putting in to Falmouth for shelter. Harrison also detached the last LST to Falmouth and appointed the master of *Ocean Gallant* as convoy commodore. This left eight merchants ships under the escort of *Leeds United* and *Trentonian*.[\[37\]](#) The convoy rounded Lizard Point into Mount's Bay. The weather was at Force 8 once again, with rough seas, heavy swells, and visibility reduced to one to two miles. The smaller ships of the convoy detached to seek shelter in Mount's Bay while the remainder continued on course and rounded Land's End at 2355.[\[38\]](#)

At 0730 on the morning of November 19, Harrison left the convoy with *Leeds United* and swept astern one more time for stragglers. None were found and *Trentonian* rejoined the convoy by 1005.[\[39\]](#)

At 1305, the convoy was approaching Bristol Channel. *Leeds United* continued to the north with its convoy while *Trentonian* brought its ships into the channel, arriving at Milford Haven at 1750.[\[40\]](#) On arrival they discovered that the trawler *Transvaal*, which they had spoken to on the seventeenth, had foundered the next day during the height of the storm and had lost nineteen crew members.

Lieutenant Harrison received a message concerning Leading Seaman Aubrey Wells. The sailor's condition had continued to deteriorate after he was transferred to the RAF hospital at St. Athan and he had died of unknown causes on November 16, 1944, at the age of twenty-nine, just four days short of his thirtieth birthday.[\[41\]](#) The skipper called his crew together for the distressing news.

Leading Seaman Wells had joined *Trentonian* in Halifax and had been with the ship continuously since then. He was buried at the Cardiff Western Cemetery and, because of distance, his friends and messmates could not attend the burial. A memorial service was conducted on the ship. Lieutenant Harrison said a few words of comfort to the men.



Leading Seaman Aubrey Wells, of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, died of unknown causes at RAF Hospital St. Athan on November 16, 1944, following a brief illness.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

The news of Wells's death hit the crew very hard; this was a young man in perfect health. He was also the first man the ship had lost. They had experienced death before — watching bodies of soldiers float past them off the beaches of Normandy and the *Monarch* incident after D-Day when several of that ship's crew were killed — but this was different. Wells was one of their shipmates. Each man knew that death was always a possibility; most expected to have it come in a fight with the enemy. None would have imagined "death due to unknown causes."

Wells's personal effects were gathered and sorted and then boxed to be shipped to his wife in Dartmouth.

Many tried to decide what the meaning of “unknown causes” was. A great deal of discussion led his messmates to realize that, while painting the ship in Cardiff, Wells’s uniform had been covered in paint. He had used the old trick with the fire extinguisher chemical to clean his uniform. The paint mark had been large and a fair amount of the chemical ended up on his uniform. He hadn’t allowed time for it to dry or washed it before going on leave. They agreed that some of the chemical must have penetrated his skin.[\[42\]](#)

After a sombre two days, *Trentonian* received orders for its next convoy. Despite their loss, the war went on and there was work to be done. At 1646 on November 22, they sailed from Milford Haven and arrived in Swansea Bay at 2215[\[43\]](#) to await the next convoy.

The next day *Trentonian* sailed away with BEC 45 at 1208.[\[44\]](#) The convoy consisted of nine new liberty ships; the oldest was only two years old. The men enjoyed these convoys due to the speed the merchant ships could maintain. It was a nice change from the old merchant ships and Phoenix tows they had in the past.

The convoy arrived at Cherbourg at 1252 on November 25 without incident.[\[45\]](#)

However, not all Canadian escorts returned safely to port that day. The corvette *Shawinigan* had been torpedoed by a German submarine. There were no survivors of *Shawinigan*’s crew of ninety-one.[\[46\]](#)

On November 26, *Trentonian* departed with EBC 48 at 0918.[\[47\]](#) This was a larger convoy of thirteen merchant ships, a mixed assortment — the oldest had been constructed in 1914. The convoy was joined by five new liberty ships while en route to Milford Haven. All eighteen ships arrived safely at Milford Haven on November 28 at 0905.[\[48\]](#)

Trentonian and its crew enjoyed two days of resting, refuelling, and resupply. Shore leave was given each of the nights.

On November 30, ERA Robert Arkley from Victoria, British Columbia, was transferred to the RCN base at *Niobe* for gastric investigation.[\[49\]](#)

The next day, December 1, the crew of *Trentonian* celebrated the first year the ship had been in commission. Despite the anniversary, regular duties still had to be performed — after all, the war was still on and the men and their ship had a job to do. Later in the day, they departed Milford Haven; they anchored at Swansea the next morning at 0855 to await their next convoy. The convoy was formed and departed at 1130 on December 2 for Cherbourg. The two-day escort was uneventful and all arrived safely at Cherbourg on December 4 at 2248.[\[50\]](#)

After a night’s rest anchored off the French coast, *Trentonian* departed with convoy EBC 57 at 1100 on December 5.[\[51\]](#) The convoy consisted of twenty merchant ships ranging in age from the new liberty ships to others built as far back as 1911. The ships were a mixed batch, consisting of British, American, Dutch, Norwegian, Yugoslavian, and Polish registries. The convoy arrived safely at Milford Haven at 1340 on December 7, 1944.[\[52\]](#)

This was *Trentonian*’s last convoy to the French coast and the port of Cherbourg. The Allied armies had continued to advance and push the German army back.

13: The Army Moves Forward; Au Revoir France, Hello 1945

It is with a certain amount of sadness that I write to you this time, because it is to inform you that I am leaving the old ship in a couple of days. I have been appointed to a frigate, HMCS JOLIETTE, and will be joining her shortly.

— Lt. W.E. Harrison, Commanding Officer, HMCS Trentonian

On November 26, 1944, the first Allied convoy reached the Belgium port of Antwerp.^[1] The opening of this port dramatically changed the supply chain for the Allies; material and men could now be landed closer to the advancing Allied armies.

On December 8, 1944, the Channel convoys were once again reorganized. The departure area for Antwerp was the Thames Estuary. Convoys sailing from the Bristol Channel to the Thames Estuary were titled BTC and the returning convoys from the Thames Estuary to Bristol Channel were titled TBC.^[2]

These changes were to facilitate the escort of merchant ships along the English coast. Unlike traditional convoys where the merchant ships were formed into a group and sailed from port A to port B by the most direct route, these convoys were designed to provide protection along the longer coastal routes. A convoy would leave the Bristol Channel and sail along the Cornish coast, round Land's End, and then proceed along the south coast of England through the English Channel and the Strait of Dover to the final destination at the Thames Estuary.

The destinations of each merchant ship would vary. As the convoy proceeded, some ships would detach and head into the respective ports along the route, while others would come out of the coastal ports and join the convoy. This made the convoy's organization very dynamic and their composition of merchant ships fluid. There would normally be ten to fifteen ships in the convoy at any one time. The small overall size of these convoys required only one escort for protection, usually a single corvette. If an attack did occur, there was always an attack group in the vicinity and other escorts could provide reinforcement.^[3]

The Canadian corvettes were distributed along the coast in three primary ports. On the west coast at Milford Haven providing escort from the Bristol Channel to the Thames was the Forty-first Escort Group, consisting of *Trentonian*, *Algoma*, *Kitchener*, *Louisburg* (II), *Lindsay*, *Ville de Quebec*, and *Moose Jaw*.^[4]

At Portsmouth on the south coast were *Mayflower*, *Snowberry*, and *Port Arthur*. These corvettes provided escort to convoys from Portsmouth to the French coast. On the east coast at Sheerness were *Baddeck*, *Calgary*, *Drumheller*, and *Mimico*, escorting the convoys from the Thames Estuary to Antwerp.^[5]

Along with their regular escort duties, the corvettes were frequently called upon for anti-submarine patrols, searches for survivors of torpedoed ships or ditched aircraft, and escort of minelayers or other ships engaged in special duties.^[6]

At this stage of the war, the threats to the convoys and escorts were still abundant. There was the ever-present danger of German submarines and midget submarines, whose detection was hindered by the difficult asdic conditions that resulted from the multitude of wrecks, rock pinnacles, strong currents, and temperature layers. All these things combined to give false echoes, providing a multitude of hiding places for the enemy. Added to this was the continued danger from E-boats, mines, and enemy aircraft.^[7]

Under the new convoy system, *Trentonian* departed Milford Haven with its first Bristol Channel-to-the-Thames convoy at 0900 on December 8, 1944.^[8] Convoy BTC 2 started with five merchant ships. By the time *Trentonian* arrived at the Thames Estuary on December 12, a total of twenty-nine merchants had joined or departed the convoy

along the route. The escort job complete, *Trentonian* anchored at Sheerness at 1220.[9]

After twenty hours rest, *Trentonian* picked up its anchor and departed Sheerness at 1020 with convoy TBC 6 on December 13. The convoy totalled twenty-one ships over the course of its journey and arrived at Bristol Channel on December 16. *Trentonian* returned to Milford Haven at 0255.[10] The crew was given four days of rest.

Trentonian remained at anchor, so the crew had to transit by boat to shore to enjoy leave.



Trentonian's football team. Warrant Engineer Hindle was an avid football player and fan. He organized a team from the ship to take on the local team in Milford Haven.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

While in Milford Haven, *Trentonian* received new safety equipment. From past experiences with ships that had been sunk, the navy had learned that the Carley Floats could not always be released, causing the life raft to sink with the ship and leaving the survivors without a means of self-rescue. A hydro-release system had been developed to release the Carley Floats automatically if the mechanism was submerged in water, allowing any unreleased floats to come to the surface.[11]

Several parcels arrived for the ship — including one very large crate — all addressed from Trenton, Ontario. The elusive washing machine had finally arrived.[12] The machine had undergone its own journey of historic proportions. Due to bureaucratic paperwork, the motor for the machine had not been requested in time for the washing machine to be installed in Kingston. By the time the paperwork was approved and an electric motor was available, *Trentonian* had not only sailed from Kingston, it was working in the United Kingdom. That meant the City of Trenton had to submit a request for overseas shipping of large, non-essential goods. Once approved and space was made available on a merchant ship, the washing machine made the voyage to England. It then spent many months travelling around the coast arriving at the various ports that *Trentonian* had worked from, each time just after the ship had been moved to the next area of operation.

Finally, after thirteen months and thousands of miles, the washing machine arrived just in time for Christmas. The machine was quickly installed and just as quickly put to use. The men would no longer have to wash their kit with wash boards and basins. Still, some of the stokers believed their jury-rigged milk can, filled with holes and dragged behind the ship, cleaned their clothes better.

The other parcels contained an assortment of gifts and Christmas cheer for the men

from the citizens of Trenton. These included wallets, chocolates, and writing kits.[\[13\]](#) With Christmas fast approaching, Lt. Harrison sent a telegram to the citizens of Trenton on December 20, "MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE SHIPS COMPANY."[\[14\]](#)

That same day, a large parcel was received, marked "Red Cross Supplies." These were the much appreciated Red Cross Parcels, one for each man in the ship.[\[15\]](#) The parcels consisted of an assortment food stuffs, including canned meat, fish, cheese, powdered milk, biscuits, sweets, and soap.

At 1655 on December 21, *Trentonian* took up its anchor and sailed for Swansea Bay to wait for its next convoy.[\[16\]](#) As the passage to the Thames Estuary took three to four days, the crew reconciled themselves to spending Christmas as sea.

At 2125 that night *Trentonian* headed into the Bristol Channel with convoy BTC 15 bound for the Thames.[\[17\]](#) The convoy consisted of twenty-five ships in total, and assisting with the escort was RN corvette HMS *Heather*. The two escorts shepherded the convoy out of the Bristol Channel and south along the Cornish coast. By the morning of December 23, they had rounded Land's End and were heading east on the south coast of England. Off Lizard Head they met convoy TBC 14 heading in the opposite direction.

Trentonian received a signal to detach from BTC 15, leaving *Heather* as its sole escort, and join the westbound convoy.[\[18\]](#) TBC 14 was under escort of their chummy ship, *Moose Jaw*, and consisted of thirty-four ships bound for the Bristol Channel. Very quickly some of the men started doing the math and word spread through the ship; if they maintained normal convoy speed, they would be in home port for Christmas after all.

Trentonian and *Moose Jaw* arrived in Milford Haven at 0445 on December 24.[\[19\]](#) The crew spent the day getting the ship ready for Christmas — anything they could find to give the ship a sense of Christmas spirit was used to decorate the messes.

Later that day, Harrison received orders to sail for another convoy. According to *Trentonian*'s crew, their skipper refused, stating that his men were going to get their Christmas. The authorities allowed his ship to remain in harbour.[\[20\]](#)

Not all Canadian sailors would be celebrating Christmas; *Clayoquot*, a Bangor-class minesweeper, was torpedoed and sunk just off Halifax on Christmas Eve. Eight crewmembers were killed.[\[21\]](#)

Christmas Day came with the usual traditions of the navy. The youngest man in the ship was promoted to skipper for the day. Customarily, his first order (and to the men, the most important), was for an extra issue of grog to be given to each man in honour of the day.

Harrison did not know, but he had in fact chosen the wrong man to be skipper for the day. Stoker Bill Shields of Oakville, Ontario, had turned eighteen on December 24, 1944. Shields had lied about his age in order to join the navy as a sixteen-year-old. He did not speak up that Christmas, out of fear that his true age at joining the navy would become known.[\[22\]](#)

The cooks spent the day preparing both the normal meals for the crew and a Christmas dinner with what resources they had on board. There wasn't much, since they were supposed to have been at sea. When the feast was ready, hands were piped to dinner. Following another Christmas tradition, the food was served to the men by the officers. Following supper the men turned to, to clean and wash the dishes in each mess. In one of the messes, two sailors who had enjoyed the additional "spirits" of the day set to work. The washer diligently scrubbed each dish absolutely clean and ceremonially passed the dish to the man next to him. He, in turn, dried and polished the dish to perfection before tossing each plate out the open porthole.[\[23\]](#)

The men settled in to their messes to enjoy an evening of cards, stories, and carols.

However, the festivities were cut short. The shore authorities still remembered the previous evening's orders and signalled Harrison to proceed to sea. *Trentonian* departed Milford Haven at 2340. Other escort ships had been in harbour since before *Trentonian* arrived. Angered that his ship was being put to work before the sleeping escorts, Harrison rang up "full speed" on the engine room telegraph and sailed out of harbour, tossing several of the other boats about and a few float planes as well.^[24] *Trentonian* arrived at Barry Roads at 0630 on December 26. By 0838, convoy BTC 19 consisting of nineteen merchant ships was formed up. Assisting with the escort was RN corvette HMS *Armeria*.^[25]

The convoy arrived at Southend on the afternoon of December 29, at 1300.^[26] Some good news was waiting from the war effort and was passed onto the crew. On December 27, *St. Thomas*, a Castle-class corvette, and *Sea Cliff*, a River-class frigate, attacked and sank the German submarine *U-877* in the mid-Atlantic.

After twenty hours rest, *Trentonian* sailed from Southend escorting TBC 23 on December 30.^[27] The convoy consisted of a total of thirty merchant ships. Three additional escorts were provided to assist; the SO was in HMS *Anthony*, an A-class destroyer, the Free French frigate *Tonkinois*, and *Trentonian*'s chummy ship, *Louisburg*.



Trentonian's entire crew turned out in their number one uniforms for church parade in Milford Haven.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

The men celebrated New Year's Eve and started 1945 at sea off the English coast. The usual custom of ringing sixteen bells for the New Year was disregarded as *Trentonian* was operating in hostile waters. Fortunately, there were no fireworks.

The men and their ship had experienced a difficult and, at times, unique year. Of the six officers that were present with the ship at commissioning, four had remained with *Trentonian*: her skipper, Lt. Harrison; the executive officer, Lt. Kinsman; anti-submarine control officer, Lt. Dodds, and the engineering officer, Warrant Engineer Hindle. Chief Petty Officer Roberts remained as coxswain.

Forty-four of the eighty-one original men were still with *Trentonian* by the end of the year. In most Canadian ships of the time, the crew was usually transferred and dispersed to new corvettes after a few escort duties. Even though the men may have had only have a few weeks at sea, that was considered more experience than the new

sailors joining the new ships. This made it difficult to train a cohesive ship's company with any amount of skill. *Trentonian* had been indeed fortunate to retain over 55 percent of her original crew.

During the preceding year, *Trentonian* had finished construction, travelled to Bermuda for work-ups, escorted convoys off the coast of Canada and Newfoundland, rescued a damaged RN submarine, crossed the Atlantic Ocean, taken part in the Normandy invasion, helped construct the Gooseberrys and Mulberry harbours off France, survived an attack by the United States Navy, dodged German Buzz Bombs in the Strait of Dover, and escorted convoys around England and to France. During the previous twelve months, it had performed over fifty escort jobs, delivering hundreds of merchant ships safely to their respective destinations. A truly successful year!

With the close of 1944, *Trentonian* earned its third Battle Honour, English Channel 1944, for the ship's operations escorting convoys in the United Kingdom.

The first day of 1945 found *Trentonian* and its crew in the waters of the United Kingdom escorting convoy TBC 23 from Southend on the Thames Estuary to the Bristol Channel off the coast of Wales. The men speculated that the war would be over sometime that year; the German army had been steadily pushed back by the Allies since June. The discussion focused on exactly when it would be over.

Trentonian arrived at Milford Haven on January 2 with her convoy after an uneventful voyage from Sheerness.

The ship was moved to the jetty for another boiler cleaning. Lieutenant Harrison once again took advantage of the extended time in port to give half the crew seven days leave ashore. Quickly the ship filled with workmen, making repairs to the various equipment and machinery in the ship.

Lieutenant Harrison had many qualities that made him an excellent commanding officer and endeared him to the men. He was an excellent sailor, fair with his men, willing to give leave when time allowed, but still ran a tight ship. One quality he did lack had to do with the administrative aspects of operating his command. On January 5, 1945, Harrison received the following letter from the secretary, Canadian Mission Overseas in London, "With reference to Returns of Days at Sea and in Harbour for the months of May to November, 1944, inclusive submitted by H.M.C.S. TRENTONIAN, the Commanding Officer, H.M.C.S. TRENTONIAN is to be instructed to render this report monthly, on the first of each month, for the month previous."[\[28\]](#)

Harrison had not filed a monthly report since his ship had arrived in the United Kingdom. While his crew enjoyed their time ashore, he was in his cabin completing the missing seven months of paperwork.

On January 6, Harrison updated the City of Trenton with a letter to Miss Farley: Have just received a very large batch of letters and parcels. All kinds of gifts from Trenton included. There are a lot of things which you mention sending which haven't arrived yet but doubtless will turn up in time. I will give you a list now of what we actually have received from all sources in Trenton. A very imposing list too — 80 wallets — 80 boxes of chocolates — 32,000 cigarettes — 75 woolen socks — 15 mitts — Gramophone records — Washing machine — Writing kits. (I think there were 80 writing kits but as half the ship's company are on leave I can't check on it at the moment — all the people who handled the distribution are away.)

You can see that several shipments which you mention have not arrived yet (plum puddings, etc.). I also have a letter from Mrs. C.V. Wilkins telling me of a shipment of socks by the Red Cross. These are not turned up yet but I will let her know when they do. The washing machine arrived before Xmas and is now operating very successfully. By the way the Victrola that you sent the same time as the records is not here yet. I mailed a list of the ship's company to you the other day so you should have it soon. Our numbers alternate around 104 men all told. There is a little variation sometimes we get

down to a hundred when a couple go to hospital or are absent for some reason. We distributed the personal gifts as follows. The 80 wallets arrived first and went to the 80 who had been in the ship the longest — the ones left out got a box of chocolates. The writing kits were drawn for, the losers getting chocolates again. The remaining chocolates were distributed to the messes. I think everybody appreciated the gifts as I'm sure they should, there being very few Canadian ships as well and as consistently looked after as well as we are. Some of the bigger cities which have adopted ships started off with a very expensive splash, but so far as I hear their enthusiasm died down after a few months.

I'm sure you are very much responsible for the fact that we have not been forgotten for a moment even though we are so far away and the difficulty of shipping things so great. As I was writing the last sentence a large parcel has arrived addressed to me. I see it is marked "Knit goods" and has Mrs. Whitley's name on the label. I have had it locked away not to be opened until we get out of dock, as the ship is teeming with acquisitive workmen and the men don't need them till we leave.

Hoping that you are enjoying 1945 and wishing you all the best in the coming year.[\[29\]](#)

In his letter, Harrison noted the ship's complement usually ran around 104 men; this was unusually high, as corvettes normally carried around ninety-six men. Harrison showed a real loyalty to his men and, once assigned to his ship, he attempted to retain each man. Having served in corvettes earlier in the war, he knew how hard it was to keep up the skill and cohesion of a crew when the men were constantly being transferred to other ships. He also believed having extra hands allowed the work of the ship to be distributed, allowing the crew to get better rest and not be too overworked.

Harrison's personal manning policy came into question when he received a signal from the Canadian Manning Depot at *Niobe* on January 8, 1945. "Records here indicate you are over authorized complement 2 P.O.'s, 3 L/Sea, 1 SD and 2 Radar³. Propose adjusting compliment. Request your comments be signalled."[\[30\]](#) Harrison's response was to draft ashore one of the ship's cooks as dentally unfit on January 13.[\[31\]](#) This did not resolve the Manning Depot's request as another cook would have to replace him.

On January 16, AS Gordon Gibbons was transferred to the hospital in Milford Haven[\[32\]](#) for a severe skin rash that would require several weeks of treatment.

Boiler cleaning and repairs complete, *Trentonian* moved away from the jetty and once again took up her mooring in the harbour. The ship did not remain idle long; orders were received to sail immediately into St. George's Channel to aid a merchant ship in distress. Departing Milford Haven at speed, they made the short trip to the channel separating Ireland from Wales and found a large British merchant ship on fire.

Harrison brought *Trentonian* alongside the burning merchant ship and transferred over all the fire hose they could spare as well as a portable water pump. The skipper knew the Canadian hoses and fittings were not compatible with their British counterparts; he was taking advantage of the situation to officially "lose" all of *Trentonian*'s old equipment so it could be replaced with new fire-fighting gear.



Photo of a merchant ship on fire in the Irish Sea taken from Trentonian on January 16, 1945.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Tom Farrell.

Trentonian moved off from the merchant ship when the RN Castle-class corvette HMS *Pevensey Castle* arrived to assist. Harrison then circled the merchant ship with *Pevensey Castle* providing an anti-submarine screen at close range. The fire was extinguished and the merchant ship was towed safely to harbour; *Trentonian* returned to Milford Haven.

On January 21, *Trentonian* departed Milford Haven with convoy BTC 45 as the sole escort of the fourteen-ship convoy. They arrived at Sheerness on January 24 without incident. There was a signal waiting for Harrison on arrival that gave him and the crew cause for celebration and sadness. Lieutenant Harrison was promoted to lieutenant-commander, effective immediately. His work and performance were being rewarded. This news gave great pride to the men; they had known for a long time that the skipper should have his third ring.

The second part of the signal dampened the celebration: with the promotion came a new command, also effective immediately. Lieutenant-Commander Harrison was to take command of HMCS *Joliette*, a River-class frigate. After giving the news time to settle, Harrison wrote his last letter as commanding officer of *Trentonian* to Miss Farley in Trenton:

It is with a certain amount of sadness that I write to you this time, because it is to inform you that I am leaving the old ship in a couple of days. I have been appointed to a frigate, HMCS JOLIETTE, and will be joining her shortly.

Almost as much as I regret leaving the ship and her happy and efficient ship's company, I regret breaking my official connection with yourself, and the many good folks of Trenton who have interested themselves in the ship. It has been a very pleasant experience for me to have been connected with you all.

I hope that one of these days we shall all meet again. Who knows?

The new Commanding Officer will be Lieut. C. Glassco RCNVR and I will pass on to him all my records of things that have been done or undone i.e. the balance between what has been sent and what has been received. There are one or two things still in the mail, as I mentioned in my last letter.

Please say Goodbye, for me, to all the girls and boys, and give them my very best wishes and my thanks for their good work and self-sacrifice on our behalf.

Tell them all, teachers and pupils, that if I ever get another chance to visit them, they won't terrify me quite so much the second time. (I believe everyone in Joliette speaks French, so pity me if I ever go there.)

Well I'll say Au Revoir (just to get in practice) to all of you and would like you to know

that I shall always remember you and my visit to you, with pleasure.[33]



Trentonian's crew watching the events from the gun deck, January 1945.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Bruce Keir.

Harrison touched in his letter his regrets for having to leave the ship and its crew, something felt even more by the crew. Their skipper had been with them since *Trentonian's* commission, he had been with them in the early days of training the crew, the first convoys in the Atlantic, and the dangerous waters off Normandy. He had stopped the accidental attack by the American destroyer by placing his ship between the Americans and the helpless cable layer, saving many lives in the ship. He had kept a fair command of his ship. He had sent a few men to the cells, but only when absolutely required; for most incidents his punishment was light. He had fought for the crew, sometimes defying orders so his men could have a rest or a Christmas in port. The crew of *Trentonian* felt an absolute loyalty to their skipper because they knew that same respect and loyalty was also shared by Harrison.

Despite the news, the ship still had work to do. Later that day *Trentonian* departed Sheerness with TBC 49, one of the smaller convoys, consisting of three ships, of which they were the sole escort. The ships arrived at Milford Haven on January 28 after an uneventful voyage. A parcel containing a new selection of library books awaited them there.[34]

Preparations began to make *Trentonian* tidy for the arrival of the new commanding officer. Covertly, preparations were also made to give the skipper a fitting send-off. During the next two days, the crew took advantage of any moment with Harrison to express their best wishes and regret concerning his departure.

Harrison spent his final days in *Trentonian* preparing for the administrative side of the transfer of command, finishing paperwork, logs, forms, and reviewing the final draft of the defects list prepared by Warrant Engineer Hindle for the upcoming refit.

On January 30, Harrison gave temporary command to his executive officer, Lt. Kinsman. The two officers made their way through the ship to the outer decks where the officers and men had gathered to say goodbye to Lt.-Commander Harrison. As he stepped onto the gangway, he turned and saluted the quarterdeck. Lieutenant Kinsman ordered the piping party to pipe the side one last time. Harrison turned and walked down the ladder to the cheers of the men.

14: A New Commanding Officer

I was lucky in succeeding Lt. Cdr. Harrison, an excellent officer and so I inherited a well-trained crew and a group of excellent officers.

— Lt. Colin S. Glassco, RCNVR, Commanding Officer, HMCS *Trentonian*^[1]
Lieutenant Colin S. Glassco, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, arrived aboard *Trentonian* on January 31 to take over his new command.

Glassco had joined the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve at *Star* Hamilton, in July 1940. His first command was the naval reserve unit, *Nonsuch*, in Edmonton, Alberta, which he held from April 1941 to June 1942. He then took command of the naval reserve unit, *Discovery*, in Vancouver, British Columbia, from June 1942 to July 1943.

Lieutenant Glassco joined his first ship, *Ville De Quebec*, nicknamed *VDQ*, a Flower-class corvette, in July 1943 as its executive officer. He remained with this ship until taking command of *Trentonian*.^[2]

The new commanding officer was first introduced to his officers and then the crew was called together for introductions and instructions. As many of the crew expected, a new old man came with new rules. One of the first rules Glassco laid down was that no one was permitted on deck while underway without a life jacket on, and there would be no exceptions. This was a rule he brought with him from *VDQ*. Glassco was surprised that fourteen men of his new crew could not swim.

This alone was enough to spark murmurs amongst the men. They would have to wear the bulky RCN-issue life jackets while attempting to perform even the most menial duties on deck. The men expected to wear them during action stations, but having to wear them all the time was going to make their work harder.

The first order of business for the new CO was to review the defects list for the upcoming refit with Lt. Kinsman and Warrant Engineer Hindle. This was a very extensive list, containing thirty-six pages of items needing repair, replacement, reworking, alterations, extensive maintenance, or installation.^[3]

Trentonian had now been in service for over fourteen months, working at wartime capacity without the benefit of returning for what would be normal maintenance during peacetime. Many items were beginning to wear out, including the vent that had been damaged in Bermuda. It had been repaired following the incident and several times since, but still continued to leak, causing the forward mess deck to always be wet.

All of the machinery was to be overhauled and rebuilt or replaced, new voice pipes installed, ventilation and insulation improved, hammock rails in the deck heads of the messes replaced, and all the weapon and electronic systems were to be reworked as well.^[4]

The biggest alteration to the ship would not be visible from the outside, but would drastically change the chief and petty officers' mess in the stern. The mess was to be completely gutted and the hammock rails removed. A bulkhead would be placed down the centre and bunks installed on one side with a sitting area for the chiefs and POs on the other. There would be no more swinging from the deck head for senior ratings.^[5]

In Trenton a letter was posted in the local newspaper from one of *Trentonian's* crew. Doug Excell, ERA4 from New Westminster, British Columbia, had written to R.J. Whitley, chairman of the *Trentonian* Committee.

I believe the general practice is for us to write to a young lady, but in my case I did not join the ship till last March and it was not until today that I heard of the young ladies writing to us, so as I have no address but yours, I will write this short note to you and you can pass it along to the members.

I wish to thank you for all the gifts that you folks have sent along to us and I want you to

know that we appreciate them. A big bunch of gift cigarettes have arrived from you the last short while and they are gifts from heaven as far as we are concerned. We are on English rations over here and there is as much difference in the cigarettes over here and our own as there is between night and day, so it is a real treat for us to smoke good old Canadian cigarettes for a change. The wallets arrived safely and they are very nice and something we are all very proud of.

You may not have read about us in the papers but let me assure you that we are not idle and we are doing our share of the job. Some day you will be able to hear about our exploits.

To one and all of you, thanks a lot for the gifts and they are greatly appreciated. Good luck to you all.[\[6\]](#)



Lt. Colin S. Glassco, RCNVR, from Hamilton, Ontario.

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

On February 1, 1945, the pipe was made, "prepare for leaving harbour, special sea duty men close up to stations for leaving harbour." One of the liberty boats from Milford

Haven came alongside with crewmen who had been ashore the night before. They had been stranded in the town by a dense fog the night before.

Under the watchful eye of the new old man, the crew grumbled as they put on their RCN-issue life jackets and closed up to their respective stations for getting underway. Under the lingering heavy fog, *Trentonian* started to glide through the still water of Milford Haven.

Getting underway had been performed the same as any other time, with one exception. One of *Trentonian*'s crew was missing. Stoker Bill Shields had been ashore the night before and had not reported back. The ship sailed out of the harbour without him at 0700; Shields was now considered Absent With Out Leave.[\[7\]](#)

This was *Trentonian*'s first convoy under her new CO. Convoy BTC 56 consisted of twenty-two merchants ships bound for Southend. As they made their way along the Cornish coast, *Trentonian* was joined by HMS *Armeria* to assist with the escort. The weather persisted with fog and increasing rain. The wind and the seas got heavier. The next day *Trentonian* was detached from convoy BTC 56, leaving *Armeria* as sole escort, and turned towards Milford Haven.

They had been reassigned to a larger convoy sailing from Milford Haven on February 3. Convoy BTC 58 consisted of thirty-eight ships also bound for Southend. Assisting with the escort was their chummy ship *Moose Jaw* and HMS *Mignonette*.

The weather continued to deteriorate and, at its worst, had blown up to a stiff gale, spreading the convoy out over forty-eight miles. By the time they reached the Isle of Wright, the storm had abated, but the thick fog had returned and the entire convoy had to come to anchor to wait for the weather to clear.[\[8\]](#)

Convoy BTC 58 arrived at Southend in the Thames Estuary on February 6. Waiting for the ship at Southend was their missing crewman, Stoker Bill Shields.[\[9\]](#)

Shields was met by the jimmy (executive officer) when he boarded and was informed that he was charged with being AWOL and would be sent for punishment.[\[10\]](#) Kinsman then took him before Glassco.

This was the first time that Shields had met the old man and he was already on defaulters. Lieutenant Glassco asked the young sailor what had happened and why he missed the sailing. Shields explained that he had met some of the men in Milford Haven at 2200 the night before *Trentonian* sailed. They had told him the liberty boats would not take them back in the fog and that they needed to find a bed for the night, for *Trentonian* was sailing at 0800.[\[11\]](#) He had found a bed at the local hospital and in the morning he went down to the jetty to take the liberty boat back to the ship. That's when he was informed that the ship had already sailed.

Shields then reported to the shore authorities at Milford Haven. He was given travel papers and caught a train from Milford Haven to Southend, arriving there later the same day.[\[12\]](#)

Trentonian was not scheduled to arrive until February 4, so he was placed in the RN barracks and assigned duties. He had peeled potatoes for the mess and done other jobs with the defaulters. But *Trentonian* hadn't arrived until February 6, so he had continued to work with the defaulters until that morning.[\[13\]](#)

Shields explained to Glassco that he had not intentionally missed the ship; it was an error of communication. Glassco accepted the explanation and, contrary the XO's recommendation, let Shields off without punishment.[\[14\]](#)

The next day, February 7, 1945, *Trentonian* and *Moose Jaw* departed Southend with convoy TBC 62 heading back to Milford Haven. The convoy was thirteen ships; all but two were new British Park ships and American liberty ships. The two older ships were built in 1918 and 1919 and not capable of the same speeds as the newer ships. The convoy moved slowly but arrived safely at Milford Haven on February 10, 1945.[\[15\]](#) Lieutenant Glassco received his first letter from Hazel Farley in Trenton. It congratulated

him on his new command and outlined what the Corvette Committee in Trenton was doing for his ship.[16]

Once secure in harbour, shore leave was granted. Several of the men headed off to the hospital to visit their mate Gordon Gibbins. He was quite pleased to have the company. They told Gibbins about the old man, the recent trip to Sheerness, and generally brought him up to speed on what was happening in the ship.[17]

They also discreetly presented Gibbins with a whole chicken they had liberated from the galley.[18] Gibbins took the chicken and tucked it safely away to eat later when the hospital ward was not as busy; he didn't want to get caught with food or get his mates in trouble for stealing a chicken.[19] When he finally did get to eat it later, he found the chicken was tasteless and rubbery — his mates had stolen a raw chicken. He covered the chicken carcass back up and, being confined to his bed, threw the chicken into a corner of the ward, hoping that when it was found he would not be blamed.[20]

Trentonian was once again starting to look grungy; the ship had not had a fresh coat of paint since November. The ship had a few days in port planned so Glassco turned the crew out to paint ship. Once again the men began the task of chipping and scraping the old paint away. The drab false hull camouflage was covered over, and once again the diamond and geometric patterns of light and dark grey were painted on the hull and upperworks. A broad band was painted on the top of her funnel.

While alongside the jetty, a new crew member wandered on board. A local mutt decided to check out the ship and then take up residence in *Trentonian*. The ship had been without a mascot since AB O'Brian had died. This new dog was very friendly and seemed quite at home in the ship; the men adopted it quickly.



Demonstrating what seemed to be a sailor's primary duty — chipping and scraping for painting ship — a group of Trentonians take a moment and cross brushes for the camera.

Photo credit: SBA A. Singleton, courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

After the painting was complete, *Trentonian* was sent into the Irish Sea on an anti-submarine patrol to investigate U-boat activity that had been reported there. After an extended search, the ship returned to Milford Haven without having made any contacts.[21]

On return to harbour, AB Gordon Gibbins returned to the ship after his stay in the hospital. *Trentonian* once again had its full complement.

The Forty-first Escort Group underwent a few changes. *Lunenburg* joined the group on February 18, fresh from refit in Canada. Two days later, *Trentonian* cheered their chummy ship *Lindsay* as it slipped from Milford Haven for the last time. *Lindsay* was on its way back to Canada for refit and repairs from its collision with HMS *Brilliant*, a destroyer.[22]

Trentonian and *Lindsay* came to the United Kingdom together and the crew knew that their turn to head back to Canada was not far away. Some of the men speculated that the old man had ordered the ship to be painted so they could look their best sailing back into Halifax harbour.

The morning of February 21 brought bad news from home for AB Robert Gray from Toronto, Ontario. His wife had sent a cable dated the eighteenth, "June died very suddenly last night, family very upset. You notify David, letter following, all my love Florence." [23] Unfortunately for Gray there was not enough time for him to act on the solemn message. *Trentonian* was preparing to get underway.

Glassco had been called into the FOIC Milford Haven that morning along with the skipper of *Moose Jaw*. The two skippers were informed that there was an escort job to be done and it only required one escort ship. The FOIC gave the two skippers the choice as to whose ship would do the next job. Both men being gentlemen, they offered their own ship for the duty. After much friendly debate, they decided to "toss a coin," with the winner going on to escort the convoy. Winning the toss, Glassco returned to *Trentonian* and gave the order for "harbour stations, prepare to get underway." [24] As the men were getting ready to leave Milford Haven, it didn't take long for word of the old man's morning activities to spread through the ship. The men grumbled, "the old man might be trying to prove himself, but we have been here all along." They thought leaving one's fate to a coin toss was not a good omen.

Steady work pushed the complaints aside. The berthing lines were singled up and the order came to pull in the gangway. Stoker Bruce Keir remembers the new mascot sitting quietly on deck watching the entire procedure. Just as the gangway was to be pulled in, he bolted for it and jumped onto the jetty, and, without a single look back, the dog casually walked away from *Trentonian*. [25]

Several of the crew who witnessed the event thought the mutt ungrateful; they had fed and taken care of the dog and this is the thanks they got? Some of the more superstitious of the crew looked at each other and said it was too bad they couldn't join him.

Trentonian departed Milford Haven and joined her convoy in the Bristol Channel at 1730. [26] Convoy BTC 76 consisted of two large liberty ships and twelve smaller coastal trawlers arranged in two columns with the liberty ships leading each. The convoy travelled at a speed of seven knots with *Trentonian* screening ahead. [27] The convoy commodore, Commander Greenwood, RNR, was in the first ship in the port column, S.S. *Walter Christiansen*. [28]

Stoker Les Majoros of Hamilton, Ontario, remembers the mood in the ship began to improve as the rumour that they were going to escort this convoy all the way to Antwerp started to spread through the ship. [29] Bad omens and extra work were quickly forgotten. This would be their first time in Belgium and the men looked forward to getting this convoy to its destination.

15: Lives Forever Changed

The conduct of the Officers and men appears to have been of the highest order.

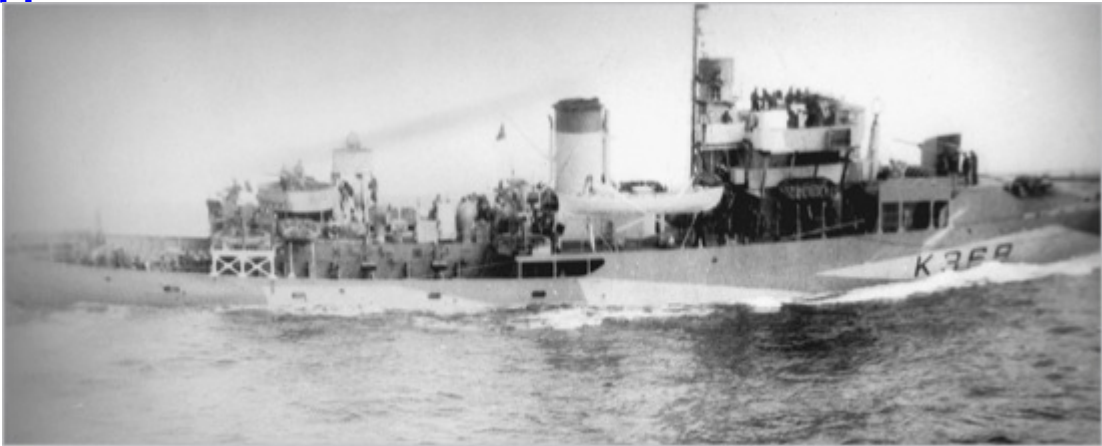
— Commander R.T. White, DSO, RN, president, Board of Inquiry^[1]

The route of the convoy took them along familiar waters. The evening of February 21, 1945, found them along the Cornish coast. By morning, the convoy had rounded Land's End in a dense fog.

The fog lifted by 1030 and, with visibility improving, the radar set was switched to standby. The ship was at cruising stations, which meant lookouts had been posted, two on the bridge and three in the stern.^[2]

Off in the distance they could make out a lone destroyer approaching the convoy. As the distance between *Trentonian* and the sleek destroyer closed, they were able to identify her as *Algonquin*, one of the V-class destroyers. *Algonquin* flashed a signal to *Trentonian*, "Good Hunting, we are going home for refit." Glassco acknowledge "God Luck and God's Speed."

In *Trentonian* most of the men were able to read the signal as it was flashed and spelled it out for those that couldn't. Collectively, they gave *Algonquin* a cheer; individually, they thought, *those bastards, rubbing our noses in it. It will be our turn next.*^[3]



HMCS Trentonian off Land's End on February 22, 1945. The crew are standing regular sea keeping stations, lookouts are visible on the bridge and stern, weapons are manned and ready.

Photo courtesy Directorate of Naval History and Heritage.

The English Channel was busy as usual; convoys and escorts were everywhere, moving up and down the coast. The sheer volume of marine traffic posed its own hazards in addition to the enemy. Fortunately, the Channel was calm, with good visibility, from six to ten miles, and winds were light.^[4] *Trentonian* remained in a position three- to four-thousand yards directly ahead of the convoy, steering an irregular zigzag course at ten knots.^[5] The radar remained on standby as visibility was good; the asdic operator was performing a continuous sweep from forty degrees starboard to forty degrees port.^[6]

The normal daily routine of *Trentonian* continued uninterrupted. At 1130, the afternoon watch was called for lunch in preparation for going on watch. At 1200, Lt. Abbott, as navigator, took his noonday fix of the sun with the sextant while waiting for the watch to close up. Below decks, the daily issue of grog was carefully measured and issued to the men. As the forenoon watch was relieved, they too went below for lunch and rest. Finally, Lt. Abbott received the report from the outgoing officer-of-the-watch and took over the afternoon watch from *Trentonian's* bridge.^[7]

Shortly thereafter, at 1220, the convoy was joined by a tug towing a floating crane escorted by Royal Navy motor launch *ML600*. The tug, crane, and motor launch took up a position at the rear of the starboard column.^[8] Below decks, several of the men

were trying to get some rest; AB Gordon Gibbons had lain down on the bench in the communications mess,^[9] while two of the men in the stokers' mess had put on boxing gloves for a friendly sparring session.^[10]

The calm, sunny afternoon suddenly and violently shattered with the sight of a terrible explosion. The second ship in the port column, SS *Alexander Kennedy*, exploded at 1320.^[11] The men in *Trentonian* watched in astonishment as a great geyser of water, smoke, and flame rose from the stricken merchant ship's hull. This was followed a few seconds later by the deafening boom of an explosion and the grinding sound of metal being ripped apart. Every man on deck felt the deep, chest penetrating concussion of the explosion.

Lieutenant Abbott immediately rang action stations and ordered all watertight doors to be closed and secured.^[12] As *Alexander Kennedy* was on the port side of the convoy, Abbott ordered *Trentonian* turned to port to search for the submarine on that side. At the same time, the asdic operator in *Trentonian* reported to the bridge a contact directly ahead of the convoy.^[13] Glassco immediately came to the bridge from his sea cabin one deck below and Abbott gave the commanding officer his report.^[14] After taking over from Abbott, the skipper considered the bearing and distance of the torpedoed ship and decided the reported asdic contact was a highly improbable position for a submarine to attack the port side of the convoy. Abbott agreed with Glassco's analysis. The skipper ordered the turn to port continued, the CAT gear streamed, and speed increased to fourteen knots.^[15]

Now relieved, Abbott took up his position as navigating officer in the plotting room off the bridge and fixed the ship's position for first contact with the enemy.^[16]

Kinsman was in his cabin when action stations sounded. He immediately commenced a quick inspection to ensure the lower decks were cleared and all watertight doors secured. He then proceeded to the boat deck to ensure that communications were set up and the crew were in their proper action stations.^[17]

Kinsman then made his way to the bridge. He was met by an officer who informed him that one of the merchant ships had been torpedoed. Once on the bridge he reported "action stations closed up" to Glassco. Kinsman was apprised of the situation and then, using the PA system, updated the crew: "There has been a merchant ship torpedoed, heads up and keep a sharp lookout!" Kinsman returned to the main deck to ensure the supply parties were closed up.^[18]

Every man was in position. The forward gun, two-pounder, and all six oerlikons were manned by the gunners and ammunition supply parties. The depth charge throwers and rails were ready for an immediate attack. Senior members of the crew were at their stations in communications, steering, radar, asdic, plot, and engine and boiler rooms. All other men made up the lookouts, supply parties, damage control and fire-fighting parties, and first aid parties. Every man knew his job and together they had done this many times before.

The men on deck watched as *Alexander Kennedy* came to a stop and began to settle in the water; the crew was already starting to abandon ship.

Glassco sent a signal to the commander-in-chief, Plymouth, "Emergency — ALEC KENNEDY torpedoed, commencing observant." Included with the signal was the estimated position of the attack.^[19]

The skipper then sent a message by visual signal to the convoy commodore in *Walter Christiansen* asking which side the merchantman had been torpedoed. Commander Greenwood's reply was brief, "Starboard Side." Glassco then ordered *Trentonian's* course changed so they would pass through the convoy and be able to start a search on the starboard side of the convoy.^[20]

Lieutenant Stephen, as anti-submarine control officer, reported to the bridge from his position in the stern that the CAT gear had been streamed and was working

properly.[21]

Glassco sent a signal to Commander Greenwood requesting that one of the merchant ships be designated a rescue ship to aid the survivors. Eighteen of *Alexander Kennedy*'s crew would survive the attack; one man, Lamp Trimmer Alexander Tait, was killed.[22]

Trentonian passed through the port column of the convoy, just astern of the commodore's ship on *Trentonian*'s port side and the sinking *Alexander Kennedy* on its starboard side. Stoker Bill Shields recalls watching the poor merchant sailors in the cold waters of the Channel and saying how glad it wasn't them.[23]

As *Trentonian* approached the starboard column, another large explosion was heard directly astern of the ship. Glassco called down to Lt. Stephen in the quarterdeck to identify if the CAT gear had been struck by a torpedo. Stephen replied that it was the boilers of the sinking merchant ship exploding. *Alexander Kennedy* was now directly astern of *Trentonian*.[24]

The skipper gave the order, "Stand by to drop one charge from the rails at 150 foot setting." The men on the quarterdeck readied a single depth charged in an attempt to regain the earlier asdic contact. At the same time, Glassco sent Kinsman to the quarterdeck to drop a DAN buoy to mark the start location of the search.[25]

At full speed, *Trentonian* passed through the starboard side of the convoy; between the first and second ships in the column. The convoy commodore flashed a signal to *Trentonian*: there was a disturbance in the water behind the ship. This was thought to be the CAT gear hydroplaning on the water.[26]

Trentonian had just cleared the convoy at 1330 when a violent explosion was felt throughout the ship and they abruptly slewed to starboard.[27] Debris rained down on *Trentonian*'s bridge, causing Glassco and the men to duck for cover. From his position on the forward four-inch gun, AB Frank Barron recalls hearing the sound of metal crashing down on the gun shield. When they looked, they thought they recognized what was left of the spare CAT gear, normally stored on the quarterdeck, lying on the fo'c'sle.[28]

Trentonian's engines immediately began to race. The propeller had been ripped from the shaft and the entire ship trembled violently with the bent propeller shaft spinning at high speed.[29]

The surreal scene in the after part of the ship was unlike anything the men had ever experienced. The oerlikon in the waist had been knocked off its mounting; the after oerlikon and mounting were missing, blown completely from the ship; the starboard side depth charge rail was lying on top of the port side rail; the entire quarterdeck had been lifted; twisted metal and destruction lay all about the after starboard side of the ship. Many of the men were dazed by the force of the explosion, having been thrown to the deck or slammed against the side of the ship. Bodies were lying scattered on *Trentonian*'s deck. One man was killed instantly by the force of the explosion and, to the horror of the crew, another had been decapitated. A third had lost his arm. Several sailors suffered severe wounds and broken bones, one lay in a heap on the deck, screaming in pain, as the jagged end of the broken bone of his upper leg had pierced through his pants.[30]

Other men had been blown into the water and were floating in their life jackets near the stricken ship, unconscious, while others called to their shipmates for help. Lieutenant Stephen, who had been standing where the torpedo hit, was seen unconscious, floating in the water with the blood streaming from his head staining the sea around him.[31]

One of the young sailors had been trapped inside the twisted metal, alive and conscious, screaming to be cut free.[32]

On the bridge, Glassco ordered "stop engines"; Warrant Engineer Hindle in the engine room immediately shut them down.[33] The unbroken hum and subtle vibration that had

been a constant for the crew for so many months — the reassurance that their ship was alive, well, and safe — ceased to be. *Trentonian*'s heart was silenced.

Hindle immediately ordered the three men with him in the engine room to evacuate.^[34] Water was coming into the space from behind the after bulkhead, which had been bent into the engine room. He then called the boiler room and instructed the stokers to shut down the boilers and clear out.^[35]

Stoker Sydney Coates answered Hindle's call and in the background he could hear the water rushing into the engine room. He shouted to the other men in the boiler room and told them, "WE'RE SINKING, GET OUT!" Fortunately, their space was not yet flooding; the stokers were able to shut down the boilers and scramble up the ladder to the hatch. Coates remembers when they reached the hatch on the main deck, it was jammed. Through the small porthole they could see that the deck was already awash and knew they faced certain death if they were trapped in the compartment. The three stokers heaved on the handle, afraid it would break. When the hatch suddenly gave way, they were able to force their way onto the open deck. Waist high water swirled around them.^[36]

Lieutenant Kinsman was on the ladder to the boat deck when the torpedo struck and knocked him against the side of the ship. Immediately he detailed Engine Room Artificer George Goar from Toronto, Ontario, to locate the engineering officer and get a damage report.^[37]

From the bridge, Glassco could see the ship was settling quickly by the stern and ordered the crew to "STAND BY BOATS AND FLOATS!"^[38] The skipper felt there was not enough time to send a wireless message, so he ordered the signalman to send a visual message to the convoy commodore requesting him to send a message to Plymouth reporting that *Trentonian* had been torpedoed.^[39]

The crew moved the wounded to the rails while another group desperately attempted to free their young shipmate from the twisted metal of the quarterdeck, even as the stern of the ship quickly sank.

Signalman Jack MacIver recalls one of the depth-charge party started to remove the detonators from the ninety-seven depth charges located on *Trentonian*'s deck. The rating slowly crawled through the wreckage, trying to reach each three hundred pound canister of explosives. If one of the depth charges remained armed, it would explode while the ship sank, severely wounding or killing any men in the water.^[40]

Once on deck, Warrant Engineer Hindle examined the damage to *Trentonian*. The engine room was flooding rapidly, and when Hindle moved aft, the chief and petty officers' mess was already flooded. The hole from the torpedo could not be fixed. The entire after part of the ship was full of water and could not be saved. He sent ERA Goar to the XO with his report.^[41]

Kinsman returned to the bridge and reported to Glassco that the flooding could not be stopped, the entire after part of the ship was flooded into the engine room, and once the water passed through to the boiler room, the ship would sink.

Glassco gave the order, "ABANDON SHIP!" at 1334; four minutes had elapsed from the moment the torpedo had slammed into *Trentonian*'s hull.^[42] Kinsman repeated the order over the loud speaker.^[43]

This was an order no one had ever expected to hear in *Trentonian*. They had practised this in Bermuda and in some way always knew it was a possibility, but the reality of hearing that order over the loud speaker was a shock to the entire crew.

That one order set in motion a series of events that were almost automatic for the men. There was no panic, each man knew his job and set about performing his duties.

Lieutenant Abbot gathered the code books and charts and locked them away while others were placed in weighted bags and dumped over the side, ensuring they would sink to the bottom of the Channel. The recognition signals were immediately burned on

the bridge.[\[44\]](#)

The wounded men close to the ship's whaler were placed into the boat; those that could not be moved were secured into their life jackets and lowered over the side. The dead were left where they lay. The men secured the sailor who had lost his arm as best they could into his tattered life jacket and he slid into the water. They watched as his lifeless body floated for a moment and then slipped from the damaged life jacket. He vanished beneath the water.

On the quarterdeck the men attempting to free their shipmate from the wreckage were forced to abandon the young sailor. His pleas for rescue silenced as his head disappeared under the water, still trapped, and now entombed.

The men left the ship. Those on the quarterdeck no longer had to jump, with *Trentonian* sinking by the stern they simply swam off the deck.

The ship's whaler was lowered into the water and the Carley Floats were cast off.

Stoker Bruce Keir remembers he was unable to release the line securing his float, forcing him to abandon ship without one.[\[45\]](#) Stoker Sydney Coates also couldn't get his to release. With his action station in the boiler room, he was one of the few men that did not have a life jacket on, so releasing his Carley Float was especially important. Just as he had finally given up, one of the gunners came by and tossed him an extra life jacket. Coates put it on and jumped over the side. When he surfaced, the Carley Float that he could not release came crashing down next to him, almost striking him on the head.[\[46\]](#)

On the forward gun deck, AB Gordon Gibbons took off his sea boots and placed them neatly under one of the ammunition lockers, thinking he might be able to retrieve them later, and jumped over the side.[\[47\]](#) The bow of *Trentonian* had started to rise out of the water; as the men on the stern could walk off the ship, those on the bow were facing a steadily higher jump.

Stoker Les Majoros left his action station near the skipper's cabin and made his way to the rail. He paused and looked down to the water that was steadily gaining height below him. One of the senior ratings passed by and curtly stated, "What are you waiting for?" and, with a forceful shove, pushed him over the side. Majoros recalls striking the frigid water and sinking deep into the cold. When he finally surfaced, he swam as fast and as far from the sinking ship as he could.[\[48\]](#)

Able Seaman Hayward was beside his friend AB Runtz. As the two men were getting ready to jump from the ship, Hayward looked over and realized Runtz had taken off his shoes — the same shoes they had spent an entire precious day of shore leave trying to find. With several curt words reminding his friend that he was unlikely to find another pair, Runtz put his size twelve shoes back on and the two men jumped into the water.[\[49\]](#)

Just then, another one of those surreal moments occurred. As the men in the water were watching *Trentonian's* bow steadily rise, Lt. Dodds stepped up to the rail of the gun deck and, with a single leap, performed a most graceful swan dive.[\[50\]](#) Many of the crew saw this singular athletic feat, forever earning the young officer the admiration of the men and the endearing nick name "Swan Dive" Dodds.[\[51\]](#)

Signalman Jack MacIver had been in the after gun tub when the torpedo hit. The concussion from the explosion under the deck had broken both his ankles and thrown him into the air, gashing his head when he landed. He had crawled over the gun deck railings and lowered himself feet first to the deck with a painful crash. He then made his way to the next railing, lowering himself over the side, hanging above the main deck below him. Knowing the intense pain that was waiting for him as his broken ankles would once again strike the steel deck below, he could not let go. One of his mates seeing his hesitation came over and told him to let go; MacIver could not. His mate, acting in MacIver's best interest, then stomped on both his hands forcing him to release

his grip. Unknown to MacIver, the main deck under him was already below water and he crashed into the sea.[\[52\]](#)

Lieutenant Glassco and Lt. Kinsman were now alone on *Trentonian's* bridge. From their position they could see the forward gun deck and fo'c'sle had been cleared as well as the after part of the ship. *Trentonian* started to list to starboard and the two men made their way down to the boat deck, ensuring that the superstructure was clear and no one remained behind.[\[53\]](#)

Once on the boat deck the two officers were met by the navigating officer, Lt. Abbott.[\[54\]](#) Together they made one final check to ensure that no one alive was still on board. Kinsman then climbed into the whaler and ordered the boat to slip from *Trentonian's* starboard side. The boat crew pulled as hard as they could to clear *Trentonian*, fearing their ship might roll on top of them.[\[55\]](#)

With the boat deck and the base of the funnel now under water, Abbott, followed by Lt. Glassco, still wearing his cap,[\[56\]](#) simply stepped off the port side boat deck of the ship into the frigid water of the English Channel. The skipper was the last man to leave *Trentonian*.[\[57\]](#)

Trentonian's bow continued to rise until it was almost vertical. A loud, musical crash came from the ship. The piano, a donation from the citizens of Trenton and played by so many of the crew, broke from its mountings and crashed into the bulkhead inside the ship.

For many of the men in the water, their last sight of *Trentonian* was seeing it standing upright, the bow towering towards the sky. Chief Petty Officer Roberts was along the hull, in his lifejacket, caught in the suction of the sinking ship. The coxswain would push off from the hull with his legs and swim a few feet before the suction would drag him back against the hull, only to bravely repeat his attempt at escape again and again. For the men, time seemed to stop as they watched the dreamlike vision of *Trentonian's* last moments unfolding before them. They watched as the ship started to slip below the sea, going straight down from vertical, the white ensign still flying.

Trentonian's pennant numbers slowly disappeared, one at a time, K — 3 — 6 — 8, on the starboard side.

The suction was ultimately too much for Chief Roberts and he disappeared below the water.

A moment later the bow of *Trentonian* disappeared in a large silent swirl of water. The time was 1340. It had been ten minutes since the torpedo struck.

His Majesty's Canadian Ship *Trentonian* was gone.



*Artist Henry Winsor's painting of HMCS Trentonian in its final moments on February 22, 1945.
Painting courtesy of the artist, Henry Winsor.*

16: Rescue and the Hunt for U-1004

The behavior of the entire ship's company was of a very high order and reflects great credit on them and on the discipline of the ship. It is undoubtedly due to this fact that the rescue operations were carried out with such efficiency.

— Lt. C.S. Glassco, RCNVR, Commanding Officer, HMCS *Trentonian*^[1]

Following the sinking, the sea was calm and the silence deafening. The men in the water, the Carley Floats, and in the whaler waited breathlessly. If a single depth charge on *Trentonian* had not been made safe, the water below them would erupt in a horrendous explosion.

Each depth charge had three hundred pounds of explosive, and *Trentonian* carried one hundred of them. The crew may have survived the sinking, but many of them could still be killed or seriously wounded.

Seconds after the ship disappeared, a bubble of water erupted from the sea and there was the coxswain. Released from the suction, Chief Roberts had been propelled to the surface by his lifejacket and burst through the water, to the relief of the entire crew.

Coughing and sputtering, Roberts made his way to the nearest Carley Float.

Although the English Channel was filled with ships, the men were now alone. The convoy could not stop; there was a German U-boat in the area and any ship that attempted a rescue ran the risk of causing another catastrophe.

The men were on their own; their immediate rescue was their own responsibility.

Kinsman and the boat crew started to pick up the wounded and bring them into the whaler.^[2] Lieutenant Stephen was one of the first to be brought into the boat. He was still unconscious with a terrible head wound.

Kinsman then gathered the men that had started to drift away and brought them to Carley Floats.^[3] The men in the floats started to bring the rafts together to make rescue easier and keep the crew together.

Glassco climbed onto one of the floats. Many of the men reflected that the skipper's order a few weeks ago had in fact saved many of their lives; no one drowned after the sinking. There were over fourteen men in *Trentonian* that could not swim.^[4]

The ships in the convoys around *Trentonian* had witnessed the attack and watched *Trentonian* and *Alexander Kennedy* sink. *ML600* came forward from its position at the rear of the convoy and started a search for the submarine. A Royal Navy sloop that was escorting a convoy directly behind BTC 76 raced toward the location to join the search.

The men watched, waiting, hoping they would be quickly avenged. They expected to see the submarine driven to the surface in a concentrated attack, or better yet, destroyed by the horrific underwater explosions of a depth charge attack.

Their attacker had been *U-1004*, a VIIC-class U-boat fitted with Schnorchel. As part of the Eleventh Flotilla, it had left Bergen, Norway, under the command of Oberleutnant zur See Rudolf Hinz. This was *U-1004*'s second patrol of the war, having been commissioned into the German Navy on December 16, 1943, fifteen days after *Trentonian* was commissioned. The attack on BTC 76 was the U-boat's first successful attack.

U-1004's skipper, Rudolf Hinz, was born in Berlin on February 22, 1920, and took command of the submarine in January 1945, almost the same time as Glassco took command of *Trentonian*. *U-1004*'s skipper and crew had a great deal to celebrate with the attack and sinking of *Trentonian* and *Alexander Kennedy* on their skipper's twenty-fifth birthday. But before any celebrations could begin, the U-boat needed to escape. Hinz ordered *U-1004* to dive deep and make its way away from the location of the attack.^[5]

On the surface, some of the men started to complain about the time they had recently

spent giving *Trentonian* a new coat of paint. Able Seaman Eric Muff commented on all the rum in the spirit locker going to the fishes.[\[6\]](#) The group of men with Lt. Abbott began to sing,[\[7\]](#) while others commented on what they would do once ashore.[\[8\]](#) Some of the men were fighting hypothermia. The water they were in was one degree above freezing.[\[9\]](#) Quickly, the survivors began to experience fatigue and confusion; if they were not rescued soon they would face unconsciousness and death.

The RN sloop took over the search for the submarine. *ML600* broke off and commenced rescue operations. They arrived at the whaler within twenty minutes of *Trentonian* sinking. The wounded were the first moved into the motor launch. Lieutenant Stephen's condition had not changed; unconscious, he was taken gently into the ML.

Lieutenant Kinsman then took the boat and began a search for any crew members in need of immediate assistance while keeping watch for confidential books, charts, or records that may have surfaced.[\[10\]](#)

Within ten minutes of rescue, without regaining consciousness, Lt. Gordon Kent Stephen of Toronto, Ontario, succumbed to his wounds and died in *ML600*.[\[11\]](#)

The rescue efforts were joined by a second RN motor launch, *ML124*. It arrived on the scene and started to pick up the men in the Carley Floats. Many had to be physically lifted into the motor launch due to exhaustion and hypothermia.

Lieutenant Kinsman and the boat crew were ordered out of the whaler and into the motor launches and they started towards Falmouth. As a sailor was coiling a line on the stern of *ML124*, he noticed a feeble arm rising from behind one of the Carley Floats. The ML immediately came about and returned to find AB Gordon Gibbons, tucked behind the float. He had not been seen earlier and, realizing his rescue was about to leave, mustered what little strength he had left and raised his arm for help.[\[12\]](#) Gibbons was lifted into the launch, successfully ending the rescue operations. All of *Trentonian's* survivors were out of the freezing water within forty-five minutes of the sinking.[\[13\]](#)

The crews of both *ML600* and *ML124* were praised by Lt. Glassco for their rescue efforts and the comforts they provided to the *Trentonian's*.[\[14\]](#) Dry, warm blankets were provided along with hot beverages. Able Seaman George Hayward remembers everyone having a few good slugs of rum and scotch that were passed around by the crew of the ML.[\[15\]](#)

The search operations continued, though the RN sloop had not made contact with the submarine. Plymouth Command ordered the Canadian groups EG 6 and EG 26 to the area to start a concentrated search for the submarine under command of an RN frigate HMS *Duckworth*.[\[16\]](#)

En route to Falmouth, the officers started to do a head count of *Trentonian's* crew. There had been 101 crew members in the ship. They knew several had been killed and many wounded. Between the two motor launches, there were ninety-five men alive, with thirteen wounded, two seriously.[\[17\]](#) This included six officers and eighty-nine men.[\[18\]](#) The body of Lt. Stephen was in *ML600* ; this left five men missing. Between the members of the crew they were able to account for all the missing men, as they had witnessed the fate of each.

Many had witnessed the three men killed by the torpedo's explosion. These were AB Beck from Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, and, AB Catherine and LS Fournier, both from Windsor, Ontario. Their torn and shattered bodies had lain on *Trentonian's* deck while the others evacuated.

Others witnessed the loss of LS Harvey from Sydney, Nova Scotia, whose lifeless body slipped from his lifejacket and disappeared into the water. Most of the crew had heard the pleas of young Stoker McCormick from Belleville, Ontario, trapped in the wreckage on the quarterdeck.[\[19\]](#)

Because their bodies were not recovered, those five men would have to be classed as

missing-in-action. Despite the official designation, the survivors from *Trentonian* knew six of their shipmates had been killed.

The motor launches arrived at Falmouth. Medical staff and ambulances waited on the jetty to treat the wounded and transfer them to the hospital. Some of the wounds were horrendous. Stoker Sidney Atkinson from Vancouver, British Columbia, had serious trauma to his head, with extensive lacerations, and had lost an eye.^[20] Petty Officer Edwin Thorogood of Brantford, Ontario, had a serious compound fracture of his upper leg and a fractured arm.^[21] Both men were admitted to the Royal Cornwall Infirmary at Truro.^[22]

Eleven men were admitted to sick quarters at Falmouth with various degrees of injuries: Coder Peter Meyer (minor burns and a dislocated knee); Steward George Guthrie; AB Odell Hanson; Signalman Jack MacIver (two broken ankles and lacerations to his head); AB Lewis Karns; Stoker William Baril (large laceration above the eye and a sprained ankle); AB Lawrence Brako of Minnedosa; Telegrapher Vince Hadley (two lost teeth and lacerations to the face); Assistant Cook Lewis Murphy; and AB James Rickard of Port Arthur, ON.^[23]

The remaining men were taken to the Royal Navy barracks, where they were able to wash and get clean. Their clothes had to be discarded, as they were covered in oil, dirt, and grime. Replacement clothing was provided by the Royal Navy. Generally, the clothes consisted of whatever was at hand — no two men looked alike and there was a choice of two sizes, too big or too small. The men were given an assortment of coveralls and fleece survival suits; the truly unlucky ones wore hospital blue — hospital dress could cause a sailor to be refused a drink at the local pub.^[24]

Four of the men did retain articles of clothing: PO Ray Lounsbury and PO Bernard Roden had kept their life jackets and had no intentions of giving them up; Lt. Glassco was still wearing the salt water-soaked cap that remained on his head as he stepped off *Trentonian's* deck; and AB Weldon Runtz had his size twelve shoes, now turning concrete as the salt crystallized in the leather.^[25] The remainder of the crew were given size seven running shoes. Several men had to cut out the toes just to be able to get the shoes on their feet.^[26]

Despite the state of their clothing, after a hot meal several of the men managed to go into Falmouth for a visit to the local pubs. The only personal effects the men had was what had been in their pockets at the time of abandoning ship. As a result, most men had no money. AB Harold Salmon recalls a young lady insisting on giving him money to buy a beer and later running into the RN sailor who had pulled him into the motor launch.^[27]



Petty Officer Ray Lounsbury (right) and Petty Officer Bernard Roden, both of Vancouver, British Columbia, demonstrate the RCN-issue life jackets that saved their lives.

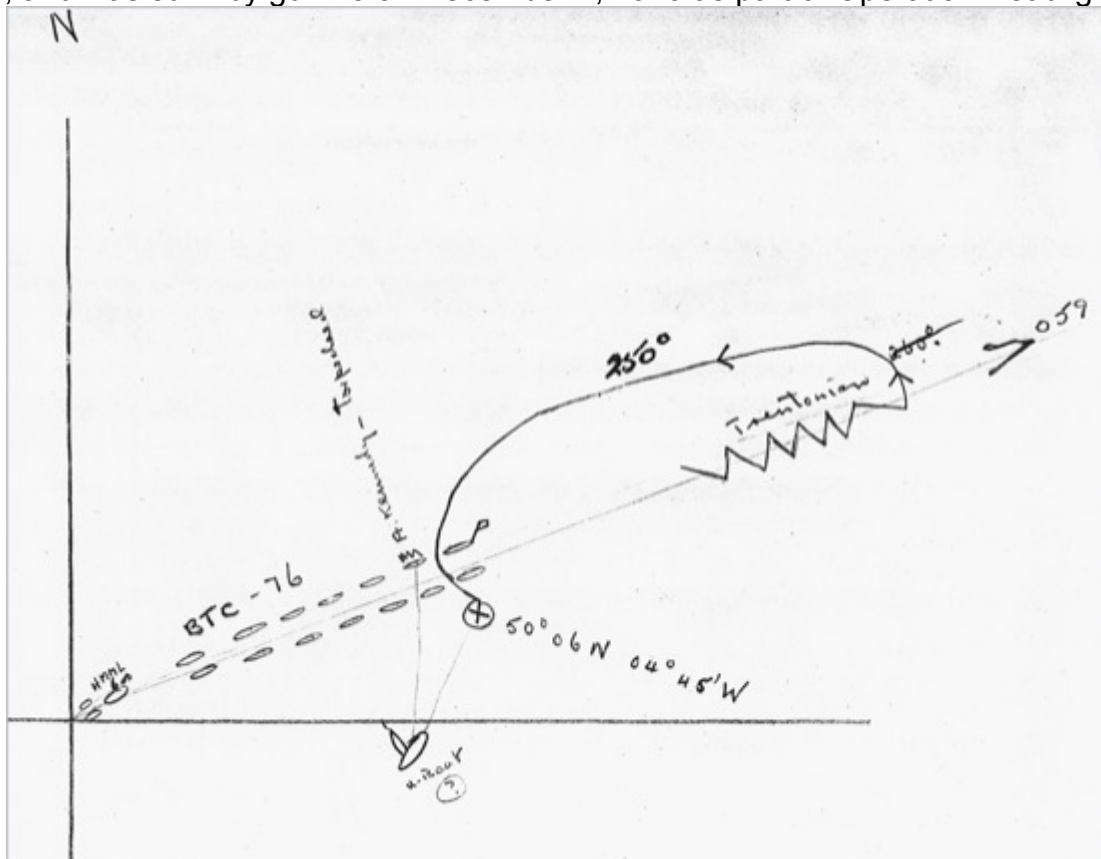
Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

EG 6 and EG 26 continued the search for *U-1004* during the afternoon. *Calgary* had a brief contact with a submarine in the evening, possibly *U-1004*, but was unable to press home a successful attack. The hunt for the German submarine continued through the night.^[28]

The morning of February 23, 1945, arrived with no changes for the wounded; everyone would survive their wounds. Thorogood and Atkinson, however, required many months of hospitalization.

Plymouth Command called off the search for the enemy submarine during the morning. The same difficult asdic conditions in the English Channel that allowed the German submarine to press home the attack also allowed the U-boat to escape.^[29]

Documents recovered after the war credit *U-1004* with attacking convoy BTC 76 and sinking *Trentonian* and *Alexander Kennedy*. Oberleutnant zur See Rudolf Hinz was decorated with the German Cross in Gold for his successful attack. *U-1004* had no other successes and was surrendered at Bergen, Norway, to the Royal Navy on May 9, 1945, and was sunk by gunfire on December 1, 1945 as part of Operation Deadlight.



Lt. Glassco submitted this sketch of the movements of *Trentonian* and convoy BTC 76 as part of his report.

Photo credit: Roger Litwiller, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, 81/520/8000, box 105, File 5 — HMCS *Trentonian*.

Following the loss of the ship, a multitude of paperwork began, starting with notification to the respective authorities. A signal had already been sent from the scene of the tragedy to Plymouth Command. Plymouth then notified the Canadian Naval Mission in London who then notified the government with the following letter, addressed February 23:

S E C R E T

I very much regret to inform you that HMCS TRENTONIAN was torpedoed and sunk during the early afternoon of the 22nd February, 1945, off Falmouth, Cornwall.

There were 95 survivors of whom two are seriously injured, 11 slightly injured, one officer was killed and five ratings are missing presumed killed.

This information has not been made public.[\[30\]](#)

As the letter indicates, news of *Trentonian's* loss was not made public right away. If the news of the successful attack were broadcast to the public immediately after the incident, the German Naval Authorities would know that their attack had been successful and that their submarine was being searched for. It would be over a month before news of *Trentonian's* loss was publically announced.

For Lt. Glassco, the paperwork was just beginning. A report detailing the actions of the crew and himself before and after *Trentonian* was attacked needed to be completed. As well, he needed to write a detailed account of the disposal of all code books, charts, and secret material in the ship; a complete nominal list of the crew, listing survivors, wounded, and the men who had been killed or were missing; and finally, letters to the families of the wounded and dead would have to be written.

There would be a Board of Inquiry to investigate the loss of *Trentonian* and, depending on the findings of the board, there could be a court martial. Lieutenant Glassco received notice that a Board of Inquiry was to be convened on February 27 in the Royal Navy Barracks, Plymouth, at 0930. He was to bring with him all reports, documentation, and witnesses necessary for the board to determine the cause of *Trentonian's* loss.[\[31\]](#)

Despite the secrecy surrounding *Trentonian's* loss, the families of the wounded needed to be notified that their loved ones were in hospital and the families of the men killed and missing had to be informed of their son's or husband's death.

In Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, the following telegram was received by Mrs. Bertha Beck: THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE FOR NAVAL SERVICES DEEPLY REGRETS TO REPORT THAT YOUR HUSBAND MOYLE KITCHENER BECK LEADING SEAMAN IS MISSING AT SEA. LETTER FOLLOWS.[\[32\]](#)

Similar telegrams were arriving at homes all across Canada for the other five men killed or missing and the families of the wounded.

One can only imagine the anguish and hardship these telegrams would cause to so many Canadian families. There are no details; these messages brought with them questions but no answers. The family of each man would be greatly distressed wondering what the fate of their loved one was.

Preparations for the funeral of Lt. Gordon Stephens began. Glassco had received a message that a Canadian Navy chaplain was being sent to Falmouth to preside over the service and visit with the men.[\[33\]](#)

While writing his reports, Glassco made a point of recommending five members of the crew for special praise and to be Mentioned-In-Dispatches. He stated Lt. William Kinsman; Warrant Engineer Hamilton Hindle; ERA Murray Angus of Smith Falls, Ontario; ERA Douglas Excell; and ERA George Goar, deserved special praise for their actions during the attack and while abandoning the ship. (See Appendix 1: Medals and Awards.)

In his official report, Lt. Glassco made a point of thanking the crews of the two RN motor launches for the expeditious rescue and the comfort and aid provided to his men by the two crews. He also remarked about the care and comfort provided to them by FOIC Falmouth and the RN barracks that his men had enjoyed since arriving in Falmouth. The Captains, Officers, and crews of the two rescuing M.L.'s, Numbers 600 and 124, deserve the highest praise for their efforts in picking up survivors, and their kindness in providing comforts for the men.

It is further desired to wholeheartedly thank Flag Officer In Charge Falmouth, and his staff, for the considerate and efficient manner in which the needs of the rescued officers and men were supplied. Everyone was most generous in providing every comfort for all concerned which contributed greatly in keeping up the morale of the men.[\[34\]](#)

Glassco chose his witnesses for the inquiry. Lieutenant Kinsman, Lt. Abbott, Warrant Engineer Hindle, ERA George Goar, and LS Jack Straw of Hamilton, Ontario, were to accompany him to Plymouth for the Board of Inquiry on the twenty-seventh.^[35] The rest of the crew spent the remainder of February 23 with the RCN Public Affairs Department giving interviews and taking photos for the press release that would be sent out across Canada when news of the sinking was made public.^[36] Royal Navy-issue great coats and caps were given out so the men looked like sailors. The caps had HMS on the cap tallies, so several of the men took them off — after all they were RCN. They were grouped together by province for the photos, and if there was a group from one particular area or city, those men were photographed separately. Several of the men gave interviews and quotes for publication. The media loves strong, brave, humorous statements like, “We sang while waiting rescue,” or “Every man did his duty,” or “We wasted all that time painting the ship.”

The wounded men did not escape the Public Affairs Department visit. The men in hospital were photographed in their beds in fresh hospital gowns, with clean dressings and full smiles — except for Telegrapher Vince Hadley, who had lost two teeth. Petty Officer Lounsbury was photographed wearing his precious lifejacket and a few of the crew had their picture taken with one of the ladies from the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRENS).

Command Chaplain E.G.B. Foote, RCN, arrived at Falmouth on February 24, 1945, and spent the morning with the men before officiating the burial service for Lt. Stephen and memorial service for the missing men.^[37] With his shipmates attending, Lt. Stephen was laid to rest at the Falmouth Cemetery with full military honours. Chaplain Foote ended the service with a prayer of thanksgiving for the ninety-five lives that had been spared.



Telegraphist Vince Hadley was thrown face down on Trentonian’s deck by the explosion, breaking his teeth and upper palate.

Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.



AB James Rickard lying in a hospital bed with a head wound, pictured with OS Douglas Campbell. Campbell sustained a head injury and shrapnel wounds over most of his body.

Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

17: The Board of Inquiry; Goodbye to Old Friends

I am sure we were all proud to have served in Trentonian. To those who were lost, we can only say that they were less fortunate than the rest of us, but their names will live for evermore. Lest we forget, lest we forget."

— Anonymous crew member HMCS Trentonian[1]

The men left Falmouth after the funeral, seventy-three ratings and one officer boarded a train for *Niobe* in Scotland.[2] Lieutenant Glassco and three officers and three ratings travelled to Plymouth to appear before the Board of Inquiry.

In Canada, the official letters to the families were written and sent by air mail for quick delivery. Mrs. Beck was sent the following letter from the secretary of the Navy Board: It is with deepest regret that I must confirm the telegram of the 24th of February, 1945, from the Minister of Defence for Naval Services, informing you that your husband, Moyle Kitchener Beck, Leading Seaman, Royal Canadian Naval Reserve, is missing at sea.

The only information that can be given at this time is that your husband is missing at sea as the result of enemy action, overseas. The position of the action is such that there is no possibility of him being a prisoner of war and little hope can be held for his survival.

Please be assured that as soon as further particulars can be released or any other news received, you will be informed.

For security reasons it is requested that you regard the name of your husband's ship in connection with his loss as confidential at this time.

Please accept the sincere sympathy of the Department in your anxiety.[3]

The train to Scotland stopped at London where the men had to wait for a connecting train to take them north. Still wearing the ragtag clothes issued at Falmouth, the crew was a very sorry looking lot. Stoker Bruce Keir remembers some of the civilians in the station called them some very derogatory names as they passed by. One of the station employees came over and explained that a group of German POWs had just passed through the station wearing the same style of clothes.[4]

This problem was quickly remedied once the crew arrived at *Niobe*, and each man was issued a full set of RCN kit, complete with HMCS cap tallies.

The RCN medical officer examined the men fully. Able Seaman Stanley Bennett of Belle Isle, Newfoundland, had complained of increasing chest pain and difficulty breathing. Bennett was admitted to the Royal Canadian Navy hospital at *Niobe* with fractured ribs,[5] bringing the total number of wounded to fourteen.

On February 26, 1945, the medical officer at *Niobe* had the following message sent to Naval Service Headquarters:

Medical Officer recommends survivors leave in Canada be granted to survivors from HMCS TRENTONIAN. Request early approval to discharge ratings to Canada by first available passage.[6]

At *Niobe*, Stoker Bruce Keir ran into a friend who had been transferred off *Trentonian* two weeks before; he was shocked on learning the news. The friend asked Keir for a loan; it seemed he had lost his money and was penniless. Keir had received survivors pay, so he made the loan to the friend and in return the friend gave Keir all the photos that he had collected from the Tiffy, SBA Arthur Singleton.[7]

This worked out well for Stoker Keir; he had lost all his photos, as did the rest of the crew. Singleton's entire collection of negatives and prints went down with *Trentonian*, lost forever. The only photographs to survive were those held by crew members that had left *Trentonian*.

When Keir sorted through the collection, there were over 180 photos and, since the friend had joined *Trentonian* in Quebec City, the photographs covered the entire history of their ship up two weeks before the sinking. This chance encounter between two old shipmates — and the poor card playing by the friend — saved the unprecedented photographic record of *Trentonian*, preserving a remarkable history for all Canadians.



The crew of Trentonian was transferred to HMCS Niobe in Scotland to wait for travel arrangements to Canada for survivors leave.

Photo courtesy of Bruce Keir.

On February 27, 1945, *Niobe*'s medical officer received a response from NSHQ and the Canadian Naval Medical Officer; it simply read, "28 days survivors leave in Canada approved."[\[8\]](#)

The crew of *Trentonian* was going home.

Now that all the survivors had been examined by Canadian doctors and each of the fourteen wounded were expected to recover, letters were being sent to their families. In London, Ontario, Mrs. Gladys Crandall, mother of AB Lewis Karns, received the following letter:

I regret to inform you that the Department has received information that your son, Lewis Charles Karns, Able Seaman, Royal Canadian Volunteer Reserve, has been admitted to the Royal Naval Sick Quarters, at Falmouth, Cornwall, England, suffering from slight injuries received due to enemy action at sea. The exact nature of his injuries is not known.

As he has not been reported as seriously or dangerously injured, there would not appear to be any cause for anxiety but, should anything untoward occur, you will be informed immediately.

It is suggested that you son's mail should be addressed as follows:

Lewis C. Karns, Able Seaman,
c/o Canadian Fleet Mail Office, Great Britain
London S.W.1 , ENGLAND

and that the envelop be plainly marked "IN HOSPITAL".

No Particulars can be given regarding the action in which your son was injured and it is requested that, for security reasons, you regard the name of his ship in this connection as confidential at this time.

Please be assured that he is receiving the best medical attention and that everything possible is being done for his comfort and welfare.[\[9\]](#)

In Plymouth, Lt. Glassco and the six crew members he had chosen as witnesses

reported to the Royal Naval barracks for the Board of Inquiry. They were led to an open room and asked to have a seat. A few minutes later a warrant officer appeared and laid a sword on the head table. During a serious trial, naval custom places a sword on the table of the court president presiding over the case. At the end of the trial, when the charged man returns for the court's decision, if found guilty, the sword is turned to face the guilty person. If innocent, the sword is pointed away. Glassco's heart sank — it appeared the inquiry was to be disposed of and the matter was going directly to court martial. The warrant officer returned later and apologized as he picked up the sword, cheerfully saying, "Sorry Sir, wrong room."[\[10\]](#)

At 0930 the Board of Inquiry commenced with Commander R.T. White, DSO, RN, commanding officer of HMS *Terpsichore* presiding, along with Lt. J.B. Lamb, RCNVR, commanding officer of *Camrose*, and Lt-Comdr. G.A. Wilkins, (E)RCNR from the Office of Captain(D). Wilkins was an engineering officer and had the expertise to understand the damage to *Trentonian*.[\[11\]](#)

Lieutenant Glassco was the first witness called. The board's questions were direct and to the point. Glassco was asked to confirm the weather and position of his ship. Relate his actions and orders before and after his ship was attacked, based on information available to him at the time. He was also asked to confirm if *Trentonian* had been torpedoed or mined and the location of the submarine in relation to the convoy.[\[12\]](#)

After the questioning, Lt. Glassco was excused and remained in the room while the other witnesses were called.[\[13\]](#)

Lieutenant Abbott was called next. As officer-of-the-watch at the time and navigation officer, he was asked to describe his actions when *Alexander Kennedy* was torpedoed and why he turned *Trentonian* to port, and his actions in destroying the code books and charts.[\[14\]](#)

Warrant Officer Francis Hindle was then asked to describe the location that the torpedo struck *Trentonian* and the damage to the ship that caused it to flood and sink. Hindle was asked to confirm that *Trentonian* was torpedoed and had not struck a mine. He replied, "I think it was a torpedo. I have never been torpedoed or mined before, so I don't really know."[\[15\]](#)

Engine Room Artificer George Goar gave testimony as part of the damage control party and his actions as messenger between Warrant Officer Hindle and the executive officer, Lt. Kinsman.[\[16\]](#)

Lieutenant Kinsman was questioned concerning the actions of the crew while at action stations and after the torpedo struck. He gave details of how the men performed while abandoning the ship and the rescue of the men following the sinking.[\[17\]](#)

The board members attempted to confirm that the explosion behind *Trentonian* was from the sinking merchant ship and not a torpedo striking the CAT gear. Glassco was recalled to confirm if his ship had worked up to full speed at the time the torpedo struck and if the CAT gear was streamed and working properly.



*ERA George Goar and LS Jack Straw were both called as witnesses in the inquiry of *Trentonian's* loss. Goar was later Mentioned-In-Dispatches for his actions following the attack.*

Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.

Kinsman was then recalled to confirm the type of CAT gear in use and whether it was used properly. He was also asked if it had planed out of the water while the ship was at full speed.[\[18\]](#)

Leading Signalman Jack Straw was asked to give evidence of the signal messages received in *Trentonian* from the commodore of the convoy that reported a disturbance behind the ship just before *Trentonian* was torpedoed.[\[19\]](#)

Glassco was recalled again and asked if the convoy commodore changed the convoy's course following the attack, and if the torpedo had not struck his ship, if it would have hit another ship in the convoy. He replied the convoy remained on its original course and the torpedo would have struck the starboard column if it had missed *Trentonian*.[\[20\]](#)

Glassco was then asked if he could account for any of the men killed. The skipper then related the details of the deaths of the men in his ship.[\[21\]](#) Glassco was excused and Cmdr. White, Lt.-Commander Wilkins and Lt. Lamb began their deliberations of the testimony given.

The board submitted their report the same day with the following conclusions:

There is insufficient evidence to prove conclusively that it was not a GNAT, but the evidence goes to prove that it was a straight running torpedo fired from the starboard side of the convoy, and probably aimed at the leading ship of the starboard wing column.

Up to the time of the torpedoing, HMCS *Trentonian* had never put herself in a position for a GNAT attack, and was only just clear of the convoy and proceeding to carry out a search on the starboard side, when she was hit, all of which tends to confirm it being a straight running torpedo.

The action taken by the Commanding Officer prior to the torpedoing, was entirely correct.

The conduct of the Officers and men appears to have been of the highest order, and Lieutenant William Burnley Kinsman, RCNVR, and Warrant Engineer Hamilton Francis

Hindle, RCN deserve special praise.[\[22\]](#)

The results of the Board of Inquiry established that Lt. Glassco, along with the officers and men of *Trentonian*, had acted properly during the circumstances that led to the loss of the ship and that no further action would be required.

Even though *Trentonian* had been sunk by the enemy, her operations from January 1 to the day it was lost earned the ship the extension to her Battle Honour, English Channel 1944–45.

Glassco received a letter from Hazel Farley welcoming him as *Trentonian*'s new commanding officer on behalf of the Trenton Corvette Committee. He replied to the letter as best he could under the circumstances, as the loss of the ship had not yet been made public.

Thank you very much for your kind letter of February 9th, in which you outlined what the "Trentonian" Committee is doing for the Ship. Since taking over command I have learnt with pleasure of the many things which your Committee has already done for the Ship, and it is with great comfort to know that your generous support will be forthcoming in the future.[\[23\]](#)

Lieutenant Glassco then began completing the administrative portion of losing his ship. Accounts had to be finalized and records completed. The letters he had written to the families of the dead were completed, but were being looked over by the secretary, Canadian Naval Mission Overseas. The secretary had taken exception to his comments, in each letter, referring to the sailor having been killed. Citing that it was too early to designate the men dead, as they were still considered missing, he insisted that the letters be rewritten so that the families would not lose hope.[\[24\]](#)

Lieutenant Glassco replied to this letter with a full and detailed description of how each man met his death. Stating, "Although the Navy records these men as missing, they are in fact dead," and he would continue to refer to his men as deceased. The letters were accepted as written and forwarded on March 11.

The following letter was received at the Beck family home in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia: It is with deepest sympathy that I write to you regarding the death of your husband. Moyle was killed whilst carrying out his duties at action stations during an attack on the Ship by an enemy submarine.

During my short association with him I soon came to appreciate his qualities as a Seaman. He was at all times cheerful and efficient in carrying out his duties, and his loss is deeply felt by all of the Ship's Company.

Due to the nature of the attack, it was not possible to recover the bodies of the casualties sustained during the action.

It is very difficult on occasions such as this to adequately express one's feelings and those of the Ship's Company but you will, I know, feel proud that Moyle died bravely in the service of his Country.

The Ship's Company join with me in sending you our sincere sympathy.[\[25\]](#)

For the crew of *Trentonian*, the voyage home began on March 8, 1945. They boarded the troopship *Aquitania* (a converted ocean liner) at the Clyde. Stoker Bill Shields recalls that, although this was a voyage home on one of the greatest liners of the time, they were still sailors in the Royal Canadian Navy and there was still a war to be fought, so each man was assigned watches and duties during the seven-day crossing.[\[26\]](#)

On arrival at Halifax, the *Trentonians* from Nova Scotia were sent home. The remaining men were to return home by train. The crew was given a private coach for the trip. They stopped in New Brunswick and Quebec to allow the men from those areas off. When it arrived at Toronto, the crew was dispersed to the rest of Canada for their survivors' leave.[\[27\]](#)

On March 17, the families of the six men killed were sent a letter from the secretary of the Navy Board. The Catherine family in Windsor, Ontario received the following letter:

Further to my letter of the 25th of February, 1945. I regret to inform you that in view of the length of time which has elapsed since your son, Robert Thomas Cathrine, Able Seaman, Royal Canadian Naval Voluntary Reserve, was reported missing from H.M.C.S. TRENTONIAN, the fact that all circumstances surrounding the mishap have been carefully reviewed, and as no information has since been received of his having survived, the Canadian Naval Authorities have now presumed his death to have occurred on the 22nd of February, 1945.

H.M.C.S. TRENTONIAN, a Royal Canadian Navy corvette was torpedoed and sunk by an enemy U-boat, while on convoy escort duty.

One Officer was killed in action and five ratings, including your son, were lost at this time, with 95 Officers and men, including injured, having survived the disaster.

The news of the sinking of this ship is being released shortly, but it is requested that you will regard this information as confidential until an official announcement is made.

May I express sincere sympathy with you in your bereavement on behalf of the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Officers and men of the Royal Canadian Navy, the high traditions of which your son has helped to maintain.

News of *Trentonian's* loss was released two days later, on March 26, 1945. The citizens of Trenton first heard the tragic news of their ship at the same time as the rest of Canada through a press release.[\[28\]](#)

Mayor Cory ordered the flags lowered to half mast in the city as a mark of respect to the men who had been killed and sent the following cable to Lt. Glassco:

Just heard news of sinking of Trentonian with loss of one officer and five ratings, also heroic attitude of the men during the ordeal, Trenton is proud of the record of her ship and crew which has been followed by the citizens, mourns with the families of the brave boys who were lost and rejoice with those who were saved.[\[29\]](#)

On March 28, 1945 official notification of *Trentonian's* loss was sent to the city:

The department of National Defence for Naval Services regrets to announce the loss of H.M.C.S. Trentonian, whose sponsorship the citizens of Trenton had so graciously undertaken.

The Department takes this opportunity to express its sincere thanks for the kindness and generosity of the good people of Trenton in providing for the comfort and welfare of the crew of this corvette.[\[30\]](#)

The citizens of Trenton had sent a considerable amount of gifts to the ship since before it was commissioned and had continued to enthusiastically support *Trentonian*. Several crates of gifts were still in transit to the ship when it was lost.

With *Trentonian* no longer able to receive shipments, the authorities sent them to the person marked on the crates, "Attention Lieutenant Commander Harrison." The parcels were received by *Trentonian's* first commanding officer and distributed to the crew of his new ship, *Joliette*.[\[31\]](#)

Lieutenant Glassco returned to Canada and, after his survivors' leave, was promoted to lieutenant-commander and given command of *Star*, the Naval Reserve Unit in his hometown of Hamilton, Ontario.

From Hamilton, Glassco sent his final letter to the City of Trenton:

At the time of writing to you on March 9th I was, for security reasons, unable to mention anything concerning the sinking of Trentonian. Since then, it has been announced from Naval Service Headquarters, so I should like very much to once again thank you and your committee for your generosity and kindness to the Ship's Company since Trentonian was commissioned.

The newspaper accounts have given a very full and accurate account of the action, and you may well feel proud of the way the Officers and Men conducted themselves under stress.

I know that you will be interested in continuing with your support, and in this connection there are two men who are in the Royal Cornwall Infirmary at Truro, Cornwall, both of whom are quite severely wounded, and both of whom, would I am sure, be glad to hear from you.

These are: Petty Officer Edwin Thorogood, RCNVR, Stoker, Sidney C. Atkinson, RCNVR.

It is expected that both men will be in hospital for some little time and, would therefore be most appreciated of any comforts such as cigarettes, candy, etc., which you could send to them.

P.S. May I also say that your kind letter to my wife was much appreciated.[\[32\]](#)

Stoker Sidney Atkinson would require five surgeries over the next two years for his wounds.[\[33\]](#)

Some of the other wounded men required extended hospital stays as well; OS Doug Campbell remained in hospital with a head injury for many weeks and returned to Canada later. Campbell's cousin had asked several young ladies from his work in Ottawa to write and help cheer his cousin up. On return to Canada, Campbell met one of his pen pals and they were later married. Campbell suffered for many years from the headaches associated with his injury.[\[34\]](#)

The bond between the crew of *Trentonian* and the community of Trenton did not end with the loss of the ship. Support for the men in hospital continued, and months after the sinking, the following letter from Ed Thorogood was published in the local newspaper.

Thank you very much for the excellent parcel of candy and cigarettes which I much appreciated. Please convey my very sincere thanks to the pupils of Grade 12.

It was very good of Lieutenant-Commander Glassco to forward my name. Although it will be some considerable time before I am fully recovered, I expect to be moved from here to a Canadian Base Hospital in the very near future, from where I can be repatriated by hospital ship.

I shan't mind completing my cure in Canada one bit. I have been well treated over here, and before my accident had a good time visiting relatives of mine in this country; but all the same I am looking forward to getting back home.

Thank you again for your kind thoughts and wishing all in Trenton High School all the very best.

For many months the Trenton paper published stories about *Trentonian* and the connection between ship and community, reflecting the sense of loss shared by a community that was so closely involved in the support and welfare of their ship and the men who sailed in her.

One of the final articles published in the *Trenton Courier Advocate* sums up this story and the special relationship in a single poignant statement:

Trenton — yes, all of Canada is proud of them, for they upheld the finest traditions of the Navy.

Epilogue

Over the years that followed *Trentonian's* sinking, many of the men who served in the ship would visit the local Legion whenever they passed through Eastern Ontario to express their gratitude first hand.

The Corvette Committee was dissolved, but the support for the navy continued through the local branch of the Navy League of Canada. During the war, a Sea Cadet Corps was formed, called Royal Canadian Seas Cadet Corps Trent. In 1993, a Navy League Cadet Corps was formed for younger children and named after the community's own ship, Navy League Cadet Corps *Trentonian*. Both cadet corps remain active today.

The crew members themselves kept in touch with each other in the years following the war. But it was not until 1979, when the City of Trenton invited their adopted sons home, that the crew of *Trentonian* had an official reunion.

Prior to the reunion, Walter Gregory and Mike Ticehurst interviewed many members of the crew, gathering as much information as they could, and wrote a book titled, *Memories of HMCS TRENTONIAN, Trenton's Own Ship*. The book was published by Branch 110, Trenton, Royal Canadian Legion, and was presented to the crew.

A second reunion took place in 1985 to coincide with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy. The third reunion of the crew was in 1990, and at that time the City of Trenton unveiled a memorial stone at the local cenotaph dedicated to *Trentonian* and the six men killed on February 22, 1945.

The last reunion of *Trentonian* took place during the summer of 2002 in Trenton. The highlight of the weekend was a memorial service and parade through the streets of Trenton involving over 250 military personnel. The parade was headed by the National Naval Reserve Band of Canada and included the sea cadet band and colour party from HMCS *Ontario* in Kingston, and the Air Cadet Band from Trenton. A contingent of regular forces members from CFB *Trenton* and Naval Reserve members from *Cataraqui* in Kingston, as well as local sea cadets and Navy League cadets were also in attendance. Many of the crew commented that seeing the various cadet corps names on the cap tallies of the cadets reminded them of their own days as sea cadets prior to joining the navy.



The Cenotaph in Trenton has a memorial stone dedicated to HMCS *Trentonian*. This picture was taken during the reunion of its crew in 2002. A sailor's cap was placed by a survivor of *Trentonian* on the memorial stone, in memory of each man killed.

Photo courtesy Corporal Jim Jordan.

Rear-Admiral David Morse, commandant of the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, represented the Canadian Navy and laid a wreath at the stone dedicated to the ship. Five black sailors' caps and one officer's cap were placed on top of the memorial stone by a member of the crew, as the name of each man killed was called out. The brass bell from NLCC *Trentonian* was rung six times, once for each man, in a moving ceremony to honour the sacrifice made by their shipmates.

The wreck of *Trentonian* lies in the English Channel near Falmouth and has been well-marked on charts. The wreck is protected under the international laws concerning war graves. In 2004, a British dive team under diver Nick Jewson was able to survey the ship.

The Royal Canadian Navy celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 2010, and during that year presented each community in Canada that had a ship named for it a plaque honouring the ship and the community. The city invited the crew of *Trentonian* to accept the plaque on the community's behalf and four *Trentonians* were able to attend. The plaque is proudly displayed at the entrance to council chambers at Quinte West City Hall.



Trentonian crew members attending the 2002 reunion in Trenton. Front row (left to right): Stoker Bill Shields, AB Gordon Simpson, AB Eric Muff, Stoker Bruce Keir, and Signalman Jack MacIver. Back Row (left to right): AB James Rickard, A/R A Joe Gosskie, AB Gordon Gibbons, Telegraphist Tom Farrell, PO James Erwin, Vince Callandar (HMCS *Lindsay*), Signalman Jack Harold, and Stoker Sid Coates.

Photo courtesy Rhonda Litwiller.

The painting on the cover of this book has been presented to the citizens of Trenton by the artist, Marc Magee. It will be displayed for everyone to enjoy at the main Branch of the Quinte West Public Library in Trenton.

For additional information on HMCS *Trentonian*, please visit the *White Ensign Flying* webpage at www.rogerlitwiller.com.

This brings the story of *Trentonian* to the present. The future has not yet been written. The numbers of the crew have steadily dwindled, with many having joined their shipmates. But with the Royal Canadian Navy looking to the future and new construction of ships, it is possible that once again a Royal Canadian Navy ship will bear the proud name of *Trentonian*.

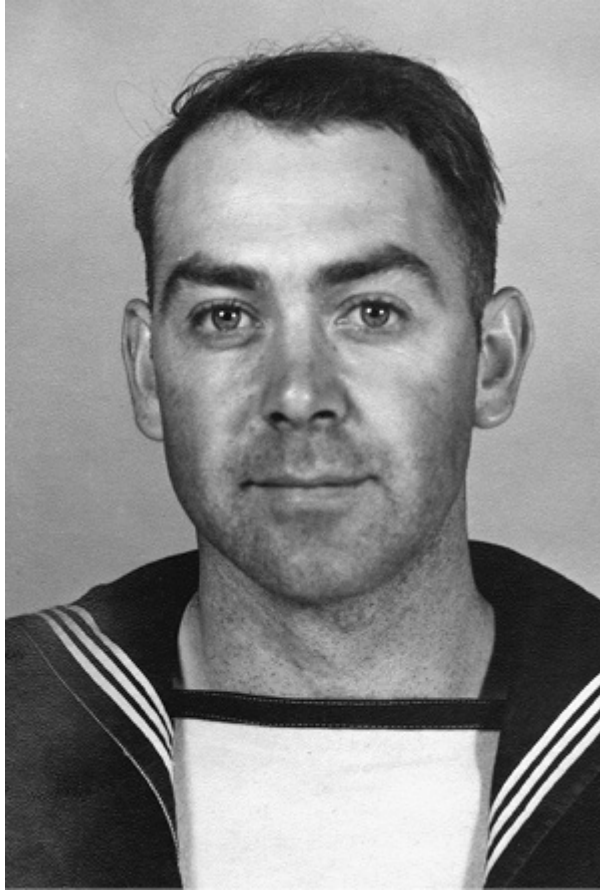
When that day comes, the heart and soul of the new ship will gather its strength from the men who served with pride, dedication, and sacrifice in His Majesties Canadian Ship *Trentonian*, for they truly have upheld the finest traditions of the Royal Canadian Navy.



During the one-hundredth Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy in 2010, the RCN gave each community in Canada that has had a ship named for it a plaque in recognition of the cooperation and heritage between the navy and the communities. The City of Quinte West, which Trenton is now part of, invited the crew of Trentonian to the ceremony and to accept and unveil the plaque. Four Trentonians were able to attend, (left to right): AB Gordon Gibbons, AB Eric Muff, Stoker Bill Shields, and PO Jim Erwin.

Photo courtesy Rhonda Litwiller

Honour Roll



Leading Seaman Moyle Kitchener Beck, RCNR

From: Lunenburg, Nova Scotia

Age: 28

Status: Missing, Presumed Dead, February 22, 1945

Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.



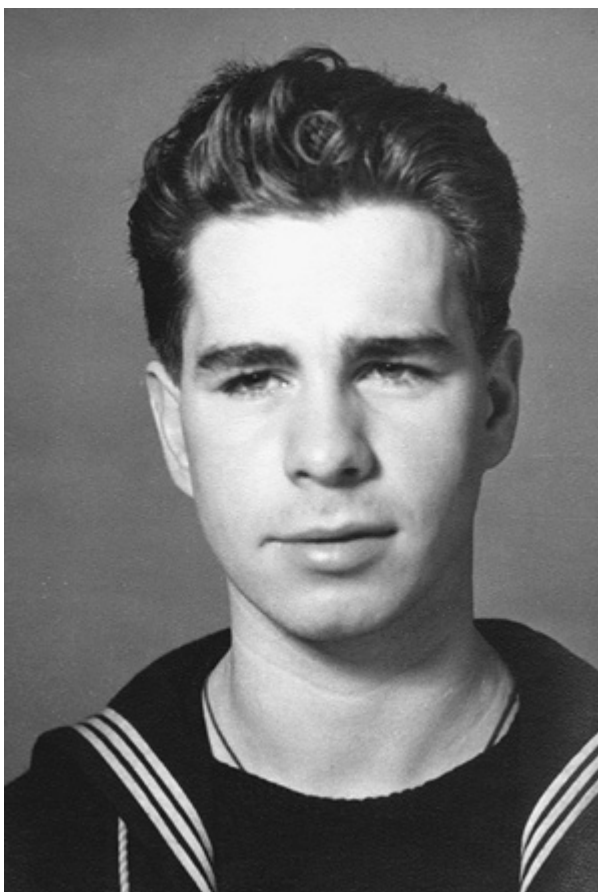
Able Seaman Robert Thomas Catherine, RCNVR

From: Windsor, Ontario

Age: 19

Status: Missing, Presumed Dead, February 22, 1945

Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.



Leading Seaman John Alfred Fournier, RCNVR

From: Windsor, Ontario

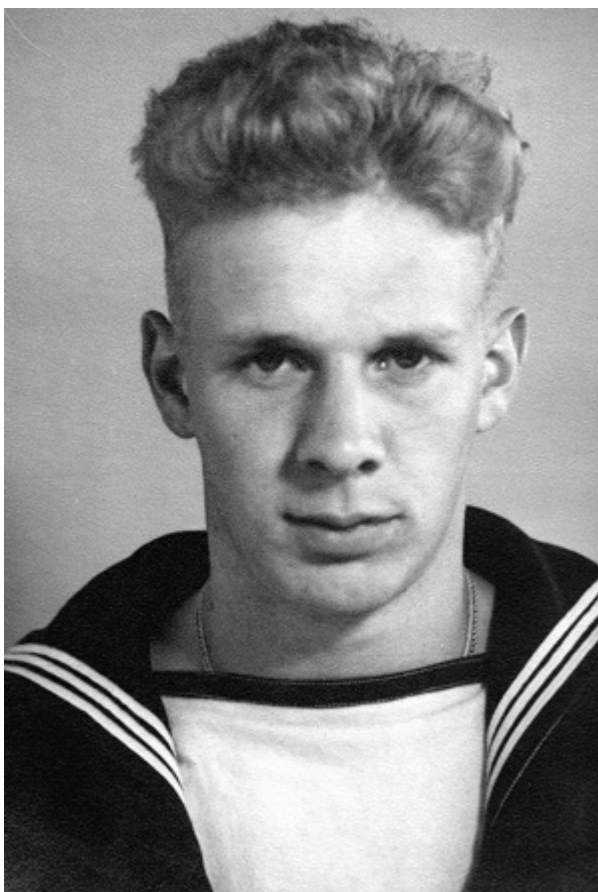
Age: 21

Status: Missing, Presumed Dead, February 22, 1945

Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.



*Leading Seaman Colin Bancroft Harvey, RCNR
From: Seal Cove, New Brunswick
Age: 23
Status: Missing, Presumed Dead, February 22, 1945
Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.*



Stoker John McCormick, RCNVR

From: Belleville, Ontario

Age: 19

Status: Missing, Presumed Dead, February 22, 1945

Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.



Lieutenant Gordon Kent Stephens, RCNVR

From: Toronto, Ontario

Age: 24

Status: Killed in Action, February 22, 1945

Buried: Falmouth Cemetery

Photo courtesy of the Family of Maurice Campbell.



Leading Seaman Aubrey Calland Wells, RCNVR

From: Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Age: 29

Status: Deceased, November 16, 1944

Buried: Cardiff Western Cemetery

Photo credit: A. Singleton, courtesy of Jack Harold.

Appendix 1: Medals and Awards

Acting Temporary Lieutenant-Commander William Edward Harrison, RCNVR
Distinguished Service Cross (DSC)

The King has been graciously pleased on the Occasion of the Celebration of His Majesty's Birthday to give orders for the following awards for gallantry or outstanding service in the face of the enemy, or for zeal, patience and cheerfulness in dangerous waters, and for setting an example of wholehearted devotion to duty upholding the high tradition of the Royal (Canadian) Navy.

Engine Room Artificer Fourth Class Douglas Excell, RCNVR
Mention-In-Dispatches

Following the torpedoing of his ship HMCS Trentonian, this rating remained behind at risk of his own life to assist in the removal of the wounded men from the quarterdeck. This action is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Acting Engine Room Artificer George Goar, RCNR
Mention-In-Dispatches

After the torpedoing of HMCS TRENTONIAN, this rating showed extreme courage in helping the wounded survivors from the ship to a Carley float, and then took charge of the party until rescue was effected. Although a non-swimmer, he showed disregard for his own safety throughout. His bravery and gallantry are well worthy of commendation.

Warrant Engineer Hamilton Francis Hindle, RCN
Mention-In-Dispatches

As engineer Officer of HMCS Trentonian when she was torpedoed in February, 1945, Mr. Hindle displayed integrity and zeal to a marked degree. In clearing the engine room of all its personnel after the order "Abandon Ship" had been given, he remained until the last moment without thought of personal risk.

Lieutenant William Burnley Kinsman, RCNVR
Mention-In-Dispatches

At the time of the sinking of HMCS TRENTONIAN this officer's conduct was of the highest order. He remained cool as he organized the men when the order to "Abandon Ship" was given. Later, from the ship's whaler, Lieutenant Kinsman picked up survivors and saw to it that the injured were placed aboard one of His Majesty's Canadian M.L.'s which was in the vicinity.

Appendix 2: Nominal Roll, Wounded and Survivors, February 23, 1945

(*denotes wounded)

Officers:

Glassco, Colin Stinson, lieutenant, RCNVR, commanding officer, Hamilton, ON
Kinsmen, William Burley, lieutenant, RCNVR, executive officer, Vancouver, BC
Abbott, Ralph Patrick, lieutenant, RCNVR, navigating officer, Oakville, ON
Dodds, Donald Jackson, lieutenant, RCNVR, Westmount, PQ
Mowat, James Keith, acting lieutenant, RCNVR, Westmount, PQ
Hindle, Hamilton Francis, warrant officer, RCN, engineer officer, Vancouver, BC

Men:

Newfoundland:

Bennett, Rupert Stanley, Conception Bay *

Prince Edward Island:

Dye, Harry, Summerside

Nova Scotia:

Chadbolt, George, Halifax
Farmer, James Keith, New Glasgow
Johnston, Ross Allison, Halifax
Roberts, Donald Osborne, Derbert Station
Roberts, Thomas Raymond, Halifax
Roden, Bernard Gerald Joseph, Halifax
Walsh, William Francis, Newport

New Brunswick:

Eldridge, Gilbert Edwin, Beaver Harbour

Québec

Barber, Walter Thomas, St. Lambert
Barron, Frank Henry, Montreal
Chapman, Isaie, Hull
Hayward, George Albert, Montreal
Kevins, Philip Anthony, Verdun
McKay, John Clifford, Terrebonne

Ontario:

Angus, Murray Ross, Smith Falls
Bateman, Earl Douglas, Cobalt
Beaumont, Delmar Stanley, Glen Williams
Beer, Writer Jack, Toronto
Bergin, Michael George, Ottawa
Campbell, Hector Douglas, Ottawa*
Clark, Henry Alexander, King
Crampton, Norman Benjamin, Carleton Place
Davidson, James Archibald, Gatchell
Erwin, Robert J., Toronto
Gibbons, Gordon, Acton
Goar, George Harvey, Toronto
Grey, Robert William, Toronto
Grigor, Alexander, London
Harley, Gordon, Hamilton
Holden, John, Windsor
Jacobs, William David, Ottawa

Karns, Lewis Charles, London*
Keir, Bruce Dunston, Toronto
Majoros, Leslie, Hamilton
Muff, Eric Edward, Toronto
McIntyre, Norman, Hilton Beach
Poulin, Edmund Joseph, Ottawa
Rickard, James Allen, Port Arthur*
Runtz, Weldon Walter, Arnprior
Salmon, Harold Keith, Hamilton
Scott, John Richardson, Port Arthur
Shanahan, John Charles, Clinton
Shields, William Noel, Oakville
Simpson, Gordon Thomas, Toronto
Straw, Jack Eugene, Hamilton
Terrell, John William, Toronto
Thorogood, Edwin, Brantford*
Vak, Michael, Port Arthur
Yakowenko, Joseph, London

Manitoba

Brako, Lawrence Douglas, Minnedosa *
Gosskie, Joseph Edward, Birnie
Johnson, Russell Arden, Clanwilliam
Kresko, John, Transcona
MacIver, Alexander John, Winnipeg*
Robertson, Thomas W., Winnipeg
Slater, Arthur Bernard, Winnipeg

Saskatchewan:

Baker, Elmer Bernard, Tribune
Cochran, Maurice Edward, Ratener
Evans, Roy, Saskatoon
Guthrie, George Walter, Regina*
Hadley, Vincent Earnest, Prince Albert*
Hanson, Odell Lorne, Nipawin*
Meyer, Peter Barrington, Regina*
Murphy, Lewis Joseph, Moose Jaw*
Powell, Robert James, Portreeve
Saretzky, Leo Bernard, Richlea
Singleton, Allan Egerton, Saskatoon
Taylor, Robert Creighton, Weyburn

Alberta:

Coates, Sidney John, Carbon
Starr, Charles R., Calgary

British Columbia:

Atkinson, Sidney Charles, Vancouver*
Baril, William Richard, Trail*
Brennan, Bernard Benjamin, Victoria
Butler, Thomas Walter, Vancouver
Excell, Douglas, New Westminster
Lounsbury, Raymond, Vancouver
Medhurst, Richard Paul, Victoria
Miner, Reginald Allen, Vancouver
Roy, Robert Alex, Vancouver

Sharpe, Norman Henry, Vancouver
Thompson, Wilfred Bruce, Vancouver

British West Indies:

Graham, Darcy Hamel, San Juan, Trinidad

Source: "List of Survivors HMCS TRENTONIAN." Library and Archive Canada, RG 24
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Appendix 3: Specifications

Name:	HMCS <i>Trentonian</i> , alternate name for the City of Trenton			
Classification:	Revised Flower-class corvette, increased endurance, 1942-43 program			
Builder:	Kingston Shipbuilding Company Ltd., Kingston, Ontario			
Keel Laid: February 19, 1943		Launched: September 1, 1943	Commissioned: December 1, 1943	Paid Off: February 22, 1945
Length: 208 feet, 4 inches		Beam: 33 feet, 1 inch	Draught: 11 feet	Crew: 7 officers, 90 other ranks
Displacement: 970 tons		Speed: 16 knots	Endurance: 7,400nm at 10 knots	Fuel: 338 tons
Machinery:	- Four-cycle triple expansion engine - Two water tube boilers - Two 30 Kw steam generators			
Weapons: Surface	- One 4 inch QF Mk. XIX gun — forward gun platform - One 2-pounder pom-pom gun — after gun tub - Two single 20mm oerlikon machine guns — port and starboard bridge wings - Four single 20mm oerlikon machine guns added March 1944 — 2 waist; 2 aft of 2-pounder pom-pom gun tub			
Anti-Submarine	- One hedgehog anti-submarine mortar — starboard side forward gun platform - Five hedgehog mortar salvos (one loaded; three ready-use lockers; one 4-inch magazine) - Four depth charge throwers — two port, two starboard waist - Two depth charge traps — stern - Two depth charge rails — stern - 100 depth charges — stored on deck			
Other:	- Two Bren Guns Mk II — wheelhouse - Four Sten Guns MK II — two wheelhouse, two wardroom flats - Six Lee-Enfield No. 4 MK I rifles — wardroom flats - Four Colt pistols — wardroom flats - One Costin gun			
Sensors:	Radar: S.W.2 C/P and Type 271Q –installed March 1944 Asdic: 144XA Medium Frequency Direction Finder: MDF 5			

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- [55.](#) "Loss of HMCS TRENTONIAN — Board of Inquiry," February 24, 1945.
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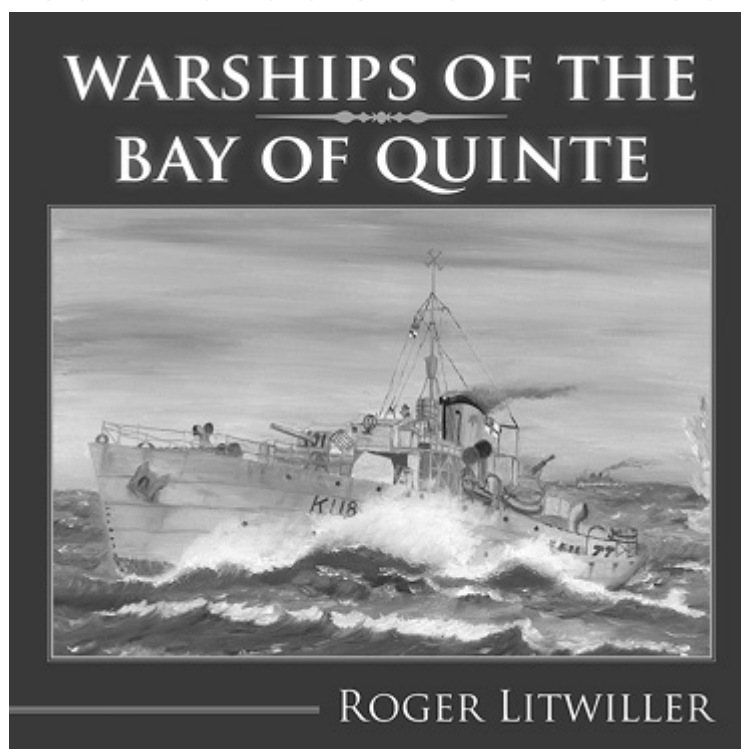
[31.](#) Hazel Farley Scrapbook. City of Quinte West Public Library, Hazel Farley Collection.

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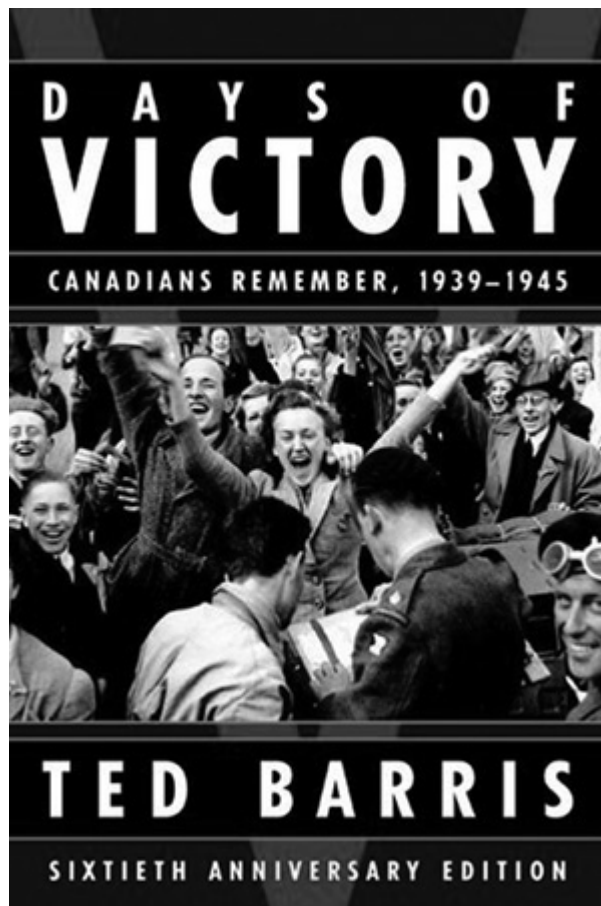
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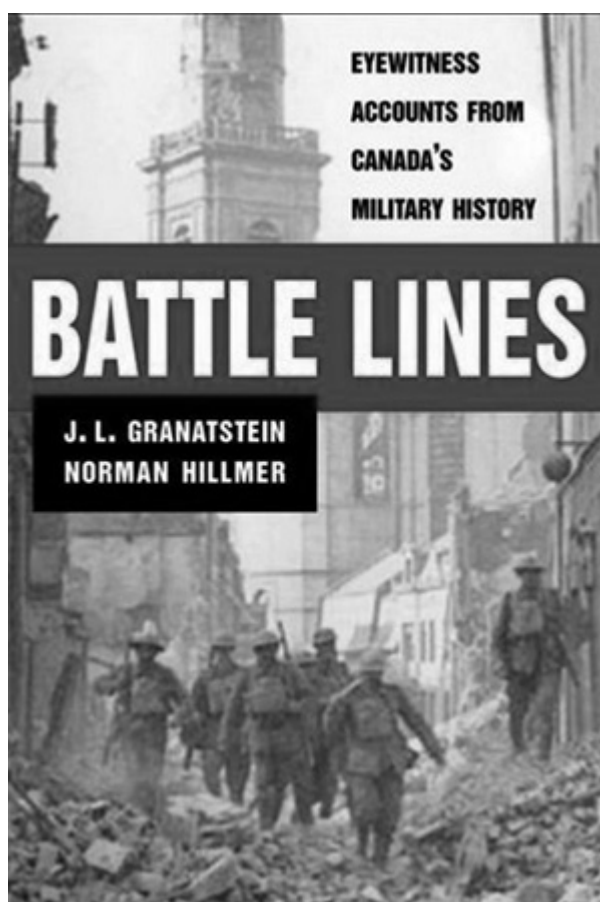
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