

Canadian Nautical Research Society
Société canadienne pour la recherche nautique

Ports and Harbours: The Convergence of Water, Land, and Humanity
Annual Conference and Meeting, 18-19 August 2022

Registration

Participation in the conference is free for Members of the CNRS. To request a link for the virtual conference, please send an email to Michael Moir at mmoir@yorku.ca with "Conference registration" in the subject line. To join the CNRS, please visit https://www.cnrs-scrn.org/membership/index_e.html. Reduced rates are available for students and early career researchers.

Schedule (subject to change)

Times indicated below are Eastern Daylight Time

Thursday, 18 August 2022

1045-1100 Welcome and introductory remarks

1100-1220 Session 1

Chair: Thomas Malcomson

- Roger Sarty, "Halifax Harbour's Western Shoreline, 1793-2017: Soldiers, Sailors, Parklands, and Suburban Sprawl"
- Brian Jeffrey Street, "Built for a Miracle: A Closer Look at the East Mole at Dunkirk"

1220-1300 Lunch

1300-1420 Session 2

Chair: Michael Moir

- Mark MacKenzie, "Legacy of the Gold Rush: Historical Contingency and the Fraser Port"
- Chris Madsen, "Professional Port Police: Donald Cassidy's 1967 Report on Policing and Security in Canadian Commercial Ports"

1420-1440 Break

1440-1600 Session 3

Chair: Meaghan Walker

- Nicholas Rogers, "Aboard the *Thetis*. The Trials of Robert Barker"
- Margaret Schotte, "From Port to Port – New Perspectives on French Voyages in the Indian Ocean"

1600-1620 Break

1620-1740 Session 4

Chair: Thomas Malcomson

- Jeff Noakes, "Little Ship, Big Screen: A Battle of the Atlantic Animation at the Canadian War Museum"
- Martin Hubley, "The convergence of water, land and humanity in watercolour – An overview of The Watercolour World project as a resource for maritime and naval historians"

Friday, 19 August 2022

1045-1100 Welcome back and conference announcements

1100-1220 Session 5

Chair: Richard Gimblett

- Isabel Campbell, "'Manning the naval shore stations.' How dismantling the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service in 1946 deprived Canada of key intelligence capabilities in the early Cold War"
- Richard Goette, "Why did it Take So Long for the RCAF to Establish a Joint Headquarters in Halifax during the Second World War?"

1220-1300 Lunch

1300-1420 Session 6

Chair: Richard Goette

- Michael Moir, "As Scarce as a Snowball in Hades: Shipbuilding and the Search for Skilled Labour during the First World War"
- Alex Comber, "Scrapping the super carrier – what the satellites saw"

1420-1540 Session 7

Chair: Erika Behrisch

- Paul Mansell, "Incapable of Executing Their Lordships' Orders: The Royal Navy, the War of Jenkins' Ear, and Epidemic Typhus"
- Thomas Malcomson, "The Re-Establishment of the British Navy on Lake Erie, 1814 through 1834"

1540-1600 Break

1600- Annual General Meeting

Presenters' Abstracts and Biographical Notes

Campbell, Isabel

“‘Manning the naval shore stations.’ How dismantling the Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service in 1946 deprived Canada of key intelligence capabilities in the early Cold War”

Canadian historians generally acknowledge that the Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service (the WRCNS or WRENS) made a vital contribution to Canada’s Second World War operational intelligence functions. The official history concluded: “WREN of all ranks had taken on the majority of duties at most naval signals intelligence sites, as well as in the OIC [Operational Intelligence Centre] the Intelligence and Signals Division in NSHQ, and in the Halifax and St. John’s Headquarters” (W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty, and Michael Whitby, *A Blue Water Navy. The official operational history of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1939-45*, vol. II, part 2 (St. Catharine’s, ON, 2007), Appendix V, 606). This paper will address how the dismantling of the women’s services in 1946 negatively affected the Royal Canadian Navy’s (RCN) operational capacity in the immediate post war period.

This period, known as the “doldrums,” has been analyzed by historians who have debated varied causes of the RCN’s poor morale, personnel shortages, and work stoppages. My paper adds to this debate, arguing that society-wide misogyny – assumptions about how females were most suited to raising children and males most suited to the professional working world – led to the dismantling of the women’s services and the loss of intelligence capacity. During the early 1950s, Canada allowed women to serve again. These women made a difference, improving shore station capacity just as Soviet vessels began to appear off Canadian shores.

Isabel Campbell is a senior historian at the Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence. She has published on the Cold War, strategy, alliance relations, the north, oceanography, gender, service families, declassification, and archives. This paper draws upon work for the official history of the Royal Canadian Navy, but represents her own views, not necessarily those of DND.

Comber, Alex

“Scraping the supercarrier – what the satellites saw”

The creator of an online database of warship satellite imagery will explore what Google Earth and other aerial and satellite imagery repositories can show us about the lifecycle of aircraft carriers. Carriers are some of the most expensive military equipment ever constructed, and like earlier capital ships, are both a powerful weapons system and an object of national prestige. They are packed with technological marvels and receive costly upgrades to serve as long as five decades. A particular focus of the presentation will be the process that the World’s largest warships go through at the end of their life cycle – dismantlement. We will journey overseas and across thirty years of imagery to

show the building and breaking of these massive ships. We will contrast the orderly process at Brownsville, Texas, with more chaotic breaking overseas.

Alex Comber is a military archivist at Library and Archives Canada. He has directed his passion for naval history to making collections of historic Royal Canadian Navy records more accessible, while also working to acquire Department of National Defence archival records. As a personal project, he has built a database of satellite and other imagery of fifty navies, with more than three thousand views, and interpreted discoveries and naval events through frequent blog posts on the site.

Goette, Richard

“Why did it Take So Long for the RCAF and RCN to Establish a Joint Headquarters in Halifax During the Second World War?”

Part of the reason for the success of Britain’s Royal Air Force and Royal Navy against German U-boats during the Second World War is that their staffs effectively worked together in a joint headquarters called an Area Combined Headquarters (ACHQ). Although the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) attempted to model themselves on the larger British organizations, the two Canadian services did not come together into an ACHQ at the important convoy port of Halifax until July 1943 – fully five years after the British and one year after the United States. Why was this so? My paper will address the many factors that account for this development. These include resource constraints, physical location issues, and communications systems considerations. However, my presentation will demonstrate that the most important factors were service culture and individual personalities, notably conceptions regarding air-naval jointness and command and control. With the Canadian Armed Forces currently re-assessing its approach to jointness in a pan-domain environment, my paper will thus provide insights into operational-level services relationships in general, and specifically those between the RCAF and RCN from which modern military forces can learn.

Dr. Richard Goette is an air power academic and Canadian air force historian. He is an associate professor in the Department of Defence Studies at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto. He is an Associate Editor-in-Chief of the RCAF Association’s flagship publication, *Airforce* magazine, and is Secretary of the Canadian Nautical Research Society. Richard conducts research on air power issues related to the RCAF as a professional military institution, command and control, joint operations, and “soft” air power (especially air mobility), in addition to writing a biography of “The Father of Canada’s Modern Air Force,” Lieutenant-General Bill Carr.

Hubley, Martin

“The convergence of water, land and humanity in watercolour – An overview of The Watercolour World project as a resource for maritime and naval historians”

The Nova Scotia Museum and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia have recently completed the digitization of almost 1,000 historical watercolour art works from the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. These are now available online along with tens of thousands of similar works from local, national, and international public and private collections around the globe as part of the UK-based Watercolour World charity (<https://watercolourworld.org>). This unique resource provides historians, archaeologists, ethnologists, geologists, climate scientists, and the public with a new lens into the oft-undiscovered pre-photography world. Many of the geo-tagged and mapped watercolours (easily searchable or browsable by actual scene location, collection location, artist etc.) reflect the themes of the CNRS conference. Again, due to the nature of the medium, the works capture multiple every-day life perspectives over time of the interactions between water, people, and land, often from the perspective of “ordinary” individuals – such as mariners – and not necessarily professional or even trained artists. These include snapshots in time of depictions of cultural maritime landscapes not otherwise visually recorded. These would have been eventually lost due to the fragile nature of the watercolour medium were it not for digitization. A whirlwind tour of the project, and particularly its utility to maritime and naval historians, will be provided.

Martin Hubley is the Curator of the History Collection of the Nova Scotia Museum. He holds a doctorate in British history with research interests in Empire and the Atlantic World during the long eighteenth century.

Mackenzie, Mark

“Legacy of the Gold Rush: Historical Contingency and the Fraser Port”

Arguably, the Fraser River was a poor choice for a deep sea port, but 163 years after the first European cargo left the waterfront of New Westminster, the Fraser River remains a high-volume operation. The various Sto Lo peoples have used the river as a transportation corridor and a livelihood for at least 9,000 years and locations of villages were influenced by the requirements of paddling and beaching canoes, among other factors. For Europeans who suddenly flooded into the river with the Gold Rush of 1858, the Fraser River was also the principal transportation route to the interior, and location of the newcomer's "village" at New Westminster was influenced by the need to establish a deepwater port in the river, in addition to defence considerations against American rivals. The establishment of New Westminster as the principal mainland port in British North America, despite the far superior qualities of Burrard Inlet where Vancouver would later be situated, would eventually entail extensive obligations from the federal government of Canada. Dredging, snag-clearance, aids to navigation, modifications to the river banks and the construction of training walls were among the tasks of the federal government over the century of the early 1880s to the early 1980s. This paper explores some of the issues that led to the establishment of the Fraser River port and some of the implications that the political and economic contingencies of the 1850s would have for the operation of the port down to the present day.

Mark MacKenzie is a working mariner on the Fraser River and in the Port of Vancouver. In addition to operating an excursion sternwheeler out of New Westminster, he has a background in heritage restoration of the former Department of Public Works sternwheeler snagboat *Samson V*, currently moored as a museum in New Westminster,

and of the CPR sternwheeler SS *Moyie* in Kaslo, BC. He has previously presented papers on the Department of Public Works' operations on the Fraser River at conferences of the BC Historical Society, The Underwater Archeological Society of BC and the Canadian Nautical Research Society.

Madsen, Chris

“Professional Port Police: Donald Cassidy’s 1967 Reports on Policing and Security in Canadian Commercial Ports”

In response to a troubling rise in criminal activity in some of Canada’s major commercial seaports during the mid-1960s, the federal transport department engaged a former RCMP member seconded from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to study the scope of the problem and suggest possible improvements. Two reports were prepared, an internal one for the government harbours board and a public one for the private association representing port managements. A key outcome was creation of the National Harbours Board Police, a new federal police force distinct from the RCMP. This research note compares the reports and provides a table showing the principal recommendations.

Chris Madsen is a Professor in the Department of Defence Studies at the Canadian Forces College and Royal Military College of Canada in Toronto, Ontario. He teaches military officers and senior public servants on the National Security Programme and the Joint Command and Staff Programme. He is a past president of the Canadian Nautical Research Society.

Malcomson, Thomas

“The Re-Establishment of the British Navy on Lake Erie, 1814 through 1834”

With the loss of the naval yard at Amherstburg in 1813, the British Navy required another spot on the upper lakes from which to mount an effort to wrestle control from the Americans. By the end of 1814 they also needed a place for four captured American schooners and a place to build a frigate. There were three candidate locations: Penetanguishene, off Georgian Bay, the mouth of the Grand River, and the area of Turkey Point and Long Point, both of which were on Lake Erie. While Penetanguishene was chosen for the site of the new naval dockyard, the need for a supply depot and minor repair facility was clearly needed on Lake Erie. This paper will discuss the characteristics of the sites on Lake Eire, and how one was selected for the naval depot. The short history of the depot will be examined as well.

Thomas Malcomson, PhD, taught for 32 years as a professor in the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at George Brown College, Toronto. Thomas has produced numerous articles on naval and maritime subjects, with a primary focus on the final years of the long eighteenth century and the War of 1812. He has presented papers at conferences and public forums in North America and Europe. He was the co-author of *HMS Detroit: The Battle for Lake Erie* with his brother Robert, and more recently authored *Order and Disorder in the British Navy, 1793-1815: Control, Resistance, Flogging and Hanging*.

Current projects include tracing the stories of individual Black refugees from slavery to freedom during the War of 1812 and exploring the role of the British navy on the Great Lakes from 1813 through 1834. He is a research associate with the Nova Scotia Museum.

Mansell, Paul

“Incapable of Executing Their Lordships' Orders: The Royal Navy, the War of Jenkins' Ear, and Epidemic Typhus”

The topic of my PhD research is the impact of a typhus epidemic on the Royal Navy at the beginning of the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748). This epidemic reduced the Royal Navy to two-thirds of its nominal strength by causing over 15,000 seamen to be removed from duty and sent to overloaded health facilities at the major naval bases. Existing literature on this war has focused on its disappointing naval and military aspects which place the blame on the government for its poor implementation of sea power. My dissertation proposes a new line of historiography based on primary research into the medical impact of the typhus epidemic on naval operations. The talk will argue that the early failures in this war can be better understood through this medical viewpoint. It is my contention that the emphasis in the historiography on government failures omits the challenge presented by this epidemic and its overall reduction of the Royal Navy's effectiveness.

This paper represents the current development of my dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Darryl Dee and Dr. Roger Sarty at Wilfrid Laurier University, and will indicate the progression of my research since my presentation at the 2018 CNRS Conference, “How to Solve an Unsolvable Problem: The Royal Navy's Response to the Typhus Epidemic of 1739-42.”

Paul Mansell is a PhD Candidate in history at Wilfrid Laurier University, specializing in the early eighteenth-century Royal Navy, early modern Europe, and medicine. He has worked as an engineering designer most of his life and has been a full-time student at Laurier since 2010.

Moir, Michael

“As Scarce as a Snowball in Hades: Shipbuilding and the Search for Skilled Labour during the First World War”

By late 1916, the loss of Allied and Neutral merchant shipping threatened to halt fighting in Europe regardless of the outcome of land battles. Britain responded with an international shipbuilding program that included Canada and the United States, until America's entry into the war led to construction of its own merchant marine. The rapid increase in the demand for ships led to expansion of existing shipyards and creation of new facilities along east and west coasts, the St. Lawrence River, and the Great Lakes, straining the industrial capacity of both countries. Due to competition from military recruiters and munition manufacturers, skilled labour was in short supply; as a Canadian shipyard manager observed in October 1917, trades such as fitters were “as scarce as a snowball would be in hades.” The lack of trained workers seriously impeded

the pace of production when time was of the essence and raised issues about the quality of construction. This presentation will examine the approach taken by Canadian authorities in comparison with their British and American counterparts to address this shortfall within an environment affected by the growth of unions and workers' independence through training, the introduction of women to shipyards, and cross-border recruitment.

Michael Moir's career as an archivist began almost forty years ago with the Toronto Harbour Commission. He joined York University Libraries in 2004, where he is University Archivist and Head of the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections. He is currently President of the Canadian Nautical Research Society.

Noakes, Jeff

“Little Ship, Big Screen: A Battle of the Atlantic Animation at the Canadian War Museum”

As part of the Canadian War Museum's upgrading of exhibitions and visitor experiences in its permanent galleries, staff and contractors recently developed an immersive computer-animated video experience for visitors in the museum's Second World War gallery. It is a dramatization of a Canadian corvette's nighttime encounter with a German U-boat in the North Atlantic, told from the perspective of the crew of the corvette escorting a convoy.

This animated film, presented in section of the gallery dealing with the Battle of the Atlantic, is based on actual events, and draws on sources such as Alan Easton's memoir *50 North*, deck logs from HMCS *Sackville* and other corvettes, and naval inquiry transcripts, as well as more recent research and secondary sources. Some details have been adapted for the presentation; in particular, events have been compressed to create an experience that most museum visitors will choose to view in full. The approximately 2.5-minute animated film is projected onto a large, curved screen, and replaces an installation that used a variety of archival film footage projected onto three flat screens.

This conference presentation will examine and discuss the process of developing this visitor experience, including the challenges and opportunities it presents. These include making decisions about subject matter and the way in which it is presented, as well as designing an accessible installation that can fit within an established and already-defined space, and the role of archival and historical research in determining and supporting these objectives.

Jeff Noakes has been the Second World War historian at the Canadian War Museum since mid-2006 and is also the curator responsible for the William James Roué Collection at the Canadian Museum of History. He is the author or joint author of books, book chapters, exhibition catalogues, and articles on subjects related to the First World War, the Second World War, the Cold War, and the Arctic.

Rogers, Nicholas

“Aboard the *Thetis*. The Trials of Robert Barker”

Robert Barker was a barely literate Lancashire shipwright who dictated his experiences aboard a Bristol slaver in a six-penny tract entitled *The Unfortunate Shipwright*. He quarrelled with the chief mate, Robert Wapshutt, over his responsibilities as ship carpenter and over the crew's entitlements under their articles of agreement. Barker was framed by Wapshutt for mutinous behaviour and chained to the deck for five weeks, during which time he lost his eyesight from an ophthalmic disorder common to the African coast around Biafra. Once back in Britain Barker sought legal redress for his loss of wages and eyesight, events retold in part two of *The Unfortunate Shipwright* and in a longer narrative just prior to his death. The ship's owner and his mercantile associates attempted to discredit Barker's story because it cast a bad light on the slave trade and because they had a stake in Wapshutt's subsequent privateering ventures. For many years they denied Barker a pension under the seamen's Hospital Fund. This paper explores Barker's tortured time aboard the slaver and the legal obstacles he encountered seeking justice. It links the dynamics of the ship to the dynamics of the port and its mercantile elite. The paper also ponders what is absent, or treated elliptically, namely, the obscene packing of Africans in the holds and their efforts to free themselves from slavery.

Nicholas Rogers is a Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus in the Department of History, York University, Toronto. He is the author of nine books on the eighteenth century and one on a cultural history of Halloween. Among the nine are *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) and *Mayhem. Post-war Crime and Violence in Britain, 1748-1753* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2012), both of which won book awards. More recently he co-authored with Steve Poole *Bristol from Below: Law, Authority and Protest in a Georgian City* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017) and wrote a microhistory of a slave-trade scandal, *Murder on the Middle Passage. The Trial of Captain Kimber* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020). From 2000-2005 he co-edited *The Journal of British Studies* with Professor James Epstein of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN. Among his other books that directly bear on naval history are *The Press Gang. Naval Impressment and its Opponents in Georgian Britain* (London: Continuum Press, 2008) and an edited set of documents, *Manning the Royal Navy in Bristol. Liberty, Impressment, and the State, 1739-1815* (Bristol Record Society, vol. 64: Bristol, 2014).

Sarty, Roger

“Halifax Harbour's Western Shoreline, 1793-2017: Soldiers, Sailors, Parklands, and Suburban Sprawl”

The four-kilometre stretch of steeply hilled shoreline from Purcell's Cove in the north to Sandwich Point in the south, has been the scene of military activities from the early part of the French Revolutionary War to the present. The defence lands were closed to the public, and access was limited by poor roads. That began to change in the 1960s, with the completion of a modern asphalt highway and the opening of a large group of fortifications as a national historic site. Still, the navy has developed modern facilities on

the military lands north and south of the historic park, and these sites are active, even as housing subdivisions have sprouted up outside the government lands. The presentation will be a photographic tour of this historically rich and physically impressive stretch of shoreline. Thanks largely to the military presence over more than two centuries, the history and beauty have endured – so far – despite the encroaching suburbs.

Roger Sarty taught in the history department of Wilfrid Laurier University from 2004 to 2021, after a career as a public historian and manager at the Directorate of History and Heritage, National Defence Headquarters, and at the Canadian War Museum.

Schotte, Margaret

“From Port to Port — New Perspectives on French Voyages in the Indian Ocean”

Long-distance merchant voyages shaped global trade and colonization in the early modern period. And yet our understandings of maritime labour and trade networks shift dramatically when we recognize that each of these years-long voyages consisted of much shorter individual legs. This talk, focusing on the 1754-56 voyage of the *Prince de Conti* from France to India, encourages this shift in perspective. I will delve into the changes that occurred at each stage of the voyage. Records of crew and passengers from the French East India Company reveal key differences in the make-up of the crew, as well as the health and mortality of the individuals on board.

By examining the ports along the route, we will also gain insights into the waterfront infrastructure that supported these multi-year, multi-stage voyages. Particular attention will be paid to the facilities and industries on the small islands of Mauritius and Réunion, where French ships spent months waiting out the monsoon season. In considering the way stations of these merchant voyages rather than simply their end points, we can see more clearly how sailors and local populations alike responded to the shifting demands of the trade companies, and in turn stitched together these far-flung nodes in the global trade network.

Margaret Schotte is associate professor of history at York University, where she teaches early modern history of science and technology, and history of the book. Her prize-winning first book, *Sailing School: Navigating Science and Skill, 1550-1800* (Johns Hopkins, 2019), is a comparative study of maritime expertise and training, with particular attention to the connections between classrooms, textbooks, and tacit knowledge. She has published on nautical instruments, logbooks, and navigational examinations. Her current research explores questions of technical knowledge, labour, and race in the French Compagnie des Indes.

Street, Brian Jeffrey

“Built for a Miracle: A Closer Look at the East Mole at Dunkirk”

Winston Churchill famously described the rescue of more than 338,000 Allied troops from the embattled coast of France in late May and early June 1940 as a “miracle of

deliverance.” Most of those who returned to England to fight another day were on destroyers and other large vessels that had tied up at Dunkirk’s east mole, the longer of two jetties that served mainly as breakwaters protecting the entrance to the town’s harbour, which was unusable after repeated air attacks. Although the mole’s importance during the evacuation is well-recognised, historians have not pursued a detailed examination of the landmark. It was never intended to be used as it was in 1940, but it withstood the punishment it received — from ships coming alongside and dive-bombing enemy aircraft — and remained standing, largely intact, as the scene of one of the most significant events of the 20th century. This presentation will examine how the mole was constructed and what made it so resilient. It will also consider ways the mole shaped the course of a highly improvised operation that stretched over nine days and ultimately affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, sailors, and others — including many Canadians.

Brian Jeffrey Street is the author and co-author of several bestselling books about Canadian military history, including (with Brian Nolan) *Champagne Navy: Canada’s Small Boat Raiders of the Second World War*, published by Random House in 1991. He is currently writing a biography of Cdr Campbell Clouston, a Canadian in the Royal Navy who, as pier master of the east mole, was a key figure during the evacuation from Dunkirk.