



# the Ensign

Volume 19, No. 2 ♦ Spring 2009

***You are invited!***



**GRAND OPENING**  
SUNDAY 7 JUNE 2009



The Military Museums has completed its expansion and renovation! Our 107,000 square foot complex now houses seven museum galleries representing Canada's navy, army, and air force. TMM is also home to a new strategic studies library and archives, a computerized decision maze, and the Founders' Gallery, which hosts temporary art and heritage exhibitions.

**CELEBRATE THIS SPECIAL OCCASION WITH US! FREE ADMISSION, PRIZES, TOURS, HISTORICAL ACTORS, PRESENTATIONS, SPECIAL EXHIBITS, AND MORE!**



Sunday 7 June 2009  
9:30 AM - 4 PM

The Military Museums  
4520 Crowchild Trail SW  
Calgary Alberta

[themilitarymuseums.ca](http://themilitarymuseums.ca)

[www.navalmuseum.ab.ca](http://www.navalmuseum.ab.ca)

# The Chairman's Bridge

By Tom Glover

Progress continues with the new Naval Museum as we look forward to upcoming events. I hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend the Grand Opening of The Military Museums on Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by TMM/CMMS, and officiated by The Duchess of Wessex the day before. Your president has outlined the criteria established in the selection of NMAS members who will attend this historic event.

It is encouraging to note that in the past twelve month period there has been a 95% increase in the number of visitors to TMM. As you may recall, beginning in 1998 our own attendance at the old museum at HMCS *Tecumseh* was in marked decline. We were unable to generate the interest needed from within the community and this was due to the lack of trained staff. Our experience was not unique as the Museum of the Regiments and other military museums across Canada were generally suffering similar declines in attendance.

The dynamics of the new TMM/CMMS programming and presentation have ignited a new interest in military museums. The ability of the public to

view the stories of their military history within a single complex has helped to enhance, and in some cases generate, a new interest in Canada's armed forces.

The new submarine exhibit is underway and will be on display during the celebrations of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canadian Navy in 2010. The periscope from HMCS *Grilse* is now in place in the new Naval Museum where it occupies a corner designated for the full submarine exhibit.

The Convoys and Battle of the Atlantic Exhibit has been open to the general public since our reopening last October. Most of the discrepancies are now out of this wonderful and highly interactive display. Minor corrections of syntax, grammar and occasional factual errors have either, or will be, corrected shortly as we approach our first year of operations in our new facility this autumn.

The overwhelming response from our many volunteers has been positively outstanding as they continue to toil to make the Naval Museum of Alberta a show-place for all Canadians.

**Bravo Zulu!**

*Tom Glover is the chairman of the Naval Museum of Alberta Society's board of directors.*

# In the President's View

By Glenn Hardie

Your board of directors has had some complex problems to grapple with over the life of the museum, but I expect that one of the most difficult has been the recent selection of a list of veterans for attendance at the Grand Opening this June

6<sup>th</sup> of The Military Museums.

Limitations imposed by the size of the venue, budgetary considerations and timings, have all conspired to restrict the number of people from the greater Calgary military community who can be accommodated. Naturally, there are a

number of obligatory invitations that need to be provided for political and other dignitaries who have been strong leaders in the provision of community support to The Military Museums throughout all of its stages of development.

The TMM/CMMS, in establishing guidelines for the selection of invitees, based their criteria on two important factors. Of primary importance, Princess Sophie, the Duchess of Wessex, indicated she would like to see as many "veterans" as possible at the reception following the opening ceremonies. Secondly, it was determined that the maximum number of guests that could be accommodated under the limitations imposed would be 600.

It was further determined that to ensure fairness, a maximum of forty tickets would be provided for each of the galleries within the TMM complex. The NMAS board of directors at its meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>, directed that the executive committee design a criteria that provides the highest priority to members of the NMAS, with emphasis on those members in good standing who had devoted the most time and effort to the successful operations of the museum throughout its years of operation.

Spouses and members of the naval community at large were considered, but as it turned out, the latter were well represented among the NMAS membership. Our faithful and long suffering spouses posed a more difficult decision. With the emphasis placed on the attendance of "veterans," it became obvious that twenty more veterans could be added to the list in lieu of spouses.

There can be no doubt that our spouses deserve recognition for their loyal support, and it is our intention to recognise these unsung members of our society at some future event. You may also be interested to know that, other than two or three who have been selected to represent the NMAS, members of our board have declined invitations in favour of the vet-

eran members of the Naval Museum of Alberta Society.

The Military Museums will host an official dinner at the Hyatt Recency Hotel on the evening of June 6<sup>th</sup>. The Guest of Honour will be the Honorable Jim Prentice, no stranger to the City of Calgary, the Naval Museum or the TMM. Tickets have been selling fast, and if you wish to attend please contact Linda Bialek at 403-242-0002. The cost for this event is \$300 per plate, and will be subsidised by the NMAS to those members wishing to attend. Proceeds will go to the TMM/CMMS as part of the annual fund raising programme.

The TMM will officially open to the public the following day, Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009 (please see our front cover). Many special events will form part of the day's programme and should be informative and entertaining for all ages. Bring out your kids and grandkids and enjoy the day.

Murray Bialek, our stalwart Curator/General Manager, will bring you up to date on museum happenings in his Curator's Cabin piece in this issue. But I would like to add my own words of welcome to our latest STEP student Alison Mercer who replaces Shannon May. Shannon is returning to university full time.

Lt(N) Aura Pon, who for the past several months has held a Class 'A' reserves position at the museum, has been replaced by Bos'n Kris Singer. Please take with you our sincere thanks for your valued hard work in support of the Naval Museum.

We also express a hearty welcome to Kris and Alison as the latest members of our Museum staff.

Planning is underway for the summer NMAS barbecue. Watch for dates and times which we should finalise following the TMM Grand Opening ceremonies.

*Glen Hardie is the President of the Naval Museum of Alberta Society.*

# The Curator's Cabin

By Murray Bialek

I would like to welcome Alison Mercer to our museum. Alison has joined us compliments of a grant received from the Government of Alberta under their Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP). She will be here until the end of August and will act in the capacity of assistant curator. Alison is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in history. I would also like to welcome Kris Singer who is here compliments of DND, and he will also be here until the end of August. LS Singer is a naval reservist with HMCS *Tecumseh* who has served on an MCDV, and will act as an administrative assistant.

Our volunteers have been extremely busy preparing for the official opening of The Military Museums in June. Since Don Connolly's return from Texas, he and Gary Hansen have been restoring our twin Oerlikons. Dick Ellsworth has finished cataloguing our badges, and with the help of Robert Teel each badge has been photographed and entered into our computer system. Jim Cowie has purchased 'planks' of oak and is in the process of edging, cutting, sanding, staining and varnishing these in preparation for mounting the badges. Hope Madsen is painting numerous 'unfinished' badges. As ever, Bruce Connolly, when he is not working for the city at his paid job, spends all of his time at the museum, which I'm sure he believes to be his 'real' job! Anne Cowie has 'stepped up to the plate' and taken on the project of sewing cotton muslin garment bags to properly protect our uniforms in storage.

I would like to formally recognize our numerous volunteers who have helped out during 2009:

*Al Curley  
Al McBean*

*Andy Madsen  
Anne Cowie  
Art Hazel  
Art Jorgenson  
Barbara Murray  
Barry Liberty  
Bernie Harris  
Bill Buchanan  
Bill Payne  
Bill Wilson  
Birdie Archer  
Bob Bryden  
Bob Orthlieb  
Bob Quinn  
Brent Pollock  
Bruce Connolly  
Cal Annis  
Carl Souchereau  
Charlie Cobb  
Dave Cathcart  
Dick Ellsworth  
Don Connolly  
Don Westland  
Doug Bourne  
Dwayne Bakaas  
Ed Simpson  
Frank Archer  
Frank Saies-Jones  
Gary Hansen  
George Bolland  
George Moore  
George Pumple  
Glenn Hardie  
Gordon Kelly  
Gordon Rowan  
Greg McKenzie  
Hans Schallhorn  
Harold Hutchinson  
Ian Christie  
Jack Pidgeon  
James Baldwin  
Joe Graham  
Johanne Aylett  
John Marchand  
Kay Hyde*

Kay Luna  
 Keith Scott  
 Laraine Orthlieb  
 Laurie Hainsworth  
 Linda Bialek  
 Lloyd Downey  
 Lorne Hanson  
 Lyle Reid  
 Marg Ellsworth  
 Marvel Evelyn  
 Mike Beare  
 Mitchell Randall  
 Nancy Olmstead  
 Neil Murray  
 Norm Holden  
 Pat Nichol  
 Peter Berghs  
 Peter Jones  
 Rob White  
 Robert Teel  
 Ron Hallman  
 Ron Miller  
 Ross Hicks  
 Scott Hausberg  
 Syd Young  
 Terry Thompson  
 Tom Conrick  
 Tom Glover  
 Wing Low

The fear of producing such a list is that someone will be left out, which will probably be the case here. However, I would rather let our readers see the names of our wonderful volunteers than not produce a list at all. If you have volunteered during 2009 and your name has been overlooked, please email or phone me.

#### RECENT DONATIONS (Short List)

Items recently received by your museum include: uniforms, buttons, shoulder boards (engineers), mess undress, framed photos, books, WWII photographs, DEMS pennant and crest, Wrens cap and tunic, posters, miniature wooden signal flag locker training aid, booklet: HMCS *Cayuga* (1947), booklet: Vickers Shipbuilding (1924).

#### ARTEFACT DONORS

On behalf of the museum, I would like to thank a number of individuals who recently made artefact donations: Rev. Dr. Don MacMahon, Susan Hausberg, Greg McKenzie, Kay Hyde, Joyce Parsons, Don Hargraves, Kay Luna, HMCS *Tecumseh*, Tim Ganan, Bruce Connolly, Jack Pidgeon and Barry Padley.

#### VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

We are currently seeking an Office Manager willing to spend one to two hours per day (Monday through Friday). Must be computer literate.

We also require Watchkeepers/Hosts who can dedicate four to five hours per month to greet visitors.

If you can help please contact me (Murray) at 403-242-0002 or by email to [curator@navalmuseum.ab.ca](mailto:curator@navalmuseum.ab.ca).

#### CASINO SEPTEMBER 24 & 25, 2009

The chairperson for the next Naval Museum of Alberta Society casino is Johanne Aylett 403-245-4517. Please mark your calendars and telephone

Johanne if you can volunteer for one or more shifts. We must start collecting names as soon as possible.

#### GRAND OPENING

Full details of the Grand Opening of The Military Museums (TMM) will be found on our front cover.



The expansion and renovation is finally complete! The 107,000 sq. ft. complex now houses seven museum galleries representing Canada's Navy, Army and Air Force.

TMM is also home to the University of Calgary's Centre for Military and Strategic Studies library and archives, a computerized decision maze, and an art gallery. The art gallery will open with an exhibit show casing 'Group of Seven' war art dating back to World War One.

Admission to the Grand Opening will be free, and there will be door prizes, tours, historical actors, presentations, special exhibits, food for sale, and much, much more!



## Volunteer Spotlight

### Lorne Hanson



Lorne has been a volunteer for the past twelve years and was 'press-ganged' into museum service by the late Chuck Mawer in 1997. Lorne is a board director for the Naval Museum of Alberta Society and acts as the museum's treasurer, avoiding the 'limelight' and providing an invaluable service. He has been involved in all financial aspects of the NMAAS over the years but has been especially busy during the transition from the old site at HMCS *Tecumseh* to The Military Museums.

Lorne was born in Foam Lake, Saskatchewan, attended the University of Saskatchewan, and graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree. He then joined Price Waterhouse where he articulated and became a Chartered Accountant, subsequently rising to the position of "Partner in Charge of Local Business." He left Price Waterhouse to join a small local firm and has been in business for 41 years. He is still active as a sole practitioner.

Although Lorne has not served in the navy, he has a strong interest in military history. He has been married to Judy for the past 43 years and has two grown and married daughters.



# A Centennial Retrospective

## Canada's First Warship

### HMCS *Rainbow*



Featuring a narrative and photographs from the Canadian Navy Heritage Project website and photo archive [http://www.navy.gc.ca/project\\_pride/home/index\\_e.asp](http://www.navy.gc.ca/project_pride/home/index_e.asp)

#### HISTORY IS MADE IN ESQUIMALT

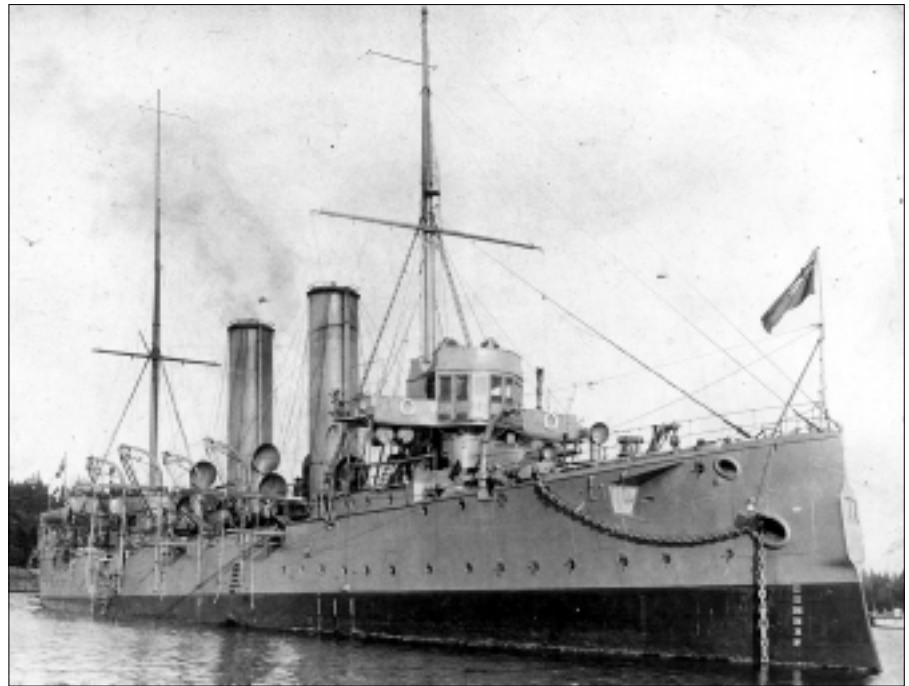
In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, British Columbia was a long way from the Royal Navy proper — a very, very long way. By sea, since the Panama Canal was not yet open, Portsmouth was nearly 29,000 km away; 54 days and 19 hours at a steady speed of 10 knots. Even the China Station was over 11,000 km away; 21 days and 7 hours at a steady speed of 10 knots. Quite rightly then, "British Columbians, feeling lonely and isolated, welcomed her [*Rainbow*]."<sup>1</sup>

History was made on the morning of November 7<sup>th</sup> 1910, when HMCS *Rainbow* arrived at Esquimalt — dressed overall and firing the national salute of 21 guns.

The 'trim little cruiser' reported in the *Victoria Times* was editorialised as "...the first fruits on this coast of a Canadian naval policy, the forerunner of the larger vessels which will add dignity to our name and prestige to our actions."<sup>2</sup>

She was more pragmatically assessed by the *Victoria Colonist*: "The *Rainbow* is not a fighting ship, but she is manned by fighting men and her mission is to train men so as to make them fit to defend our country."<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of WWI, she was the only Allied warship to protect the western coast of North America. During the war she patrolled the entire coast, sometimes as far as Panama, in search of German warships and shipping, scouted the British Columbia coastal waters to ensure that no German auxiliaries such as col-



National Defence E-34438

HMCS *Rainbow* at anchor in Esquimalt Harbour, date unknown.



liers were hiding or spying on ship movements, and ended up transporting some \$140,000,000 in Russian gold bullion between Japanese ships in Esquimalt and Barkley Sound and Vancouver.

By early 1917, Naval Service Headquarters was having difficulties managing the East Coast patrols. By this time both the Japanese and the United States had taken over naval patrol of the Pacific. She performed her last duties of war service by training gunners for patrol vessels, and was paid off on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1917.

#### THE TRIM LITTLE CRUISER

On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1910, the first unit of the fledgling Canadian Naval Service was commissioned into the Royal Canadian Navy at Portsmouth, England, as HMCS *Rainbow*. She was a light cruiser of the Apollo-class of the Royal Navy.

The term 'cruiser,' originally spelled 'cruizer' was at first any ship, often a frigate, detached from a fleet for independent reconnaissance. The important similarity of such ships was that they be fast. With the advent of steam propulsion and armour plating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cruisers

became a generic type of warship in their own right.

Filling roughly the place of the frigate in sailing navies, strong but swift cruisers were built in several categories. The biggest were the armoured cruisers of about 16,000 tons; then came the belted cruisers; the second-class cruiser (with only light armour), and finally the light cruisers which had virtually no armour at all.

The Apollo-class ships were an offshoot of the development of the battle-cruiser, the armoured and protected cruisers, and descended directly from the 'belted' cruisers. 'Armoured' or 'heavily protected cruisers' such as HMCS *Niobe*, were larger ships and had large amounts of armour which contributed to their weight of over 11,000 tons.

*Rainbow* on the other hand, was one of two branches of the cruiser tree. All had the armoured 'citadel,' but in the case of *Rainbow*, the guns on deck were completely without protection, or at best fitted with light shields. Apart from that, the ship was fitted with a light 'belt' of armour and only her magazines were armoured. These 'belted' cruisers, in order to achieve higher speeds, were gradually developed into the 'small' cruiser, and finally the 'light' cruiser. 'Armoured' cruisers, even more substantial than *Niobe*, were fitted with gun casements or turrets which were heavily armoured.

By the time *Rainbow* was ready to come to Canada, she had already been removed from the effective list of the Royal Navy, as had eight other members of the class; limited speed and "very small fighting value" were cited as the reasons.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding, the Admiralty received £215,000 for a ship that had only cost £200,000 to build eighteen years earlier.

<sup>1</sup> Marc Milner, *Canada's Navy – The First Century*, University of Toronto Press (1999) p.20.

<sup>2</sup> *The Victoria Daily Times* (7 Nov. 1910) and quoted in Gilbert Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada – Its Official History, Volume 1*, Ottawa, King's Printer (1952), p.147.

<sup>3</sup> *The Victoria Daily Colonist* (8 Nov. 1910) and quoted in Tucker (see above), p.148.

<sup>4</sup> Fred T. Jane, ed., *Jane's Fighting Ships – 1905-06* New York, Arco Publishing (1970 reprint) p.69.

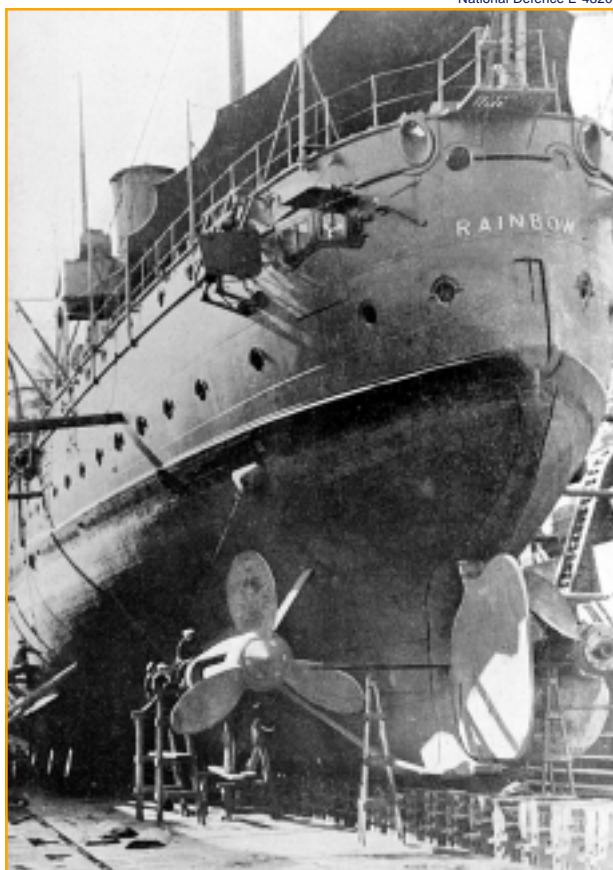
## PARTICULARS

<b>Builder:</b>	Palmers, Hebburn-on-Tyne, United Kingdom
<b>Launched:</b>	25 March 1891
<b>Commissioned:</b>	4 August 1910
<b>Class:</b>	Royal Navy Apollo-class light cruiser
<b>Displacement:</b>	3,600 tons
<b>Dimensions:</b>	314.5 ft. x 43.5 ft. x 16.5 ft.
<b>Speed:</b>	19.75 knots (design), 20.0 (trials)
<b>Crew:</b>	273
<b>Armament:</b>	Two 6-inch; six 4-inch; eight 6-pounders; and, four 14 in. torpedo tubes.

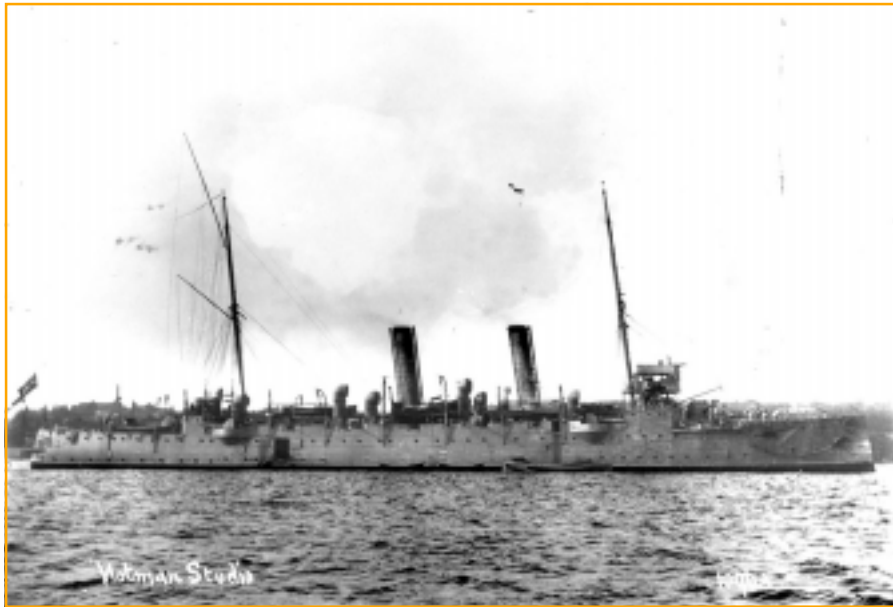
### Commanding Officers:

Cdr J. D. D. Stewart RN	4 Aug 1910 to	23 Jun 1911
Cdr W. Hose RN	24 Jun 1911 to	30 Apr 1917
Cdr H. E. Holme RCN	1 May 1917 to	5 Aug 1917
LCdr J. H. Knight RCN	1 Jul 1917 to	21 Aug 1917
Cdr J. T. Shenton RCN	22 Aug 1917 to	12 May 1918
Lt Y. Birley RCN	13 May 1918 to	14 Oct 1919
Capt E. H. Martin CMG, RCN	15 Oct 1919 to	1 Jun 1920

National Defence E-48205



HMCS *Rainbow* in dry dock, Esquimalt, BC, date unknown.



LEFT – HMCS *Rainbow*, date unknown.

RIGHT – A portion of HMCS *Rainbow's* crew, Esquimalt, 13 March 1914 — from original photograph donated by Michael Curry and Captain A. D. M. Curry



Crew members dhobying aboard HMCS *Rainbow* ca. 1914. From an original photo donated by Michael Curry and Captain A. D. M. Curry.



Gunnery practice aboard *Rainbow* ca. 1915-17. From the album of Cdr Ninian Bannatyne, DND negative courtesy Maj B. B. Price

# Policing the Slave Trade

## The Royal Navy's West African Squadron of 1808

By Frank Saies-Jones

Recent events in the United States leading to the election of President Barack Obama has many citizens of that country believing that racial discrimination against African-Americans no longer exists. With that election coinciding with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln (the sixteenth President of the US) it is perhaps understandable that he is the person credited for declaring slavery to be illegal in the United States.

The truth is that, while Lincoln is indisputably one of America's greatest presidents, forever remembered, not only as the one responsible for uniting his country in a common destiny at the conclusion of the Civil War but also for his Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, when he stated, in part: *"I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated states, or parts of states, are, and henceforward shall be, free."* It is a lesser known fact however, that in 1808, fifty-five years earlier, the Congress of the United States passed into law an Act declaring slavery to be illegal in America. In so doing, America followed the example set by Denmark in 1802, and Great Britain in 1807. Portugal followed suit in 1810 (with certain reservations), Holland in 1814, Spain in 1820, and Brazil in 1829. The British went one step further in 1833 by abolishing slavery throughout her Empire. By 1830 seven countries had declared slave trade illegal, but it appeared that of the seven nations involved, only Great Britain was willing to take action to

enforce the law. In 1808, warships of the Royal Navy were sent by the British Admiralty to patrol the west coast of Africa with orders to intercept any ship found engaging in slaving, and after 1807, no slave ship on the high seas dared fly the British Red Ensign.

So-called African-Americans, together with the descendants of African slaves who now populate many South American countries and the West Indian Islands, have Britain and the Royal Navy to thank for policing the high seas, attempting to enforce the law for over sixty-one years **after** the US had declared slavery illegal, and a further seven years **after** the end of the US Civil War, at which time slavery in the former Confederate States of America was supposed to have ceased. Furthermore, the Royal Navy, despite the diplomatic evasiveness, corruption, and legal obstruction encountered from the six other countries involved, continued to enforce the law until 1869, four years **after** Lincoln's assassination. The basic reason for the war between the states was constitutional, namely, had any state the right to secede from the Union? The question of emancipation had become the focal point however, when it was realized that the southern states had no intention of abolishing the slave trade. That in turn, led to the secession of the Confederate States and the start of the war — a strange turn of events when one considers that slavery had been declared illegal in the US for over fifty-five years.

In Great Britain, when the antislavery bill had first been presented to the House

of Commons in 1807, a lengthy debate followed, which the abolitionists won. They were led by William Wilberforce MP, an outspoken champion of the Abolition Act in the United Kingdom. Despite the optimism of the abolitionists however, when the act finally passed, many members of the House had grave doubts as to how, and by whom, the act would be enforced. By and large, public opinion in Britain supported the abolition of slavery on both moral and humanitarian grounds, but in abolishing the slave trade little regard was given to the effect it would have on the importation of sugar, rum and molasses from the West Indies, as well as other commodities such as cotton and tobacco from the southern states of America. It soon became apparent there would be opposition to the act from ship owners in Denmark, Britain, Portugal, Spain and America, all of whom stood to lose vast fortunes if compelled to abandon the business of buying and selling slaves.

Plantation owners in the western hemisphere were dependent on African slaves to provide them with cheap labour, and it came as no surprise to the British government when powerful voices were raised in both Europe and America against interference with the slave trade. While Britain acted to enforce the law, the importation of slaves into Cuba and Brazil continued, and thousands more continued to be smuggled into the United States in Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish and American ships.

It was hoped that the various coun-



tries involved would have worked out a mutual agreement to enforce the law, but this was not the case. There was no consensus reached as to how this should be done or which country or countries would be responsible for providing the means of doing so. Furthermore, each country appeared to have a different idea as to how the Act would apply to them. For example, Portugal held out for the right to load slaves at her own ports providing those ports were south of the equator, and Spain, which in 1817 prohibited slave trading only in ports north of the equator, eventually extended the ban in 1820 to include ports south of the equator as well.

In 1808, when the first two British warships, the frigate HMS *Solebay* and the sloop HMS *Derwent* were dispatched by the Admiralty to the west coast of Africa with orders to intercept and arrest vessels engaged in the slave trade, there was no agreement in place between the nations as to how a slave ship — on being apprehended at sea — was to be tried, and if proven guilty, how, and by whom it should be punished. The British government therefore negotiated with Spain, Portugal and Holland to establish Anglo-Spanish, Anglo-Portuguese and Anglo-Dutch courts in Freetown, West Africa, for this purpose. When tried, and if convicted by these courts, ships could be confiscated and sold by auction. Similar courts were later set up in Rio de Janeiro, Cuba (a Spanish colony at the time), and Surinam. France, which had been at war with Eng-

land in 1807 when Britain passed the Abolition Act, now joined the other European nations in declaring slavery illegal. Although ready to admit that trading in slaves was inhumane, and that ships suspected of being thus engaged should be stopped and searched, the French, like the Americans, were reluctant to allow any interference with their ships by a foreign power, and opted to be left outside any proposed reciprocal agreement in regard to the boarding of ships on the high seas.

The reason given for this decision was that the French government was concerned that a French ship taken into Sierra Leone to be tried by an Anglo-French court might not be given a fair trial. It



Capture of a slaver off the coast of Cuba.

was 1828 before the French navy was to establish an antislavery patrol, and did not agree to a reciprocal search treaty with Britain until 1833.

Meanwhile in America, there seemed to be no effort being made to enforce the law. While the northern states in general were in favour of abolition, businessmen in both the north and south had major investments in the slave trade. The north built and owned the ships that were used in the trade, and the south used the ships to transport slaves from Africa. The businessmen's lobby in Congress was strong,

and ship's owners in both the northern and southern states continued to engage in the slave trade up to the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865. In 1818, the US government had stiffened the law against slave trading by stating that the master of an American ship accused of slaving had to prove his innocence in court, rather than the court having to prove his guilt, and in 1820, Congress declared slaving to be equitable to piracy and punishable by death. Neither of these amendments meant a great deal however, as British warships were forbidden to apprehend American ships, and forty-two years were to pass before an American captain was executed for engaging in slavery.

Britain and America had long been at variance with regard to freedom of the seas. The Royal Navy maintained that all ships were free to sail the high seas without interference, providing they were on their "lawful occasions," but it reserved the right to stop and board any vessel suspect-

ed of breaking international law. The Americans however, maintained that their flag protected all their citizens from foreign interference, in any and all circumstances. They would therefore, never allow a British officer — or for that matter any foreign officer — the right to board an American ship on the high seas. In 1833, when Britain abolished slavery throughout her Empire, she signed a treaty with France giving reciprocal rights of search to French and British vessels, and an unsuccessful attempt was made to persuade the United States to discuss a

similar proposal.

One of the more frustrating obstacles encountered by the Royal Navy in enforcing the law was the practice of releasing a ship after apprehension, when she was found to be carrying no slaves. This was common practice despite the obvious fact she was equipped for slaving. For example, finding that she was fitted with gratings instead of solid hatches (in order to allow ventilation), carrying food and water far in excess of that required for a crew of about thirty men, equipped with cooking boilers and mess tubs to provide meals for up to 300 to 400 slaves, iron shackles for

fettering male slaves, and carrying bulkheads and spare timber for fitting extra tiers in her hold to increase her carrying capacity. To put a stop to this practice, Britain set about trying through diplomatic means to persuade anti-slave trading countries to accept what was to become

known as the "Equipment Clause." Briefly, this meant that any ship stopped on the high seas obviously engaged in transporting slaves, regardless of whether she was carrying slaves or not, could be arrested and brought before the courts.

Between 1822 and 1839, Spain, Holland and Portugal accepted the provisions of the "Equipment Clause," and in 1840, relations with the Americans improved somewhat when the US Navy sent the USS *Dolphin* to patrol the African coast. *Dolphin* was relieved by the USS

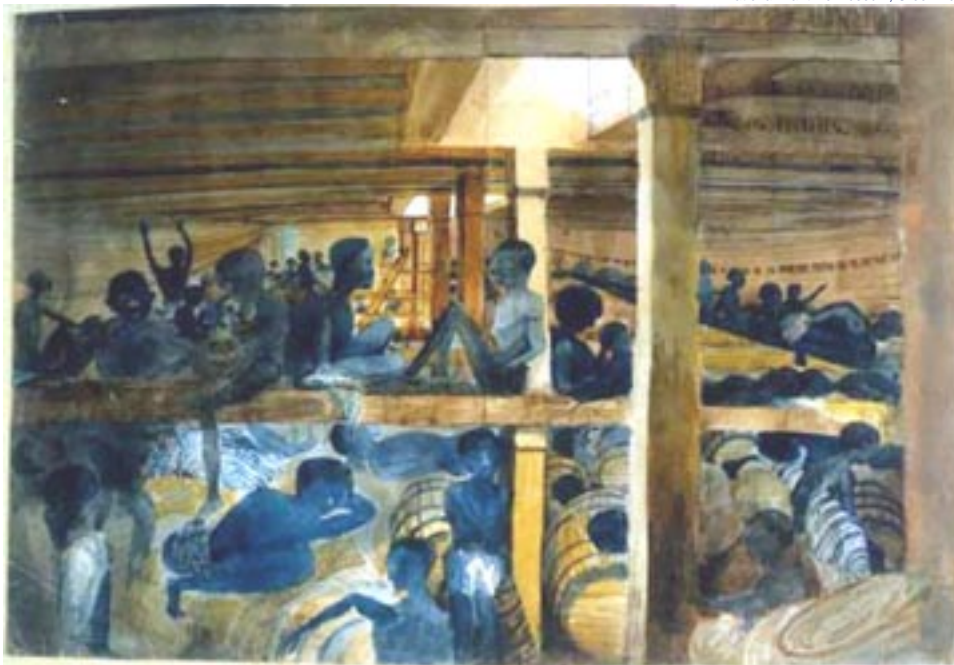
*Grampus*, and shortly after her arrival on station, a formal agreement was made by which the British and American warships sailing in pairs, could detain and search vessels from all countries. The idea was that if a British ship stopped an American ship, it would be handed over to the Americans to be boarded and searched, and likewise, an American ship stopping a British ship would turn it over to the Royal Navy. This agreement was necessary to solve the problem of America's sensitive regard for the sanctity of their flag. These improved Anglo-American relations suffered a setback however,

that had been counted on from other nations, had not materialized, and for approximately twenty years Britain shouldered the burden alone, with the cost of the entire operation being borne primarily by the British.

The Royal Navy was paying a heavy price in killed, wounded and diseased personnel, yet despite this, more slaves than ever were being shipped across the Atlantic. Fortunately, the British government persevered in their effort to abolish slavery, and those who would have had them abandon the cause were silenced. The Royal Navy had started their anti-

slavery campaign off the Gold Coast with a squadron of frigates, sloops and brigs, which were the principal vessels used by the British in the formation of what became known as the West African squadron. After having defeated the French and Spanish at Trafalgar, the navy had been reduced in size,

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich



Slave deck of the *Albatroz*, 1845. On patrol for ships engaged in the illegal slave trade, Lt. Francis Meynell RN painted this image of the lower deck of the captured slave ship while off the African coast.

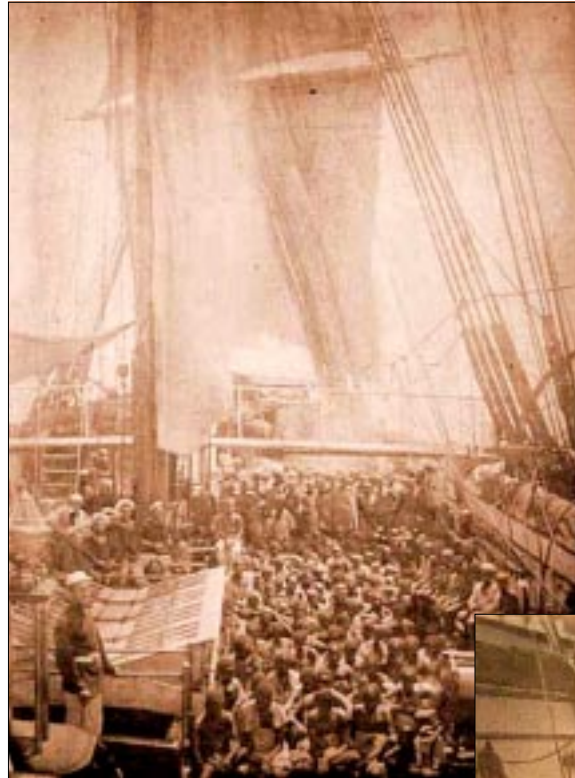
when the US government gave way to pressure from the planters in the southern states and withdrew their cruisers from the waters of the eastern seaboard. This resulted in American ships, and those of other foreign countries, sailing under American colours to engage in slaving with no fear of being boarded by British warships who were ordered not to touch them. Also at this time, public opinion in Britain, which had strongly supported the suppression of slavery at the outset, began to wane. Assistance

but the Admiralty managed to allocate roughly one-fifth of Britain's naval strength to engage in the suppression of slavery. All told, some fifty-six vessels and over 6,000 men were employed in 1836 on antislavery patrol.

Space does not permit a detailed description of the many engagements involving the Royal Navy in the years they attempted to suppress the slave trade, but the following two incidents will serve to provide the reader with a good example of what they had to contend with.

Both photos: The National Archives, United Kingdom

In the autumn of 1841, the American vessel *Creole* sailed from Hampton, Virginia with a cargo of slaves bound for New Orleans. No British ship came near her, but during the passage the slaves mutinied, seized the ship, and sailed her into the port of Nassau in the Bahamas where they landed and declared themselves to be free. On learning of the incident, the US demanded the slaves be handed over, but the British refused to deliver them back into slavery, allowing them to remain in the Bahamas as free men.



**LEFT** – This photo was taken in the Indian Ocean on November 1, 1868, and shows East African slaves taken aboard the Dutch warship *Daphne* from an Arab dhow.

**BELOW** – This photograph, also dated 1868, reveals little of the terrible suffering caused to millions of people by the slave trade. This group of severely emaciated boys and young men on the lower deck of a Royal Navy ship, were apparently taken from a slave vessel trading illegally off the African coast headed to the Americas. The captain of the Royal Navy vessel had instructions not to return the rescued slaves to the place on the coast where they had been put on the slave ship (presumably because they were in danger of being recaptured by traders), but it is not clear from the available documentation what happened to them afterwards.



The second incident concerned the brigantine *Eagle* detained by the British in Lagos on January 14, 1839, and the schooner *Clara*, also detained by the RN in Rio Nun on March 18, 1839. Both vessels were flying American colours when detained, but were suspected by the British of being Spanish ships. The courts in Sierra Leone refused to hear the case stating that British ships were not authorized to detain American ships, nor, they said, did they have jurisdiction to try vessels claiming American nationality. The two ships were then escorted to the Spanish island of Fernando Po by HMS *Buzzard* under the command of Lt. Fitzgerald RN, who, in turn, was ordered to escort them to New York and turn them over to the Americans. In New York, Lt. Fitzgerald presented his evidence to the American authorities who agreed the captain of the *Eagle* was an American citizen who was then put on trial and charged with slaving. On the question of the nationality of the ships however, the Americans claimed they were Spanish, and Lt. Fitzgerald therefore escorted them to Bermuda where he hoped a British court would settle the matter. The British court

ruled that the two ships were indeed Spanish, and that they should be returned to the court in Sierra Leone to stand trial. On her return journey across the Atlantic, *Eagle* foundered in a storm, but *Buzzard* managed to rescue the prize crew and the vessel was later posthumously convicted of being a Spanish slaver by a Freetown court, a year after having been first detained. The other vessel, *Clara*, had parted company in the gale that sunk the *Eagle*, and ended up in Jamaica where she was condemned as being unseaworthy, and in due course was also found guilty of being a Spanish slaver. The story of these two ships will serve to describe the problems that the British encountered when dealing with the Americans. Lt. Fitzgerald, and his ship *Buzzard*, had gone to great lengths spending more than a year in the attempt to bring the Spanish ships to trial by the Americans to no avail. The Americans, on the other hand, accused the British of being high handed, and claimed the Spanish ships should have been left

alone, even though sailing under American colours. It was stated that, if the British had minded their own business, *Eagle* and *Clara* would still have been afloat and earning money for their owners, rather than one rotting in dock, and the other at the bottom of the Atlantic.

And so it went until finally in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the American Constitution was passed abolishing slavery throughout that country. One can only speculate as to how long the slave trade might have continued to flourish had Britain not used her navy to enforce the law, and furthermore, what might have happened had the Union troops been defeated by the Confederates in the War Between the States.

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