

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE MARINE SECTION
and
RADIO STATION VDH, HALIFAX
RADIO STATION VDS, SHEDIAC BRIDGE

By Spud Roscoe VE1BC
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Although the Canadian Customs Service felt they were doing their duty and convincing their superiors that they were, better heads were to prevail and take up the job of trying to clean up the rum running mess of the Prohibition era once and for all. This gave birth to one of the finest and most fascinating fleets to operate under the Canadian flag. On April 1st, 1932, the Marine Section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police went into service and took over all the duties of the Canada Customs Patrol Vessels.

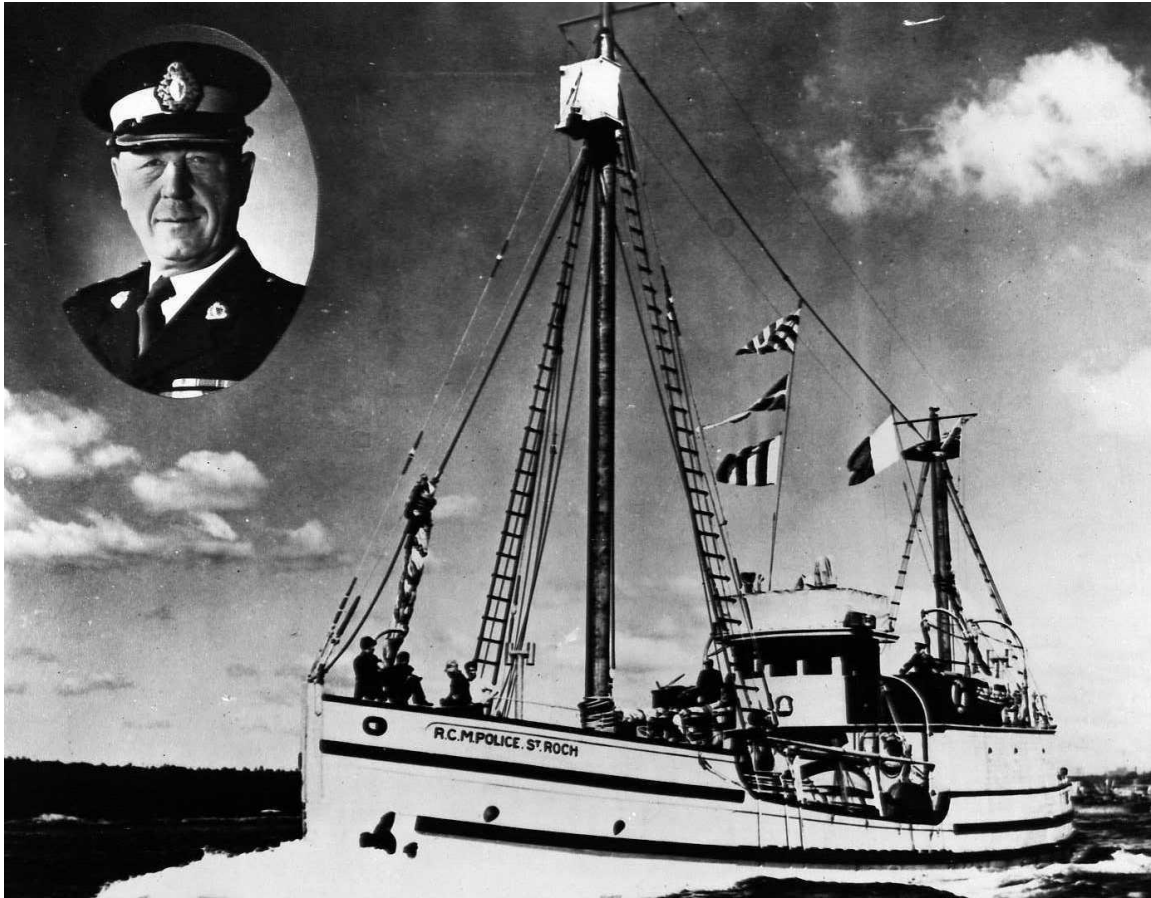
CGMP referred to any or all vessels of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Marine Section. This CGMP collective radio call sign was assigned right after the creation of the Marine Section on April 1, 1932. This call sign was listed in the International Telecommunication Union Publications but I do not know how much or if any use was made of this call sign.



The men in this new organization wore a uniform not unlike the old naval uniforms worn by the Royal Canadian Navy. There were minor differences between the two uniforms. The Cap Tallies read MARINE SECTION with the Mounted Police crest between the two words, and the large collars on the RCMP uniform had one ½ inch wide white stripe, instead of the Navy's three narrow white stripes. The ranks held by both units were the same and the only difference between the Chief Petty Officer, and Officer's uniform, was the Cap Badge which was the same Cap Badge worn in the Navy with the addition of the letters RCMP across the center of the badge. The Marine Section of the RCMP was permitted to wear moustaches, whereas the Navy members were not. This made for a few interesting incidents between the two units. Many a Navy Officer was to be taken up short for bawling out a man with a moustache to learn on closer examination that he was not navy.

It should be noted that the famous Royal Canadian Mounted Police vessel, the RCMP ST. ROCH that had call sign VGSR, was not a member of the Marine Section. She was a special-built supply vessel constructed in 1928 and remained with "G" Division, the division by which she was built and operated. "G" Division is that section of the Mounted Police that controls their activities in the north. The north is the Yukon Territory, the North West Territories and now the territory of Nunavut that was formed from a section of the North West Territories on April 1st, 1999.

RCMP ST. ROCH can be seen at the Maritime Museum in Vancouver, British Columbia. She had a special radio transmitter built by the Canadian Marconi Company in Montreal and used a National HRO receiver.



Royal Canadian Mounted Police

This is the RCMP ST. ROCH with international call sign VGSR and Commanding Officer Henry Larsen in the insert.

Shediac Bridge, New Brunswick is located north of Shediac on Shediac Bay. Shediac Bay is part of the Northumberland Strait; that body of water that separates the province of Prince Edward Island from the mainland. Shediac Bridge had a radio station with call sign VDS. This VDS station was for communication with the RCMP Marine Section Vessels. VDS would communicate with any RCMP vessel and then pass any message traffic collected to another station located in the Dockyard at Halifax. The call sign of this Halifax station was VDH, believe it or not, another of the many mysteries within our allotment of call signs. The letter S is three dots in Morse code and the letter H is four dots. With lots of static this must have been somewhat of a nightmare. Luckily these stations were not very close and any confusion would have been reduced because of this. The frequency used for this inter-station communication was around 3,000 kHz. There is also a possibility that VDH Halifax was the remnant of VAA Halifax, although I have been unable to prove this suspicion. VAA Halifax was located in a small shack in HMC Dockyard, a naval station during World I.

I found another RCMP station in operation in 1936 in this area. This station was located outside Moncton, New Brunswick and held call sign VFM. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police took delivery of four DeHavilland Dragonfly aircraft in 1937, the first on May 5th, 1937. These four aircraft were to carry a radio operator capable of communicating with their vessels and these stations. These four aircraft were registered as CF-MPA, CF-MPB, CF-MPC and CF-MPD. They were to use this registration as their radio call sign. These four aircraft were turned over to the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. In addition to this the Mounted Police had radio station CY6M located at the Moncton Airport in 1938. These four aircraft had eight regular members of the Mounted Police as pilots and all four aircraft were based at

Moncton. Sometime ago I received a phone call from one who was doing research on these aircraft and wanted to know if I knew George Lowe. There is a record that he was assigned as radio operator in these aircraft but as near as they could tell only one of the four aircraft had been fitted with a radio station. VDS may have been moved to Moncton and became VFM in 1936. This VFM station is mentioned on page 94 of the October 1936 issue of the amateur radio publication QST. The amateur radio operators attending the Moncton Amateur Radio Hamfest that year were given a tour of this station. One will probably never know the complete detail of these stations.



Bing Maps

One can see the location of the three stations on the above map.

This meant that these RCMP vessels normally communicated with these two stations, VDS and VDH, but used the regular coast stations from time to time. They always used their international call signs, but the majority of their messages were in code. They would often obtain their positions, during weather conditions of low visibility or for any reason, by requesting that radio bearings be taken from their transmissions. They normally operated under "black out" during the hours of darkness and did not show any lights. As can be seen a radio operator in a "rum runner" with a direction finder would be a welcome asset. Even one with a good receiver, because during the period this radio direction finding service was provided by coast stations it was known as QTF from the International List of Q Signals. QTF means: The position of your station according to the bearings taken by the direction-finding stations I control was --- Latitude --- Longitude. QTF?

Would be the interrogative of this statement, both are well known by any radio operators in all of the world's languages.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Marine Section vessels were called Cruisers. There were four types of Cruisers:

Class A – Comprises all Cruisers radio equipped and carrying a crew of not less than 14 men victualled on board.

Class B – Comprises all Cruisers radio equipped and carrying a crew of not more than 14 men and not less than 6 men victualled on board.

Class C – Comprises Patrol Boats not equipped with regular radio equipment, a crew of not more than 4 men, and in receipt of Single Ration Allowance of 60 cents per diem.

Class D – To comprise small patrol boats not equipped with suitable living accommodations, carrying a crew of not more than 3 men, and in receipt of Hard Lying Money to allow for sleeping accommodation ashore.

Canada has probably assigned four-letter international call signs to a number of stations that I am not aware of but one further example was the stations operated by the Hudson Bay Company in the Arctic. Actually these stations had a four-character call sign with an international prefix and not a four-letter call sign. For many years each manager of the various Hudson Bay Company trading posts throughout the country was issued a ten-watt fix-tuned radiotelegraph transceiver along with a list of the various characters in Morse code, the continental code. It was each manager's responsibility to learn the code and the operation of these units, likely a welcome diversion for many from the boredom associated with the various isolated posts. Right after World War II, the Hudson Bay Company post at Cambridge Bay, North West Territories had call sign CY5D. The manager at this post, "Scottie" Gaul, mastered the operation of this unit but it was his wife who took the bull by the horns so to speak and became very proficient with this unit. Radiotelephone has replaced these stations and I have seen their location, including call sign and frequency, printed on various navigational charts in case some station, ship, aircraft, etc., wanted to communicate with them.

These are two of this type of call sign I have found:

CY5D Hudson Bay Company, Cambridge Bay, North West Territories (1940's)
CY6M R.C.M.P. Aircraft Section Moncton Airport, Moncton, New Brunswick (1938)

There were quite a few of these two letter, one digit and one letter call signs assigned back then. These are some of the ones I found listed for 1937. They all were listed as using radiotelegraph so there must have been a lot of work for one who could operate radiotelegraph back then. Probably someone working for these organizations was told to become proficient in radiotelegraph and operate the station.

CZ2R Pilotage Authority, New Westminster, British Columbia
CZ3C Wings Limited, Norway House, Manitoba
CZ3K General Dredging, Neuville, Quebec
CZ3R Canadian Pacific Railways, New Liskeard, Ontario
CZ3Y Northern Broadcasting, North Bay, Ontario
CZ4O Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, Mount Collins, Ontario
CZ4P Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, Nesters Falls, Ontario
CZ4Q Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, North Bay, Ontario
CZ5K Dominion Skyways, Montreal, Quebec
CZ5L Dominion Skyways, Mud Lake, Quebec

From this research and years of experience I am convinced that the majority of the Canadian ships should have had a four-letter call sign allotted permanently and listed correctly in the International Telecommunication Union publications. The assignment of these ship call signs to ships with a prefix indicating the owner of the ship, as they were over the years led to a lot of unnecessary confusion and foolishness. When they did not list certain fleets in the International Telecommunication Union publications simply led to further frustration.

This RCMP fleet was also of Ottawa design. Although the Marine Section did a fairly good job of curbing rum-running, having worked closely with the United States Coast Guard, it was World War II that actually put a stop to it, and the fact some States repealed prohibition in 1936. When war was declared in 1939 the Marine Section, including both ships and personnel, was taken over by either the Royal Canadian Navy or the Marine Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force, as were the rumrunners, including a lot of the men who operated the rum running vessels. One thing rum running did accomplish was to make excellent seamen of the men involved.



Photo courtesy Royal Canadian Mounted Police

This is RCMP LAURIER that became HMCS LAURIER on the outbreak of World War II. The RCMP vessels retained their RCMP call signs during the war as part of the RCN or RCAF fleets.

The late Ed Hartling was one of the RCMP Marine operators during this period, and when war was declared he was the radio operator in RCMP MACDONALD on Canada's West Coast. MACDONALD was new at the time and a very nice vessel. Her interior including the furniture was of oak wood and she was fitted with a standard Marconi station of the period with the Marconi

LTT4 as the main transmitter. The identical twin sister of RCMP MACDONALD was the RCMP LAURIER with call sign CGPC, and was also constructed in 1939. Her radio installation was identical. LAURIER became HMCS LAURIER at the outbreak of the war and the late Norman Hinde was one of her first naval operators. She retained her RCMP Radio Station but used the standard naval two letter coded calls which were changed regularly. Norm said her station was the standard Marconi station of the period. The Main Transmitter was the LTT4, the Main Receiver the National HRO, and the Marconi MF/DF (MDF5). Norm sailed in LAURIER from October 1939 until early 1940.

Ed Hartling was absorbed in the Royal Canadian Navy as a Chief Petty Officer, the rank he held in the Marine Section. This meant only two changes, both in appearance, he had to shave off his moustache and remove the RCMP from his Cap Badge. The Navy must have been quite happy to acquire Ed, because they sent him to HMCS ST. HYACINTHE, in the province of Quebec (the naval radio school of the time), as an instructor. He remained at this post throughout the war teaching thirteen classes in radio operations and was returned to his RCMP career on completion.

The RCMP ST. ROCH remained with the RCMP throughout the war, and made a number of her famous voyages during that time. All of the RCMP vessels fitted with radio, including ST. ROCH, were fitted with continuous wave (radiotelegraph) equipment. Not one of these vessels used spark equipment at any time.

The RCMP Marine Section had sixteen vessels equipped with radio and carried radio operators. They were:

CGPB BAROFF
CGPC LAURIER
CGPD ACADIAN
CGPF MACDONALD
CGPL FLEUR DE LIS
CGPQ INTERCEPTOR
CGPR MADAWASKA
CGPS CHALEUR
CGPT SCATARIE
CGPV ULNA
CGPW ALACHASSE
CGPX ADVERSUS
CGPY CAPTOR
CGPZ DETECTOR
CGSJ ARRESTEUR
CGSR FRENCH

As can be seen the "rum runner" had to keep an ear open for only the two, FRENCH and ARRESTEUR that did not have a CGP prefix, but at that they were so similar there was no problem. If one tried to learn the reason those two did not have a CGP prefix it would be as foolish as those having the CGP prefix to begin with. Note the similarity in the FRENCH and ST. ROCH (VGSR) call signs. Most of these vessels were equipped with Canadian Marconi stations although I was told ARRESTEUR and DETECTOR had stations built from a kit of some description by the first operator. The main transmitters were tuned to the standard frequencies of 300, 600, and 800 meters.

Currently, the St.Roch is on exhibit with the Canadian Marconi LTT-4 and 200PT transmitters in her radio room. It is assumed that the vessel paid off with these two types. The MACDONALD and LAURIER definitely had the LTT4 but I am not certain what the others were fitted with.



Courtesy Robert F. Holton

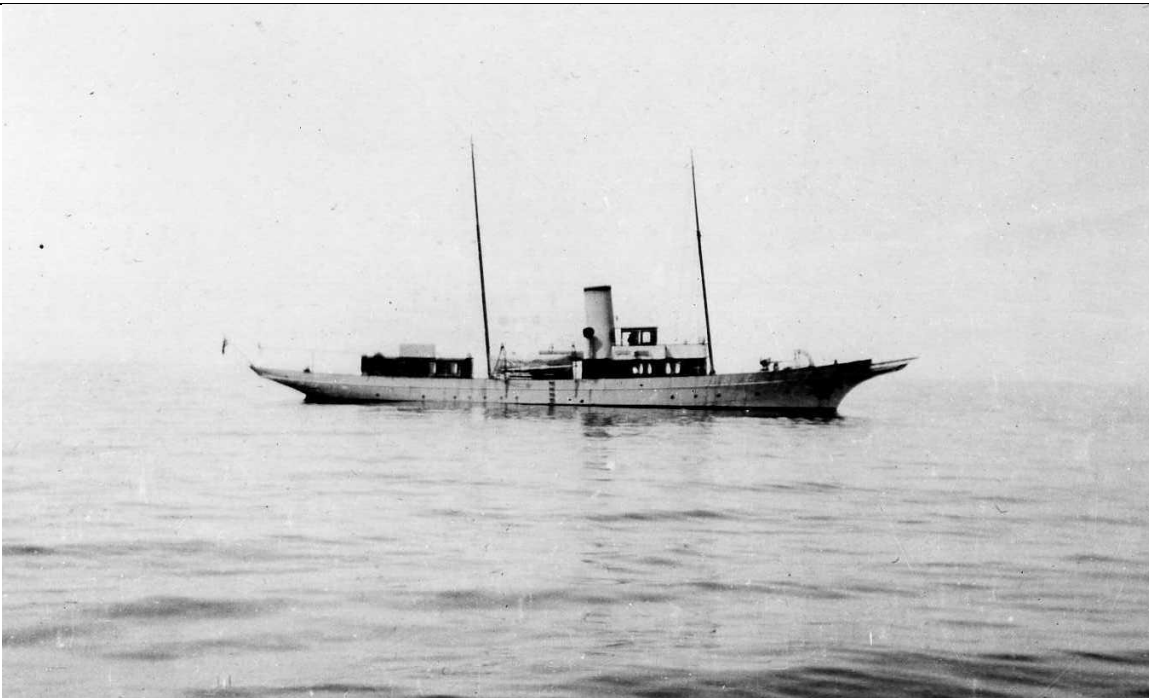
RCMP BAROFF

It is amazing how one can research and write about these things for so long and then realize they have not found all there is. I did not learn of RCMP BAROFF until February 2008. She was a sister of PATROL BOAT NO. 4 or the STUMBLE INN described in my rum running description above. We do not know the former United States Navy number of these two former Submarine Chasers. BAROFF was built in 1918 at New York and served in the Marine Section out of Gaspé, Quebec. She was known as BO' PEEP while rum-running when seized by the Preventive Service and turned into a government vessel. She was known as BAR OFF and became BAROFF as a member of the Marine Section. Her radio operator would have made good use of radio station VDS at Shédiac Bridge. She served in the Marine Section from its creation in 1932 until 1936 when she was taken out of service. War Assets Disposal Corporation disposed of her in 1945. Her original gasoline engines had been replaced with three 80 BHP diesels in 1928. The RCMP called her a Class "A" Cruiser. Therefore, she must have carried more than 14 men. The International Telecommunication Union records indicate that she was capable of Continuous Wave and Modulated Continuous Wave transmission. Her main transmitter would be most interesting. There would have been sufficient room for a Canadian Marconi LTT4 unit.



Photo courtesy Royal Canadian Mounted Police

This is RCMP FRENCH "Making Her Number". The four flags in a vertical line are read from the top to the bottom C G S R. I have no idea why she is flying what appear to be two ensigns. It may be a special holiday or she may have a high ranking officer on board.

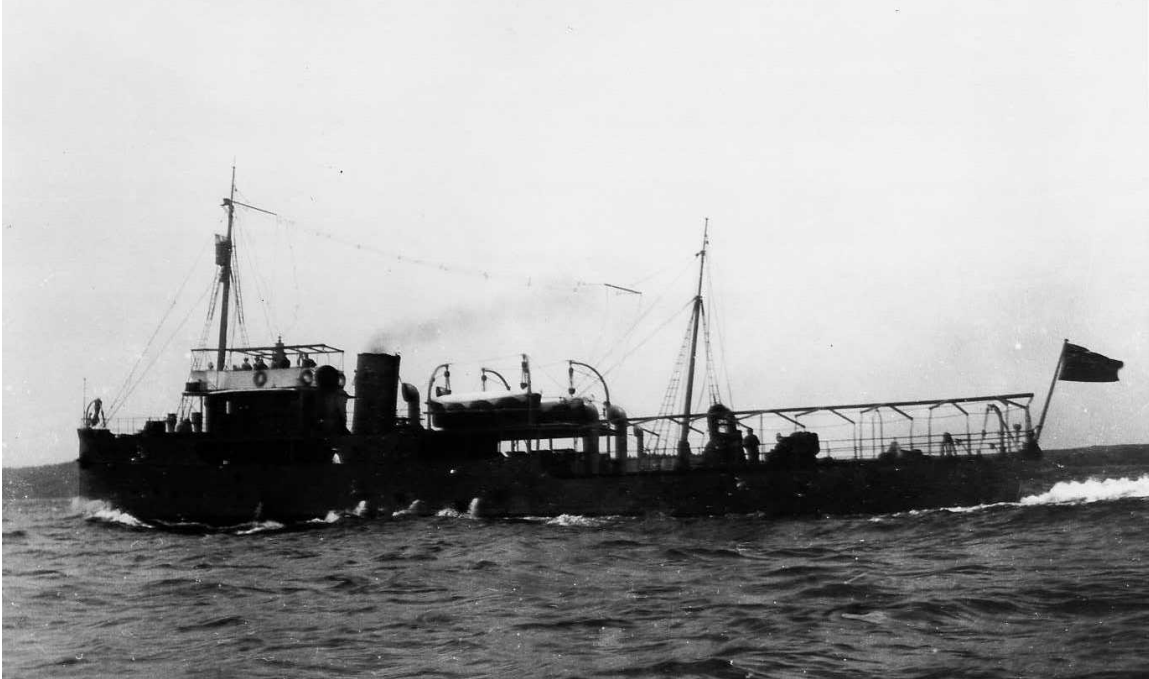


Royal Canadian Mounted Police

RCMP ULNA

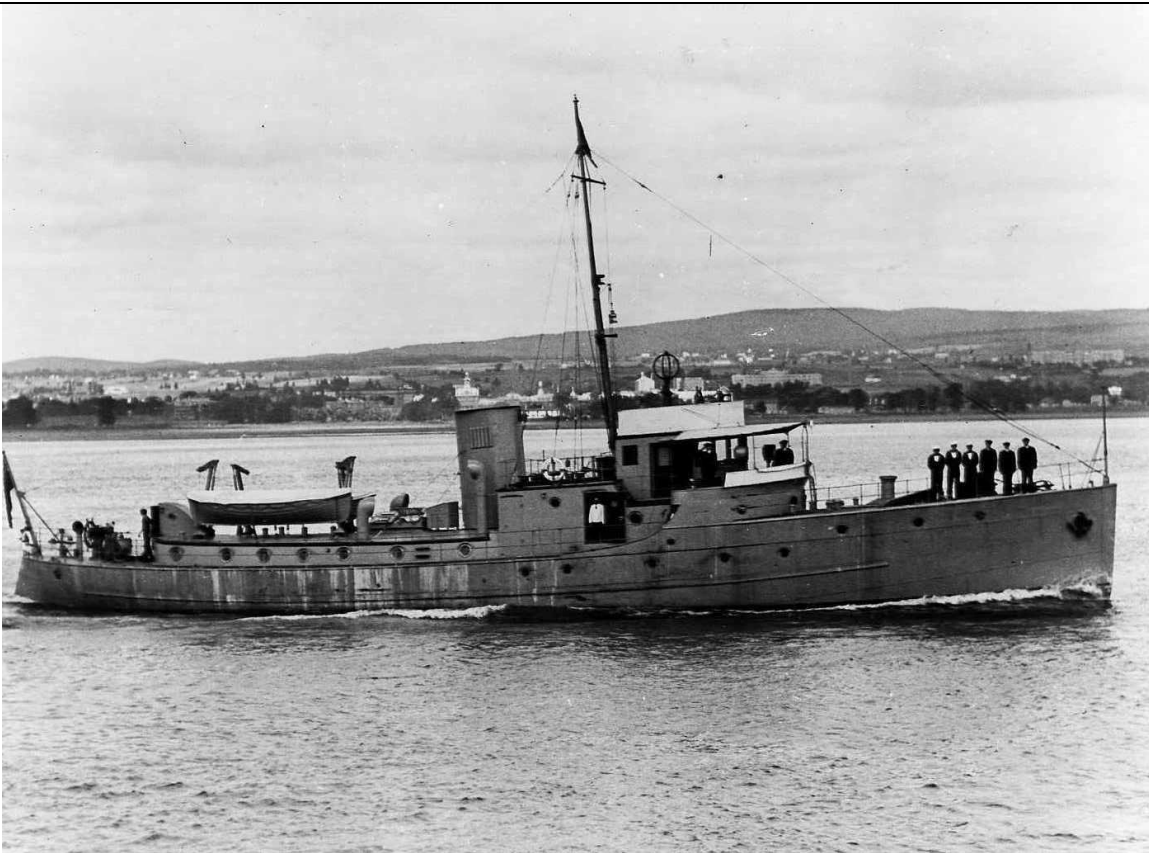
As one can see RCMP ULNA looked a lot like a yacht and her call sign was as descriptive as one can get it; Canadian Government Police Vessel (CGPV). With an inverted L antenna from the

tops of both masts down to the radio station meant she should have had one of the best signals in this fleet.



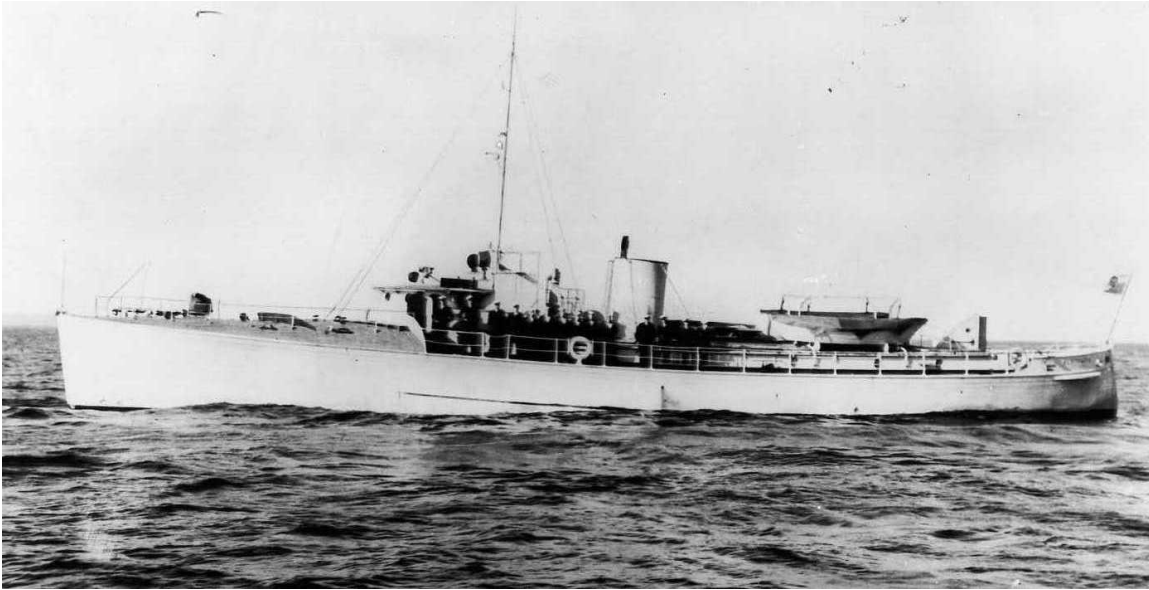
Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2300

RCMP FLEUR DE LIS



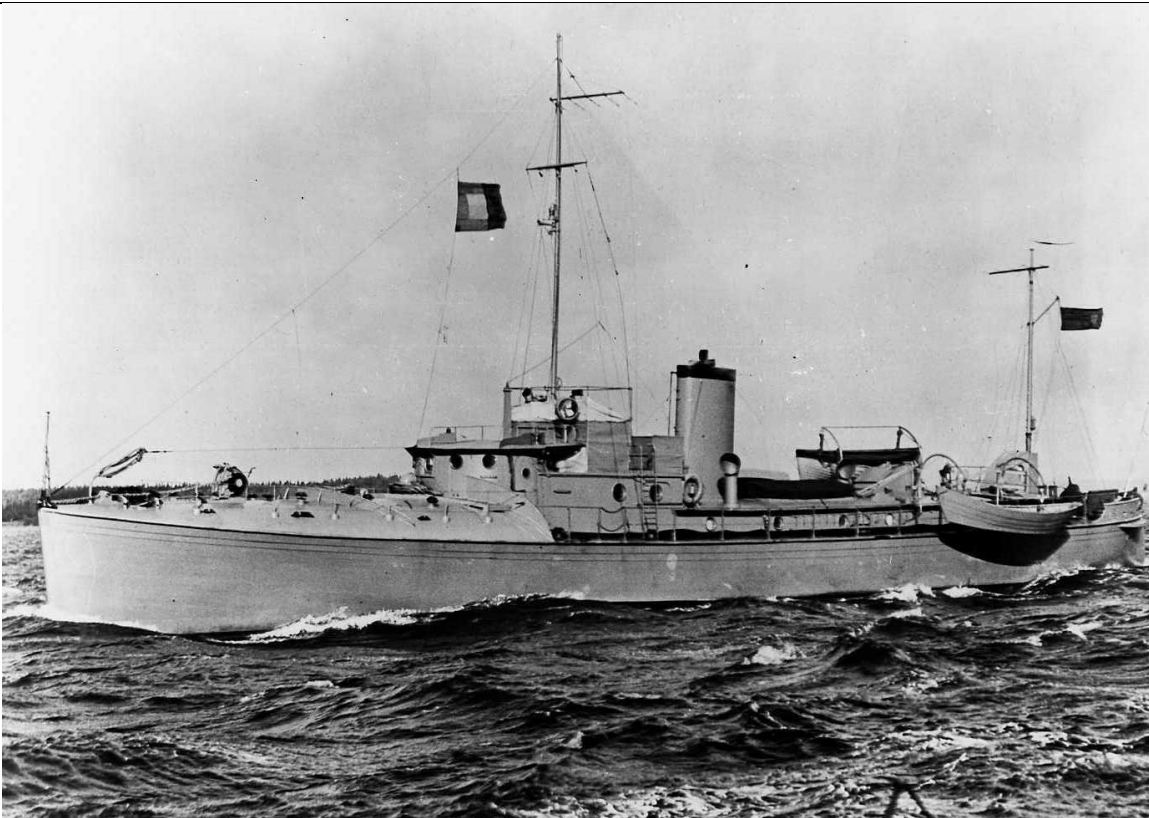
Royal Canadian Mounted Police 5719

RCMP MACDONALD



Royal Canadian Mounted Police

RCMP ALACHASSE



Royal Canadian Mounted Police 1150

RCMP ADVERSUS

Those five strand inverted L antenna from the spreaders at the tops of both masts down to the radio station would have given ADVERUS a good signal on medium frequencies.



Royal Canadian Mounted Police 501

RCMP MADAWASKA



Royal Canadian Mounted Police 162-4

This is RCMP ACADIAN and one can see the naval type uniform.

On the outbreak of World War II steps were taken immediately to increase the fleets of the Royal Canadian Navy and our merchant Navy. At the outbreak of war RCMP CAPTOR (call sign CGPY) was based at Saint John, New Brunswick. Both she and her commanding officer, R. C. Butt, found themselves members of the Royal Canadian Navy. Someone had reported seeing a U-boat on the surface off Digby Neck, Nova Scotia. This would put it much too close for comfort of the PRINCESS HELENE (call sign VGKL), the ferry that ran daily between Saint John and Digby. On learning of this U-boat the Navy assigned CAPTOR to travel in zig-zag fashion back and forth with PRINCESS HELENE. CAPTOR could only make half the speed that PRINCESS HELENE could and had one old machine gun only. When Captain Butt asked what he was supposed to do if they encountered this U-boat, his superior told him that was his problem his job was to see that he followed the ferry. Luckily no harm fell to either vessel. When trouble was suspected, the ferry "opened up" and ran like hell for port. CAPTOR came "puffing" in behind, taking twice as long as the ferry to get there. But this is only one of many such incidents and gives a good example of just how poorly equipped we were when we got tangled up in this war. The one thing that should be noted is that we declared war on our own, not as a branch of the British forces as we had in World War I.



Kenn Haycock

This is RCAF DETECTOR the former RCMP DETECTOR with call sign CGPZ under full power.

The RCMP DETECTOR and her sister RCMP ARRESTEUR were two of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police craft transferred to the Marine Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force at the outbreak of World War II. They all retained their call signs as assigned while members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Air Force called both vessels a High Speed Rescue Vessel and both were stationed at Eastern Air Command located at Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia. This Air Force base became HMCS SHEARWATER on December 1, 1948 when the Royal Canadian Navy obtained an air arm.

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