

MERCHANT NAVY DAY

September 3rd

(Received Royal Assent June 19, 2003)

The Merchant Navy played a vital role during the Second World War: it ensured the flow of trade in munitions, supplies, and men between North America and Britain/Europe to support the War effort.

These convoys crossing the Atlantic were terribly vulnerable to German attack, particularly by U-boats, because of a lack of armed ships and air cover to support them. The deadliest part of the Atlantic run was through what was known as the "Black Pit" – out of range of air cover from either North America or the United Kingdom.



The HMCS Charlottetown (I) was destroyed near Cap-Chat on September 11, 1942.

Many Merchant Mariners perished not only by enemy attack but by exposure to the elements and accidents in fog and winter gales.

Without the brave sailors manning the convoys across the Atlantic, the Allies would have surely lost the Second World War.



Survivors of a torpedoed Merchant Navy ship aboard the HMCS Arvida, 1942.

THE HALIFAX MEMORIAL

This memorial in Nova Scotia's capital, erected in Point Pleasant Park, is a reminder of all who have died at sea.



The Monument is a 12 meter high Cross of Sacrifice, clearly visible to all ships approaching Halifax, mounted on a podium bearing the names of 3,123 Canadian men and women who were buried at sea.

The inscription on the memorial reads:

**IN HONOUR OF THE
MEN AND WOMEN
OF THE NAVY, ARMY
AND MERCHANT
NAVY OF CANADA
WHOSE NAMES ARE
INSCRIBED HERE
THEIR GRAVES
ARE UNKNOWN
BUT THEIR MEMORY
SHALL ENDURE.**

Did You Know...

A typical convoy across the Atlantic during the Second World War consisted of 40 ships carrying food, munitions, men, and other supplies to the United Kingdom and the Battlefields of Europe.

570 merchant sailors died in the First World War; 1,629 in the Second World War.

The S.S. Athenia was torpedoed off Ireland on September 3, 1939. One hundred civilians died, including Hanna Baird, stewardess—the first Canadian Merchant Navy casualty of the War.

The first Allied convoy attacked by German Wolf-Pack U-boats was HX-72 on September 20–21, 1940. Of 41 ships, 11 were lost.

12,000 Canadians manned ships during the Second World War and over 1,600 lost their lives.



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