

War Memories across Canada Conversation Kit:

One Name on a Memorial The Story of Russell McConnell Sites Across Canada



McGill Sports Hall of Fame,
McGill University

Across Canada, lists of names are carefully carved into memorials. Russell McConnell is such a name and researching his story and those of others allows us to reveal who these men and women are, and what we might share in common with them. Sub Lieutenant McConnell was serving with the Royal Canadian Volunteer Naval Reserve was aboard Her Majesty's Canadian Ship Raccoon when the ship was torpedoed by a German U-boat on September 7, 1942. Today Russell's name is found at a number

of sites across Canada. These include the cenotaph at Royal Roads University, the Sailors Memorial in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and at Forillon National Park in Gaspé, Quebec.

Discussion Questions:

Killed in Active Service archival files usually contain the telegram that notified the officer's next of kin and provided details of the person's death. In this vignette, we see photos of Russell McConnell during his training at Royal Roads, followed by the telegram that notified his wife that he had been lost at sea.

What was your emotional response to seeing these documents and photos?

How do you think naval archives tell the story of the person who lived and died?

Why do you think it is important to collect, catalogue and store this memorabilia?

Even though he was considered one of McGill University's best hockey players and was inducted into the university's Sports Hall of Fame in 1996; he chose the Royal Canadian Navy over a professional hockey career with the New York Rangers. Imagine his post-war life had he survived the Battle of the Atlantic. What do you think he might have accomplished? How do you think his death altered the lives of his family and friends?



HMCS Raccoon - CFB Esquimalt Naval & Military Museum

Activities:

Imagine you are a newspaper reporter assigned to cover the sinking of the HMCS Raccoon for one of the prominent newspapers at the time. Write the front page story and circulate it to your classmates/school on September 7th to commemorate the anniversary of the day the ship went down. Read through these [newspaper accounts from 1942](#) for inspiration.

Visit the Library and Archives Canada website to discover what records you can research related to this war.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission also has a useful website for research.

Resources:

Websites

Crew list from the HMCS Raccoon – Uboat.net
<http://uboot.net/allies/merchants/crews/ship2126.html>

Forillon National Park – Parks Canada
<http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/qc/forillon/index.aspx>
Available in [French](#).

History of the Battle of the Atlantic – Royal Canadian Navy
<http://www.navy-marine.forces.gc.ca/en/navy-life/history-boa-home.page>
Available in [French](#).

Russell Henry McConnell - Canadian Virtual War Memorial

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2639980>

Available in [French](#).

The Battle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence – Veterans Affairs Canada

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/second-world-war/battle-gulf-st-lawrence>

Available in [French](#).

Videos

Corvette Port Arthur, directed by Joris Ivens. National Film Board, 1943.

A documentary about the role of corvettes in combating German U-boats during the Second World War.

The battle of the Atlantic. (BBC History of World War II) BBC, 2009.

Books

War in the St. Lawrence : the forgotten U-boat battles on Canada's shores, by Roger Sarty. Allen Lane, 2012.

Victory in the St. Lawrence : the unknown U-boat war, by James W. Essex. Boston Mills Pres, 2004.

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