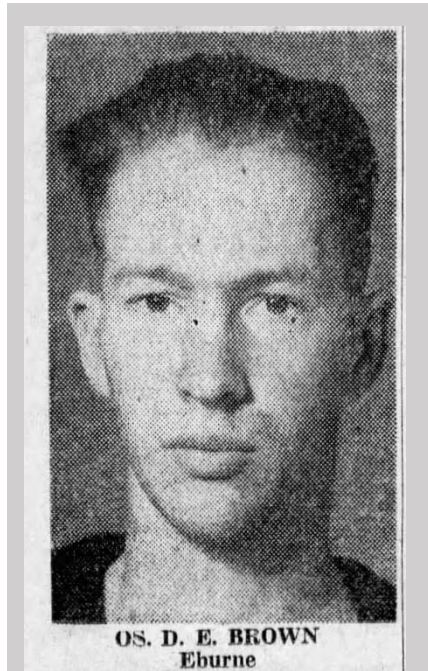


Able Seaman David Edgar Brown, V-51452



David Edgar Brown is pictured as an Ordinary Seaman. Photo: *The Province*, 20 May 1944

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Toronto ON, 19 September 1924**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Discovery*, 1 December 1942**
- **Civilian Occupation: Supply Clerk, David Spencer Limited**
- **Death: Killed when HMCS *Valleyfield* was torpedoed and sank on 7 May 1944**
- **Mentioned in Despatches**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 11; HMCS *Valleyfield* Memorial, Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, QC; City of Richmond website; and Canadian Virtual War Memorial**

David Edgar Brown was born in Toronto, ON, on 19 September 1924. He moved to Richmond, BC, with his parents and two sisters in 1928. David's father was Edgar Brown, and his stepmother was Mildred Loise Brown. Unfortunately, his birth mother had passed away. David had two sisters, Margaret Edna Brown, who was a year younger than him, and Barbara Mary Brown, who was six years younger. David was affectionately known as "Buddy" by his friends.

David attended Mitchell Elementary School and Richmond High School, where he graduated in 1942, having completed grade 12. From 1940 to 1942, Following high school, David worked as a supply clerk in the Drugs Department for David Spencer Limited in Vancouver. This was a department store chain originally established in Victoria in 1873.

At the time of his enlistment in 1942, the family was living in Eburne, BC. This was a suburb of Richmond and the agricultural centre for the Sea Island and Lulu Island (Richmond) farmers. On his occupational history form, David indicated that he had a year of farming experience, which was in keeping with his home location. The Brown family sold their house in Richmond in 1944 and moved to Burnaby.

Before joining the RCNVR, David served as a Private from 1940-1942 with the 72nd Seaforth Highlanders Cadet Battalion. His attestation form shows that David enlisted in HMCS *Discovery* on 1 December 1942 and was taken on divisional strength as an Ordinary Seaman. At the time of his enlistment, David was described as 5' 9" tall with light brown hair and brown eyes. He had a small scar on the right side of his back, and the tip of the second finger of his left hand was missing.

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Following enlistment in HMCS *Discovery*, Ordinary Seaman David Brown had several months of training ashore. He was placed on Active Service on 25 February 1943, and four days later, he was sent to HMCS *Tecumseh* in Calgary, AB, where he completed basic naval indoctrination.

On 3 May 1943, David was sent to HMCS *Naden* in Esquimalt, BC. While in *Naden*, Ordinary Seaman Brown was given extensive seamanship and Torpedoman training, all of which he completed with excellent marks. On completion of his training, David – now a qualified Seaman Torpedoman – travelled to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax, NS and then to HMCS *Hochelaga II*, a Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) manning depot in Montreal, QC. From Montreal, he was drafted to HMCS *Valleyfield* on 6 December 1943.

By the time he walked up the brow of his first ship, his head must have been spinning from the frequency of his moves from establishment to establishment. HMCS *Valleyfield* was a brand-new River-class frigate commissioned on 7 December 1943 in Quebec City, QC. *Valleyfield* arrived at Halifax on 20 December 1943 and commenced work-ups in St. Margaret's Bay, completing the process in Bermuda. She left Halifax at the end of February 1944 to join the convoy Escort Group C-1 based in St John's, Newfoundland.

David Brown was promoted to the rank of Able Seaman on 25 February 1944 at the time of *Valleyfield's* departure to join EG C-1. The ship's first tasking was as an escort to Slow Convoy SC.154, which sailed to the United Kingdom. En route, *Valleyfield* was detached to Horta, Azores, where she escorted the rescue ship *Dundee* with the corvette HMCS *Regina* in tow, the latter having fouled her screw while fueling. Her next assignment was to escort the damaged HMCS *Mulgrave* from Horta to the Clyde River. The three ships left the Azores on 14 March 1944 and joined convoy SL.151 (from Sierra Leone) three days later. *Valleyfield* made one more uneventful return trip to Canada with a 50-ship convoy.

During her final mission, *Valleyfield* safely escorted a convoy of 73 ships that departed from Londonderry on 27 April 1944. After separating from convoy ONM 234 on 7 May 1944, the escort ships of EG C-1 were en route to St. John's and were approximately 50 miles southeast of Cape Race. Even though the conditions were favourable for a submarine attack, the escort group had not been zigzagging for several hours. At 0435, submarine U-548 fired two GNATs (acoustic torpedoes), and one of the torpedoes hit *Valleyfield's* port-side boiler room, causing the ship to split in half and sink in less than four minutes. As *Valleyfield* was travelling behind the group, it took some time for the other escorts to realize that the ship had been attacked and sunk.



Monument to HMCS Valleyfield
Photo Credit: Lieutenant de vaisseau Pierre Lefebvre
<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/national-inventory-canadian-memorials/details/9992>

HMCS *Giffard* eventually arrived to rescue survivors, while the other group members, HMCS *Edmundston*, HMCS *Frontenac* and HMCS *Halifax*, searched for the U-boat without success.

While *Giffard* followed procedure at the time, some criticism was directed at the hesitation before rescuing survivors, which may have led to increased casualties. By the time *Giffard* had arrived, many men had surrendered their hold on Carley floats or wreckage and sank from sight. A total of 125 men perished that night, all within the coastal shores of Newfoundland. Able Seaman David Edgar Brown's body was never recovered from the sea. He was 19 years old when he died.

Gallantry: The explosions had caused the ship to break in two. The bow section sank within seconds of the torpedo strike, but the stern section remained afloat for 5-6 minutes. During this brief time, three ratings from the torpedo department, Leading Seaman Dave Henry Brown from Windsor, Able Seaman Merv Harrison Woods from Montreal, and Able Seaman David Edgar Brown from Eburne, BC, ran aft and withdrew the primers from the depth charges. They feared that once the stern sank, the depth charges would explode and kill everyone, including those men already in the sea and on the rescue vessel. This gallant gesture cost all three men their lives but undoubtedly saved many of their fellow shipmates.

Edgar Brown, Able Seaman Brown's father, received a certificate of Mention in Despatches from the RCN and the bronze oak leaf emblem as posthumous honours for his son David Edgar Brown. The citation reads:

"For services in HMCS Valleyfield and HMCS Giffard for brave rescue work when HMCS Valleyfield was sunk on 7 May 1944"

The City of Richmond website has a brief biography and recognition of Able Seaman Brown's Mention in Despatches.

For his service, Able Seaman David Edgar Brown was awarded the 1939-1945 Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp, and the War Medal.

Able Seaman David Edgar Brown is commemorated on Panel 11 of the Halifax Memorial at Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, NS; the Honour Roll plaque at HMCS *Discovery*; and the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 260, at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa.

A monument and plaque commemorating the loss of HMCS *Valleyfield* is located in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, QC. The memorial number is 24006-025 and consists of an anchor and plaque at 240 Victoria Street on Vieux-Canal Promenade in Delpha-Sauvé Park.

Prepared By*:

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*All stories are edited by the project crew and sometimes altered to conform to the Citizen Sailors Virtual Cenotaph format, length and content parameters.

Sources:

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<https://www.richmond.ca/cityhall/archives/exhibits/remember/brown.htm>
- For Posterity's Sake:
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- Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMCS_Valleyfield_\(K329\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMCS_Valleyfield_(K329))
- Canadian Virtual War Memorial: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2557607?David%20Edgar%20Brown>
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- Commonwealth War Graves Commission: Commonwealth War Graves Commission Database – profile page for David Edgar Brown V51452
- Library and Archives Canada, Service Files of the Second World War – War Dead, 1939-1947, Item Number 4802, David Edgar Brown: <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/second-world-war/second-world-war-dead-1939-1947/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=4208&>
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