

Ordinary Seaman Arthur Herbert Butler V-69293



Ordinary Seaman Arthur Butler. Photo:
Canadian Virtual War Memorial.

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Oakville ON, 12 September 1924**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Star*, 23 August 1943**
- **Civilian Occupation: Assembler, Victory Aircraft Limited**
- **Death: Lost at sea when HMCS *Shawinigan* was torpedoed and sank on 24 November 1944**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 11; HMCS *Shawinigan* Memorial, Shawinigan QC; Second World War Memorial St. George's Square; and Trafalgar Township War Memorial**

Arthur Herbert Butler was the Canadian-born son of Arthur Ernest Butler and Edith Mabel Woodland who emigrated from England. Arthur senior, born in 1890, came from Brentford, Middlesex in 1912, and Edith, born in 1892, came from Stocklinch, Ottersey. She left England on 16 October 1912, landed in Montreal on 23 October, and married Arthur on 26 October in Halton, ON. From passenger lists it appears that Butler travelled home to England to find his future wife.

At the time of their son's birth, Arthur and Edith were living on Morden Road in Oakville. Arthur worked as a gardener. Their first child, Edith, was stillborn in 1913 and their second daughter, Grace Gertrude, was born 28 March 1920. Grace later married Lorne Pell and lived in Palermo. She died in 2003.

Their only other child, Arthur Herbert came along on 12 September 1924. He attended Oakville High School (renamed Oakville Trafalgar in 1946), at that time located on Reynolds Street, and left after Grade 10. He subsequently took a Radio course at Central Technical School in Toronto. The Butlers moved to a house at 24 MacDonald Avenue while their son was in the Navy. The street was renamed Westside Drive when Oakville amalgamated with Trafalgar Township and the house is still there. Unfortunately, none of the neighbours have any knowledge of the Butler family.

Arthur Herbert went to work at Victory Aircraft Limited in Malton briefly before joining the 2nd Battalion of the Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin & Halton Regiment) in Oakville. After four months he transferred to the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve. He enrolled as an Ordinary Seaman at HMCS *Star* in Hamilton on 23 August 1943. His attestation papers indicate that he weighed



HMCS Shawinigan
Photo: www.ReadyAyeReady.com

163.5 pounds, was 5' 11" tall with brown hair and blue eyes. He received basic training at HMCS *Cornwallis* in Nova Scotia beginning in March 1944 before being transferred to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax for further training. After sea training in HMCS *Saguenay*, he was assessed as a

"dependable worker on deck and shows interest in learning. Appearance and bearing good." and was posted to his first and only sea-going ship, HMCS *Shawinigan*, in June 1944.

Shawinigan, a Flower-class corvette, was built in Lauzon, QC and commissioned on 19 September 1941. She served on convoy escort duty almost continuously until 1944. On 25 November 1944, while on independent anti-submarine patrol out of Sydney, NS, she was torpedoed in the Cabot Strait by U-1228 (Oberleutnant zur Friedrich-Wilhelm Marienfeld). She exploded and sank immediately with all hands lost. The tragedy is all the more poignant when it



Shawinigan Memorial, Shawinigan QC
Photo - www.forposterityssake.ca

was understood that the submarine had been unable to fix a faulty schnorkel and was returning to Germany. Ordinary Seaman Arthur Butler was 20 years old when he died.

The Butlers were informed of the probable loss of their son, first by telegram on 29 November 1944, followed by a letter that same day, five days after the sinking. Further details were provided in a letter dated 7 December 1944, and formal confirmation of the presumption of death on 15 February 1945. There were no Allied witnesses to the sinking that was deduced

from challenging circumstances and German records. If Arthur's parents held out any hope either for his survival or for recovery of his body, it was undoubtedly a painful wait from November 1944 to February 1945. There was further correspondence. Arthur's father wrote: "In our son's last

letter, he mentioned being captain's requestman. He requested a higher rate of pay & received his request. Does it follow from this that a higher rate of pay was granted?"

A note on the letter indicates that Arthur was not qualified for promotion to Able Seaman and he remained an Ordinary Seaman, but he was granted what appears to be back pay, perhaps to that point he had only been paid as a trainee. As his beneficiary, Arthur's mother Edith received the following accounting, and eventually, presumably, the promised cheque:

Balance of pay and allowances.....	\$ 76.86
Credit for Kit Upkeep Allowance, Hard Lying Money, and Grog Money.....	2.28
Refund of payment made on Seventy Victory Loan Bond...	16.80
War Service Gratuity.....	130.59
Balance withdrawn from Canadian Bank of Commerce, Oakville, Ontario.....	<u>28.87</u>
TOTAL.....	<u>\$255.40</u>

Letter to Mrs Butler, November, 1945
Canada, World War II Records and Service Files of War Dead, 1939-1947

For his service, Ordinary Seaman Arthur Herbert Butler was posthumously awarded: the 1939-45 Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp, and the War Medal. His mother Edith Butler received the Memorial Cross.

Ordinary Seaman Arthur Herbert Butler is remembered on Panel 11 of the Halifax Memorial, at Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, NS; HMCS *Shawinigan* Memorial, Shawinigan, QC; St. Jude's Anglican Church, Oakville; Second World War Memorial St. George's Square (under Trafalgar Township), Trafalgar Township War Memorial; Oakville Trafalgar High School Book of Remembrance, and the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 264 at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa.

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Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission Database – profile for Ordinary Seaman Arthur Herbert Butler
- https://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS_SHAWINIGAN Retrieved 21 Aug 2022

- The Canadian Virtual War Memorial: Ordinary Seaman Arthur Herbert Butler, Oakville Record Star, 22 Feb 1945, Milton Canadian Champion, 1 Mar 1945, Toronto Star
- Ancestry.com. Canada, World War II Records and Service Files of War Dead, 1939-1947
- Ancestry.com. England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915
- Library and Archives Canada; Ottawa, Canada; Service Files of the Second World War - War Dead, 1939-1947; Series: RG 24; Volume: 29032
- Oakville High School 1939-1945 Honour Roll, Oakville.ca, Oakville Historical Society
- Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 264 at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa