

Ordinary Signalman Morley Willerton Carson V-11312



- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Wilkie SK, 19 January 1920**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Unicorn*, 20 October 1938**
- **Civilian Occupation: Student**
- **Death: Lost at sea when HMS *Jervis Bay* sank on 5 November 1940**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 7; and Carson Bay, SK 56° 55' N 103°47'W is named in his memory**

Ordinary Seaman Morley W. Carson.
Credit: Canadian Virtual War Memorial.
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Morley was the first of two sons born to Alberta Amelia (Bertie) Carson and Albert Carson on 19 August 1920 in Wilkie, Saskatchewan. Brother Douglas Warren Carson followed in 1924. Bertie and Albert were married in Winnipeg in June 1916. In 1926 the marriage ended and all contact with Albert ceased. Bertie and the boys moved to Saskatoon where the boys were enrolled in Caswell Hill Public School. In 1928 they moved a second time to a large house that Bertie would live in until the mid-1960s when it and neighbouring houses were demolished to make way for a high-rise apartment building. As a result of the move the boys transferred to nearby King Edward Public School. Upon completion of Grade 8, Morley moved on to City Park Collegiate graduating in 1938.

Morley became a Gunner in the 14th Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery (Militia) and served from March 30, 1938, until 5 October 1938. On 20 March 1938 he enrolled in the Saskatoon Division of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve as an Ordinary Seaman. He was attested by Lieutenant William Campbell who would become the Commanding Officer of the corvette HMCS *Louisburg* and be killed in action when *Louisburg* was sunk in February 1944.

Following enrollment, he undertook summer training in HMCS *Naden*. He spent all of 1939 attending weekly training and extra drills in Saskatoon before being drafted to HMCS *Stadacona* in April 1940 where he was remustered to Ordinary Signalman. On 1 October he was drafted to HMS *Jervis Bay*.

HMS *Jervis Bay*, originally built in 1921-22 as a passenger ship for the Aberdeen & Commonwealth Line to carry emigrants to Australia from Britain, was taken up from trade by the



HMS Jervis Bay
Source: <https://hmsjervisbay.com>

Admiralty in August 1939 and designated an armed merchant cruiser. Seven 6-inch guns and two 3-inch guns, all manufactured in the 1890's, were distributed around her upper deck. There were no automated ammunition handling

systems and only a rudimentary fire control system associated with the guns. In addition, *Jervis Bay*, like all armed merchant cruisers, was vulnerable, being high-sided, unarmoured, and not highly compartmented. She was repainted grey and allocated a crew of 255 men (mainly reservists), and the White Ensign was hoisted. Her role was that of an ocean escort for Atlantic convoys. In the First World War and the early stages of the Second World War, the Germans employed armed merchant ships as surface raiders. Against such ships the *Jervis Bay* had a good chance of success, but she was no match for armoured, purpose-built warships.

Commanded by Captain Fogarty Fegen, she was ordered to Saint John, New Brunswick in late July 1940 to undergo a six-week re-fit. On completion, *Jervis Bay* left Saint John in September for Halifax to commence convoy escort duties. From there as the only escort, she took charge of Convoy HX84, consisting of thirty-seven merchant ships, and departed Halifax on 28 October. Before departing, she received a draft of 22 Canadians, including Morley, (1 RCN, 7 RCNR, 14 RCNVR) and 7 Newfoundlanders to complete her complement.

In the late afternoon of 5 November HX84 was about 750 miles southwest of Iceland when they encountered the German heavy cruiser *Admiral Scheer*. *Admiral Scheer* was armed with six 11-inch guns in two triple-gun turrets, and eight 6-inch guns all coordinated by state-of-the-art fire control systems. At 1645, Captain Fegen ordered the convoy to disperse into the gathering darkness then closed *Admiral Scheer* firing *Jervis Bay's* guns in a valiant effort to delay her target. The ensuing action lasted twenty-four minutes. *Admiral Scheer's* eleven-inch guns repeatedly hit *Jervis Bay* with devastating results while her guns never came within range. Captain Fegen stayed on what remained of his bridge to the end despite grievous wounds. Once free of the *Jervis Bay*, *Admiral Scheer* set about to pursue the scattered merchant ships but was only able to sink four and damage one. One hundred and ninety (190) members of *Jervis Bay's* ship's company, including Morley Carson and 16 other Canadians and Newfoundlanders perished. Morley was 20 years old.

Twelve awards for gallantry were issued. Among them Captain Fegen was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. Stoker George Beaman, RCNVR, survived and was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.

For his service, Ordinary Signalman Morley Carson was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the War Medal, and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp. His mother, Bertie Carson, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

Morley has no known grave and is commemorated on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 7. Additionally, Carson Bay (Lat 56°55' N Long 103° 47' W) in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory.

In 1944, the newly constructed HMCS *Unicorn* was opened directly across the back alley from Bertie Carson's home. *Unicorn* became the home of Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps *Jervis Bay*. Both served as a constant reminder to Mrs. Carson of her lost son.



Prepared By:

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Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission record for Ordinary Signalman Morley Carson
- Library and Archives Canada Service Record for Ordinary Signalman Morley Carson
- Canadian Virtual War Memorial – Profile page for Ordinary Signalman Morley Carson
- Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial -Profile page for Ordinary Signalman Morley Carson
- HMS Jervis Bay, *80th Anniversary Nov.5 1940-2020*. Retrieved November 3, 2021 from <https://hmsjervisbay.com/index.php>
- Warfare History Network (2020), *The Heroic Death of HMS Jervis Bay*, Retrieved November 3, 2021 from <http://warfarehistorynetwork.com/2019/01/13/the-heroic-death-of-the-hms-jervis-bay/>