

Cook (S) Cyril Duron V-13735



Grave marker for Cook (S) Cyril Duron
Photo credit: CWGC Website

Do you have a photo you can share?
Please submit to
CSVC.CVMC@gmail.com

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Dlhá Luka Czechoslovakia, 9 March 1911**
- **Enlisted: Calgary Division RCNVR, 3 April 1941**
- **Civilian Occupation: Farm Labourer, Cook**
- **Death: Died of wounds when SS *Fort Townshend* collided with HMCS *Mahone* on 28 January 1944**
- **Buried: Fox Valley Cemetery (SK), Plot 11. Lot 8**
- **Commemorated: Second World War Book of Remembrance, page 364, Centre Block of the Houses of Parliament; Saskatchewan Virtual Memorial; HMCS *Tecumseh* memorial plaque; the Naval Museum of Alberta plaque; and the Calgary Field of Crosses**

Cyril Duron was born on 09 March 1911 in what was known as Dlhá Luka, Zupa Liptovská, Czechoslovakia. Today it is known as Kvačany, a municipality in the Liptovský Mikuláš District in the Žilina Region of northern Slovakia. His parents were John (or Jan) Duron and Zuzana Duronová. He had two brothers, Alojz (Alec) Duron and Jozef Duron. His sisters were Terezia Duronová and Anna Duronová. Cyril was Roman Catholic.

John Hudec was Cyril's friend and, for a time, his employer. John Hudec seemed to play a more significant role in Cyril's life than any of his relatives. He was listed as Cyril's next of kin on some of the Navy documents. Mr. Hudec and his family homesteaded near Fox Valley, Saskatchewan. He was also from Czechoslovakia.

Cyril emigrated to Canada in 1927. He was only 16 and travelled on his own. He had completed one year of high school before travelling to Canada and had worked on a farm in Czechoslovakia. His mother paid for his passage. His ship landed at Quebec City on 22 April 1927. From there he travelled to Edmonton.

Little is known about where he lived and worked during his years in Western Canada. His time coincided with the Depression and drought. It is known that he worked for a time in Banff, AB. On 20 March 1934, he became a Naturalized British Subject residing in Canada. He was living in Fox Valley, Saskatchewan and was working as a farm labourer for John Hudec. Mr. Hudec would also have gone through the naturalization process – which included rescinding all previous citizenships – before being allowed to homestead.

Cyril enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve at the Calgary Division on 3 April 1941. He was 30 years old at the time. He enlisted as a Probationary Cook. His brother Alojz (Alec) Duron was listed as next of kin. Cyril listed his address as 407 7A St NE in Calgary.

His documentation shows that prior to his enlistment he wasn't working and had not been working regularly for some time. He did feel that he was qualified to be a cook. He listed several years of farm experience but seemed to be ambivalent about whether he wanted to return to farming. He presented his Naturalization papers to the recruiter. He was able to speak English, German, and Slovakian.

He was placed on active service the very next day, and his status was changed from Probationary Cook to Acting Cook(S). The Navy must have been very happy to find someone willing to be a cook. He spent a few days training in Calgary and was then sent to HMCS *Naden* – the main Navy base for the west coast in Esquimalt, BC. Cyril must have demonstrated good cooking skills in Esquimalt: After just two days at HMCS *Naden*, his status was changed from Acting Cook(S) to Cook(S). There are no records indicating that Cook(S) Cyril Duron underwent any formal trade training in the Navy.

Cook(S) Duron spent the next six months at HMCS *Naden* and was then sent to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax, NS. HMCS *Stadacona* was the Navy base in Halifax, NS. After a short time in Halifax, he was sent to Montreal to serve in HMS *Parrsboro*, an RN minesweeper that was built in Canada but had not yet been commissioned. On 25 December 1941 he returned to Halifax and was assigned to HMCS *Mont Joli*, which was an accommodation ship at the time. On 1 May 1942 HMCS *Mont Joli* became an examination vessel and Cook(S) Duron was transferred ashore to HMCS *Stadacona*. He was hospitalized for ten days in July 1942, but there is no record of why he needed hospitalization. He remained working ashore until 1 September 1942 when he was transferred to HMCS *Mahone*.

HMCS *Mahone* was a steam-powered Bangor class minesweeper used for escort and submarine hunting duties. She was built at North Vancouver Ship Repairs and commissioned in 1941. The ship was designed for a crew of 60 but carried a crew of 83. From a cook's point of view that works out to 249 meals needing to be prepared every day.

Like most Bangor minesweepers, HMCS *Mahone* was part of the Western Local Escort Force (WLEF) from the time of her arrival in Halifax on 17 December 1941 until the end of the war. The role of the WLEF was to escort convoys from North America to, or from, the Western-Ocean Meeting Point (WOMP). Here the escort duties were taken over by the warships assigned to the Mid Ocean Escort Force. Westbound convoys would then be met and escorted to various North American ports such as Halifax, Sydney, Saint John, Boston, and New York.

When Cook(S) Duron joined HMCS *Mahone*, the ship was assigned to the Halifax Force of the WLEF. She carried out escort duties until January 1943 when she went for a refit. When HMCS *Mahone* came out of refit in April 1943, she was assigned to the Gaspé Force due to increasing U-boat activity in the Gulf of St Lawrence.

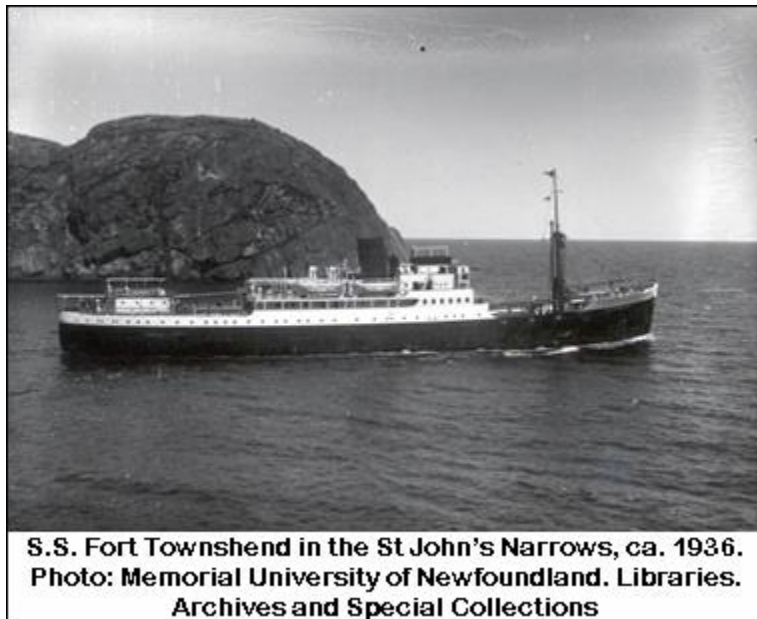
In September 1943, Cyril and his shipmates in *Mahone* took part in Operation POINTE MAISONNETTE. A German U-boat, U-536 had been assigned to sail into Pointe Maisonnette, Baie des Chaleur, NB to pick up four POWs who had escaped from the Bowmanville, ON Prisoner of War camp. They were all U-boat commanders. Canadian military intelligence and the RCMP knew about the plan. The RCN wanted to capture or destroy the U-boat. Three of the POWs were caught at the camp in Ontario, but a fourth managed to elude capture and made it to Pointe Maisonnette by train, where he was caught. A small task force of RCN corvettes and

minesweepers – including HMCS *Mahone* - were waiting for the U-boat. The task force attacked with depth charges, but the U-boat escaped.

In October 1943 Cyril was being considered for promotion to Leading Cook(S). He went through the exam in which he had to prepare nine dishes and scored very well on all nine. He also had to answer oral questions related to the Manual of Cookery and on Galley Organization and Equipment. He didn't do very well on this more formal part of the exam and wasn't promoted. But on every performance review, he was rated as being of Very Good character and of Very Good or Satisfactory efficiency.

In November 1943 HMCS *Mahone* was assigned to the Sydney Force and continued her escort duties.

On the night of 28 January 1944, HMCS *Mahone* was escorting a convoy from Halifax to St John's Newfoundland when she was accidentally rammed by SS *Fort Townshend* in the vicinity of Louisburg, NS. Cook(S) Cyril Duron was critically injured in the collision. He and two other sailors were trapped below decks. One of the other sailors was Cook(S) Allen John Roberts, who managed to free the trio. Cook(S) Roberts was awarded the British Empire Medal for his heroism.



Cook(S) Cyril Duron was being transferred to SS *Fort Townshend* for medical treatment but died before reaching the other ship. Two other RCNVR sailors died in the collision. They were Steward Dirk Van Ooyen and ERA Douglas C Varney. Cook (S) Cyril Duron was 32 years old when he died.

For his Service, Cook(S) Cyril Duron was awarded the 1939-1945 Star, the Atlantic Star & Clasp, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp, and the War Medal.

Cook(S) Cyril Duron was buried in Hardwood Hill Cemetery in Sydney, NS. Later his remains were re-interred in Fox Valley,

Saskatchewan. His final resting place is registered with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as being in Plot 11, Lot 8, Fox Valley Cemetery. His grave marker is inscribed:

"May God Grant Him Eternal Rest".

Fox Valley is where Cyril lived when he was working for his friend John Hudec. Presumably, it was Mr. Hudec who arranged for the new grave site. Mr. Hudec and his family are also buried in the Fox Valley Cemetery.

Cook(S) Cyril Duron is commemorated in the Second World War Book of Remembrance, p.297, Centre Block of the Houses of Parliament, the Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial, on the HMCS *Tecumseh* memorial plaque, on the Naval Museum of Alberta plaque, and in the Calgary Field of Crosses.

Prepared By:

David Mitchell, former Able Seaman, HMCS *Tecumseh*, Citizen Sailors Virtual Cenotaph Research team



Sources:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission – Profile for Cyril Duron
- Library and Archives Canada – Service file for Cyril Duron
- Ancestry.com for family information
- For Posterity Sake website
- Canadian Virtual War Memorial website
- Naval History Net website
- Uboat.net naval history website
- Peel's Henderson Directories