

Ordinary Seaman Lewis Brychan Evans V-71593



- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Saskatoon SK, 9 February 1926**
- **Enlisted: HMCS *Unicorn*, 4 September 1943**
- **Civilian Occupation: Warehouseman, Robin Hood Mills Ltd**
- **Death: Lost at sea when HMCS *Shawinigan* was torpedoed and sank on 24 November 1944**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 11; City of Shawinigan Memorial; Evans Lake (Lat 56° 55'N Long 103° 31' W) in Northern Saskatchewan**

Lewis Evans was the youngest of four children born to Mabel Mary Evans and William Welston Evans on 9 February 1926 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Brother John was born in 1916, sister Decima in 1918 and brother Richard in 1920. William, sometimes referred to as Welston, was born in 1887 in Wales and emigrated to Canada in 1906. Mabel was born in England in 1896 and emigrated in 1911. They were married in Radisson, Saskatchewan, about 40 miles northwest of Saskatoon and made their home on a farm which William owned in the district. According to the 1926 census, the family left the farm and moved to Saskatoon in 1926 and made their home in an apartment in a pleasant neighbourhood overlooking a park and the South Saskatchewan River. Lewis' father William quickly found employment with Boyd Brothers, a large Chevrolet Oldsmobile dealer- a job he held until retirement. This steady employment allowed the family to weather the Great Depression. Lewis attended King Edward Public School (grades 1-8) and City Park Collegiate Institute (grade 9) before leaving school finally at the age of 15 in 1941. During Lewis' transition from public school to high school, the family moved to a house in a comfortable neighbourhood. On 1 September 1942, at the age of 16, Lewis joined the Saskatoon Light Infantry (Non-Permanent Active Militia) as a private and served until 3 September 1943. Also at 16, he went to work as a warehouseman in a major flour mill operated by Robin Hood Mills Ltd. in Saskatoon. By then the drought which had devastated cereal crops was truly over and ample supplies of grain were available for milling.

On 4 September 1943, Lewis was sworn in at the Saskatoon Division (HMCS *Unicorn*) of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve as an Ordinary Seaman (Temporary). Lewis' oldest brother, John, had enrolled in the Royal Canadian Air Force earlier in the war and by March 1945

was a Flight Lieutenant serving at No. 15 Service Flight Training School, Claresholm, Alberta. Upon enrollment Lewis was single, 5 feet 8 3/8 inches tall and weighed 138 pounds. He had brown hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion.

Lewis spent the first three and a half months at *Unicorn* attending to appointments and taking some training on "Divisional Strength". On 22 December he transferred to "Active Service" at *Unicorn* and began basic training in earnest. On 23 February 1944 he was drafted to HMCS *Cornwallis* in Deep Cove, Nova Scotia to take New Entry training. On completion Lewis was drafted to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax for administrative purposes before being drafted to HMCS *Shawinigan* on 14 June 1944.

HMCS *Shawinigan* (K136) was a Flower class corvette built by George T. Davie & Sons Ltd., Lauzon, Quebec. Commissioned on 19 September 1941, at Quebec City, HMCS *Shawinigan* was named for the town of Shawinigan Falls located on the Saint Maurice River 22 miles upstream from the St. Lawrence River. Her service life was busy and varied. By the time Lewis joined her in April 1944, *Shawinigan* had worked as a convoy escort for 39 merchant ship convoys, and she had just completed a second refit during which her forecandle was extended. Lewis' first voyage in her was to Bermuda for work ups.



HMCS *Shawinigan* ship's company photo.
 Ordinary Seaman Lewis Evans marked with a red X.
 Photo: Thomas J. Simpson collection www.forposteritysake.ca

On completion of work-ups, *Shawinigan* would complete five more escort taskings successfully. Then, on 24 November 1944 *Shawinigan* and the United States Coast Guard Cutter *Sassafras* escorted the ferry *Burgeo*, from Sydney, Nova Scotia to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. Since the sinking of the ferry *Caribou* in 1942, ferries on this route were always escorted. Enroute *Sassafras* was detached from the escort without relief. With *Burgeo* safely delivered, *Shawinigan* informed *Burgeo* that she would rendezvous with her in the morning, and she departed on an independent anti-submarine patrol. At 0230 on 25 November, *Shawinigan* was torpedoed by the German submarine *U-1228* in the Cabot Strait. Later that morning *Burgeo* left Port aux Basques on schedule in dense fog. Unable to find *Shawinigan* and keeping radio silence, *Burgeo* proceeded to Sydney unescorted. On arrival at 1800 it was evident that *Shawinigan* was missing. Over the next three days searchers looked for survivors and were only successful in finding flotsam and, eventually, the remains of five members of *Shawinigan's* ship's company. HMCS *Shawinigan* was one of three Canadian warships that have been lost with all hands. The entire crew of ninety-one, including Ordinary Seaman Lewis Evans, perished.

Lewis like most of the others who perished has no known grave. The exceptions are the five whose remains were recovered. They were returned to their families for burial in their home communities. The entire ship's company is remembered by a memorial in the City of Shawinigan and a stained-glass window in the chapel at Canadian Forces Base Halifax. Lewis is

commemorated on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 11. Additionally, Evans Lake (Lat 56° 55'N Long 103° 31' W) in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory.

For his service, Ordinary Seaman Lewis Evans was awarded the Atlantic Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal. His mother, Mrs. Mabel Evans, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

Prepared By:

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Sources:

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