

Electrical Artificer 4th Class William Hodgson V-10356



Petty Officer Cap badge (public domain)

Do you have a photo of EA 4th Class Hodgson you can share? Please submit to CSVC.CVMC@gmail.com

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Regina SK, 17 September 1918**
- **Enlisted: Regina Division RCNVR, 23 May 1940**
- **Civilian Occupation: Truck Driver, Saskatchewan Department of Highways**
- **Death: Died of tuberculosis acquired during his naval service on 24 February 1946**
- **Buried: Soldier's Plot, Regina Cemetery, Block B. Plot 5. Grave 24**
- **Commemorated: On the Regina First Baptist Church memorial window, and Lake Hodgson in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory.**

William Hodgson, born on 17 September 1918 in Regina, Saskatchewan, was the second of two children born to Grace Henry (nee Stobbart) and William Henry. His sister Katheline was born in 1915. William Henry was born on Prince Edward Island in 1886 and was recorded living in Regina in the 1911 Census. Grace was born in Scotland in 1896, emigrated to Canada, and married William in 1914. Unfortunately, William died in 1918 at the age of 32, shortly after his son was born. Subsequently, in 1920, Grace married George Hodgson, who was born in Nova Scotia in 1884.

Life in the close-knit Hodgson family was eventful and often difficult. From the time of the marriage until 1931, George was employed by the American-based Advance-Rumely Company as a well-paid "expert" or salesman. Advanced-Rumely manufactured the Rumely Oil Pull - a line of farm tractors sold between 1910 and 1930. The Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Company acquired the company in 1930 and ceased producing the Oil Pull line. As well, the Great Depression and the severe drought which devastated agriculture in Saskatchewan had begun. As a result, George lost his job and, after 1932, was either unemployed or under-employed until he died in 1940 at the age of 56. Sadly, Grace died in 1936 at the age of 42. The cause of both their deaths could not be determined from the research material on hand.

The family moved eight times from one rental property to another between 1921 and 1934, all but once within the same school district. As a result, William likely attended the same elementary school - Albert Public School - except for grade 7, when he probably attended Haultain Public School. Upon graduating from grade 8, he enrolled in a four-year electrical technical course at Balfour Technical School, which he successfully completed in 1936 at the age of 18.

During his student years, he was considered an accomplished athlete, participating in hockey, soccer, rugby, baseball, and basketball. While attending Balfour, William worked as the caretaker in the apartment building where he and his family lived. Upon graduation, unable to find employment as an electrician, he worked briefly in a warehouse and then as a truck driver with the Saskatchewan Department of Highways.

On 23 May 1940, William enrolled as an Ordinary Seaman in the Regina Division (later HMCS *Queen*) of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR). He was 21 years old, single, 5 feet 6 inches tall, and weighed 148 pounds. He had black hair, one blue eye and one brown eye, and a dark complexion.

William attended appointments and dealt with administrative details before commencing initial training at the Regina Division on 19 June. Upon completion of the course on 8 September, he was drafted to HMCS *Naden*, the large training base in Esquimalt, British Columbia. There, he commenced basic training until 26 October 1940, when he was "Marked Trained" in his personnel documents.

That may seem like an excessive length of time to receive fundamental training. It is important to remember, however, that when war was declared, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) consisted of thirteen ships and 3,843 officers and ratings, including reservists, and that it counted on the seventeen naval reserve divisions operating across Canada to recruit and initially train men. This training, however, was not standardized until 1941 and divisions were short of training equipment, accommodations, and instructors. As a result, HMCS *Naden* and HMCS *Stadacona*, the second large training base located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, were soon overcrowded, with recruits being largely retrained because of the inadequacies of the system.

In addition to training issues, the production of ships to man was fraught with difficulties. The ambitious program to build 122 vessels, from motor launches to destroyers, announced in 1940, failed to deliver on schedule. This failure was due to the unprecedented shipbuilding expansion at a time when similar expansion in other fields, such as aviation, brought on by the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan created competition for resources.

After completing basic training, William was employed at *Naden* performing various tasks until 4 December 1940, when he was remustered to the Electrician trade and loaded onto an Electrician course. Upon successful completion on 22 May 1941, he was drafted to HMCS *Sans Peur*, an armed yacht, for a month of sea experience.

On 29 June 1941, William was drafted to HMCS *Wasaga* (J-162), the RCN's first Bangor class minesweeper. Named for Wasaga Beach, Ontario, she was built by Burrard Dry Dock Co. Ltd. in North Vancouver and commissioned on 30 June.

Bangor-class minesweepers, as the name implies, were designed to operate in coastal waters to sweep mines. However, since enemy mines were laid only once in Canadian waters in 1943, the Bangors were used primarily to escort coastal convoys. Like all Bangors, *Wasaga* had extremely poor habitability. They were designed to accommodate a crew of 40, but their



ship's company grew to 83 to cover an increasing spectrum of equipment and the men to operate and maintain it. The Bangors also had a shallow draft to enable them to operate in shallow coastal waters, which made them very unstable in the swells of the open ocean. Their short length caused them to bury their bows when steaming into the sea.

Wasaga left Esquimalt on 6 August 1941 for Halifax, arriving on 10 September. Following work-ups in Bermuda, she was assigned to Halifax Force and tasked with escorting coastal convoys during the period William served in her.

In April 1942, William was reclassified as an acting Electrical Artificer 4th Class and drafted to HMCS *Star* in Hamilton, Ontario. There, he was enrolled in a seven-month qualifying course at the Hamilton Technical School. The rigorous course included electrical theory, mathematics, drafting and blueprint reading, machine shop practices, and sheet metal work.

There were several artificer classifications in addition to Electrical Artificer - including Engine Room Artificers and Radio Artificer. Artificers were highly skilled technicians who had received extensive training. Upon graduation, artificers changed from the square rig of ratings to the round rig uniforms of petty officers. They enjoyed the pay and privileges of petty officers, although they were not actually petty officers. Their pay and status compensated them for what they knew, not where they were in the chain of command. Only the most senior artificers exercised authority over junior artificers and ratings - a Chief Engine Room Artificer of a ship, for example.

In December 1942, he enrolled in the Torpedo School at HMCS *Cornwallis*, then located in Halifax. The school emphasized an array of naval weapons and systems, such as mining, mine countermeasures, degaussing, and torpedoes, which required knowledge of electrical circuits, batteries, switches, and magnetism. Upon graduation in April 1943, William was confirmed as an Electrical Artificer 4th Class and employed at HMCS *Stadacona*.

He was granted leave to return to Regina in May, where he married Mary McNie on 29 May 1943. William's sister, Katherine, and Mary's brother, James, witnessed the wedding and were themselves married in September 1944.

Following his leave, William was drafted to HMCS *Avalon*, the large naval base in St. John's, Newfoundland, effective 27 June 1943. Originally designed as a temporary ocean escort base, St. John's and *Avalon* evolved into one of the most important bases in the Atlantic, second only to Halifax. Along with repair facilities, a work-up training organization for ships, and recreational facilities, there was a wide range of training centres.

While at *Avalon*, William was awarded the first Good Conduct Badge, which entitled him to a raise of his daily rate of pay by \$.05, effective June 19. In consideration of his job performance, he was recommended for promotion to Electrical Artificer 3rd Class on 18 August 1943.

For the most part, William worked ashore in the ship repair facilities. However, he was drafted to HMS *Destiny* (W-115), an ocean-going tug belonging to the Royal Navy Rescue Tug Service,



HMS Destiny Source: Wikipedia

from 22 July to 17 August 1943. *Destiny* was one of 21 Favourite Class tugs built in the United States. They were armed, substantial vessels with a complement of 45 all ranks, measuring 143 feet long, displacing 836 tons and powered by a diesel-electric engine. Based in St. John's, *Destiny's* task was to tow damaged or broken-down vessels from the North Atlantic to safety.

Sometime during the late winter of 1944, William began to experience symptoms such as persistent

coughing, weight loss, fevers, and chills. After bringing his condition to the attention of the medical authorities, he was drafted to *Stadacona* on 1 April 1944, where he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. As a result, he was drafted back to *Queen* in Regina, where he was discharged as medically unfit on 26 April 1944. William was subsequently admitted to the Fort San Sanitorium near Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, about 77 km northeast of Regina.

His discharge triggered a series of administrative steps to ensure that William was awarded the proper benefits available to veterans. First off, while newly admitted to the sanitarium, he was interviewed under the auspices of the Department of Pensions and National Health to determine what sort of civilian job training would be appropriate for William to pursue once he recovered. William was apparently optimistic about his recovery and, on 15 May 1944, was described by the interviewer as "*Good type...cheerful, ambitious and interested in telephone work. Appears to want to continue studies.*"

Sadly, William died about twenty months later, on 24 February 1946, at the age of 27, like his father, mother, and stepfather, before his time. His death was recognized as being related to military service, and his remains were interred in the Regina Cemetery, Soldiers' Plot, Lot 24, Plot 5, Block B. The inscription on his grave reads:

"Their Name Liveth Forever"

For his service, Electrical Artificer 4th Class William Hodgson was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Clasp, and the War Medal. His wife, Mrs. Mary Hodgson, was awarded the Memorial Cross.

He is commemorated on the memorial window in the Regina First Presbyterian Church, in the Second World War Book of Remembrance, page 585, at the Centre Block, Houses of Parliament, Ottawa, and Hodgson Lake (Lat 59° 23'N Long 102°19'W) in Northern Saskatchewan is named in his memory.

Prepared By*:

John Dalzell, Captain(N) (retired), Commanding Officer HMCS UNICORN
1983-88 & Citizen Sailors Virtual Cenotaph Research Team



*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:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission Database – profile for William Hodgson
- Library and Archives Canada Service Record for Electrical Artificer William Hodgson
- Canadian Virtual War Memorial – Profile page for Electrical Artificer William Hodgson
- Saskatchewan Virtual War Memorial - Profile page for Electrical Artificer William Hodgson
- Library and Archives Canada Service 1911, 1916, 1926, 1931 Canadian Census
- Internet Archive. *Henderson's Regina Directory 1925-1940*. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/> on various dates
- Regina Public School Division. *School Finder*. Retrieved February 6, 2024, from <https://mybaragar.com/index.cfm?event=page.SchoolLocatorPublic&DistrictCode=SK04>
- Google Earth Pro
- Find a Grave. <https://www.findagrave.com/> on various dates
- Wikipedia (June 6, 2022). *Advance-Rumely*. Retrieved February 6, 2024 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advance-Rumely>
- Gilbert, Norman Tucker. *The Naval Service of Canada Its Official History Volume II*. Ottawa, Ontario: King's Printer, 1952
- Notes of a conversation between Engine Room Artificer Donald McIntosh, HMCS *Regina*, and Capt. J. Dalzell (Retired), April 2015
- Wikipedia (June 19, 2023). *HMCS Wasaga*. Retrieved February 8, 2024 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMCS_Wasaga
- For Posterity's Sake. *HMCS Avalon RCN Barracks*. Retrieved February 8, 2024, from <http://www.forposterityssake.ca/SE/SE0009.htm>
- Wikipedia (October 3, 2021). *HMS Destiny (W-115)*. Retrieved February 8, 2024 from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Destiny_\(W_115\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Destiny_(W_115))
- Government of Canada. *Tuberculosis (TB): Symptoms and Treatment*. Retrieved February 9, 2024 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/tuberculosis.html>

This material may be freely reproduced for non-commercial purposes, provided it includes the statement that it has been prepared by the Citizen Sailors Virtual Cenotaph project of the Naval Reserve Association of Canada from interviews and publicly accessible sources.

