

# ***The Uganda Tar Paper: A Ship's Newspaper and Its Community***

Malcolm A.P. Butler

*While HMCS Uganda's operational records have been examined along with the impact of the volunteers-only policy for the Pacific Theatre implemented by the Canadian Government in April 1945, historians have largely overlooked HMCS Uganda's shipboard newspaper called The Uganda Tar Paper. Recognising the importance of a newspaper to its community and that HMCS Uganda was the sole Canadian warship in combat operations in the Pacific Theatre, this oversight has impacted our understanding of the importance of the newspaper aboard ship and the experiences of the ship's company. In response, this article offers an examination of the newspaper and its importance to the sense of community aboard while also contributing to the historiography of HMCS Uganda. Furthermore, this article examines the possible use of the newspaper by the senior leadership aboard to influence the results of the Pacific volunteer vote held aboard HMCS Uganda in June 1945.*

*Bien que les archives opérationnelles du NCSM Uganda aient fait l'objet d'un examen, tout comme l'impact de la politique d'admission des bénévoles dans le théâtre du Pacifique mise en œuvre par le gouvernement canadien en avril 1945, les historiens ont largement négligé le journal de bord du NCSM Uganda, intitulé « The Uganda Tar Paper ». Il importe de reconnaître l'importance d'un journal pour sa communauté*

*et le fait que le NCSM Uganda était le seul navire de guerre canadien qui participait aux opérations de combat dans le théâtre du Pacifique. Cette omission involontaire de la part des historiens a eu une incidence sur notre compréhension de l'importance d'un journal de bord et des expériences de l'équipage. Le présent article propose donc une analyse du journal et de son importance pour le sentiment d'appartenance collective à bord, tout en contribuant à l'historiographie du NCSM Uganda. De plus, cet article considère l'utilisation possible du journal par la haute direction du navire pour influencer les résultats du vote sur les bénévoles du théâtre du Pacifique tenu à bord du NCSM Uganda en juin 1945.*

## Introduction

Arriving home after circumnavigating the globe and a tour of duty against the Imperial Japanese Navy with the British Pacific Fleet (BPF), Lieutenant Stuart Keate, HMCS *Uganda*'s information officer, described the ship's final approach to His Majesty's Canadian Dockyard Esquimalt in his memoir:

we revved up our engines and pointed *Uganda*'s nose for her last wartime harbor, thus completing her tour around the world. In a few minutes the sun came out, revealing the snow-capped Olympic range across the Straits and the wooded promontories of the islands, a picture so clean and fresh that it made you feel good just to stand by the rails and look at it.<sup>1</sup>

Having steamed 63,313 miles since departing Halifax, Nova Scotia ten months earlier, *Uganda* had returned home to Canada on 10 August 1945.<sup>2</sup>

Originally commissioned into the Royal Navy (RN) as HMS *Uganda*, this *Fiji*-class cruiser briefly served throughout the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean theatres during the Second World War before being severely damaged in September 1943 during *Operation Avalanche*. Following the refit, *Uganda* was transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), re-commissioned

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<sup>1</sup> J.S. Keate, "Pacific Diary," September 1945, 177, Stuart Keate fonds, RBSC-ARC-1299-1-6, University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books and Special Collections, Vancouver (UBCL).

<sup>2</sup> John Caldecott Littler, *Sea Fever* (Kiwi Publications, 1995), 242, photograph and caption opposite.



HMCS *Uganda* entering Esquimalt harbour, late 1945. (Credit: RCN Image E-07099-6, courtesy CFB Esquimalt Naval & Military Museum)

as HMCS *Uganda* and with a crew of 908 personnel, briefly returned to Canada and the United Kingdom before joining the BPF in the Pacific Theatre.<sup>3</sup>

While *Uganda*'s operational records and the impact of the Canadian government's Pacific volunteer policy have been examined along with accounts written by former crew, these studies have focussed heavily on the successes and failures of *Uganda*'s operations along with the Pacific volunteer issue.<sup>4</sup> They are invaluable to our understanding of the ship's operations in the Pacific Theatre with the BPF. This study, using a social and cultural approach, will instead examine the sense of community aboard *Uganda* during its operational service in the Pacific Theatre by drawing upon *The Uganda Tar Paper* (hereafter the *Tar Paper*), the ship's daily newspaper.

Unlike the newspapers of today with multiple sections and colour photographs, the *Tar Paper* was produced using a broadsheet style, usually a single page with no photographs or sketches printed on a mimeograph machine. Distributed throughout the ship to key areas and posted on the notice boards, the ship's company would have to gather around and take turns reading

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<sup>3</sup> Conrad Waters, *British Fiji Class Cruisers and Their Derivatives: Design, Development and Performance* (Seaforth Publishing, 2024), 235–39; Stephen Conrad Geneja, *The Cruiser Uganda: One War, Many Conflicts* (Tyendinaga Publishers, 1994), 252–62.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Schull, *The Far Distant Ships: An Official Account of Canadian Naval Operations in the Second World War* (King's Printer, 1950); W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty, Michael Whitby, Robert H. Caldwell, William Johnston, and William G.P. Rawling, *A Blue Water Navy: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1943–1945*, vol. 2, part 2 (Vanwell Publishing, 2007).

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THE UGANDA TAR PAPER

Monday, May 22/45.

**CAPTAIN'S SPEECH** In an informal talk from the bridge at 1900 tonight the Captain outlined plans for future movements. After finishing this time, we will return to the Sakishima area for another strike, and then the Fleet heads south for a major replenishment.

Some ships will go to Australian ports, while others will stay at Manus. Among these is the Uganda. The choice was made on a "last gas up, last time down" basis, with a promise that the ships left behind in Manus this time would get first crack at civilization when operational requirements again permit.

The Captain said that we would probably be in Manus about three weeks, and while we were there, there was a possibility that we might engage in a strike against an island in that vicinity.

A number of hands have asked the Tar Paper what's to do in Manus. As far as we can gather, there are recreational facilities in the way of swimming and baseball. Movies should be definitely better in the area, with the Yanks close at hand. There is a native village ashore but it is believed to be out of bounds. However, it is possible to take walks ashore and that should appeal to a lot of the ship's company.

x x x

**TODAY'S STRIKE** Here is a roundup of the day's activities:

"All four serviceable airfields were well bombed and are now believed to be out of action. Cloud late in the day made accurate assessment impossible. Mirara town and port installations were also attacked and started. Two radio stations and Mirara airfield barracks and administrative buildings rocketed and all damaged or set on fire. Two further radio stations, barges, motor transport and a tented camp were well strafed and damaged. Sixty tons of bombs were dropped.

"One MYRT snapper (reconnaissance) splashed by Helldivers. "None of our aircraft is missing".

x x x

**WORLD NEWS**

**FLASHESx**

Prime Minister Mackenzie King, on return from the San Francisco Conference, arrived in Vancouver on Wednesday, and immediately began a campaign to put the Liberal party back in power. The P.M. said that, until the Japs suffered the fate of Nazi power Germany, Canada's war effort would be directed across the Pacific and that Vancouver would be the embarkation point.

The first troop-ships bearing Canadians home from the Western Front are expected late in June. It will be Christmas before all the troops are home from Europe.

At Edmonton, Mr. King said that the R.C.N. would employ 15,600 men in the Pacific War, along with about 30,000 Army personnel. The strength of the Air Force has yet to be decided upon.

Seven thousand Canadian prisoners have been released in Germany. There are 1700 Canadians imprisoned at Hong Kong, only two of whom are from the Canadian Navy.

26,000 tire tubes will be released for sale to car owners in Canada, as they move to out rationing.

The Yanks are still meeting fierce resistance on Okinawa, but have succeeded in enveloping the key defence city of Shuri. An American radio station has already been set up on Okinawa.

American G.I.'s of the 101st Airborne Division have uncovered Hermann Goering's \$2,000,000 art collection (that should be \$200,000, excuse us) and had a showing the other day. Most of the stuff was pilfered when the Nazis were riding high.

It has been revealed that the 10,000-ton Jap cruiser sunk by the British East Indies Fleet was one of the Nachi class.

Marshall Tito announced that 12,000 to 20,000 Yugo-Slav troops would be moved out of Austria within the next few days.

Among the U.S.O. entertainers coming to the Pacific shortly are Katherine Hepburn, Frank Sinatra, Raymond Massey and Anne 'n Andy.

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**FINE POINT**

Shywt. Henry Stroppel solved the gramophone needle problem referred to yesterday. First he presented a new needle. Then he suggested that the old ones be put on the high-power machine. We did it!

x x x

The Uganda Tar Paper, 22 May 1945. (Credit: Author's personal collection)

the news.

Recognising that HMCS *Ontario*, near sister of *Uganda*, arrived in the Pacific Theatre post-hostilities and did not have a newspaper until mid-November 1945, the value of the *Tar Paper* to our understanding of the morale and sense of community aboard the sole ship of the RCN in the Pacific Theatre during active combat operations becomes evident. This study of the *Tar Paper* reveals new details about the ship's company and demonstrates the importance of the *Tar Paper* to the development of a cohesive ship's company, while also providing insights into the operations of the BPF and how the Pacific volunteer issue was handled aboard at the time of the policy announcement.<sup>5</sup>

### Historiographical Considerations

In his study of newspapers as historical sources, Jerry W. Knudson observed that as a newspaper both reflects and moulds the society it serves, it is an essential cornerstone to understanding the community.<sup>6</sup> He noted that the most important aspect of the newspaper was not the validity of the news being reported but whether the readers believed the news and how they interacted with the news as the newspaper informed their perceptions and mindset.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Robert L. Nelson noted in his study of First World War soldiers' newspapers that the newspaper could be used to understand the mental landscape of the soldier.<sup>8</sup> Noting that the newspaper's existence not only prevented a sense of isolation but directly fostered a sense of community, Nelson identified subjects such as humour, combat reports, women, and their perceptions of the enemy as providing insights into the mindset of the common soldier.<sup>9</sup> In contrast,

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<sup>5</sup> The author thanks former Ordinary Telegraphist Darrell Bedford for discussing his experiences aboard HMCS *Uganda* and for providing access to the entire print run of *The Uganda Tar Paper* from 14 February to 9 August 1945. The author scanned these issues and provided digital copies to the website For Posterity's Sake: A Royal Canadian Navy Historical Project, accessed 31 August 2025, <https://www.forposterityssake.ca/RCN-DOCS/TAR-PAPER.htm>. See also Bill Rawling, "Paved with Good Intentions: HMCS *Uganda*, the Pacific War, and the Volunteer Issue," *Canadian Military History* 4, no. 2 (1995): 23–33; and Bill Rawling, "A Lonely Ambassador: HMCS *Uganda* and the War in the Pacific," *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* 8, no. 1 (1998): 39–63.

<sup>6</sup> Jerry W. Knudson, "Late to the Feast: Newspapers as Historical Sources," *Perspectives on History* 31, no. 7 (1993), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/october-1993/late-to-the-feast>.

<sup>7</sup> Knudson, "Late to the Feast."

<sup>8</sup> Robert L. Nelson, "Soldier Newspapers: A Useful Source in the Social and Cultural History of the First World War and Beyond," *War in History* 17, no. 2 (2010): 168, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344509357127>.

<sup>9</sup> Nelson, "Soldier Newspapers," 173, 183–89.

Joseph Baumgartner identified several problems with newspapers as primary sources. While recognising the historical value of a newspaper's account of an event due to the proximity in time, he stated his concern for the speed of reporting potentially impacting accuracy and reliability. He also identified the well-known disadvantages of most primary sources: bias, partisanship, and censorship.<sup>10</sup>

With a readership restricted to the ship's company, the *Tar Paper* served both a Canadian and a naval community with its publication of Canadian news to maintain the connection between the ship's company and their lives back in Canada as well as details about current operations to keep them motivated and aware of the Allies' progress. While the speed of reporting impacting accuracy and reliability is not an issue at sea, *Uganda* was deployed to a theatre of war and involved in naval operations against the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces. Largely limited to the Pacific volunteer issue, bias and partisanship did surface in the newspaper. In contrast, censorship does not appear to have been an issue within the *Tar Paper*.

Despite the wide variety of conflicts, regions around the globe, and operational environments, the historiography is strikingly similar as it strongly points to the beneficial impact of a newspaper in establishing and maintaining a community for those in unfamiliar and uncomfortable surroundings.<sup>11</sup> Directly advancing our understanding of life aboard *Uganda*, the *Tar Paper* reported on various combat operations, Canadian and international news, and personal anecdotes in its efforts to establish and maintain a sense of community aboard. Uniquely, this study also provides direct insight into the handling of the Pacific volunteer issue aboard *Uganda* and how the ship's company reacted. While all HMC ships were required to canvas their personnel as to their intentions to volunteer for service in the Pacific Theatre, as the sole ship already directly involved in active combat operations, the *Tar Paper* was used to encourage the ship's company to volunteer.

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Baumgartner, "Newspapers as Historical Sources," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 9, no. 3 (1981): 256–58, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29791732>.

<sup>11</sup> Erika Behrisch Elce, "'One of the bright objects that solace us in these regions': Labour, Leisure, and the Arctic Shipboard Periodical, 1820–1852," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 46, no. 3 (2013): 343–67, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43663188>; Eve Coppinger, "Publishing on Ice: Personal Experiences and Incarnations of Print Culture Aboard the HMS *Hecla*," *Constellations* 2, no. 2 (2011): 118–24, <https://doi.org/10.29173/cons10499>; Mary Isbell, "Diplomatic Editions of a Handwritten Shipboard Newspaper," in *Handwritten Newspapers: An Alternative Medium during the Early Modern and Modern Periods*, eds. Heiko Droste and Kirsti Salmi-Niklander (Finnish Literature Society, 2016), 98–114, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv11991n1.8>; Nelson, "Soldier Newspapers," 167–91.

## The Ship's Company

Reporting aboard *Uganda* on 5 February 1945, Keate met with Lieutenant Commander N. Alexander, first lieutenant, to discuss the idea of a daily newspaper. Receiving Alexander's support, the newspaper would be a bulletin to keep the crew updated on world news and other shipboard discussions.<sup>12</sup> While Captain E.R. Mainguy was the commanding officer, it would fall to Commander H.F. Pullen, executive officer, to outline the newspaper's purpose stating that the newspaper would be "devoted to world news, Canadian [news], ship news and chatter from the various mess decks."<sup>13</sup> Noting that the newspaper would be different from the Daily Routine Orders known aboard as the *Uganda Gazette*, Pullen stated that while the tone would be similar to a regular newspaper, much of the information would be confidential and was not to leave the ship.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps, most importantly, he stated that "To make this a paper for everybody, each mess should have a representative and they are invited to contact Lt. Keate."<sup>15</sup> This statement strongly suggests that the *Tar Paper* was open to all contributions, be it gripe or praise, alongside the news being reported. With this approach, like the trench journals of the First World War examined by Nelson, the *Tar Paper* was building a community aboard ship.<sup>16</sup>

Having examined the sense of community aboard warships, Joerg Wombacher and Joerg Felfe stated this shared identity, often referred to as morale, cohesion, esprit de corps, or camaraderie, serves as the cornerstone of a navy's organisational culture with specific purposes.<sup>17</sup> Primarily used to assist personnel in overcoming both communication and teamwork failures while enhancing one's combat readiness, a secondary purpose of community is to counter those negative psychological experiences related to operational



Commander H.F. Pullen, shown as a rear admiral. (Credit: Naval Marine Archive – The Canadian Collection, [https://navalmarinearchive.com/research/docs/pullen\\_h\\_f.html](https://navalmarinearchive.com/research/docs/pullen_h_f.html))

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<sup>12</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 32.

<sup>13</sup> *Tar Paper*, 14 February 1945; Geneja, *The Cruiser Uganda*, 195–97.

<sup>14</sup> *Tar Paper*, 14 February 1945.

<sup>15</sup> *Tar Paper*, 14 February 1945.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson, "Soldier Newspapers," 172.

<sup>17</sup> Joerg Wombacher and Joerg Felfe, "United We Are Strong: An Investigation into Sense of Community among Navy Crews," *Armed Forces & Society* 38, no. 4 (2012): 557, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X11428787>.

deployments such as the threat to one's safety, frequent relocations, living in close-quarters, and separation from one's home and family.<sup>18</sup>

Along similar lines, Karyn Hall, a clinical psychologist, remarked that the feeling of belonging to a larger community improves an individual's motivation, health, and happiness. Hall recognised that within their connection to the community, one finds comfort in knowing that all people struggle at times. The sense of community, however, enables the individual to see the value in life and to cope with difficult situations.<sup>19</sup> With these studies in mind, in addition to the difficulties experienced aboard a warship in combat operations, it is the solitary nature of *Uganda's* deployment with the BPF that underscores the importance of the sense of community. Reflecting on Pullen's comments and noting his three previous commands at sea aboard HMC Ships *St. Francis*, *Ottawa*, and *St. Laurent*, it is clear that he was aware of the importance of building a community aboard *Uganda* and saw the newspaper as a means by which to do so.<sup>20</sup> By holding a contest to select a name for the newspaper, Pullen also immediately drew the involvement of the entire ship's company into the newspaper and thus further developed the camaraderie aboard.<sup>21</sup> This was further enhanced with the selection of the name *The Uganda Tar Paper* as it reflected the ship's name and was clearly a paper meant for the ship's company as the word "tar" is an old nickname for a sailor.<sup>22</sup>

Reporting aboard *Uganda*, personnel were issued a naval information card and requested to complete and submit it to Keate for use when sending news reports back to Canada. Essentially a miniature biographical sketch of each crew member, Keate received 730 cards and reviewing them identified several characteristics about the ship's company. In his role as the editor, he could use this knowledge to ensure that the *Tar Paper* met its stated intent as a newspaper for the ship's company. Published in the *Tar Paper*, these statistics helped build the sense of identity aboard *Uganda* as personnel could immediately see themselves within the demographics of the shipboard community.<sup>23</sup> They now provide insights into the composition of the ship's company which are not readily available from other sources:

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<sup>18</sup> Wombacher and Felfe, "United We Are Strong," 557.

<sup>19</sup> Karyn Hall, "Create a Sense of Belonging: Finding Ways to Belong Can Help Ease the Pain of Loneliness," *Psychology Today*, 24 March 2014, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pieces-mind/201403/create-sense-belonging>.

<sup>20</sup> "Admiral Pullen Retires," *The Crowsnest*, July 1960, 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Tar Paper*, 14 February 1945.

<sup>22</sup> *Tar Paper*, 22 February 1945.

<sup>23</sup> *Tar Paper*, 9 March 1945.



- a. Average age aboard ship was 23.64 years old;
- b. The most common age was 20 years old with 130 personnel;
- c. The youngest member aboard was 17 years old;
- d. The oldest member aboard was 53 years old;
- e. No members of the ship's company were between the ages of 47 and 52;
- f. Only one-third of the ship's company had experience aboard cruisers;
- g. 28.6 per cent of the ship's company were married;
- h. Favourite sports included baseball, hockey, swimming, hunting, and fishing;
- i. 154 members of the ship's company stated no interest in sports; and
- j. 7 per cent of the ship's company were Permanent Force RCN.<sup>24</sup>

Additionally, of the 721 cards on which the individual identified the location of home, the following breakdown amongst the ship's company was reported in the *Tar Paper*.<sup>25</sup>

**Table 1: Regional Breakdown of the Ship's Company of HMCS *Uganda***

Home Region	Representation within Ship's Company	Percentage of Ship's Company
Alberta	56	6.20%
British Columbia	100	11.08%
Dominion of Newfoundland	1	0.11%
Manitoba	58	6.43%
New Brunswick	25	2.77%
Nova Scotia	43	4.76%
Ontario	305	33.81%
Prince Edward Island	16	1.77%
Quebec	70	7.76%
Saskatchewan	44	4.87%
USA	3	0.33%
Unidentified	181	20.06%

Ontario, the most heavily populated province in Canada at the time, had by far

<sup>24</sup> *Tar Paper*, 9 March 1945.

<sup>25</sup> *Tar Paper*, 3 March 1945. While the province of Newfoundland and Labrador is a part of Canada presently, it was still a distinct dominion of the British Empire in 1945 and did not join Canada until 1949.

the largest representation aboard ship, but the crew included sailors from all nine other provinces.<sup>26</sup> These statistics provided the editor with the knowledge that he could report news from across Canada and it would find an interested readership among the crew, ensuring that the newspaper met its stated intent as a newspaper for all aboard.

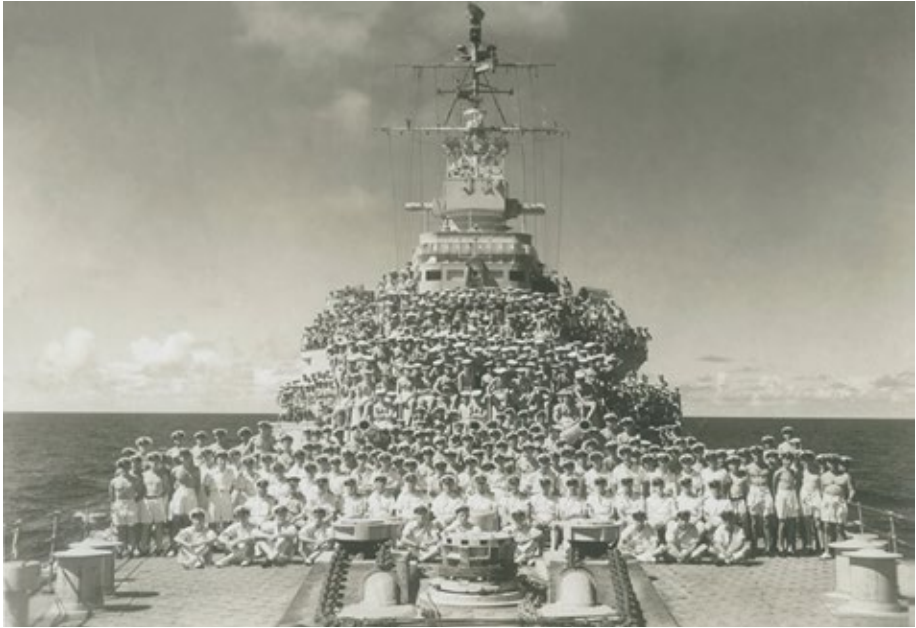
Of significance to the camaraderie and identity of the ship's company was the naval background of those who served aboard *Uganda*. Having a mere seven per cent Permanent Force personnel, the ship's company consisted of reservists for the most part (93 per cent). More specifically, *Uganda* was operated by Royal Canadian Naval Reserve (RCNR) personnel who were former merchant mariners and by wartime reservists with the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) who had no previous seagoing experience prior to enlistment. While the Permanent Force personnel would have a sense of community within the RCN, the RCNR personnel were likely to have developed a moderate appreciation of a cohesive community due to their previous naval training and experience at sea. In contrast, having very different professional and personal experiences, the RCNVR crew members did not have the same sense of community. With either limited or no previous experience of shipboard life prior to reporting for duty, the ability to develop the RCNVR's naval identity aboard *Uganda* became critically important in assisting them to adjust to their new life at sea. Stephen Geneja, a former RCNVR member of the ship's company, noted that in December 1944, *Uganda's* company of 908 personnel included 22 RCNVR officers and 631 RCNVR ratings.<sup>27</sup> This large disparity between the Permanent Force, the RCNR, and the RCNVR suggests that as the RCNVR personnel brought aboard a vastly different identity with different expectations than those of the Permanent Force or RCNR personnel, the importance of the *Tar Paper's* role in establishing a firm sense of community and cohesion aboard was increasingly important.

Additionally, with only 33 per cent of the ship's company having previous service aboard a British cruiser, the remaining 67 per cent had either no experience at sea or had served aboard smaller warships such as corvettes, frigates, and destroyers. This meant that while one-third of personnel had been trained and experienced life aboard a cruiser, the majority of the crew had not and were forced to adapt their attitude, training, and routines to suit a cruiser's operation, since in contrast with smaller warships, the strict discipline and rigid adherence to daily routines and procedures aboard *Uganda* were absolute

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<sup>26</sup> Statistics Canada, "Population of Canada and the provinces, annual, 1926–1960 (x 1,000)," <https://doi.org/10.25318/3610028001-eng>.

<sup>27</sup> Geneja, *The Cruiser Uganda*, 252–62.



Ship's Company of His Majesty's Canadian Ship *Uganda*, August 1945. (Credit: Gerald M. Moses, Library and Archives Canada - M-2669 / 3400238)

necessities. With such a diverse community aboard, using the *Tar Paper* was significant to the development of an efficient and capable ship's company which was critical to the ship's ability to conduct operations.

Tasked to promote awareness of *Uganda's* operations with the BPF in both foreign port visits and in press releases sent back to Canada, Keate, as the ship's information officer and editor of the *Tar Paper*, was also required by Pullen to co-ordinate all news reports, magazines, and pamphlets for the ship's company while maintaining up-to-date war maps.<sup>28</sup> After graduating from the University of British Columbia in 1935, Keate was employed by the *Toronto Daily Star*, the *Star Weekly*, and the *Vancouver Daily Province* as a writer prior to assuming the editorship of the sports section for the *Vancouver Daily Province* in 1940. Two years later, Keate enlisted in the RCNVR joining the Department of Naval Information.<sup>29</sup>

Nelson noted that regardless of their nationality, most military editors were junior officers who had either a publishing, journalism, writing, or teaching background and were well educated.<sup>30</sup> Despite the years between the two wars

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<sup>28</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 33.

<sup>29</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 184.

<sup>30</sup> Nelson, "Soldier Newspapers," 171.



Lieutenant Stuart Keate (left), information officer, reading a signal at sea in April 1945. (Credit: Gerald M. Moses, Library & Archives Canada: M-2199 / 3217288)

or the differences between the army and the navy, there is a clear connection between the background of Keate as editor of the *Tar Paper* and the editors of the trench journals of the First World War. Prior to *Uganda*, Keate served aboard a Tribal-class destroyer, two corvettes, and with a flotilla of Fairmile motor launches. Keate also served ashore as the RCN broadcasting liaison officer to the British Broadcasting Corporation and as chief information officer in the Dominion of Newfoundland.<sup>31</sup> This mix of professional and naval experience would serve him well as the editor of the *Tar Paper*.

## Content

In reviewing the relationship between labour and leisure found within arctic shipboard periodicals, Erika Behrisch Elce noted that unlike the official narrative of the Royal Navy's arctic expeditions issued by a ship's commanding officer, the periodicals were a collective venture with contributions from all aboard ship.<sup>32</sup>

Along similar lines, the content of the *Tar Paper* encompassed a collection of war, sports, international, Canadian, and shipboard news and personal anecdotes. With the official reports having driven the development of the received version of the ship's history, the news reported in the *Tar Paper* should not be overlooked. The official communiques, operations and news radio summaries, poetry submissions, questions to the editor, "Know Your Canada" reports, shipboard activities, sports, and humorous anecdotes about their fellow shipmates highlight the contributive nature of the *Tar Paper* to

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<sup>31</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 184.

<sup>32</sup> Behrisch Elce, "'One of the bright objects,'" 352.

enhancing morale aboard.

Using the *Tar Paper*, Keate reminded the ship's company about censorship regulations and how those were to be applied.<sup>33</sup> The *Tar Paper* itself, however, is a contradiction. With all outgoing letters reviewed by a censor before dispatch and with the ship at sea, the *Tar Paper* took liberties with the information provided to the ship's company, especially in the daily operations summary such as when the *Tar Paper* reported that "For the statistically-minded, during our first operation, *Uganda* fired 547 rounds of ammunition. Needless to say, this figure is not available for mention in letters."<sup>34</sup> This passage reinforced the cohesion and the sense of purpose as all were entrusted with this information while encouraging the community by enabling each sailor or officer to feel they were directly contributing to the defeat of the enemy. Demonstrating a lack of censorship within the news, the *Tar Paper* quickly developed a rapport with the ship's company and continued to foster the sense of identity aboard.

More than four months after the newspaper began publication, the sense of community had continued to develop. This is most clearly shown when the *Tar Paper* reported on a highly successful sing-song held the night of 10 June 1945 along with a report on the dental officer's efforts to supplement his diet with some fresh fish:

Highlights of the Sing-Song on the Foc'stle last evening was the appearance of "The Big Three" – Captain on banjo, Commander on accordion, and First Lieutenant on Piano. They made a big hit and a repeat performance is called for, upon our return from sea going duties  
....

Perhaps inspired by the hospital ship, which caught a 45-pound barracuda the other day, "Toothie" has been after em again, and reports he had one the other day with a bigger yank than he himself possesses. What we want to see, "Toothie" is a fish fryin' on the griddle.<sup>35</sup>

Not only do these two examples highlight the use of the newspaper in sharing humorous anecdotes and social activities but they show how

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<sup>33</sup> *Tar Paper*, 8 March, 26 April, 28 May, 3 July, 11 July, 19 July, and 32 July 1945. The last edition to prescribe censorship restrictions was dated 32 July 1945 due to the ship having crossed the International Date Line and repeating 31 July 1945. Additionally, having published 100 issues on 5 June 1945, the *Tar Paper* commenced vol. 2 with its next issue published on 7 June 1945.

<sup>34</sup> *Tar Paper*, 29 May 1945.

<sup>35</sup> *Tar Paper*, 11 June 1945.

camaraderie was reinforced aboard. With *Uganda*'s command team providing a musical interlude for the ship's company, the morale is strengthened as the three most senior personnel aboard are performing for the crew's entertainment. On a different tack, the unsuccessful efforts of the dental officer are also used to maintain the morale aboard ship. While all can appreciate the humour in the dental officer's fishing attempts, the memories recalled about fishing and the enjoyment of a fresh fish dinner by some of the ship's company as they read the anecdote would have likely further strengthened the community aboard by funnelling the individual memories of the ship's company into a collective experience.

While recognising that a warship is an instrument of national power and, by extension, one which reflects the nation, one must consider the impact of the *Tar Paper* as not simply a reminder of home but as a literary instrument which is subconsciously reinforcing the sense of community aboard *Uganda*. With the publication of the first edition of the newspaper, Keate observed how the "Men clustered around every notice-board and seeming to get a big kick out of the ship's news, with names of their messmates featured."<sup>36</sup> This sense of interest and strong desire to read the *Tar Paper* speaks to the importance of a newspaper upon a community. Along similar lines, Benedict Anderson identified the importance of newspapers to a community in his study on the origins of nationalism. Defining the nation as an imagined political community with inherent limitations and sovereignty, Anderson stated that while the vast majority of the nation's citizenry will never know or meet one another, they believe in their mind that they are all of the same community.<sup>37</sup> Speaking about the role of newspapers and how they supported the development and maintenance of this imagined community, he stated that through the observation of others also reading the same newspaper, the newspaper becomes a tool individually used that reinforces the connections aboard and everyday life.<sup>38</sup> Clearly, Anderson's comments highlight the social aspect of the newspaper and the importance of the *Tar Paper* to the ship's company as directly evidenced by Keate's observation.

With almost every edition of the *Tar Paper* providing an update on the progress of the BPF's daily operations and the war, the newspaper became an unofficial operational record of the fleet's activities. Reporting both losses and successes, the *Tar Paper* provided an unvarnished glimpse into the war as it

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<sup>36</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 39.

<sup>37</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (Verso, 2016), Kindle.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

was experienced by those aboard. In one issue, the daily operations summary reported that while 14 Japanese planes had been shot down or destroyed, two British planes had been destroyed. With one lost due to an accidental take-off, the second British plane had been shot down by friendly forces with the crew being rescued. The summary also noted that having successfully bombarded targets ashore, *Uganda* had fired 183 rounds of high explosive ammunition at the Sukama airfield equalling one ton from each gun aboard ship. Additionally, the *Tar Paper* reported that *Uganda* was the first Canadian warship to execute a naval bombardment of Japanese territory and that the honour of firing the first round went to Mr. Bowditch, warrant gunner, RCN.<sup>39</sup>

Openly and honestly publishing the loss of an aircraft to friendly fire demonstrated the integrity of the news reported, confirming that it was not just mere propaganda. While some may consider the publication of *Uganda*'s bombardment of Japanese territory as "cheerleading," it was considerably more significant to the camaraderie aboard ship. Regardless of rank, trade, or position, the sense of community was reinforced as all aboard recognised their role in *Uganda* being the first Canadian warship to take the war to Japan. This was an important moment for the *Uganda*, the RCN, and the dominion writ large. All aboard would be aware of the significance of the bombardment and, as a result, could take a great deal of pride in being a member of the first Canadian warship to fire on Japanese territory. Being a part of this historic moment would further foster the community aboard.

With the daily operational news of the BPF activities being published in the *Tar Paper*, an unvarnished view of the conflict and the daily naval operations undertaken by the BPF was recorded in considerable detail providing an accurate account as noted on 8 May 1945:

Here are some of the highlights of our most exciting day's action to date:

1. As yet 2230 no report from Formidable or Victorious of casualties.
2. Our successes for the day: All airfields clobbered, some motor vehicles wrecked, one Judy discovered in a cave and set afire, another destroyed on ground, one destroyed in air by a seafire, two kamikazes shot down, (one by Howe, one by Formidable) and three self destroyed. Total, 8 enemy planes.
3. Our losses: one corsair to flak, unstated damage to carriers Formidable and Victorious ....
5. ... The attackers very nearly caught us by surprise, illustrating the

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<sup>39</sup> *Tar Paper*, 4 May 1945.

shrewdness of their low-level attacks. The action began at 1650 and ended at 1725 ....

11. ... Uganda opened up on the enemy planes with "B" turret and "Y" as well as certain close-range weapons. She did not score a hit.<sup>40</sup>

The level of detail provided in these daily operations summaries ensured that all aboard were well informed about the fleet's operations and had an overall appreciation for the successes and losses experienced.

Keate's work on the *Tar Paper* shared similarities with *The Young Idea*, a newspaper written aboard HMS *Chesapeake* during the frigate's transit to the Royal Navy's East Indies and China Station in 1857 following the Indian Mutiny. Within its "Naval Intelligence" and "Promotions and Appointments" sections, *The Young Idea* reported on the official actions of the squadron, while the "Epitome" section recorded those unofficial reports submitted by the ship's company. With the crew of HMS *Chesapeake* far removed from their lives back in the United Kingdom, they were certainly more connected to those frontline events occurring as a result of British imperial expansion. With the above in mind, Mary Isbell stated that the reports within *The Young Idea* about the conflict were likely to be much more accurate than any newspaper's account back home.<sup>41</sup> Despite the different conflicts and the 88 years between HMS *Chesapeake*'s and HMCS *Uganda*'s operational experiences, there is a marked similarity in the level of detail and accuracy of report. More directly, however, these operational news summaries reinforced the sense of community aboard *Uganda* as the progress of the war was openly shared in transparent detail, and, as a result, the ship's company understood that they were all in the same situation fighting a determined enemy and facing the same level of danger from commanding officer to the lowliest seaman. This sense of equality nurtured the community established.

The majority of international news was also related to the war. Events such as the assassination of the Egyptian prime minister after declaring war on the Axis Forces, the invitation of 39 nations to send representatives to a conference to discuss the maintenance of world peace, or Argentina's declaration of war on Germany were also reported by the *Tar Paper*.<sup>42</sup> With several cross-border interests, there were also news reports impacting Canada and the US. By reporting on these issues, the *Tar Paper* indirectly reinforced various Canadian-

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<sup>40</sup> *Tar Paper*, 8 May 1945. A Judy (formally known as a D4Y1 Suisei) was a carrier dive bomber used by the Imperial Japanese Navy.

<sup>41</sup> Isbell, "Diplomatic Editions," 108.

<sup>42</sup> *Tar Paper*, 25 February, 3 March, and 28 March 1945.



American relationships aboard ship and, as a result, the connection to the broader North American home front. This was most poignantly demonstrated upon the death of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As a professional journalist, Keate recognised the impact that the death of the president would have upon the US, Canada, and the United Kingdom and that the sense of loss would be significant throughout the fleet. In response to Roosevelt's death, the *Tar Paper* published an editorial acknowledging the late president's many accomplishments:

Death of a Great American. ... News of our strike today has been overshadowed by the sudden unexpected and tragic news from Washington of the death of the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt. If it is true that "Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>" is a day for momentous and unusual events, then this one will surely go down in history as on[e] of grave misfortune. ... F.D.R. was a great "Navy Man". In the last war he was the United State's [*sic*] Secretary of the Navy and he is credited with much of the success of the U.S. building up its present powerful fleet of 1150 combat warships and 3,200,000 men. ... We salute the memory of a great democrat – in the universal sense of the word and extend our sympathy to our American shipmates on the loss of their Commander-in-Chief.<sup>43</sup>

The use of the *Tar Paper* to help soothe the sense of loss is an excellent example of the importance of the *Tar Paper* aboard *Uganda* and how it could promote solidarity and support the relationship between Canadians and Americans. According to Keate, the USN Communications Team which had been temporarily assigned to *Uganda* appreciated the gesture.<sup>44</sup>

As *Uganda* was the sole Canadian warship in active operations in the Pacific Theatre and the sole Canadian warship in the BPF, the *Tar Paper* recognised the important role played by one's sense of home and, as a result, sought to enhance the connection to home in the maintenance of the sense of community established aboard, as seen in these examples:

The big news of today is word via radio from the States that Prime Minister Mackenzie King's Government has been returned in Canada. We have no figure on the number of seats won by the various parties; simply the fact that the Liberal Government was returned. ... What

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<sup>43</sup> *Tar Paper*, 13 April 1945

<sup>44</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 86.

the vote amounts to, in effect, is that the people of Canada are satisfied with Canada's war effort to date; that they think the Pacific War can be fought on a voluntary basis; that the government's rehabilitation plans are sound; and (no doubt) that the old philosophy about "changing horses in the middle of the stream" still holds good. Word was received from Australia today that *Uganda's* votes had been received, and were counted in the election.<sup>45</sup>

Sez. Chief PO. TEL. McGee: "The center of agricultural western Ontario is the City of London, in the beautiful Thames River Valley ... Pop 80,000 ... Known as "The Forest City" because it has more trees per square mile than any other city in the world (It says here) ... Famed as the home of Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians, Labatt's Ale, Kellogg's Corn Flakes, McCormicks Biscuits, Dennisteel Works, Kelvinators and Penmans...Not forgetting the University of Western Ontario ... "Sandy" Somerville, former U.S. amateur golf champion (1932) and 7 times Canadian title-holder, now a Lt. Col. in the army ... and Bert Niosi, "Canada's King of Swing" ... Ah, that Labatt's Ale ... What a City!<sup>46</sup>

Reporting the results of the general election, the "Know Your Canada" series and contributions from the ship's company as shown above along with sports scores and music popularity polls, the *Tar Paper* not only promoted the connections to Canada but reflected the demographics of the ship's company and provided a level of familiarity in an unfamiliar Pacific Theatre.<sup>47</sup> Behrisch Elce similarly remarked that shipboard periodicals were like newspapers back home: a mixture of texts and pictures filled with humour and social commentary.<sup>48</sup> As a result, the newspapers promoted the nation left behind and provided a level of familiarity to an otherwise unfamiliar world.<sup>49</sup> Recalling that the vast majority of *Uganda's* crew were wartime reservists with many never having served aboard a cruiser, the working and living conditions aboard would be an unfamiliar world to most.

Just as the change of climate would often be an uncomfortable experience for those at sea in the nineteenth century, the same was true for *Uganda* in

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<sup>45</sup> *Tar Paper*, 13 June 1945.

<sup>46</sup> *Tar Paper*, 23 July 1945.

<sup>47</sup> *Tar Paper*, 20 February, 24 February, 2 March, 7 March, 10 March, 21 April, 21 May, 31 May, 1 June, 13 June, 14 July, and 6 August 1945.

<sup>48</sup> Behrisch Elce, "'One of the bright objects,'" 346.

<sup>49</sup> Behrisch Elce, "'One of the bright objects,'" 359.

the twentieth century.<sup>50</sup> Proceeding ever further south, the climate changed considerably and became incredibly hot and uncomfortable for those aboard *Uganda*.<sup>51</sup> By reporting these discomforts, however, it reinforced the sense of their shared experiences. Likewise, Joanna De Schmidt explained how shipboard newspapers of the transatlantic passenger ships of the nineteenth century regularly featured stories concerning the living environment and physical experiences of the shipboard community including the change in climate during a voyage.<sup>52</sup> Regardless of rank, position, or responsibility, everyone was experiencing the changes in climate.<sup>53</sup> It was not just the ship's comfort, however, that was affected by the harsh climate.

As the ship travelled abroad, the source and quality of food aboard ship also changed.<sup>54</sup> Reporting on a discussion about the daily soup, the *Tar Paper* recounted Lt. Cdr. Barclay discussing an incident whereby a petty officer showed him his soup with both a large and a small weevil in it. Barclay said, "I quite sympathize with you, old son, but what can I do?" Murmured Lieut. Roberts: 'That's easy. Just take the lesser of two weevils.'<sup>55</sup> Not only does this tale demonstrate how the *Tar Paper* served all aboard as a community-oriented outlet for their common experiences, it also demonstrates how the ship's company found humour in their shared experience and used same to address the challenges of a life at sea. Ironically, in 2003, this same scene played out in the movie *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*. While the movie is set during the Napoleonic Wars, the fact that the same situation with the same punchline played out despite the difference of 140 years speaks to the wider naval community and the difficulties of a life at sea aboard a man-of-war. It also suggests that the story in the *Tar Paper* may have been apocryphal in an effort to raise morale with a humorous anecdote. That said, De Schmidt has noted that the shipboard newspaper provided the passengers, be they first-class or steerage, the opportunity to share their collective experiences. The newspapers reinforced the fact that the entire community regardless of rank or social station was reacting to shared occurrences.<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, the change in climate and food quality were not the only negative experiences.

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<sup>50</sup> Joanna De Schmidt, "'This strange little floating world': Shipboard Periodicals and Community-building in the 'Global' Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Global History* 11 (2016): 239–40, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022816000073>; *Tar Paper*, 15 February 1945.

<sup>51</sup> *Tar Paper*, 25 February, 20 March 1945.

<sup>52</sup> De Schmidt, "'This strange little floating world,'" 239–40.

<sup>53</sup> De Schmidt, "'This strange little floating world,'" 240.

<sup>54</sup> *Tar Paper*, 28 March 1945.

<sup>55</sup> *Tar Paper*, 1 July 1945.

<sup>56</sup> De Schmidt, "'This strange little floating world,'" 239.

Three crew members – Leading Stoker Caswell Ivan Phillips, Petty Officer Joseph Dumont, and Stoker First Class Robert James Rorison – died of causes other than naval combat.<sup>57</sup> Dealing with the loss of shipmates, the *Tar Paper* spoke positively of them and detailed their funeral services and burials at sea.<sup>58</sup> More importantly, the *Tar Paper* encouraged the ship's company to support their shipmates' families to great success as demonstrated when the ship's company collected donations of more than \$3,000.00 to support the families.<sup>59</sup> These donations speak to the sense of community aboard *Uganda* as the ship's company acknowledged their loss and the need to support their shipmates' families.

Aside from reporting on the unfortunate aspects of life aboard a warship, the *Tar Paper* also reported on the social life and activities aboard ship. Starting with the newspaper's own naming competition, there are reports of band performances, dances, briefings on various ports, historical moments, a pin-up baby contest, bingo, crib, chess and checkers matches, poetry submissions, ship's sports competitions, fleet war canoe races, humorous anecdotes about shipmates, war briefings, comedy skits, war correspondent interviews, shipboard radio broadcasts, rebuttals and letters to the editor, and briefs given by the commanding officer. While one could question the importance of the *Tar Paper* to the ship's company when compared to these varied events and reports which clearly impacted the sense of community aboard, the *Tar Paper* was the conduit by which those who were unable to participate could still engage with these activities by reading about the events afterwards and embracing their connection to home which again reinforces the morale and identity aboard. In short, similar to the "Epitome" section of *The Young Idea*, the *Tar Paper* was very much aligned with the ship's company and became the unofficial report of daily life at sea fostering morale and the sense of community – with one exception.

### **Pacific Volunteer Issue**

On 4 April 1945, with *Uganda* already in the Pacific Theatre and four days prior to their rendezvous with the BPF at sea, the government of Canada announced that only those service personnel who specifically volunteered for

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<sup>57</sup> Geneja, *The Cruiser Uganda*, 117; *Tar Paper*, 27 June 1945; J.S. Keate, "Rorison Auction," 7 August 1945, Stories from on board HMCS *Uganda* – Press Releases, Stuart Keate fonds, RBSC-Arc-1299-1-5, UBCL. Leading Stoker Phillips died of natural causes, PO Dumont died of a cerebral hemorrhage, and Stoker First Class Rorison drowned.

<sup>58</sup> *Tar Paper*, 3 April and 27 June 1945.

<sup>59</sup> *Tar Paper*, 3 April, 8 April, 28 June, 29 June, 30 June, and 7 August 1945.

the Pacific Theatre would be dispatched to serve there. While HMC Ships *Ontario*, *Algonquin*, and *Prince Robert* were also forced to address the Pacific volunteer issue prior to or while en route to join the BPF, *Uganda* was already in the Pacific Theatre and would be immediately impacted at the time of the policy announcement and implementation.<sup>60</sup>

Concerned about the divisive nature of conscription and recalling the split in public opinion in 1918 during the First World War and again in 1942 during his tenure, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King was determined to avoid conscription and bring Canada out of the war as a unified nation. Concerned that there would be a need for conscription for the Pacific Theatre, however, he recorded in his diary that “The mere desire of having token contribution for prestige purposes was not sufficient reason for raising the conscription issue or indeed needlessly sacrificing lives.”<sup>61</sup> Laudable as the statement is, however, the government was also facing a general election in June 1945. Writing in his personal diary, King stated, “I took strongly the position that to create a conscription issue over Japan before a general election would be just suicidal and absolutely wrong.”<sup>62</sup> So, with concerns about national unity and re-election in the forefront, the decision was made to implement the Pacific volunteer policy.

With no advance notice provided about the Pacific volunteer policy, those aboard were surprised at the change and initially confused as to how the policy would apply to the ship’s company. Addressing the issue of the requirement for Pacific volunteers with some surprise, the *Tar Paper* published a crew member’s comment asking, “If the war against Japan packs up before the war in Germany, will we be given a chance to re-volunteer for the Western Front?,” as an expression of incredulity over the policy.<sup>63</sup> Once the policy was confirmed, however, the *Tar Paper* undertook a strong pro-volunteer stance with both direct and indirect references and editorials about *Uganda*’s responsibility:<sup>64</sup>

Beyond a few scattered pilots and airmen, and naval types serving

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<sup>60</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates, 19<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 6<sup>th</sup> Session*, vol. 1 (Edmond Cloutier, 1946), 435, [https://parl.canadiana.ca/view/oop.debates\\_HOC1906\\_20/1?r=0&s=1](https://parl.canadiana.ca/view/oop.debates_HOC1906_20/1?r=0&s=1); Marc Milner, *Canada’s Navy: The First Century* (University of Toronto Press, 1999), 155; Canadian War Museum, “Canada’s Naval History: The Second World War: War in the Pacific and South East Asia – The Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and Hong Kong,” <https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/navy/gallery-e.aspx@section=2-E-3-b&id=4&page=0.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Douglas et al., *A Blue Water Navy*, 532.

<sup>62</sup> D.F. Forster and J.W. Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record: Volume II 1944–1945* (University of Toronto Press, 1968), 346.

<sup>63</sup> *Tar Paper*, 9 April 1945.

<sup>64</sup> *Tar Paper*, 8 May, 9 May, 18 May, and 19 May 1945.

on loan to the Royal Navy, we in HMCS Uganda today are the only Canadians actively engaged in fighting this Pacific war. The eyes of our country are on us. We carry the responsibility for the prestige of all Canadian forces – A prestige dearly won at Dieppe, The Scheldte, Caen, and the Zuyder Zee. Let us set ourselves to this new task so that, when the final reckoning is made, we can say: “Well done – We saw the job through to the end”!<sup>65</sup>

With a clear position taken, the *Tar Paper*'s campaign for Pacific volunteers did not finish with this editorial following VE Day. Another inducement to volunteer was published as a biographical note on a crew member known as Pop O'Reilly, who at 45 years of age was a Royal Navy veteran of the First World War. Detailing his service at the Battle of Jutland and having been torpedoed nine times, the biography finished with a comment from O'Reilly stating, “I'm all for George [V] and I'm a Pacific volunteer.”<sup>66</sup> By focusing on a shipmate who served in the First World War and identified as a Pacific volunteer, the *Tar Paper* sought to influence the ship's company by highlighting his sense of duty and patriotism. In doing so, the *Tar Paper* directly challenged all aboard to follow his example and volunteer for the Pacific Theatre. Following the Allied victory in the European Theatre, indirect pressure to volunteer was also made when the *Tar Paper* reported that “Americans in the Pacific today expressed thanks that ‘half of America's job was done’ but expressed a new determination to see the Pacific War through to victory.”<sup>67</sup> Then, at the end of May, the *Tar Paper* published a summary of another broadcast made by Mainguy. In his speech, Mainguy advised the ship's company that the Canadian government had requested a list of volunteers, and, as a result, those aboard would likely need to redo their volunteer declarations along with the voting for the federal election while at the Manus Anchorage in early June. Of note, however, is that Mainguy also asked the ship's company to consider the question as if they were in Canada making the decision.<sup>68</sup> In a last push to encourage volunteers, the *Tar Paper* referenced a despatch from Ottawa which stated that since the end of the war in Germany, 90 per cent of naval personnel were volunteering for the Pacific Theatre.<sup>69</sup>

These editorials and articles were a clear indication of the *Tar Paper*'s position on the issue of the Pacific volunteer. While it is recognised that no

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<sup>65</sup> *Tar Paper*, 8 May 1945.

<sup>66</sup> *Tar Paper*, 19 May 1945.

<sup>67</sup> *Tar Paper*, 9 May 1945.

<sup>68</sup> *Tar Paper*, 26 May 1945.

<sup>69</sup> *Tar Paper*, 31 May 1945.

newspaper is ever completely unbiased and that the approach taken could be expected from a naval newspaper edited by a RCN information officer, it is useful to look closely at why the *Tar Paper* took such a strong and definitive position. Recounting Knudson's comments on how a newspaper reflects and shapes the society it serves, it appears that the *Tar Paper* initially reflected the surprise by which the ship's company greeted the policy announcement and then sought to mould the opinion of the ship's company on the Pacific volunteer issue.<sup>70</sup> While no evidence of any specific orders being issued for the *Tar Paper* to promote volunteering for the Pacific Theatre has been found, it is logical to consider that with the commanding officer and executive officer of *Uganda* both being senior Permanent Force personnel and the formal policy being promulgated by Naval Service Headquarters (NSHQ) in accordance with the government's volunteers-only policy, that the *Tar Paper* would be directed from behind the scenes to "hold the line" and encourage all aboard to volunteer for service in the Pacific Theatre.

In an unpublished memoir written after he returned home to Vancouver in 1945, Keate wrote that:

The Commander blasted me about the Tar Paper again tonight. It's getting to be a habit. I printed an item about some messdeck crapshooters who had had nine pounds confiscated and chipped into the fund for the late Petty Officer Dumont, commenting – in what I thought was a satirical vein – "Muchly appreciated, men." The Commander didn't like it. "Gambling is contrary to the Naval Discipline Act," he growled. "Let's not have any more of that."<sup>71</sup>

Pullen's strenuous objection to an anecdote about a game of craps held aboard *Uganda* indicates his willingness to influence Keate's editorial direction, and therefore it is reasonable to consider that Pullen may have influenced the *Tar Paper*'s position on the Pacific volunteer issue. As an RCN Permanent Force officer and executive officer of the RCN's sole warship in combat operations in the Pacific Theatre, Pullen likely felt that it was his responsibility to encourage the ship's company to volunteer in keeping with government policy. While the evidence is inconclusive as Keate makes no mention of any discussion or direction issued in his memoir, it is possible that Pullen's hand was on the *Tar Paper*'s tiller in addressing the Pacific volunteer policy.

But if Pullen did exert influence on the *Tar Paper*, what was Captain

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<sup>70</sup> Knudson, "Late to the Feast."

<sup>71</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 148.

Mainguy's approach to using the *Tar Paper* to sway the results of the volunteer polling? On 6 May 1945, the *Tar Paper* published Mainguy's address to the ship's company earlier that evening about the Pacific volunteer issue. Explaining his intention of how he planned to address the matter and co-ordinate with NSHQ, he closed his address by reading aloud a message received from Vice-Admiral Sir Bernard Rawlings, second-in-command of the BPF, which had been despatched to all officers and ratings of the Royal Navy:

With the end of the war in the north coming very close, I know that all of us must be wishing that our wives, our families and our friends could feel that we, too, were out of the war. I suggest that the best thing we can do to help them in our letters home is to say that together with many thousands from all over the Empire, we with our Allies are going to finish the job off properly, so that peace, when it comes, shall be world wide and so have a better chance of lasting. The best news of all we can give them is to tell them that we are in good heart.<sup>72</sup>

The next morning there were reports of the *Tar Paper* being ripped off the notice boards and, as expected, Mainguy was annoyed about the situation. Rebroadcasting his speech from the previous night, Mainguy started by stating that the *Tar Papers* had clearly "been taken down by some person who didn't want the others to see the terms (of his proposition) outlined."<sup>73</sup> In finishing the reading of the previous night's speech, however, Mainguy expressed his clearly negative opinion of non-volunteers. As recounted by Lieutenant Ernest Chadwick, a Permanent Force officer of the Executive Branch, the address "was a bad thing. That finished it. And the next morning the Commander's office flat was just flooded with non-volunteers."<sup>74</sup> Another member of the ship's company recorded that the "Skipper made speeches and turned the men against him more than ever. Called us foreflushers and quitters. Those who were in doubt soon made up their minds at a statement like that."<sup>75</sup> These observations are supported by Keate in his unpublished memoir when he recounted the address and Mainguy's remarks, noting that the comments were considered by "most of the officers as a tactical error, whether true or not." When the non-volunteer ballots were counted, there were 605 in total out of a ship's company of 900 personnel.<sup>76</sup> It seems clear that Mainguy's speech had a negative impact on the

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<sup>72</sup> *Tar Paper*, 6 May 1945.

<sup>73</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 105.

<sup>74</sup> Rawling, "Paved with Good Intentions," 30.

<sup>75</sup> Rawling, "Paved with Good Intentions," 30.

<sup>76</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 105.



Commanding Officer Captain  
E.R. Mainguy, OBE aboard  
HMCS *Uganda*, 20 March  
1945. (Credit: Gerald M.  
Moses, Library & Archives  
Canada: M-2091 / 3204162)



number of personnel volunteering for the Pacific Theatre.

In the weeks that passed and in contrast to his public pronouncement about non-volunteers, it appears that Mainguy had begun to develop a different attitude. Following a review of the non-volunteers' service records, Keate recalled a private discussion on 26 May 1945 with Mainguy about his findings, when Mainguy stated:

Looking back on it all, you can't blame them too much. Here are a bunch of kids away from home for the first time. What the Government asked them, in effect, was: "Do you want to stay in the Pacific, or do you want to go home"? Quite naturally, they said they wanted to go home.<sup>77</sup>

Mainguy's expression of sympathy for those sailors who did not volunteer stands in stark contrast to the accepted historiography on his negative stance about those who did not volunteer. Keate's recollection suggests that while Mainguy, as the commanding officer, had to publicly promote and encourage personnel to volunteer for the Pacific Theatre through all means possible, he had, in private, begun to acknowledge the situation unfolding around him and accept the inevitable outcome of the volunteers-only vote.

Writing in his memoir about the response from NSHQ to Captain Mainguy's

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<sup>77</sup> Keate, "Pacific Diary," 118.

proposal for Pacific volunteers, Keate ended by recording that “I’ve decided to volunteer. It just seems the right thing to do.”<sup>78</sup> Albeit inconclusive, this statement suggests that Keate may have made a deliberate editorial decision to use the *Tar Paper* to encourage those aboard to volunteer for the Pacific Theatre without receiving direction from the ship’s senior leadership. While one might question the lack of reporting by the *Tar Paper* on the re-broadcast by Mainguy of his earlier speech and derogatory comments, the next edition of the *Tar Paper* was not published until 8 May 1945 and was focussed heavily on the surrender of Germany and the end of the war in Europe.<sup>79</sup> Not surprisingly, the ill-tempered commentary by Mainguy about non-volunteers was eclipsed by the news. It could also be argued that as editor, Keate would not want to inflame the Pacific volunteer issue while all were in a relatively jubilant mood with the news of Germany’s defeat.

A little more than a month later, on 10 June 1945, the *Tar Paper* reported on answers provided by Mainguy to questions posed during a “round table” discussion with the ship’s company held on the *Uganda*’s forecastle. With HMCS *Ontario* now commissioned, it is evident that Mainguy’s comment about *Ontario*’s volunteer rate was made to encourage more of his crew to volunteer:

Those who did not volunteer for the Pacific may get another chance, but that depends on the authorities in Ottawa, it was estimated that about 50,000 of the Navy would volunteer for service in this theatre. The Captain said he believed 50% of the Ontario men had volunteered (the cruiser Ontario, that is), but that she would have a chance to get a 100% volunteer crew before coming out here, possibly by returning to Halifax before doing her work-ups.<sup>80</sup>

While Mainguy did not likely provide direction to Keate as he regularly spoke directly to the ship’s company, it is clear that between the publication of Mainguy’s broadcasts, the varied editorials, news clips, and round table discussion comments there was a clear intent by the *Tar Paper* to influence the ship’s company and encourage them to volunteer for the Pacific Theatre. Despite the abundance of journalistic license previously demonstrated by the *Tar Paper*, these editorials and articles are clear examples of the concerns raised by Baumgartner about bias and partisanship within a newspaper. The issue of the Pacific volunteer is a clear divergence from the *Tar Paper*’s

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<sup>78</sup> Keate, “Pacific Diary,” 117.

<sup>79</sup> *Tar Paper*, 8 May 1945.

<sup>80</sup> *Tar Paper*, 10 June 1945.

representation of the community aboard.

As stated earlier, the interaction between the *Tar Paper* and the ship's company in regard to the Pacific volunteer issue was vastly different. With the final volunteer polling conducted aboard ship on 2 June 1945, almost two-thirds of the ship's company – officers and ratings – refused to volunteer for service in the Pacific Theatre. Recalling Knudson's comment about how a newspaper informs the reader's perceptions and mindset, it is clear that the efforts made by the *Tar Paper* to encourage personnel to volunteer were unsuccessful as these views were not shared by the majority of the ship's company.<sup>81</sup> Polling revealed this divergence, which demonstrated quite clearly that there were limits upon a ship's newspaper in shaping the opinions of its crew.

## Conclusion

This review of the *Tar Paper* has shown how the sense of community was not only developed aboard ship but, more importantly, nurtured. As an outlet for any issue impacting the crew, the *Tar Paper* enabled the exchange of information and the expression of their thoughts and emotions. Unlike the official reports, logbooks, and personal accounts that have shaped our understanding of *Uganda's* operational experiences, this study has shown how the *Tar Paper* not only contributed to the enhancement and maintenance of the sense of community aboard ship but also how the newspaper represented the ship's company and maintained connections to home.

With valuable insights into the social history of *Uganda*, the *Tar Paper* has provided historians a view into the daily life aboard for the ship's company regardless of rank or position during a war serving alongside British and American naval forces. A view that is unavailable elsewhere in the historical record because as the sole RCN warship to serve in the Pacific Theatre in combat operations, there are no other shipboard newspapers to examine in comparison. Furthermore, with the *Tar Paper* as our witness, the strength of the shipboard community is evident as we have learned of the war's progress as understood by the crew, seen how humour was used to address life's challenges aboard a warship, and have witnessed the power of the shipboard community in how they grieved the loss of their shipmates and confronted government policy. In doing so, we have come to a much more comprehensive understanding of the community aboard *Uganda* and a bond that was forged at sea under trying circumstances which remained strong until the final reunion of its veterans in 2016.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Geneja, *The Cruiser Uganda*, 229.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Mallett, "Veterans Association Holds Last Reunion at CFB Esquimalt," *The Lookout*

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*Newspaper*, 26 September 2016, 7, <https://issuu.com/lookoutnewspaper/docs/2016-09-26-39>. In 1952, HMCS *Uganda* was reactivated and recommissioned as HMCS *Quebec* for employment as a training ship during the Korean War. As a result, the association carried the name of both commissions.