

Michael “Mike” Llewellyn Hadley

6 April 1936–4 March 2026

*Michael Hadley, professor emeritus, University of Victoria, and captain (retired) in the naval reserves, lived life as a great adventure with passion, compassion, and outstanding achievements in his many endeavours. Maritime history was only one of those endeavours, which included command responsibilities in the navy, literature and language studies and teaching, and service to social justice causes. We were fortunate that he was active in the Canadian Nautical Research Society from its beginnings until not long before his passing. Below are memories and reflections that members of the society shared in response to the news of Michael’s passing. The lead item is a biographical note that Ian Yeates was inspired to draw from Michael’s distinguished memoir, *Boxing the Compass*, that appeared in 2024 and won a Keith Matthews Award, the sixth Keith Matthews Award Michael received for his maritime publications.*

*Michael Hadley, professeur émérite à l’Université de Victoria et capitaine (à la retraite) de la Réserve navale, a vécu sa vie comme une grande aventure, avec passion, avec compassion et des réalisations exceptionnelles dans ses nombreux projets. L’histoire maritime n’était qu’un de ces projets, qui comprenaient également des responsabilités de commandement dans la marine, des études et l’enseignement de la littérature et de la langue, ainsi que son dévouement à la justice sociale. Nous avons eu la chance de compter Michael parmi les membres actifs de la Société canadienne pour la recherche nautique depuis ses débuts jusqu’à peu avant le décès de Michael. Vous trouverez ci-dessous les souvenirs et les réflexions que les membres de la société ont partagés à la suite de l’annonce de sa mort. Le premier texte est une notice biographique qu’Ian Yeates a puisée dans les remarquables mémoires de Michael intitulés « *Boxing the Compass* », parus en 2024 et*

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récompensés par le prix Keith Matthews, le sixième prix Keith Matthews que Michael a reçu pour ses publications maritimes.

The Canadian maritime historical community has lost a stalwart exemplar of all that is best in the field with the passing of Michael Hadley on 4 March 2026. The sea and all those that live off it was a very real presence throughout Michael's life starting with his birth, on 6 April 1936, in Campbell River, Vancouver Island, and his first days at Pachena Point where his father was in charge of the lighthouse and wireless facility. The family moved to Vancouver before Michael was two and it is where he grew up and completed his education. An important element in his growth was a lifelong devotion to the Anglican Church that informed his world view and that he applied to



In 2023, Michael Hadley received the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Maritime Achievement. (<https://ltgov.bc.ca/dr-captain-michael-l-hadley/>)

his day-to-day living. A second element was his passion for music, which saw him in his mid teens heading off to Europe in the early 1950s for several months with the Kitsilano Boys Band to play in various towns in England and a wide range of venues on the Continent. As a fifteen-year-old he signed on as a deck hand on a ship that ploughed the waters around Vancouver Island and north, supplying the isolated communities that dotted the coast. This varied upbringing, dominated by the sea and its many moods, marked Michael and informed his life thereafter. His childhood was scarcely common but was filled with varied experiences and opportunities, all of which he seized with gusto.

Michael entered the University of British Columbia in 1954 and graduated with a BA in 1959. While there he enrolled in the University Naval Training Division, becoming a member of the Royal Canadian Navy (Reserve) in Vancouver's HMCS *Discovery*; the benefit was pay for training some evenings and weekends during the academic year and full time during the summers. He married Anita, his wife of 67 years, in 1959 and embarked on a career in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. After a three-year stint in Europe, he returned to Canada in 1964 and commenced a master's programme at the University of Manitoba in German language and literature. He had determined on the life of an academic and foreswore the security and undemanding life in government administration. It was a good time to take such a risk as the universities were in the earliest days of a significant expansion and opportunities abounded. Michael completed his MA and carried on at Queen's University where he graduated with his PhD in 1971. He returned to the University of Winnipeg as a professor in his specialty, now with a growing family of four children. However, the call of the sea saw Michael accept a serendipitous post at the University of Victoria that year, which became his university home for the remainder of his academic life of over 30 years. Throughout the 1960s to 1980s, Michael also remained very active in the Naval Reserve, regularly serving as commanding officer of the gate vessels employed in training reserve officers and sailors. He was also commanding officer of the Victoria Naval Reserve Division, HMCS *Malahat* from 1974–78. He left the reserve a full Captain (N). Michael retired from the university in 2001 and was honoured with the appointment as Professor Emeritus. In 1998 he was made Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, an honour for “distinguished Canadians from all branches of learning who have made remarkable contributions.”

Michael possessed other passions that are not typical of either academics or sailors. He, with university and religious friends and colleagues, founded the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society in 1991. The work of this centre led Michael into the domain of restorative justice, an endeavour recognized, together with his academic achievements, by the Royal Society of Canada

fellowship. His reflections on how the “system” managed those who had taken wrong turns in life led him to the conclusion that there had to be a better way. Restorative justice was an option that he embraced and promoted with vigour. This experience, in turn, led him to more fully embrace the world of Canada’s Indigenous peoples, who are proportionately vastly overrepresented in jails across the country. Restorative justice is one route, Michael believed, that might provide a way out. His work in this field led him to a teaching opportunity in Uganda, initially with International Christian Medical Institute and then with the Ugandan Ministry of Ethics and Integrity. Michael noted the incongruity of his naval training days in the cruiser HMCS *Uganda* (renamed *Quebec*) in the 1950s, with this experience in that country in the 2000s. This led him to developing a training course in ethical decision making that brought together his life experiences in the church, in the university, in the navy, and in life. He believed in “making things right.”

Ian Yeates

Regina, Saskatchewan

I have been thinking a lot about Michael. I think I can best sum him up by saying he was a presence – a kind, gentle and thoughtful, but forceful, presence.

I first met him in the summer of 1972. I was finishing naval reserve officer training and had been posted to a gate vessel for sea time. Michael was the XO. One day when I was the OOD he told me he was going ashore to do things at Naden (we were on the Colwood side), but that there was no need to hoist his absentee indicator. He dwelt a more than standard pause enjoying my very puzzled look. Then he said, “well you know what it is?” I had to confess I did not, wondering what this horrible gap in my knowledge would do to my reliability as an OOD. He said with his smile, “Negat Mike!” and went ashore, leaving me to wonder at this person, and I guess I have been ever since.

The naval reserve was obviously an important part of his life. He was the CO of HMCS *Malahat* and ultimately promoted to captain. I remember shortly after *U-Boats against Canada* came out (a delightful and happy combination of his German lit background – I think he studied at the University of Manitoba – and naval experience) his saying that it was a pleasant new direction for him as there was only so much you could say about the placement of a comma in eighteenth-century poetry.

After I transferred to the regular force, I am not sure when our paths next crossed, despite my sea time on the west coast, but certainly they did when I was appointed to Royal Roads Military College. And of course, Anita taught French there. That was when I became active in CNRS (still fairly new) and we would certainly have met at conferences and the like. In 1989 a number of

us congregated in Canberra for the conference James Goldrick organized about comparative RAN/RCN history. One evening as a group of us Canadians were going for supper, Michael looked around the clean and planned streets, and said, “You know, Canberra could use a bit of sleaze” or maybe it was grit, but the intent was clear.

Another important part of his life was his faith. I have always understood he was a member of Victoria’s Christ Church Cathedral. At one conference, perhaps an RMC Military History Symposium, he was the after-dinner speaker. They had a curious affair as a podium. Michael began by commenting on the nature of the thing and wondered if he was supposed to offer communion from it. But, as with his German, faith had a happy coincidence with his sea experience and the product was *God’s Little Ships: A History of the Columbia Coast Mission*. That obviously was a busy time for him. The book was published in 1995, the same year as *Count Not the Dead* that was given an honourable mention in the Matthews Award. Given the complaints I would receive as editor of the journal for our naval emphasis (you can only publish what is submitted) it is unfortunate that this book did not get a higher profile. My copy is inscribed “with fondest memories of salty sea time and tall tales.”

A book that did get recognition was jointly edited with Anita: *Spindrift: A Canadian Book of the Sea*. It is a wonderful collection that also demonstrates Michael’s breadth.

These are the reminiscences of someone who knew Michael and shared interests but was never a colleague or a collaborator. How much more profound his influence must have been for them.

William Glover
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Mike (who always insisted I, even as very junior historian, call him that) was one of the leading figures in the renaissance of Canadian naval history that started in the 1980s. An innovative and highly productive scholar, he was a generous and ever congenial colleague, not least to me in the formative years of my career. In the words of Marc Milner, another leading Canadian naval history pioneer, “Michael was an exceptional man.... I will always remember him fondly.”

Although Mike joined the naval reserve when he was 18, he came late to naval history. He was already in his early forties and an established professor of German literature when he embarked on an entirely new line of research, U-boat operations during the Second World War. The inspiration came, he relates in his memoirs, in 1978 when he met a Canadian naval veteran

Commander (retired) Craig Campbell, RCNVR who had commanded the Bangor-class minesweeper HMCS *Clayoquot* when she was torpedoed in the near Halifax approaches on Christmas Eve in December 1944. Intrigued that enemy operations had come so close to Canada's shores, Mike began to dig deeper and was able to make contact in Germany with the former Kapitän-zur-See Klaus Hornbostel, the commander of *U-806*, which had torpedoed *Clayoquot*. This was the beginning of Mike's work with German and Canadian veterans and in archives on both side of the Atlantic for his book *U-Boats against Canada: German Submarines in Canadian Waters* (1985).

Mike told me several times that one of the main reasons why he took up naval history with such commitment was the encouragement he received from people in the field. This was, he said, quite unlike the turf protection he had previously encountered in academe. Alec Douglas, a fellow naval officer and director of the Directorate of History at National Defence Headquarters, was particularly helpful. At the time Mike began his work Alec was endeavouring to launch a new official history of Canadian naval operations during the Second World War. It was not an auspicious time to persuade the defence department to undertake a large new project, so Alec gathered support from the wider naval and history communities, and in particular encouraged people working on projects that would contribute to the official history programme. Marc Milner and I were hired for the naval project in early 1980s in positions opened by retirements of other personnel. Marc was a naval specialist (then at work on *North Atlantic Run* (1985)), but I was not. Alec, to help my education, had me assist Mike by locating and copying documents he needed, and mailing them to him in Victoria. The first batch of documents was in fact the inquiry by the staff in Halifax into the loss of *Clayoquot* which I sent to him in June 1981. The naval collections were at that time scattered in the government records management organization and little known, so Mike's requests built up a base of documents and knowledge of the filing systems for our own project. Mike for his part shared materials he gathered in Germany, and of course *U-Boats against Canada* became a major source for the official history and a guide for our further research.

Alec meanwhile asked me to prepare a background study on the pre-1939 history of the navy from its founding in 1910. This would provide material for a contextual first chapter in the Second World War volume the department had authorized and might possibly help open the door for the approval of a pre-1939 volume. I gathered much more than was needed for the official history and, typically, Alec encouraged me in finding publication opportunities that I could pursue on my own time. As it happened, Mike, even as he completed *U-Boats against Canada*, was beginning work on the German navy in the late

nineteenth century through the First World War. During 1984, we developed a plan to combine forces to produce what ultimately appeared in 1991 as our co-authored book *Tin-Pots and Pirate Ships: Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders 1880–1918*. Remarkably, in this time well before e-mail, we produced the book with very few personal meetings and, as I recall, only a few phone calls. Early on we developed a list of chapters which each of us would undertake, and we then traded drafts by mail or when time pressed by fax. It all worked smoothly, even for the chapters in which there were sections on both the Canadian and German story. Much of the credit for the efficient production went to Mike’s administrative gifts, honed by his experience in academe and the navy. He interested McGill-Queen’s University Press, the publisher of *U-Boats against Canada*, in bringing out the new book and made a successful application for a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to cover our costs. Above all he brought his literary flare to the project. I recall that he was astoundingly patient when I, earnestly in pursuit of “just the facts,” crossed out some of his colourful flourishes. But I came to see his gift in turning a narrative about naval policy and operations in Germany and Canada into what was truly a story. The evocative title, of course, was Mike’s.

Roger Sarty
Waterloo, Ontario

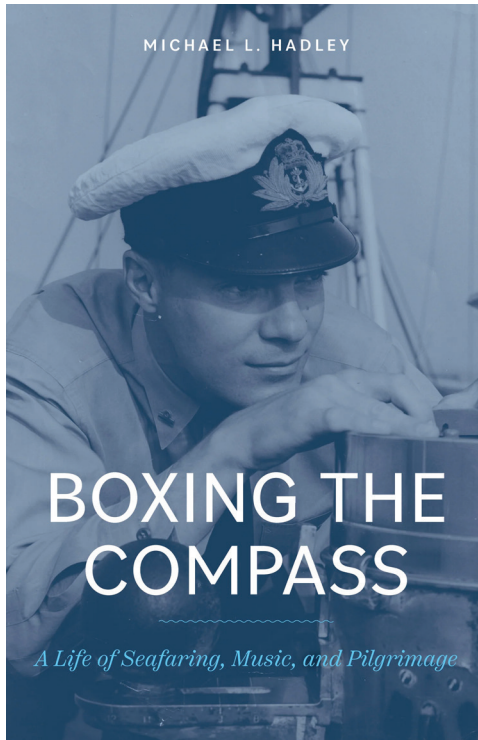
I first met Mike in the course of the “A Nation’s Navy” conference, Halifax 1993, and hit it off immediately – I recall discussing driving “pig boats” (Gate vessels / I was a reg force training officer – ergo the “expert” but I wasn’t even Cert II qualified yet – in *Porte de la Reine* the summer of 1982). When I first became President of the Society, I got a most effusive note of congratulations from him. The Naval Reserve book *Citizen Sailors* fell out of the CNRS conference in Quebec City, 2008, with dual themes of the quadricentenary of the city’s founding (several of those papers ended up in *The Northern Mariner*), and the upcoming centenary of the naval reserve (headquartered there). I sought out the speakers and he edited the proceedings as *The Book*, stitching the papers together as chapters into a seamless flow. All authors reported what a pleasure he had been to work with, and then there was his own marvellous introduction and chapter. He truly had a philosophical way with words.

Richard Gimblett
Port Hope, ON

After spending his early years as the son of the radio operator at Pachena Point on Vancouver Island, Michael Hadley's life was closely associated with the west coast and its waters. Then a professor of Germanic Studies at UVic, he became involved with CNRS in its early years in the eighties. Michael participated in its early conferences just as he was carving out a unique niche as a historian of German naval activity in Canadian waters during the world wars. Subsequently he published book reviews and articles in *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* and helped organize the conferences in Victoria in 2009 and 2021. Michael combined his university teaching and research career with decades of service in the naval reserve, as well as exploring the BC coast with his family in a sailboat. He was a longtime member of the Maritime Museum of BC. Michael was a valued and perceptive participant in discussions because he was always fully engaged and made his points with easy humour. His unique perspectives were based on his background of academic rigour combined with lived nautical experience and learned knowledge.

Jan Drent

Victoria, British Columbia



Michael Hadley's Maritime Publications

"The Impact of Public Policy on a Naval Reserve Division." In *RCN in Retrospect, 1919–1968*, edited by James A. Boutilier. University of British Columbia Press, 1982. 308–16, 362–63.

U-Boats Against Canada: German Submarines in Canadian Waters. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985. Keith Matthews Award for Best Book.

"Inshore ASW in the Second World War: The U-Boat Experience." In *RCN in Transition 1910–1985*, edited by W.A.B. Douglas. University of British Columbia Press, 1988. 126–142, 368–71.

Tin-Pots and Pirate Ships: Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders 1880–1918. With Roger Sarty. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. Keith Matthews Award for Best Book.

"'Ruckwärts schauende Propheten': U-bootgeschichte im dienste der Zukunft." In *Hinter dem schwarzen Vorhang: die Katastrophe und die epische Tradition*, edited by Friedrich Gaede et al. Francke Verlag, 1994. 117–129.

Count Not the Dead: The Popular Image of the German Submarine. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995. Keith Matthews Award Honorable Mention.

God's Little Ships: A History of the Columbia Coast Mission. Harbour Publishing, 1995.

A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity, edited with Rob Huebert and Fred Crickard. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

"The Popular Image of the Canadian Navy." In *A Nation's Navy*. 35–56, 361–63.

"Grand Admiral Dönitz (1891–1980): A Dramatic Key to the Man Behind the Mask". *The Northern Mariner Le marin du nord* 10, no. 2 (2000): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.25071/2561-5467.611>. Keith Matthews Award for Best Article.

"Wartime German Hydrography in Canadian Waters." In *Charting Northern Waters: Essays for the Centenary of the Canadian Hydrographic Service*, edited by William Glover. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004. 165–177, 245–47.

Citizen Sailors: Chronicles of Canada's Naval Reserve 1910-2010, edited with Richard H. Gimblett. Dundurn in co-operation with the Department of National Defence, 2010.

“From ‘Wavy Navy’ to ‘Jolly Green Giants,’ 1945–68.” In *Citizen Sailors*. 75–92.

Spindrift: A Canadian Book of the Sea. With Anita Hadley. Douglas & McIntyre, 2017. Keith Matthews Award for Best Book.

“Maritime Nation or Maritime Narrative: The Humanist Case for Canada.” *The Northern Mariner/ Le marin du nord* 27, no. 4 (2017): 339–53. <https://doi.org/10.25071/2561-5467.206>.

“The Pacific Gateway and West Coast One-Fifty: Nautical Contours of Celebration.” *The Northern Mariner/ Le Marin Du Nord* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2021): iii–x. <https://doi.org/10.25071/2561-5467.911>.

Boxing the Compass: A Life of Seafaring, Music, and Pilgrimage. Heritage, 2024. Keith Matthews Award for Book Deserving Special Recognition.