

The Submariner

The Newsletter of the Submariners Association of Canada (Central)
November, 2015

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Except July, August and December

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HMCS Victoria at Rocky Pt Feb 2015



HMCS Onondaga Halifax cc late 1960's

Editors Corner

This Newsletter is very late and my apologies, but I got it out before Xmas. Maybe the tardiness is because of the unseasonable warm temperature that we have been having. This past week our old SM buddy Jerry Rutherford was in the hospital, he now home recovering. It seems that happens to us more than weddings now. I try to get the newsletter out within a week of the meeting, however that is pretty difficult now with everyone working and we are all scattered all over the place. Also I have to admit, I only check my e-mail at home a couple of times a week I would like to see new members and stories from submariners of the Victoria class. Materiel for the Newsletter is scarcer.

During the AGM in August there was a change to the Bylaws to bring membership in line with the end of the year. Therefore membership now expire on Dec 31.

I will be sending renewal reminders to all electronic receiving submariners in December and for mail receiving submariners expiry notice will be on the bottom right of envelope. Membership for 2016 stands at 120 and 55 for 2017. Mail members the expiry date is on the front of the envelope. Remember dues are still **only \$20.00** per year and you can renew up to 5 years if more convenient.

Members on occasion change their e-mail address. Please inform us if you do in order that we may update our records and data basis use my e-mail below or the associations. Schatz.f@bell.net. The opinion in the Newsletter is that of the Editor and does not reflect the opinion of the Association. Comments and articles are encouraged. Use the Association mailing address for correspondence.

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SAOC Central Presidents Report

President's Report November 2015

The day of our November meeting marked the first snowfall of the season in Ottawa. Prophetic? You be the judge. Since the last newsletter it's been pretty hectic; we've had an election, a pretty major change of government and Remembrance Day. Once again I attended Remembrance Day on behalf of our branch and laid a wreath at the national War memorial. The ceremony was, as always, well attended with veterans getting a lot of applause from the crowd. Unlike previous years, the Prime Minister, Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs were very prominent in the crowd and talked to many people. The Prime Minister and his wife went out of his way to talk to a number of cadets.

The West coast branch has circulated a proposal that "the three branches ought to have a common constitution that contemplates our branch structure but allows for a continuation of our independent operations". The west coast team recommended the Submarines

Association of Australia constitution as a point of reference but not as an absolute model. I will get the secretary to mail email out more information on this initiative.

The Victoria class continue to make progress and Victoria, Windsor and Corner Brook have all seen operational use in the back half of 2015. With SELEX, the submarine life extension project, winding up the future of submarines looks considerably brighter than it did a few years ago. We can only hope that the new government understands the utility of submarines in the defence of Canada. A Minister with actual recent combat experience should provide an interesting future for the CF and the RCN.

My best wishes to all members and their families for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you all in 2016.

Bill Irvine

President SAOC Central

Dolphin 28

THE LAST PATROL OF USS BURRFISH

by
Richard Mendleson

Reprinted from *Submariner* Nov 1997 Vol 2 No 9

Unbeknownst to the officers and crew this would be the last call to arms for the *U.S.S. BURRFISH*. As usual, the United States Navy in its own inimitable way chose to send the ship to the Arctic in the winter and to the tropics in the summer, this way we would always have something to complain about. A submarine sailor is at his best when he has something to gripe about as it keeps the daily boredom to a minimum.

Our captain has his orders. Prepare the ship for special operations as soon as possible. You will proceed north to the Island of Spitzburgen and photograph the area for possible missile sites rumored to be under construction by the USSR. Order sea stores and special cold weather gear for an extended patrol. You will be accompanied by the *U.S.S. REDFIN*. The Division Commander will be aboard the *BURRFISH* as well as a doctor. Special equipment will be brought aboard to record the ships condition and hull strength. This was to be a truly unique experience.

Three pairs of trouser, 4 wool shirts, boots 3 sizes to large and full face masks. This is the special foul weather gear we climbed into at the beginning of the mission and it would be the same clothes we would finally peel off on our return. Cold, you really don't know the true meaning of cold until you stand watch in the periscope sheers facing a winter storm. Mendelson, you are supposed to be facing forward, why aren't you? Sir, I'm looking aft to make sure no one sneaks up on us. Go below and send up another lookout. Yes sir, with pleasure.

Cold, intense fog and constant ship breakdowns kept us from fulfilling our mission. Just south of Iceland our forward head sea flushing connection carried away and we started taking on heavy water in the forward torpedo room, thus our embarrassing entrance to the harbor of Reykjavik at a 15° starboard angle. After a day and a half, we snuck out of the harbour with our tail between our legs. Our secret mission was no longer a secret. I think every man, woman and child in Iceland was standing at the dock laughing at the sight of this mighty submarine tilted to one side. As I looked at the crowd I noticed one thing, they all had their heads tilted to the same angle. A bad omen for the rest of the trip. Just to make the crew feel good the Division commander requested to be taken off this death trap and be transferred to the *REDFIN*. A

high line transfer accomplished this and thanks for the vote of confidence, sir.



USS Burrfish (SS312) New York City date unk.

A change of orders came through and we were now headed for Oslo Norway and Copenhagen Denmark for a well deserved liberty but that's another story. On the way, we had to pass through the Kiel Canal where the Division Commander wanted the *BURRFISH* to tail behind making the *REDFIN* the first American submarine to pass through the canal. I put a curse on the DIVCOM and shortly thereafter the *REDFIN* lost steerage and started to flounder finally bouncing off a bulkhead and stopping sort of a huge piling. As we passed the *REDFIN* we waved and smiled allowing the *U.S.S. BURRFISH* to be the first American Submarine to enter the Baltic sea through the canal. Finally as the coast of Europe passed out of sight we headed southwest for a speed run home.

Not to be outdone by a previous sea valve disaster, I made a terrible mistake of rigging out the bow planes and by not minding my job neglected to let go of the button. All of a sudden, I heard a loud thump and the boat started to shutter. The captain was on the bridge and I can still hear him screaming for all back full. It seems that the bow started to go under water while we were surfaced. The gears to the planes were stripped and there we were bobbing up and down with the bow planes flopping up and down. After several hours and ropes and chains we finally secured the planes in a vertical position allowing us to make some headway back to port. If we could have repaired the gear we still had been restricted to 150' depth. After 42 years I finally admitted to my captain and close friend that I was the culprit. Back to port, no, our new destination, Electric Boat Company in Groton, Connecticut where we went into drydock for a look at the mess.

While sand blasting the hull for a new paint job, I noticed a yard worker measuring the pits in the hull with a micrometer. He was constantly

shaking his head and making notes. Once he caught my glance, he told me to ask for a transfer before it was too late. Meanwhile our skipper was in a division meeting discussing the possibilities of retiring this old lady. I guess his arguments for retirement were taken seriously as the next week we headed for a pier where we were to unload everything in preparation for decommissioning. It takes more paperwork to give something back to the Navy than it does to initially draw it out. I was on the food detail unloading all fresh vegetables, butter etc. On the other side of the pier was the *U.S.S. SEAWOLF*, the 2nd nuclear submarine. Scaffolding still surrounding the sail for her final coat of black paint. One of the workman wanted to know if he could have some of the tomatoes. We looked at each other and before you know it, the sail was covered with tomato paste, butter spattered all over the workman jumping off the scaffolding scrambling for cover. Yes, we did get caught and it cost me a stripe and \$300 worth of paint. The final stages of unloading were underway and I received my transfer orders to New London. My tour on the *BURRFISH* had come to a close and as I took the final walk down the gang plank and saluted the flag I had a tear in my eye. I surely will miss this old boat and the crew. Heading out to the parking lot I stopped to take one last look at my former home and wondered what fate had in store for her. Like most retired boats she would probably be sold for scrap and made into razor blades like her sister ships. Time and punishment had taken its toll on the boat and she suffered dearly. Main engine liners leaked and consumed our much needed fresh water supply, the forward signal ejector constantly filled with sea water and had to be drained whenever used, leaks in the after battery compartment gave the electricians a nightmare, the SV1 and SV2 made it impossible to keep the boat from broaching and with these huge antennas dragging in the water we could walk faster than the boat could travel, sea connections were constantly leaking and the bilge pumps worked overtime to keep up, a heavy thick black cloud of smoke covered the boat every time they started the starboard aft engine, and every once and awhile we would experience a run away engine scaring the hell out of everyone. All in all it was quite a unique submarine and I was glad to be part of her history.

As I stood there I recapped the history of this boat. This gal had a fine history; many war patrols in the Pacific theater where she was credited with 1 sinking and several assists, special operations where

she landed frogmen behind enemy lines, wolf pack operations, life saving operations and picket operations. The *BURRFISH* had been depth charged over 31 consecutive times, strafed, bombed and suffered loss of life. She had served her country well and deserved a decent and honorable ending. With most equipment stripped and only a handful of the crew left she was nothing but a skeleton of her former self. Thus ends the final chapter in the life of the *BURRFISH*.



HMCS Grilse 23 March 1964 Victoria Drydock

Not so, the *BURRFISH* would live again as the *HMCS GRILSE SS-71*. Stripped of all her picket equipment overhauled and revamped into the original SS configuration she would become the beginning of the modern submarine force of the Canadian Navy. A new beginning.

Royal Canadian Navy Submarines: Fleet Status

Overview

The Victoria-class submarine fleet is now operational with three out of four submarines available for operations. *HMCS Windsor*, *Victoria*, and *Chicoutimi* were all at sea in December 2014 and spent a cumulative total of approximately 260 days at sea in 2014. *HMCS Corner Brook* is currently docked at Victoria Shipyards to undergo its Extended Docking Work Period (EDWP) under the Victoria In-service Support Contract with Babcock Canada Inc. It is scheduled to remain in EDWP until 2017. Canadian submarines generally operate in an operational cycle in which each vessel is available to the fleet for six years, referred to as the “operational period”, followed by two years in deep maintenance during an EDWP.

Conventional diesel-electric submarines, like the Victoria Class, because of the stealth capabilities

and increased manoeuvrability inherent in their smaller size as well as their extremely quiet electric propulsion system, have advantages in certain scenarios over their nuclear counterparts, especially in littoral environments and strategic choke points, making them a valuable strategic asset that will remain relevant for years to come for Canada and our international partners.

Status of Individual Submarines

HMCS *Victoria*

HMCS *Victoria* was declared fully operational in 2012. Since that time, *Victoria* has participated in various advanced international exercises such as the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), revealing the modern and unique capabilities of the Victoria-class submarine while providing anti-submarine training for Canadian and international maritime vessels. As part of RIMPAC 2012, HMCS *Victoria* was the first of its class to fire the RCN Mk48 torpedo, sinking the decommissioned United States Naval Ship ex-USNS *Concord*. This clearly demonstrated the lethality of Victoria-class submarines. *Victoria* worked with Special Forces during JOINT Exercise 2013 and other binational continental defence exercises and also participated in operations on behalf of Canada. In September 2014, *Victoria*'s crew received the Operational Service Medal for their successful participation in Operation CARIBBE, a US-led, multinational effort to interdict drug trafficking in the waters of the Caribbean Basin and the Eastern Pacific



HMCS *Victoria* View from the Bridge

HMCS *Windsor*

HMCS *Windsor* participated in Exercises JOINT WARRIOR and TRIDENT JUNCTURE alongside NATO partners during the fall of 2015. These exercises enhanced the combat readiness of all units

involved, improved interoperability and confirmed operational mission preparedness. The participation of Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) assets in exercises such as these enhances the Navy's ability to operate with our NATO Allies and contributes to solutions in an evolving, and challenging, global security environment.



HMCS *Windsor* after refit

HMCS *Windsor* docked in 2014 and received a number of upgrades, including a state-of-the-art bow sonar system that wasn't originally scheduled to go in until 2016. The new sonar system will bring the entire sonar suite of the Victoria Class forward – from 1980s technology into the 21st century – in order to continue to act on behalf of Canada in the face of emerging maritime threats.

HMCS *Chicoutimi*



HMCS *Chicoutimi* 3 Sept 2015

HMCS *Chicoutimi* completed its EDWP and returned to the RCN fleet in December 2014. This was the first EDWP conducted by industry under the Victoria In-service Support Contract. This contract highlights a key strategic knowledge sharing initiative and partnership between the RCN and Canadian industry. The successful completion of *Chicoutimi*'s return to operations was enabled by the skills and talent of Canada's submarine

community and the relationships forged with industry. These partnerships enabled the establishment of new supply chains, and the integrated logistics to sustain these complex weapons systems.

HMCS *Corner Brook*

HMCS *Corner Brook* is docked at Victoria Shipyards Co. Ltd., in Esquimalt, B.C. to undergo its EDWP under the Victoria In-service Support Contract with Babcock Canada Inc. It is scheduled to remain in EDWP until 2017.



HMCS *Corner Brook* entering St Johns Harbour

HMCS *Corner Brook* has participated in various NATO and Canada/U.S. exercises, where it received high praise for its contribution as a simulated enemy in order to assist in the training of NATO and U.S. surface and air forces. *Corner Brook* deployed to the Arctic in support of Operation NANOOK in August 2007 and again in August 2009, where it participated in a counter-narcotics exercise and conducted covert surveillance patrols in the vicinity of Baffin Island. In March 2008 and again in 2011, the submarine also deployed as part of Operation CARIBBE. *Corner Brook* received a CDS commendation in 2008 for her operational excellence.

Corner Brook's crew received the Operational Service Medal for the submarine's successful participation in Operation CARIBBE in 2008 and 2011. These were the first operational medals received for service in Victoria-class submarines.

Submarine escorts for Gibraltar Convoys 1941

ref: Naval History Submarines Vol 17
Reprinted The Submariner Nov 2001 Vol 6 No 9

Even though the 8th Flotilla was only given six submarines in 1941 for the work of escorting the convoys as against the eight allowed to the 2nd

Flotilla for the East-West convoys they did comparatively less convoy work. For one thing the submarines were slower in arriving on their new station and for another they were constantly being diverted to other duties. This was offset to some extent by the fact that a submarine escorting a north bound convoy brought a south bound convoy back, whereas on the east -west service from Halifax submarines only provided general cover on the return journey to Halifax.

The orders for the escort submarines from the 8th Flotilla were to escort a convoy from Gibraltar to the latitude of 50 North where, in company with surface ship from the A/S escort, rendezvous would be made with a south bound convoy for escort to Gibraltar. As both these convoys had A/S escorts the position of the escorting submarine in the convoy was different from that of the East-West escort submarines.

Tuna arrived at Gibraltar on 16 Feb., 1941 from the now abandoned Azores patrol and sailed again on the 20th with convoy H.G. 54. Tuna was bound for U.K. to rejoin the 3rd flotilla and to continue the Biscay patrols. This left Flag Officer north Atlantic with no submarines until 27th Feb, when *Pandora* arrived from the Clyde, followed by *Olympus*, O-23 and O-21.



HMS Tuna

Pandora sailed with H.G. 55 on 3rd March and was therefore the only submarine in the vicinity when *Malaya* sighted *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* midway between the Canary Islands and the Azores on 8th March. *Pandora* left her convoy on 14th March and picked up O.G. 55 escorted it to Gibraltar. *Pandora* was given a chance to see action against U-boats on 29th March but was recalled on 11 April for service in the Mediterranean. *Severn* was also recalled from convoy duty to patrol the

Strait of Gibraltar, with the object of destroying Bismarck and Prinz Eugen, should these two ships attempt to break through to the Mediterranean.

During March Olympus left Gibraltar on the 14th with H.G. 54 transferring to O.G. 56 for the return journey but on arrival at Gibraltar on 2nd April she and Otus were brought to short notice by Admiralty orders.

The French battle-cruiser Dunkerque was reported to be leaving Oran shortly and on 3rd April Olympus and Otus were sailed to take up position to intercept this ship. Subsequently, orders issued by the Admiralty stated the Dunkerque was to be sunk if sighted but that no other French ship was to be attacked except in self defence. Later it was found out that the Dunkerque did not sail and Otus returned to Gibraltar and Olympus went to Malta. On 11th April the Commander-in-chief Mediterranean was informed that his fleet was to be reinforced by two "T" Class, two "U" Class and Pandora. However, the suggestion was that large submarines were not to be based in Malta, so they moved about four "O", "P", and "R"s to Gibraltar.



Dutch Submarine O21

By the end of May 1941, the Dutch "O" Class had commenced patrols in the Mediterranean and on 2nd July the Admiralty approved the following policy; that Severn and Clyde were to be employed on the Atlantic or local patrols as required; the Dutch O21, O23 and O24 were to be used on offensive patrols in the western Mediterranean.

The U534 Story

Courtesy Submariner Vol 9 No 4

U-534 was sitting silently on the Danish seabed a few miles from the castle of Elsinor when it received Admiral Doenitz's order that all German submarines should surrender by 08:00 on May 5 1945.

Alongside U-534 on the seabed were three Type XXI's the brand new boats that had only become operational in the previous month. Ever

since he had become the commander of the new German submarine services in 1936, Doenitz had dreamed of developing a long-range submarine that could travel almost as fast under the water as it could on the surface. The development of the Type XXI was a giant step in that direction, but it had come too late.

The decision on whether or not to obey Admiral Doenitz's surrender order rested with the Captain of U-534. He was only twenty-six but had been in command of U-534 since she was first commissioned two days before Christmas 1942. So the four German submarines headed north towards Norway without flying the surrender flag.

The four U-boats had powerful anti-aircraft armament. U-534 had one 37mm Bofor gun as well as twin 20mm guns. The other three U-boats submerged leaving U-534 alone on the surface. The first of six depth charges, dropped from a Liberator, seemed to miss, although an air gunner reported that a depth charge had got caught on the deck just behind the conning tower. There was no mistake on the second low-level attack, the depth charges were set to 10 feet. The explosion cracked but did not smash the hull. Seawater flooded in. U-534 was mortally wounded. Fortunately, she sank so slowly that 47 of the 52-crew members were able to jump overboard. Five more were trapped in the forward torpedo room. It seemed certain that these five men were doomed. But the senior submariner in the group, managed to find the survival equipment in the dark and to open the torpedo loading hatch when the internal pressure was equalized. Four of the five men survived the ascent to the surface.

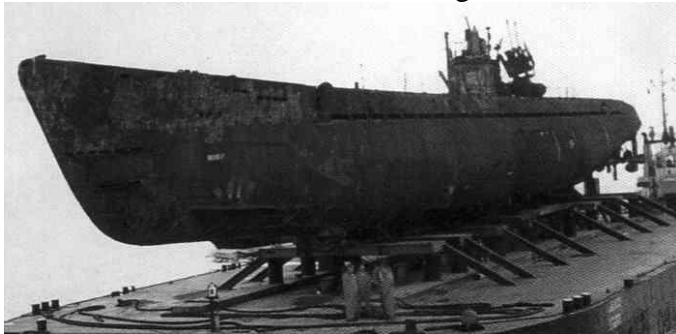
Although the crew of U-534 were young, their 26-year-old captain was the oldest man onboard – the submarine itself was one of the oldest in the German Navy. Most of the U-boats that took part in the Battle of the Atlantic were Type VII's, which were noted for their toughness and reliability. U-534 was a type IXC/40. She was somewhat less maneuverable than the type VII's and had longer range – 16,800 nautical miles at a speed of 10 knots.

The first fourteen months of her life U-534 had a comparatively safe existence as a weapons testing and training boat based at Stettin in the Baltic. Her operational life began on May 8, 1944 when she left the Norwegian port of Bergen for a weather-reporting mission south of Greenland. Weather reporting patrols were clearly safer than attacks on Allied shipping but life onboard was just

as uncomfortable as it was on a Type VII. There was a dreadful lack of space.

In the early days of the War the squalor and discomfort of life on board a U-boat had been at least partly balanced by the gala celebrations at the end of a successful cruises. There were no celebrations, however, when U-534 entered Bordeaux on August 13, 1944. The success of the Allied invasion meant that the sort of weather reports provided by U-534 were no longer of much importance, while it was clear that the German U-boat bases in France would soon be captured.

For a few days after her return to Bordeaux there was some thought of scrapping U-534 but in June, July and August 1944 no less than eighty-four U-boats had been sunk and it was decided to equip U-534 with a snorkel. The snorkel fitting in Bordeaux was not done well. When the first test of the new equipment was carried out the submarine began to fill with gas. U-534 was forced to surface and was quickly spotted by a Wellington bomber. In the summer of 1944 British and American aircraft had taken a huge toll of German submarines, but this time the anti-aircraft gunners of U-534 won the duel and the Wellington crashed.



U-534 being transported to Birkenhead 29 May 1996

After a brief stop at Kristiansand U-534 returned to the dockyard at Stettin where she had spent so much of her early life. As the Russian Army approached U-534 moved to the main German Naval dockyard at Kiel. For seven months, from October 1944 to May 1945 first in Stettin and then in Kiel U-534 was protected and refitted, at least as well as any German submarine. On May 3, 1945 she was the last boat to leave Germany.



Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year

SUBMARINERS ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
CENTRAL BRANCH

Minutes of the Meeting

Held: 24 November 2015 at Grace O'Malley's Pub, Ottawa

1. Opening Remarks:

The President, Bill Irvine, called the meeting to order at 1240 and welcomed all members to the meeting.

The following members were present:

Tony Palmer	Bill Irvine	Dave Mossman	Rob Quaia	Tim Kramble
Tony Fee	Terry Wyss	Peter Heppleston	Bob Bush	Butch Thompson
Jim Pfaff	Jake Allen	Stuart Glen	Dent Harrison	Jerry Rutherford
Ted Stiles	Tom Reid			

2. **Previous Minutes:** Previous minutes from the September 2015 monthly meeting, were passed out for review and no comments provided. No further business arose from the minutes. Bill Irvine motioned that they be accepted as is. 2nded by Stu Glen and Tony Fee. Adopted

3. Reports:

- a. Correspondence: Nil.
- b. Membership: Nil.
- c. Treasurer and Slops Report:

NET WORTH STATEMENT	
Opening balance	\$16,753.17
+ Credits	\$2526.05
- Debts	\$4,300.75
+ Slops inventory + Cash	\$3,388.43
- Liabilities	\$4,970.00
Net Worth	\$13,396.90

Changes: Only Change from the September report is for a Remembrance Day wreath for \$113.00.

- d. Entertainment Report: Nil.
- f. NCVA/Service Report: Nil.
- g. Sick and Visiting Report: A reminder to members as notice of sick members comes to their attention, please provide the secretary with details and the info will be passed to the membership.

Old Business

- a. The New Mess at HMCS Carleton was visited by Gord Burns 15th Oct 2015. This visit was for two purposes; 1. To see if they would display our SAOC artifacts; Their response is that they require SAOC to donate them permanently, surrendering all rights to the items. 2. To check out the mess for suitability for meetings; The mess has no kitchen and therefore cannot provide meals during the meetings which would rule out use of the mess for lunch time activities.
- b. Based on item a.(1.) above. Gord intends to check with the Onondaga Museum / Nepean museum and possibly a few other locations for displaying SAOC Artifacts.

- c. Based on item a.(2.) above; it was motioned to continue having the monthly lunch time meetings at Grace O'Malleys Pub on Ogilvie, Ottawa ON. Motioned by Pete and Stu; motion carried.
- d. <retained for note:>The 2016 AGM is slated to be held in Ottawa, ON, 19-21 August 2016. It was noted that some members are interested in having one at the Point Au Pere Museum in Rimouski Quebec. This will be considered and discussed with members when planning next year's AGM. Note: Onondaga's 50th anniversary will be June 22, 2017.

New Business

- a. Bill tabled that the January meeting of the SAOC is to review venue locations for the 2016 AGM.
- b. Feedback from the SAOC West, Mr. Paul Cumberland suggested comments on the SAOC BYLAWS, Bill will provide details in his annual presidents report. He will send by email for discussion at Jan 2016 Meeting. In general suggestions were made based on the Australian Submariners Association BYLAWS.
- c. Stu Glen tabled that 2 of our members from the east coast division have committed suicide in the last few months. He wants to discuss in conjunction with the east and west coast SAOC's to develop a suicide awareness / prevention / call in line for submariners.
- d. Based new business item c.; A motion was tabled by Bill to look into suicide prevention and 2ndly A motion was tabled by Bill to reach out to the east and west coast SAOC Chapters for support and to discuss; Both motions seconded by Pete and Stu and were both carried.

Any Other Business

Nil.

Roundtable

- a. A question was tabled to see if the pictures of the last AGM that were taken by the museums drone can be made available to the SAOC Members. Bill responded that he will look into it.
- b. A request was submitted to the SAOC to see if anyone has pictures of the 1968 arrival of HMCS Onondaga in Halifax NS or of her prior arrival in Shelburne NS in Oct 1967. Tom Reid will send out a general email to see if anyone in the membership has anything.

Next Meeting: The next SAOC Central meeting will be held Grace O'Malley's Ottawa, ON, 19 January 2016. The SAOC team is looking forward to all attending once again to meet as comrades in the submarine service.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Bill Irvine and seconded by Bob Bush and Peter Heppleston. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 13:30

Bill Irvine
President

Tom Reid
Secretary

: