



RUSI(NS) Welcomes HMCS *William Hall*  
by Colin Darlington

The government of Canada has announced the name of the fourth of the Royal Canadian Navy's Harry DeWolf-class Arctic/Offshore Patrol Ships being built under the AOPS Project. William Neilson Edward Hall of Horton's Bluff, Nova Scotia, has been honoured. Hall was the first Nova Scotian, the first person of African descent, and the third Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross, the United Kingdom's highest award. The medal is for "most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy." Hall was awarded the VC for his gallant conduct as a seaman of the Royal Navy in handling an artillery gun despite intense enemy fire in relief of the British garrison under siege at Lucknow, India, on 16 November 1857, during the Indian Rebellion. The award was announced in the London Gazette on 1 February 1859. The medal itself is now held at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax. Another display, with a replica of the medal, is at the Naval Museum of Halifax.

The government thus continues to honour "prominent Canadians who served with the highest distinction and conspicuous gallantry in the service of their country." Though some may note that Hall's action and award pre-date Canada's Confederation, considering the flow of history it is wholly appropriate that his name be chosen for a Canadian warship. RUSI(NS) Paper "Naming Ships" discusses naming of the patrol ships, and RUSI(NS) Note "Warship Orthography" provides information about writing ships' names.



photo credit: Colin Chase, Hantsport

A cairn was erected in Hall's honour in 1956 by the Hantsport branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. Hantsport is near where Hall was born, and its school has another replica of Hall's medal. The cairn includes a replica of his Victoria Cross and a plaque describing his actions. Though the Legion has subsequently disbanded, the cairn remains. It could well become a more popular attraction, especially if the provincial or federal government assumes care of the monument from Hantsport. Parks Canada has recently added informative displays at the cairn's site.

As is the case with the other patrol ships, it will be interesting to see what the government comes up with as a ship's badge for HMCS *William Hall*. A ship's badge usually contains one or more symbols closely or somewhat related to the ship's name. Examples are a wavy river symbol for ships named after rivers, and a southern cross and penguin in the badge of HMCS *Terra Nova*. Designing badges with ships named after people could be a little more challenging. What aspects of the history of William Hall will be drawn upon to design the badge for HMCS *William Hall*? Ultimately, the badge will be designed according to rules of heraldry and recommended by the Chief Herald of Canada, with thereafter a warrant signed by the Herald Chancellor (the Secretary to the Governor General) "authorizing a grant of armorial bearings."

With the announcement of the ship's name, the people of Hantsport and throughout Nova Scotia can take renewed pride in the achievement of one of their sons. Previously with ships named after cities and towns of Canada there were inherent linkages between those locations and their namesake ships. That is not so easy when ships are named after individuals. It can be envisioned and hoped that the ship's company of *William Hall* will form a relationship with Hantsport (which, as of 1 July 2015, will amalgamate into the District of the Municipality of West Hants). Certainly the ship's company and the Royal Canadian Navy will continue to do all they can towards a bond between the Canadian people and their Navy.

Some web sites with more information:

Veterans Affairs Canada "Able-Seaman William Neilson Edward Hall":

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/medals-decorations/orders-decorations/canadian-victoria-cross-recipients/william-hall>

Black History Canada "William Hall" (many good links on Hall):

<http://www.blackhistorycanada.ca/profiles.php?themeid=20&id=6>

Maritime Museum of the Atlantic "William Hall, VC":

<https://maritimemuseum.novascotia.ca/collections/william-hall-vc>

Naval Museum of Halifax (site outdated): <https://maritimemuseum.novascotia.ca/collections/william-hall-vc>

RUSI(NS) "Naming Ships": [http://rusi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Naming\\_Ships\\_21.pdf](http://rusi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Naming_Ships_21.pdf)

RUSI(NS) "Warship Orthography": [http://rusi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Warship\\_Orthography.pdf](http://rusi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Warship_Orthography.pdf)

Canada Post "William Hall V.C.":

[https://www.canadapost.ca/cpo/mc/personal/collecting/stamps/2010/2010\\_William\\_Hall.jsf](https://www.canadapost.ca/cpo/mc/personal/collecting/stamps/2010/2010_William_Hall.jsf)

'We Will Remember' - Canadian War Monuments on the World Wide Web:

<https://www.cdli.ca/monuments/ns/hantsport2.htm>

The Governor General of Canada "Canadian Heraldic Authority":

<https://www.gg.ca/document.aspx?id=81>

The Hants Journal "Hantsport legion closing up shop": <http://www.hantsjournal.ca/News/2011-04-26/article-2456736/Hantsport-legion-closing-up-shop/1>

A copy of the London Gazette page announcing Hall's award can be seen in an image of a picture framed for Hall's descendants by Haverstock Creative Designs at

[http://www.photogallerydescriptions.haverstockcreatedesigns.com/military\\_gallery1\\_example3.html](http://www.photogallerydescriptions.haverstockcreatedesigns.com/military_gallery1_example3.html)

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