

## RETIRING A BORROWED HERALDIC DEVICE

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In the naval history of Canada there have been two commissioned ships that have been named His Majesty's Canadian Ship COMOX (HMCS COMOX). The first ship was a Fundy-class ship that served in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) from 1938 to 1945. While she has a unique pennant number of J64, like other RCN vessels she did not enjoy having an official ship's badge. It wasn't until after the Second World War that the modern system of ship badges in the RCN was developed, and the driving force to establish modern RCN ship badges was Lieutenant-Commander Alan Beddoe, O.B.E., R.C.N.R. who later became the Founding President (1966-1967) of the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada (RHSC).



HMCS COMOX (2)

By the time the second naval vessel called HMCS COMOX was launched in 1952 the system of ship badges was established in the RCN. COMOX (2) was a Bay-class minesweeper, pennant number 146, and served on the west coast of Canada until being transferred to the Turkish navy in 1958 and renamed TIREBOLU. While I do not have a date of when the Sealed Pattern of the official RCN ship's badge of HMCS COMOX (2) was signed, she did enjoy having an official ship's badge, as shown above①.



HMCS DISCOVERY

The design of the ship's badge of COMOX (2) is a heraldic oddity being a rebus or canting; an allusional device or visual pun of a combination of objects whose names can be used to form a name or phrase. For COMOX (2) the pun is a cock's comb over an ox head alluding to COMOX. Not quite as obvious as the ship's badge for, say, HMCS DISCOVERY where the pun is a disc over the letter "Y"②.

No RCN vessel has been named COMOX since COMOX (2) was paid off in 1957 prior to her disposal to the Turkish navy. And her ship's badge would have remained unused until, possibly, another vessel would ever be commissioned as COMOX (3).

In the late 1970's and early 1980's the Navy League of Canada, the civilian sponsor of the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps (RCSCC), began to develop the artwork for the 200-plus sea cadet units across Canada. The RCSCC, named as such from 1942, is a youth organization that dates back to 1895 with the formation of the Boy's Naval Brigade. While the various units in the RCSCC have individual unit names, none enjoyed an official ship's badge until the late 1970's and early 1980's.

The formal Sealed Pattern for the various RCSCC units is issued by the Navy League of Canada. While the units of the RCSCC are staffed by officers of the Canadian Forces Cadet Instructor

Cadre, the units are not commissioned like Naval Reserve Divisions; HMCS DISCOVERY in Vancouver BC for example. And the members of the RCSCC are young men and women 12 to 18 years of age and are not members of the Canadian Armed Forces. The approval of the RCSCC unit badges lies with the civil sponsor, the Navy League of Canada rather than with the military sponsor of the RCSCC, the Canadian Forces.

In 1982 a Sealed Pattern was issued by the Navy League of Canada for Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps PORT AUGUSTA, the sea cadet unit located at Goose Spit, Comox BC. The current RCSCC PORT AUGUSTA dates from 1964 although there had been earlier units of the same name in Comox BC back to the Second World War (1939-1945). The ship's badge approved in 1982 was the badge of HMCS COMOX (2) simply re-named PORT AUGUSTA<sup>3</sup>. The "new" badge was used for a variety of items from trophies, kisby rings and it was also engraved on a cutlass for use by the PORT AUGUSTA Guard Commander during formal parades. With the evolution of the sea cadet uniform from the "square rig" to a military style tunic, the various RCSCC units also wear a ship's badge on their tunic to compliment the unit name worn on the seaman's cap tally. And the badge worn by PORT AUGUSTA sea cadets caused some confusion as no one really understood what it meant.



Original Sealed Pattern of RCSCC PORT AUGUSTA

In the case of PORT AUGUSTA, the ship's badge, a pun of the name COMOX, didn't fit with the name PORT AUGUSTA. In May 2014 I was appointed as the Commanding Officer of RCSCC PORT AUGUSTA. I had previously been the Executive Officer of PORT AUGUSTA in 2003 – 2004 and, as a student of heraldry, I was curious about the history of the unusual ship's badge. As the new CO and being a member of the RHSC I thought I could correct the anomaly and create a badge more fitting to the unit's name.



RCSCC PORT AUGUSTA  
New Ship's badge from  
8 September 2014

In August 2014 I submitted to the Navy League of Canada the proposal and artwork for a new ship's badge<sup>4</sup>. I had earlier sent the badge idea to Dr. Kevin Greaves, C.D., M.D., F.R.H.S.C., the RHSC Past President and current Chair of the Education Committee. And Kevin had been the National Sea Cadet Chairman of the Navy League of Canada when the RCSCC badges were first considered and developed. Besides the artwork I also submitted the blazon to Kevin as part of my heraldry education development. Both the artwork and the blazon "passed" Kevin's review. The Navy League of Canada approved the proposal and ship's badge design and issued a Sealed Pattern on 8 September 2014<sup>5</sup>.

On 4 November 2014 the new PORT AUGUSTA ship's badge was unveiled, and the old badge retired. The occasion for the unveiling was special Ceremonial Divisions held at the Comox Centre Mall and was well attended by cadets, parents and friends, the Mayor of the Town of

Comox, members of Branch 160 Comox of the Royal Canadian Legion and members of the Royal Canadian Naval Association. The Comox Legion also presented to PORT AUGUSTA a new naval cutlass with the new ship's badge etched onto the blade. Each PORT AUGUSTA sea cadet was issued a new badge to wear on their uniform.

BLAZON: Per fess wavy Sable and barry wavy of six Argent and Azure; a chief dancetty Argent, and over all a topsail schooner rigged and flagged proper.

SIGNIFICANCE: The mountains are the Beaufort Mountain range (named after Rear Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort K.C.B., F.R.S., F.R.G.S., R.N., Chief Hydrographer of the Royal Navy) that overlook the Comox Harbour and is the background for the Comox Valley, the home of the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox and Village of Cumberland. The water represents the Comox Harbour, originally named Port Augusta. Port Augusta was named by Captain (later Vice Admiral Sir) George Richards (K.C.B.) R.N., for Augusta Baynes, the young daughter of Rear Admiral Sir Robert Baynes K.C.B., R.N., the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Station 1857-1860.

The sailing vessel, a topsail schooner, is from the badge of the Town of Comox and represents the naval and maritime history and activity on the Comox Harbour (Port Augusta) and the association of the Town of Comox and 189 RCSCC PORT AUGUSTA.

After 32 years of using a borrowed heraldic device, RCSCC PORT AUGUSTA now has her own ship's badge that depicts her name.

#### References:

- ① Image from [www.readyayeready.com](http://www.readyayeready.com);
- ② Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, Official Lineages, Volume 2: Ships; Part 1: Extant Commissioned Ships;
- ③ RHSC Ship Badge Project; personal collection of RCSCC Sealed Patterns from the Navy League of Canada;
- ④ Letter 4470-1000-1-1404 (CO 189 RCSCC) from Commanding Officer 189 RCSCC PORT AUGUSTA to President, Comox Valley Branch – Navy League of Canada dated 24 August 2014;
- ⑤ E-mail 9 September 2014 from National Office, Navy League of Canada with attached copy of Sealed Pattern created 8 September 2014.