

THE
BRITISH
COLUMBIA
HISTORICAL
QUARTERLY



APRIL, 1944

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BRITISH COLUMBIA
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

*"Any country worthy of a future
should be interested in its past."*

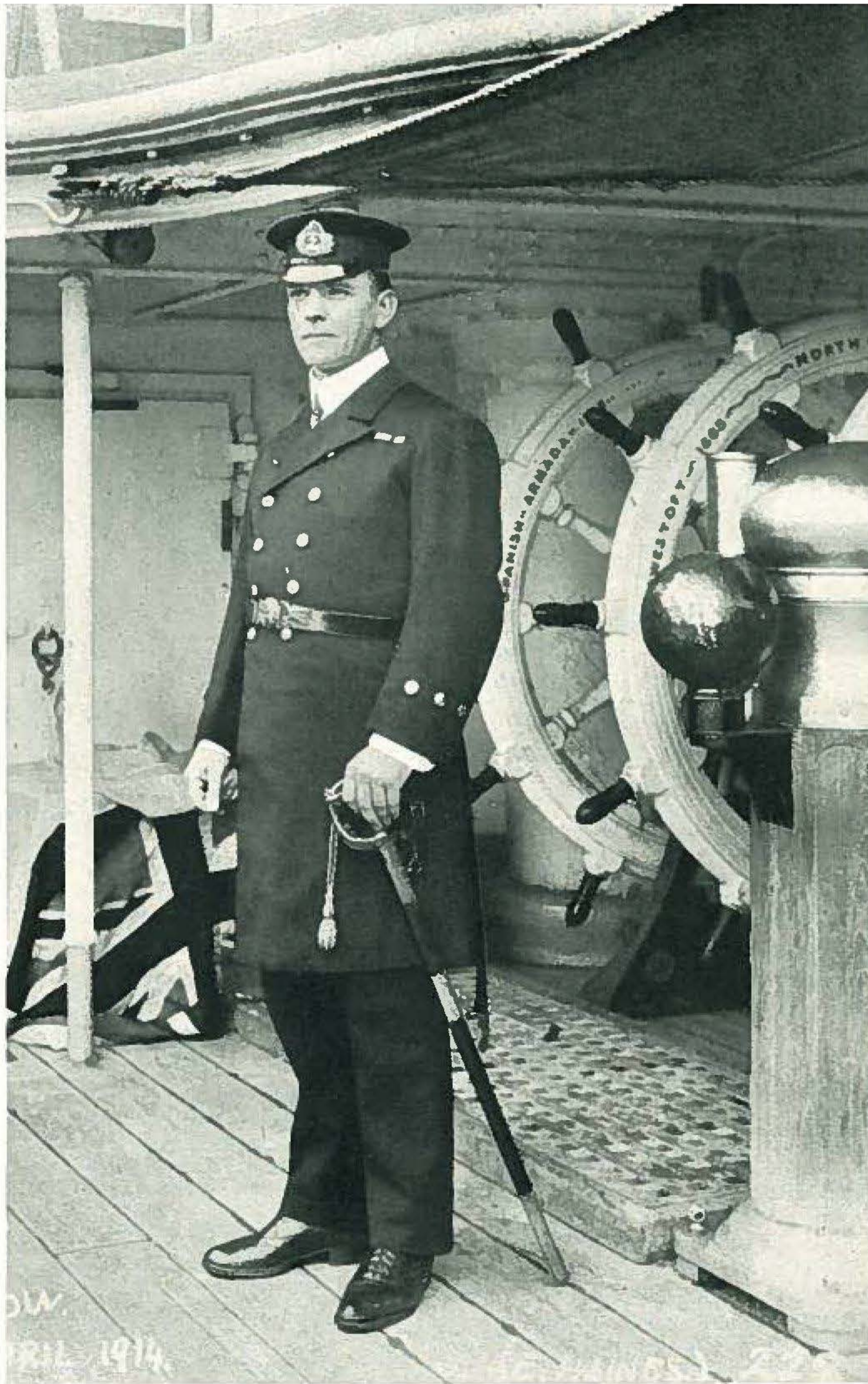
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Hand steering-wheels of H.M.C.S. *Rainbow*. The officer is Gunner E. Haines, R.C.N. (now Lieutenant-Commander E. Haines, M.B.E.).

From a photograph taken by Major F. V. Longstaff in the spring of 1914.

THE EIGHT "RAINBOWS."*

In the article on *The Career of H.M.C.S. "Rainbow"* which he contributed last year to this *Quarterly*, Dr. Gilbert N. Tucker noted that on the *Rainbow's* hand steering-wheels were inscribed the names and dates of actions in which earlier *Rainbows* had taken part: "Spanish Armada 1588—Cadiz 1596—Brest 1599—Lowestoft 1665—North Foreland 1666—Lagos Bay 1759—Frigate *Hancock* 1777—Frigate *Hebe* 1782." It seems worth while to pursue this interesting topic a little further, and present a few notes on the eight *Rainbows* that, over a period of almost four centuries, have served in the Royal Navy.

As the inscription on the steering-wheels indicate, the name *Rainbow* goes back to the time of Queen Elizabeth and Sir Francis Drake. In those days ship-names were chosen to express ideas and to inspire the people to great deeds. It was Queen Elizabeth's way to give her ships "telling" names. It has been said that the choice of energetic names for the ships of the Royal Navy was one of the means employed by the heroic Elizabeth to infuse something of her own dauntless spirit into the hearts of her subjects, and to show Europe at large how little she dreaded the mightiest armaments of her enemies. As a rule, in the case of her bigger ships, the Queen chose names that, in addition, carried an underlying meaning, or bore direct allusion to some national event of the hour. Contemporary names include *Revenge*, *Repulse* (originally *Dieu Repulse*), *Defiance*, *Warspite*, *Swiftsure* (originally *Swift-Suer*, or *Swift-Pursuer*), and *Dreadnought*.

The first *Rainbow*, a galleon of 480 tons, 54 guns, was built at Deptford in 1586. She formed part of the fleet under Drake in 1587, when he "singed the King of Spain's beard" at Cadiz. In the Armada fight the following year she bore a distinguished part. The *Rainbow* also took part in the expedition against Cadiz in 1596. She was rebuilt in 1608, emerging as a 40-gun ship of 650 tons. In the Algiers expedition of 1621 she carried

* Compiled from William G. Gates, *Ships of the British Navy*, Portsmouth, 1905; and Cecil King, *H.M.S. His Majesty's Ships and their Forbears*, London, 1940.

the flag of Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Button, and in the Cadiz expedition of 1625 (her third foray against that port), the flag of Lord Cromwell. She also took part in the expedition to La Rochelle, in 1627.

In the battle with the Dutch fleet in August, 1652, the original *Rainbow* served as flagship of Sir George Ayscue. She was also in the battle off the Kentish Knock, September 28. In the great fight off Portland on February 18, 1653, she bore the flag of Vice-Admiral James Peacock. Her losses on the latter occasion were fifteen killed and thirty-one wounded. She took part in the action off the coast of Essex on June 3, and shared in the decisive defeat of the Dutch on July 31, 1653. In both these engagements she carried the flag of Rear-Admiral William Goodsonn.

The *Rainbow* next fought in the battle off Lowestoft in 1665. In 1666 she took part in the three days' fight off the North Foreland, and in the famous St. James's Day fight off the Galloper Sand, her casualties in the latter being eighteen killed and forty wounded. In the third Dutch war she fought at Solebay, in 1672, and in the three drawn battles of the following year. She had then been in active service for eighty-seven years, and was sold in 1680.

The second *Rainbow*, a ship of 32 guns, was captured, possibly from the French, in 1697, and was also sold, in 1698.

The third *Rainbow*, of 40 guns, was built in 1747 and was present at the fight of Lagos Bay in 1759. On September 4, 1782, she captured the French 40-gun frigate *Hebe*, off the Isle of Bas (Batz). She was sold out of the service in 1802.

On January 2, 1809, the French corvette *Iris* was captured off Texel by H.M.S. *Aimable*, and added to the Royal Navy as the *Rainbow*. On February 13, 1810, this *Rainbow* made a daring attack on the French 50-gun ship *Nereide*. She continued the fight until she was dismasted and then the *Nereide* made off. This fourth *Rainbow* was sold out of the service in 1815.

The next *Rainbow*, a 28-gun frigate, was launched in 1823. She continued in service until 1838 when she, too, was sold.

The sixth *Rainbow*—and the first driven by steam—was a screw gunboat of 235 tons, 60 horse-power, mounting two guns, built in 1856 for the Russian war in the Baltic. She served as

tender to the *Ajax* at Kingston in 1863, to the *Wivern* at Hull in 1870; was laid up at Chatham in 1873, and eventually sold out of service in 1888.

This brings us to the seventh ship of the name, the *Rainbow* that was eventually acquired by the Royal Canadian Navy.

So-called "Navy scares," caused by fear of foreign attack, or uneasiness about the strength of the Royal Navy, or both, exercised an important influence on construction programmes in the last half of the nineteenth century. One of these scares, developing in 1888, resulted in the "Naval Defence Act" of 1889. This Act provided for the addition of no less than seventy ships to the Navy, of which ten were to be battleships and thirty-eight were to be cruisers. Of the cruisers, twenty-one were vessels of the *Apollo* class. This class in turn was designed in two groups, the later vessels being slightly larger than the earlier ones. It was to this improved *Apollo* class that the *Rainbow* belonged. For purposes of record it may be interesting to list her nine sister-ships: *Aeolus*, *Brilliant*, *Indefatigable*, *Intrepid*, *Iphigenia*, *Retribution*, *Pique*, *Sirius*, and *Spartan*.

The *Rainbow* and her sisters were designed by Sir William White. She was a second-class cruiser with a length of 360 feet and a displacement of 3,600 tons. She had twin screws, driven by reciprocating engines designed to develop 9,000 horse-power and to drive her at a speed of 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ knots. Her main armament consisted of two 6-inch and six 4.7-inch guns. Her crew numbered 273. She was built by Palmer's Shipbuilding Company, at Jarrow, and launched on March 25, 1891. Her total cost was £184,086.

The *Rainbow* was completed in time to participate in the naval manœuvres of 1893, and she again took part in the manœuvres in 1894. She became a Devonport ship, and on May 5, 1895, was commissioned for the China Station by Captain William C. C. Forsyth. In May, 1898, she had returned home to Devonport. Her next commission was on December 17, 1901, to the Cruiser Squadron, by Captain Thomas Y. Grant. In 1904 she was again back at Devonport.

The *Rainbow* belonged to a type of "protected" cruiser about which there was much controversy. The term designated a cruiser which, though lacking in side armour, had a horizontal

armoured deck with sloping sides in the vicinity of the water-line. Coal was usually carried on these sides in small compartments, and the combination of deck, coal, and subdivision was intended to protect the vessel's vitals. Whether or not it would do so in action was hotly debated, and in addition there were many who contended that the *Apollo*s were too small and too slow to be of much service if war broke out.

Some of the most slashing criticisms of Sir William White's cruiser designs had come from Admiral Sir John Fisher (later Lord Fisher of Kilverstone). On Trafalgar Day, 1904, Fisher became First Sea Lord of the Admiralty. One of his first actions was to strike off the effective list no less than 154 ships. Ten of the *Apollo* class cruisers were included, amongst them being the *Rainbow*. True, they were not to be scrapped immediately, but they were listed as "Ships of comparatively small fighting value," which would retain their armaments for the present, and it was obvious that their days were numbered. From 1906 until 1909 the *Rainbow* was on the sale list. In July, 1910, she is shown in the *Navy List* as refitting at Portsmouth, preparatory for sale to the Canadian Government. The officers appointed to her were shown on the books of H.M.S. *Victory*.

From that point her story has been told by Dr. Tucker.

The latest *Rainbow* to join the Royal Navy was a craft of a very different type—a submarine, launched at Chatham Dockyard in May, 1930. Her displacement was 1,475 on the surface and 2,015 tons submerged. Her sister-ships were the *Regent*, *Regulus*, and *Rover*. Unfortunately this *Rainbow* was posted as missing in November, 1940, and no further word of her has been released officially.

When the war is over perhaps we shall hear something of her gallant story.

F. V. LONGSTAFF.

VICTORIA, B.C.