

HMCS *Agassiz*

HMCS *Agassiz* was a Flower-class corvette of the Royal Canadian Navy. She served primarily in the Battle of the Atlantic as an ocean escort for convoys during the Second World War. She was named after the community of Agassiz, British Columbia.

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Background

Flower-class corvettes like *Agassiz* serving with the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War were different from earlier and more traditional sail-driven corvettes.^{[4][5][6]} The "corvette" designation was created by the French as a class of small warships; the Royal Navy borrowed the term for a period but discontinued its use in 1877.^[7] During the hurried preparations for war in the late 1930s, Winston Churchill reactivated the corvette class, needing a name for smaller ships used in an escort capacity, in this case based on a whaling ship design.^[8] The generic name "flower" was used to designate the class of these ships, which – in the Royal Navy – were named after flowering plants.^[9]

Corvettes commissioned by the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War were named after communities for the most part, to better represent the people who took part in building them. This idea was put forth by Admiral Percy W. Nelles. Sponsors were commonly associated with the community for which the ship was named. Royal Navy corvettes were designed as open sea escorts, while Canadian corvettes were developed for coastal auxiliary roles which was exemplified by their minesweeping gear. Eventually the Canadian corvettes would be modified to allow them to perform better on the open seas.^[10]

Construction

Agassiz was ordered on 14 February 1940 as part of the 1939–1940 Flower class building program. She was laid down on 29 April 1940 by Burrard Dry Dock Co. Ltd. in North Vancouver,



HMCS *Agassiz*, taken sometime in 1944 or 1945.

History



Canada

Name:	<i>Agassiz</i>
Namesake:	<u>Agassiz, British Columbia</u>
Operator:	<u>Royal Canadian Navy</u>
Ordered:	14 February 1940
Builder:	<u>Burrard Dry Dock Co. Ltd., North Vancouver</u>
Laid down:	29 April 1940
Launched:	15 August 1940
Commissioned:	23 January 1941
Decommissioned:	14 June 1945
Identification:	<u>Pennant number</u> : K129
Honours and awards:	Atlantic 1941–45; ^[1] Gulf of St. Lawrence 1944 ^[2]
Fate:	sold in 1945 for scrapping.

General characteristics

Class and type:	<u>Flower-class corvette</u> (original) ^[3]
Displacement:	925 <u>long tons</u> (940 t; 1,036 short tons)
Length:	205 ft (62.48 m) <u>o/a</u>
Beam:	33 ft (10.06 m)
Draught:	11.5 ft (3.51 m)
Propulsion:	single shaft <div>2 × fire tube Scotch boilers</div>

British Columbia and was launched on 15 August 1940.^[11] *Agassiz* was commissioned on 23 January 1941 in Vancouver, British Columbia.^{[3][12]}

Agassiz had two major refits during her career. The first took place at Liverpool, Nova Scotia from early January 1943 until mid-March. The second took place at New York, beginning in December 1943 and taking until March 1944 to complete. During her second refit, her fo'c'sle was extended.^[12]

War duty

After completion *Agassiz* was sent to Halifax, arriving 13 April 1941. In May 1941 she was assigned to the Newfoundland Escort Force. She served continuously as an ocean escort until the end of 1943. In August 1941, *Agassiz* was part of the escort 57-ship HX 143 convoy, which was guided around a U-boat concentration in the North Atlantic.^[13] On 1 September 1941, the escort groups were reformed and *Agassiz* joined Escort Group 19.^[14]

On 18 September 1941, the German submarine U-74 sighted the convoy SC 44 in the North Atlantic. The convoy was guarded by the destroyer *HMS Chesterfield* and the corvettes *Agassiz*, *HMCS Mayflower*, *HMCS Levis* and *HMS Honeysuckle*. Only four U-boats move to engage and during the first night of battle, *Levis* is sunk.^[15] *Agassiz* recovered her survivors.^[12] Four merchant vessels are sunk as well on 18/19 September. In response to the sinkings, the convoy protection is enhanced with the arrival of three more corvettes.^[15]

She participated in the battle for convoy ON 102 with Mid-Ocean Escort Force (MOEF) group A3 in July 1942. She also fought the battles for convoy SC 97 with MOEF group C2 and the battles for convoy ON 115 and convoy SC 109 with MOEF group C3. Following her workups after her first major refit in early 1943, *Agassiz* was assigned to MOEF group C1 and escorted 12 trans-Atlantic convoys without loss before another yard overhaul in early 1944. After that overhaul, *Agassiz* escorted North American coastal convoys with the Western Local Escort Force from March 1944 until February 1945. In April 1944, she was assigned to escort group W-2 and in August of that year to W-7. She remained with that group until the end of the war.^{[16][12]}

Following the end of hostilities *Agassiz* was paid off 14 June 1945 at Sydney, Nova Scotia.^{[3][12]} She was sold for scrap November 1945 and broken up at Moncton, New Brunswick in 1946.^{[10]:90}

Trans-Atlantic convoys escorted

	1 × 4-cycle triple-expansion reciprocating steam engine 2,750 ihp (2,050 kW)
Speed:	16 knots (29.6 km/h)
Range:	3,500 nautical miles (6,482 km) at 12 knots (22.2 km/h)
Complement:	85
Sensors and processing systems:	1 × SW1C or 2C radar 1 × Type 123A or Type 127DV sonar
Armament:	1 × <u>BL 4-inch (101.6 mm) Mk.IX</u> single gun 2 × <u>.50 cal machine gun (twin)</u> 2 × <u>Lewis .303 cal machine gun (twin)</u> 2 × Mk.II depth charge throwers 2 × depth charge rails with 40 depth charges originally fitted with minesweeping gear, later removed

Convoy	Escort Group	Dates	Notes
OB 347		22–31 July 1941 ^[17]	64 ships escorted without loss from <u>Iceland</u> to dispersal
<u>HX</u> 143		8–17 August 1941 ^[18]	73 ships escorted without loss from <u>Newfoundland</u> to Iceland
<u>ON</u> 8		21–25 August 1941 ^[19]	46 ships escorted without loss from Iceland to Newfoundland
<u>SC</u> 44		12–22 September 1941 ^[20]	Newfoundland to Iceland; 4 ships torpedoed & sunk
ON 19A		22 September-4 October 1941 ^[19]	Iceland shuttle
SC 50		19–31 October 1941 ^[20]	41 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Iceland
ON 32		6–14 November 1941 ^[19]	49 ships escorted without loss from Iceland to Newfoundland
SC 56		24 November-5 December 1941 ^[20]	45 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Iceland
HX 184		12–19 April 1942 ^[18]	30 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to <u>Northern Ireland</u>
ON 91		2–11 May 1942 ^[19]	31 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland
HX 190	<u>MOEF group A3</u>	20–27 May 1942 ^[18]	18 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 102	MOEF group A3	10–21 June 1942 ^[19]	Northern Ireland to Newfoundland; 1 ship torpedoed & sunk
HX 196	MOEF group A3	2–10 July 1942 ^[18]	42 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 114	MOEF group A3	20–30 July 1942 ^[19]	32 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland
ON 115	MOEF group C3	31 July-3 August 1942 ^[19]	battle reinforcement
SC 97	MOEF group C2	22–26 August 1942 ^[20]	Newfoundland to Northern Ireland: 2 ships torpedoed & sunk
SC 98	<u>MOEF group C3</u>	2–8 September 1942 ^[20]	69 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 131	MOEF group C3	19–28 September 1942 ^[19]	54 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland
HX 210	MOEF group C3	7–14 October 1942 ^[18]	36 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 141	MOEF group C3	26 October-3 November 1942 ^[19]	59 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland
SC 109	MOEF group C3	16–27 November 1942 ^[20]	Newfoundland to Northern Ireland; 2 ships torpedoed (1 sank)
ON 152	MOEF group C3	10–28 December 1942 ^[19]	15 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland
SC 127	<u>MOEF group C1</u>	20 April-2 May 1943 ^[20]	55 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 184	MOEF group C1	16–25 May 1943 ^[19]	39 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland

HX 242		6–14 June 1943 ^[18]	61 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 190		25 June–3 July 1943 ^[19]	87 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland
HX 247		14–21 July 1943 ^[18]	71 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 195		1–8 August 1943 ^[19]	51 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland
HX 252		20–27 August 1943 ^[18]	52 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 201		10–18 September 1943 ^[19]	70 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland
HX 258		28 September–5 October 1943 ^[18]	59 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 207		19–28 October 1943 ^[19]	52 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland
HX 264		5–16 November 1943 ^[18]	65 ships escorted without loss from Newfoundland to Northern Ireland
ON 213		27 November–7 December 1943 ^[19]	60 ships escorted without loss from Northern Ireland to Newfoundland

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