Newfoundland Historical Society 1905 - 2015

The oldest non-profit, independent heritage organization in the province.

Newsletter

Spring 2015

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Annual

General

Meeting



At 8:00 p.m. on April 30, 2015, the Newfoundland Historical Society (NHS) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at Hampton Hall, Marine Institute of Technology.

The meeting was called to order by President, Fred Smith who then presented the President's and Treasurer's reports (see below). Following the Treasurer's Report, Terry Bishop-Stirling presented the new Executive slate for 2015-2016. With the exception of Melanie Martin, all the past executive members offered for re-election. Two (2) new members were added to the slate: Gerona McGrath and Dave Lough. The new Executive Committee slate was voted on by the members present and unanimously adopted. After the election of the New Executive Committee the AGM was adjourned.



Frederick Smith Outgoing President of the NHS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2014 - 2015

In 2014-2015 the Newfoundland Historical Society (NHS), in its 110th year, continued with its mandate to promote knowledge and public discussion of the history and heritage of

Newfoundland and Labrador. A major component of our mandate is filled by our lecture series and symposia. The 2014 - 2015 NHS lecture series consisted of six (6) lectures.

"These ignorant and excited fishmongers": Popular Resistance to Bishop Feild in Transatlantic Newfoundland and Labrador. (Calvin Hollett)

What's Inside	
NHS AGM	1
President's Report 2014-2015	1-2
2015-16 Slate of Members Elected	3
Allan Byrne New NHS President	3
Winter 2015 Lecture Series	4-5
New Board Members	4
Life and Death on the Ice	6
WWI Books Published	6
Newfoundland's Prison Hull	7-8
From the NHS Archives	9
Widening War Conference	10
New Office Manager	10
Membership Application Form	11

"An Irish-Nationalist Resurgence in St. John's? The Self-Determination for the Ireland League of Newfoundland, 1919-1922". 2015 Gilbert Higgins Lecture. (Patrick Mannion)

"Two Episodes in the Parliamentary History of Newfoundland and Labrador: The Rise and Fall of the House of Assembly, 1832 and 1933". (John E. Fitzgerald).

"Death of the National Dream: Fred Alderdice and his Default Plan". (Doug Letto).

"Trading and Raiding: Understanding Early French/Inuit Relationships in Southern Labrador". (Lisa Rankin).

"The Pirate Who Never Was? Eric Cobham and Invention in History". 2015 George Story Lecture. (Olaf Janzen).

In addition to our annual lecture series, we also sponsored a World War I Symposium *The British Empire is at War. Mobilizing Newfoundland, 1914.* This symposium featured a number of excellent presentations including:

The Newfoundland Regiment, the British Army and Preparations for Battle in 1914. (Mike O'Brien).

The Blue Puttees, September 1914 to August 1915: Stories You May Have Never Heard. (Edward Roberts).

Understanding the Causes of the First World War. (John Keiger).

Canada's Guns of August: A Centennial Echo. (Dean Oliver).

Sealers, War and Post-war Crisis in Newfoundland, 1914-34. (Sean Cadigan).

Lasting Remembrance: Newfoundland, Labrador and War: A Digital Humanities Project. (Bert Riggs, David Mercer.)

Frontiersmen to the Front. (Robin McGrath).

They Also Serve who Knit and Wait: Mobilizing Newfoundland Women for Total War. (Terry Bishop-Stirling).

The Easterns: Breaking the Stalemate on the Western Front? (Andy Robertshaw).

Thank you to all our lecture series and symposium presenters for all the work and effort they put into their outstanding presentations. Thank you also to the symposium sponsors The Rooms, City of St. John's, Provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Memorial University of Newfoundland and the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.

In September Dominique Kane became our office manager replacing Christina Robarts. We welcome Dominique and thank Christina for her work and wish her luck in her new position.

Many people are needed to make the Society function and I thank the following:

Corey Button of Grant Thornton who continued as our volunteer accountant.

Terry-Bishop Stirling and Heidi Coombs-Thorne and their committee for work in making our WWI Symposium such a great success.

John Cheeseman, Terry Bishop-Stirling and Jeff Webb for their editing of Aspects.

Joan Ritcey for continuing to maintain the Society's web site.

Klaus Hye-Knudsen for building and maintaining our membership management software.

Allan Byrne for chairing the Program Committee and the Office Committee and as Vice-President. His advice was always valuable.

Charles Stirling for his editorship of the Society's Newsletter.

Larry Coady, Colleen Shea, Patrick Mannion for their work on the various committees.

Thanks also go to Melanie Martin for her long term support for the Newfoundland Historical Society. Melanie will be leaving the board this year and we wish her the very best.

I would also like to thank the Marine Institute for the use of Hampton Hall and the Provincial Government for the CEDP grant without which the Society would have great difficulty fulfilling its mandate.

This is my last meeting as President. I thank the board members for all the support they have given me over the last two (2) years. I know the incoming President and Vice-President will also have their full support.

Frederick R. Smith

President

2015-2016 Slate Of Officers Elected

The Newfoundland Historical Society (NHS) held its annual general meeting at 8:00 p.m., April 30th, 2015 at Hampton Hall, Marine Institute of Technology, Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). At that meeting the following Executive Members and Members-At-Large were elected for the 2015-1016 year.

2015-2016 Executive Members

President: Allan Byrne Vice-President: Larry Dohey Past President: Fred Smith Treasurer: Corey Button

Members-at-Large

Terry Bishop-Stirling
John Cheeseman
Larry Coady
Heidi Coombs-Thorne
Patrick Mannion
Gerona McGrath
Joan Ritcey
Charles Stirling
Jeff Webb

Regional Representatives

Bay Roberts: Betty Jerrett
Trinity: Jim Miller
Grand Bank: Robert Parsons
Harbour Breton: Doug Wells
Corner Brook: Sandra Wheeler
Labrador: Dave Lough

Allan Byrne New NHS President



Allan Byrne

Frederick Smith has stepped down as President of the Newfoundland Historical Society and Allan Byrne will be taking over the President's duties. Allan is a longtime member of the Newfoundland Historical Society. Hired as the NHS Office Administrator in 2006, he has been a board member ever since. Byrne has been doing historical and archival research in St. John's for the past 13 years. An alumnus of MUN's Department of History, he has worked at a number of archival institutions including the The Rooms, Provincial Archives and the City of St. John's Archives. Also an avid musician, Byrne often uses archival research materials to inspire his original music. He's excited and honoured to serve as NHS president for the 2015-2016 year.

Winter 2015 Lecture Series



John E. Fitzgerald

Two Episodes in Parliamentary History of Newfoundland and Labrador: The Rise and Fall of the House of Assembly, 1832 and 1933.

On the evening of January 29th 2015 John Fitzgerald presented the first lecture of the Winter 2015 Newfoundland Historical Society Lecture Series.

Fitgerald's lecture spoke to the circumstances that characterized and lead to the fomation of the Newfoundland Provincial Parliament and the Newfoundland Colonial Parliament of the 1830s. He also addressed some of the circumstances surrounding the abolition of the Newfoundland Colonial Parliament in the 1930s.

During his lecture Fitzgerald explained how some of the uniqueness of the Newfoundland Legislature resulted from legislation and legislative processes in Britain and to Prerogative Instruments, such as the Prerogative of the Crown, the Monarch, or the Monarch as advised by the Monarch's Ministers, Issue Letters Patent, Royal Instructions and other binding legal and constitutional mechanisms.

The lecture was very interesting, instructive and enjoyed by all who attended.



Doug Letto

Death of the National Dream: Fred Alderdice and His Default Plan.

On the evening of February 26, 2015 members of the Newfoundland Historical Society were treated to a very enlightening lecture by Doug Letto.

Letto's presentation outlined the events in October 1932, when the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, Frederick Alderdice, made a dramatic plan known to the British government that the government had little choice but to partially default on more than \$5 million a year in debt payments. In response Britain's offer put the Dominion on a path that would see its constitutional status irreversibly changed.

During the lecture the presenter questioned if Prime Minister Alderdice could have preserved Newfoundland's constitutional independence and if Newfoundlanders let down the dream and promise of a nation?

The lecture also challenged a common view, of how Newfoundland went from Dominion status to Province of Canada.

New Board Members

Two (2) new members, David Lough and Gerona McGrath, were elected to the Newfoundland Historical Society Executive Board at the April 2015 Annual General Meeting. David Lough will be the Society's Regional Representative for Labrador while Gerona McGrath will serve as a Councillor-at-Large. Welcome aboard and we are all looking forward to working with both of you.



Lisa Rankin

Trading and Raiding: Understanding Early French/ Inuit Relationships in Southern Labrador.

Lisa Rankin presented the third lecture of the Winter 2015 Newfoundland Historical Society Lecture Series at Hampton Hall on the evening of March 26, 2015.

During her lecture the presenter took the audience through her archaeological research in the Sandwich Bay area of Labrador, describing various archaeological sites and their material culture that indicated how the Inuit lived and evolved over time. She also touched on how Inuit evolution in Labrador was influenced by contact with European fishing and whaling crews. Rankin's use of excellent Power Point illustrations and actual artefacts recovered from archaeological sites enabled the audience to feel and experience these sites as if they had been there themselves.

Rankin concluded the lecture by stating: "The Inuit had a lot of control over what went on in southern Labrador. They moved down into southern Labrador very quickly to access European goods, and once they got there they were definitely the people on the ground that commanded what went on. Even with the introduction of European goods the Inuit were not transformed into mini European cultures, they very much held onto their own cultural point of view and way of life and used the goods that they got from Europeans in very typically Inuit cultural ways".

Those attending enjoyed a most interesting and informative lecture.



Olaf Janzen

The Pirate Who Never Was? Eric Cobham and Invention in History.

Did the Pirate Eric Cobham ever exist? In a presentation made at the Newfoundland Historical Society's Annual George Story Lecture on May 9th, Olaf Janzen aruged that Cobham never existed. In his own words "pirates were real but Eric Cobham was not!".

The presentation began by looking at what a pirate actually was and the difference between piracy and privateering. It then moved on to discuss the rise of piracy and why it existed in Newfoundland. The examples of Peter Easton in 1612 at Harbour Grace and Bartholomew Roberts at Trepassey in 1720 were used to illustrate that pirates were not attracted to Newfoundland for plunder, but rather for provisions, equipment and supplies they could steal, along with conscription of men. Pirates used Newfoundland as a vast service centre or chandler shop.

Then Janzen related the story of the pirate Eric Cobham and his mistress Maria Lindsey who supposedly, from their base at Sandy Point, Bay St. George's on the west coast of Newfoundland, pirated in the Gulf of St. Lawrence from 1740-1760. Janzen then debunked this story by demonstrating how there was a lack of documentary knowledge and logic to support it.

The lecture was most interesting with well presented arguments and was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience.

Remember To Join The NHS!

Fill out the form on page 12 and visit http://www.nlhistory.ca to find out how you can benefit!

Life and Death on the Ice

Two (2) Films and a Conversation





Trevor Bell

On the evening of May 5th, 2015 at Hampton Hall, Marine Institute of Technology, MUN, the Newfoundland Historical Society, the People of the Sea Film Festival, and the National Film Board co-sponsored the screening of two (2) films produced by the National Film Board. The first film titled 54 Hours, was a remarkably vivid

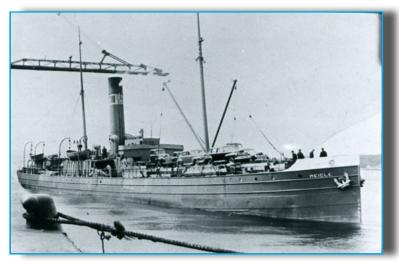
account of the 1914 sealing tragedy in which 132 men were stranded on the ice during a severe snowstorm off the coast of Newfoundland. The second film titled Vanishing Point, dealt with the unprecedented changes facing all Arctic peoples since the 1860s.

Following the film presentation Trevor Bell and Sean Cadiagn presented their views and perspectives on the film and invited questions and comments from the audience.

Books Published on World War I Newfoundland Historical Society Members

In celebration of the Centenary of World War I (2014-2018) many new books have been published on World War I subject matter. Following is a list of books published on World War I which have been authored by Newfoundland Historical Society members.

Title	Author	Publisher
Courage at Sea: Newfoundland Sailors in the Great War.	Robert Parsons	Flanker Press
When the Great Red Dawn is Shining: Howard Morry's Memoirs of Life in the Newfoundland Regiment.	Christopher Morry	Breakwater Books
A Blue Puttee at War: The Memoir of Captain Sydney Frost, MC.	Edward Roberts	Flanker Press
Essays on the Great War: Papers published in Newfoundland and Labrador Studies.	Various Authors	Faculty of Arts Publications MUN
The Royal Newfoundland Regiment in the Great War: A Guide to the Battlefields and Memorials of France, Belgium, and Gallipoli.	Frank Gogos	Flanker Press



S. S. Meigle

Newfoundland's Prison Hulk

According to Wikipedia¹, a prison ship, more precisely termed prison hulk, is a vessel (usually unseaworthy) salvaged as a prison, often to hold convicts, or with the British, civilian internees.

Did you know that the Government of Newfoundland had a prison hulk anchored in St. John's Harbour eighty three (83) years ago?

In the spring of 1932, the Great Depression damaged the Newfoundland economy. Markets for pulp and paper, minerals and fish dried up and many people in Newfoundland found themselves without work. Times were bad and the people

turned to the Government seeking relief. Unfortunately, when the Government could not raise funds to meet these demands, rioting and looting took place. In St. John's there was the *House of Assembly Riot* in April of 1932, which resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of thirty-six (36) people. The unrest also spread to the outports. In Victoria and Spaniards Bay there were the so called *Dole Riots* which resulted in the arrest of another thirty (30) people. The arrested were imprisoned in the St. John's Penitentiary, which soon became overcrowded beyond its capacity².

While this was taking place, the Government of Sir. Richard Squires was defeated by the United Party lead by F. C. Alderdice. Faced with the overcrowding, the new Government transferred the S. S. Meigle from the Reid Railway to the Department of Justice and converted it into a prison ship. The S. S. Meigle, one of the "Alphabet Fleet" was originally built in Scotland in 1881 and named the S. S. Solway³. The vessel was 65 m. long, weighed 835 gross tons and was powered by a 145 horsepower engine. The vessel was designed to accommodate six (6) passengers and freight and served as a passenger and cargo ferry until the 1930s when it became a prision ship. As a prison ship, it was anchored in St. John's Harbour and the more trustworthy prisoners including some of the Conception Bay rioters, were transferred from the overcrowded Forest Road prison facility to the prison hulk.

The floating prison had its own warden, ship crews and guards. A police boat called the *Squirrel*, was used to transfer the prisoners to the *S. S. Meigle*. When a prisoner was to be taken to the *S. S. Meigle* the *Squirrel* would arrive at Baird's Cove to take him from the police van to the floating prison. Usually there would be a collection of people, mostly unemployed men, to cheer the poor prisoner on his way.

Joseph Summers, probably influenced by the Irish song *Twenty-One years at Dartmoor*, wrote a song about the *S. S. Meigle* prison ship called *Twenty-One Years on the Meigle* (next page). Summers used some poetic licence when he wrote the song as the *S. S. Meigle* was only used as a prison ship for two (2) years.

In June 1933 the *S. S. Meigle* was converted into a salt storage hull. In 1936, Shaw Steamships of Halifax purchased the vessel and returned it to service. Despite a number of close calls the vessel survived WW II. On July 19, 1947, the *S. S. Meigle* was wrecked at Marine Cove, near St. Shotts⁴, while freighting general cargo and livestock.

Sources:

- 1. Definition Prison Ship. Wikipedia Web Site. Retrieved http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prison_ship
- 2. The Little Known History of St. John's. Chap. III, The Prison Afloat. Furlong, Wallace. The Senior's News. Jan. 1983. Newfoundland Historical Archives, Subject Files, Ships, A-N, *Meigle*.
- 3. S. S. Meigle. Newfoundland Shipbuilding Web Site. Retrieved from http://www.newfoundlandshipbuilding.com/alphabetfleet/documents/alphabet_fleet.htm
- 4. S. S. Meigle. Newfoundland Historical Society Archives. Subject Files Ships, A-N, Meigle.

Twenty One Years on the Meigle

by John Summers

We tore up the railway I once had a cod trap I once had a boat. We tore off the track. We kicked up a rumpus And once on the water How gay I would float. An' then put it back. They sent out policeman I once used to go fishing Without any fears With horses that rears. But now I'll be anchored And now I'm in prison For twenty-one years. For twenty-one year.

I'm leaving my sweetheart
I'm leaving my home.
I'm going on the water
But not far to roam.
I'll step down to Baird's Cove
While the crowd gives three cheers,
He's off to the "Meigle"
For twenty-one years.

I've been in the "lockup"
Down under the clock.
The policeman they called me,
I stood in the "dock".
The Judge said, "Up Hinders"*
And "Pin back your ears"
You're going on the "Meigle"
For twenty-one years.

Oh, out near Victoria
Oh, out round the bay.
We had no molasses
To put in our Tay.
We all got excited
"No dole" in our ears.
But now I won't worry
For twenty-one years.

Come on you young fellows
With hearts brave and true.
Come out on the "Meigle"
There's room here for you.
Don't fear getting seasick
Of storms have no fears,
You'll have free board and lodging

For twenty-one years.

Newfoundland Historical Society is on Twitter

You don't have to actually tweet to enjoy the Newfoundland Historical Society's twitter account. You can contribute, or just listen in to retrieve information on current events, monthly lectures, annual symposia and much more. It's easy to create an account, just type "http://www.nlhistory.ca twitter" into your search engine and follow the link to join up!

^{*} The term "up hinders" that became a local and very popular cant was, in fact, an order uttered by a coach of a visiting football team to St. John's. In the summer of 1931, the *H. M. S. Barwick* came into St. John's. While the ship was in port, a game of football was arranged whereby the ship's team played against a city all-star eleven. The Navy coach gave his fullbacks an order to move up the field by the phrase "up hinder". Some local wag heard the order several times that evening and turned it into a popular cant that became a standard expression of approval in Newfoundland folklore vocabulary. (Source: The Evening Telegram, October 23, 1942).

From the Newfoundland Historical Society Archives



Crew of H. M. S. Tenedos at Harbour Grace 1884

The Newfoundland Historical Society Archives includes a small collection of hard copy and digital photographs. The photograph¹ on the left is one of that collection. It is a photograph of the crew of *H. M. S. Tenedos*. The back of the photograph is inscribed "The Crew of the *H. M. S. Tenedos* Hr. Grace 1884" and stamped "Mac Lee, Hr. Grace".

The Canadian Orangeman Historical website² relates the following. On May 12, 1884 a trial began at Harbour Grace for nineteen (19) Roman Catholics charged in the Harbour Grace Affray. After hearing forty-seven (47) days of contradictory testimony, the jury acquitted all nineteen (19) of murder charges. The acquittal

infuriated Orangemen who saw it as evidence that Protestants were easy targets for Roman Catholics to attack with impunity. A new trail was ordered in November of 1884 and during this trial the Orangemen of Harbour Grace made know their intentions to mark the anniversary of the Harbour Grace Affray with another parade. This caused much unease in the community and fears of another riot. As a precaution, Governor John Hawley Glover, had the British warship *H. M. S. Tenedos* anchored in Harbour Grace Harbour and sent fifty (50) constables to preserve law and order. As it was, the parade went off quietly and Governor Glover sent the following report to the Colonial Office: "St. Stephen's Day, the anniversary of last year's riots at Harbour Grace, has passed off most satisfactorily and without any disturbance at all....knowing that the Orange Party intended to march again I took the precaution of sending *H. M. S. Tenedos* to that place....The Orange Party turned out in procession, about eight hundred (800) strong, and took their usual route through town; the Roman Catholic party also collected, numbering about four hundred (400) but there was no attempt to interfere with the Orange Party."

It is most likely that the photograph above was taken while the *H. M. S. Tenedos* was at Harbour Grace during this trial.

The Railway Coastal Museum History e-bullentin³ relates that as part of the opening celebrations for the St. John's Drydock on Dec. 10th 1884, the *H. M. S. Tenedos* was to become the first ship to enter the drydock. Unfortunately, even though the *H. M. S. Tenedos* entered the drydock the celebrations had to be postponed. The Memorial University Digital Archives Initiative Site⁴ includes a photograph of the *H. M. S. Tenedos* in the St. John's Drydock, December 1884.

Sources:

- 1 Photograph. Crew of *H. M. S. Tenedos* at Harbour Grace 1884. Newfoundland Historical Society Archives, Series 7.00 Photographs, Sub-series 7.03 Photos Place Names, Photograph 7.03.064 b&w 600 dpi front.tif
- 2. The Harbour Grace Affray. Alex Rough 1994. Canadian Orange Historical Site. Retrieved from http://canadianorangehistoricalsite.com/index-30.php
- 3. New Exhibit at the RCM: The St. John's Drydock. Keith Collier. Railway Coastal Museum History e-Bulletin, Vol. XVII, June 2008. Retrieved from http://railwaycoastalmuseum.ca/Files/08-06June.pdf
- 4. Photograph. (03 06 004) Drydock, St. John's. *H. M. S. Tenedos*, December 1884. Memorial University of Newfoundland. Libraries. Archives and Special Collections Division. Retrieved http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/arch_geog/id/3084/rec/1





This conference is being held at the Weetwood

Conference Centre and Hotel, Otley Road, Leeds, LS16 5PS, West Yorkshire, UK.

Check out their extensive website for additional details at http://www.weetwood.co.uk/ww1conference/ webarchive

NHS Office Manager

The Newfoundland Historical Society has a new office manager Colleen Shea, who is well known to many as a member of our Executive Board. Colleen graciously agreed to manage our office, stepping aside as an NHS board member. Dominique Kane who managed the office since last September has left to pursue other career opportunities. Thank you Dominique for all your hard work and welcome to Colleen.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM NAME **EXECUTIVE (2015-2016) ADDRESS** President: Allan Byrne TELEPHONE **Vice President:** E-MAIL Larry Dohey **Membership Fees:** Regular or Institutional \$40.00 / Life \$400.00. Membership **Past President:** Fred Smith entitles you to 30% off Heritage Canada Membership. Accountant: Note: Membership includes a subscription to the Newfoundland Quarterly and Corey Button three (3) newsletters per year, and is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of Office Manger payment of the fee. Your expiry date will appear on the bottom left of your mailing Colleen Shea *label* (the figures on the bottom right are a mailing code). Councillors: Terry Bishop-Stirling Donations are always welcome! And remember that membership makes Larry Coady a great gift. Gift cards are available from the Newfoundland Historical John Cheeseman Society's office. Heidi Coombs-Thorne Joan Ritcey Membership fees are the NHS's only steady source of revenue and are used Charles Stirling Ieff Webb in support of our lectures and symposium. When starting or renewing your Patrick Mannion membership please consider encouraging a friend or spouse to join as well. Gerona McGrath **Regional Representatives:** Would you like to save paper and receive our newsletter Betty Jerrett (Bay Roberts) electronically (in colour)? Jim Miller (Trinity) Would you like to be added to our list to be notified of Robert Parsons (Grand Bank) upcoming events? Doug Wells (Harbour Breton) Sandra Wheeler (Corner Brook) Would you like to be removed from the list of those Dave Lough (Labrador) receiving notification of upcoming events? Questions, comments, Donation _____ Total ___ letters to the Editor, and membership inquiries may be Visa Card Number _____ Expiry Date _____ addressed to: Signature _ NHS Office Payment may be made by VISA, cheque or money order to the P.O. Box 23154 Churchill Square Newfoundland Historical Society. Please complete and send this form with St. John's, NL your payment to the address below. USA subscribers please pay in US funds A1B 4J9 to cover postage. International subscribers please pay nineteen (19) pounds Sterling or the Canadian equivalent. (709) 722-3191 (phone) (709) 739-6458 (fax) **Newfoundland Historical Society** P.O. Box 23154 nhs@nf.aibn.com/ **Churchill Square** Internet: St. John's, NL http://www.nlhistory.ca/ A1B 4I9 http://www.nlhistory.ca