

## Petty Officer Lawrence Newton Campbell V-14372



- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Nanaimo BC, 3 August 1921**
- **Enlisted: Vancouver Division RCNVR, 25 September 1939**
- **Civilian Occupation: Messenger, Lumberman Printing Company**
- **Death: Died of injuries sustained when HMCS *Columbia* collided with a cliff on 25 Feb 1944. Death occurred on 9 March 1944.**
- **Commemorated: St. John's (Mount Pleasant) Cemetery, Sec. A. Plot 1. Grave E**

Lawrence Newton Campbell joined the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve at HMCS *Discovery* at the age of 18 and he served four years and seven months before he tragically died in an accident on board HMCS *Columbia*.

Lawrence Campbell was born in Nanaimo, BC on 3 August 1921 and he was enrolled as an Ordinary Seaman in the Vancouver Division RCNVR on 25 September 1939. He was the son of Archibald Burton Campbell and Evelyn Theresa Campbell<sup>1</sup>, of Vancouver, British Columbia, and husband of Helen Louise Campbell. His enrolment medical showed that he was 5'11", blonde with blue eyes. He came from a large family and had one brother – Robert Burton (age 15) and 4 sisters: Kathleen Carol (age 20); Gwendolyn Carol (age 19); Lorna Jean (age 17); and Margaret Evelyn (age 8) at the time of his enrolment.

Prior to joining the RCNVR Lawrence was employed as a delivery boy for the Lumberman Printing Company located at the Sun Building in Vancouver.

His service record showed that he was employed at the Vancouver Division (later HMCS *Discovery*) from 25 September 1939 until May 1940. He was placed on Active Service on 18 May 1940, and he remained under training at the Vancouver Division until 15 June. Ordinary Seaman Campbell was then posted to HMCS *Naden* in Esquimalt, BC from 16 June until 8 August 1940 for seamanship training before being drafted to HMCS *Stadacona* in Halifax, NS from 9 Aug to 26 August. He served on S.S. *Pasteur*, a troopship, between 27 August and 19 September 1940 for a total of 24 days, probably for one trip to consolidate his seamanship training. Ordinary Seaman Campbell must have demonstrated some anti-submarine warfare talent during his training, as he

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that in his attestation paper his mother was named Mrs. A.T. Campbell yet in other documents she was written as Evelyn Theresa. Perhaps it was a typo that the initial A. was used in place of E.

was landed at HMCS *Stadacona* on 20 September and he remained there until the end of October 1940 when he was awarded his Submarine Detector (SD) qualification.

With his SD qualification in hand, Ordinary Seaman Campbell was drafted to HMCS *Assiniboine* for nine days (31 October - 8 November 1940) and then to HMCS *Saint Francis*, where he would serve for the next thirteen months. During his time on board *Saint Francis*, he wrote and passed the professional exam and was rated Able Seaman on 11 April 1941.



HMCS Saint Francis

(Photo credit: [http://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS\\_ST\\_FRANCIS\\_193.htm](http://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS_ST_FRANCIS_193.htm))

HMCS *Saint Francis* was commissioned on 30 June 1919 as USS *Bancroft*, and she was turned over to the RCN at Halifax on 24 Sep 1940 becoming HMCS *Saint Francis*. Ordinary Seaman Campbell joined *Saint Francis* days after she had been employed in the search for the *Admiral Scheer* following the latter's attack on convoy HX.84.

Ordered to Scotland, *Saint Francis* left Halifax on 15 Jan 1941 for the Clyde where she joined the 4th Escort Group, January 26, 1941. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, the crew including Able Seaman Campbell rescued survivors from SS *Starcross*, which had been torpedoed. In July 1941 *Saint Francis* joined the Newfoundland Escort Force. Between 1941 and 1943 *Saint Francis* escorted numerous Atlantic convoys and made several attacks on submarines. As a qualified submarine detector Able Seaman Campbell had numerous opportunities to practice his skills during his service in *Saint Francis*. He left the ship on 12 December 1941 after a total of 388 days.

Campbell spent 5 days ashore in St John's, Newfoundland aboard the (temporary) depot ship HMCS *Prince Henry* before returning to *Stadacona* from 18 Dec 1941 to 17 March 1942 for Higher Submarine Detector (HSD) training. On completion of training, he was drafted to HMCS *Columbia* on 1 April 1942 with the rank of Acting/Leading Seaman. He served in *Columbia* for 711 days until his tragic death. Campbell's promotion to Leading Seaman was made substantive on 24 Apr 1942. One year later, on 1 April 1943 he was rated Acting/Petty Officer while continuing to serve on board *Columbia*.

In March 1942, following repairs in Halifax *Columbia* was assigned to the Western Local Escort Force (WLEF) where she escorted convoys between New York, NY and St John's, Newfoundland. Of note, in January 1943 *Columbia* went to the aid of her Royal Navy sister ship, HMS *Caldwell*. *Caldwell* was adrift without propellers southeast of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia but *Columbia* successfully towed her 370 miles to Halifax.

Tragedy struck on 25 February 1944. According to the Government of Canada website: "On 25 February 1944, owing to a combination of fog and faulty radar, she rammed a cliff in Motion Bay, Newfoundland (NL) without so much as touching bottom. Repairs only sufficient to make her watertight were carried out at Bay Bulls, NL, until May. That September she was taken to Liverpool, Nova Scotia, to serve as an ammunition storage hulk for ships refitting there. Paid off into reserve at Sydney, she was sold for scrap later that year."

The above date (25 Feb 1944) coincides with the accident that took place on board *Columbia* when Engine Room Artificer 4<sup>th</sup> class Arthur Feldman was killed and Petty Officer Lawrence Campbell sustained seriously injury due to a fractured skull. The ship returned to St. John's where Campbell was sent to the Royal Canadian Naval Hospital. His prognosis was not good and the multiple fractures to his skull were very serious: the initial assessment was "fair". PO Campbell succumbed to his injury and died on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1944. He was 22 years old.

A letter was sent by the Commanding Officer HMCS *Columbia* to Petty Officer Campbell's widow on 11 March 1944 in which he described:

*"Lawrence Campbell was as fine a young man as I have encountered in my experience at sea, which represents a (sic) good many years in command of ships and various types of men. He was most efficient in and keen about his job, was intensely loyal, and was loved by all his shipmates. His death was caused while carrying out his duties in an exposed position during a crisis, was one of which you may well be very proud, as indeed we all are aboard."*



**Find a Grave: Memorial for Lawrence Campbell, in the Joint Services Cemetery in St. John's, Newfoundland.**  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/106015702/lawrence-newton-campbell>



Campbell's funeral took place on 11 March 1944, with full Naval Honours at the Wesley United Church, St. John's. NL, conducted by the Baptist Chaplain. Interment was made in the Joint Services Cemetery at St. John's in Section A, Plot 1, Grave E.

Petty Officer Lawrence Newton Campbell was awarded the 1939-45 Star; Atlantic Star; Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & Clasp; and War Medal. Memorial crosses were sent to both Mrs. Helen Louise Campbell, his widow, and to his mother, Mrs. Evelyne Theresa Campbell.

Petty Officer Lawrence Campbell is commemorated on the Honour Roll at HMCS *Discovery*, Vancouver, BC and the Second World War Book of Remembrance, Page 267 at the Centre Block Houses of Parliament, Ottawa. His grave is located in the Joint Services Cemetery in St. John's, Newfoundland.

**Prepared By:**

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**Sources:**

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