

Able Seaman Lloyd Murchison Gordon, (MiD), V-1267



Able Seaman Gordon. Photo: canadian-virtual-war-memorial

- **Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve**
- **Born: Appin Road PE, 19 December 1920**
- **Enlisted: Charlottetown Division RCNVR, 31 October 1939**
- **Civilian Occupation: Farm Labourer**
- **Death: Died when HMCS Athabaskan sank on 29 April 1944**
- **Mention in Despatches (MiD)**
- **Commemorated: Halifax Memorial, Panel 11**

Lloyd Murchison Gordon, known to friends and shipmates as “Murky”, was born at his family home in Appin Road, Prince Edward Island, on December 19, 1920. He was the youngest son of John and Mamie MacLeod Gordon, and had two older brothers (Louis and John Jr.), an older sister (Cassie) and a younger sister (Florence). Murchison spent much of his youth working on farms. He was known for being pleasant, confident, and generally well-liked by neighbours and peers. His niece would fondly recall that he possessed “a kind and sunny disposition, attractive and manly personality, and a splendid physique.” (MacPhee) During his adolescence, Murchison enjoyed spending time in Clyde River with his brother-in-law and sister Cassie, forming a close bond with his niece and nephews. The children were always excited when uncle Murky came for a visit.

At the age of 17, Murchison lost his father. A year later, on Halloween day 1939, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) at the local naval division in Charlottetown. His medical examiner noted his particulars: black hair, blue eyes, “fresh” complexion, and normal vision. He bore no visible scars, weighed 144lbs, and stood at 5’8 1/2” tall. Shortly thereafter he attended basic training at the Charlottetown Naval Barracks and on July 11, 1940 was stationed at His Majesty’s Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Stadacona*, a shore establishment in Halifax. There he trained as a gunner, qualifying on September 20, 1940, and scoring an 80.5% on his examination. Four days later the United States Navy transferred a Town Class Destroyer to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), and the next day Murchison was added on



HMCS St. Francis prepares to take on fuel from a tanker at sea (LAC photo)

strength as a gunnery rating aboard the newly re-minted HMCS *St. Francis* (formerly USS Bancroft). The ship was refitted for convoy escort across the North Atlantic but remained in Halifax for the remainder of the year. On November 5, 1940 the German Cruiser *Admiral Scheer* attacked convoy HX-84, escorted by a sole Armed Merchant Cruiser, His Majesty's Ship (HMS) *Jervis Bay*. *Scheer* attacked, sinking *Jervis Bay* in only 22 minutes, and then proceeded to destroy another five of the convoy's 37 merchant vessels. HMCS *St. Francis* received the convoy's distress call and rushed at speed to intercept the German raider, but *Scheer* escaped. It would be Murchison's first time in action.

On New Year's Day, 1941, Murchison was promoted to Able Seaman and transferred back to *Stadacona*, joining HMCS *Hochelaga II* on October 3rd. He spent the better part of a month assisting in harbour duties and the control and movement of merchant vessels until reassigned on November 12th to the newly christened Flower Class Corvette, HMCS *Oakville*. He was aboard the vessel when she was commissioned in Montreal on the 18th, the short ceremony presided by "none other than Lady Mountbatten, wife of the King's cousin Lord Louis Mountbatten." (Livingston 45) *Oakville* then escorted some newly constructed Fairmile Motor Launches to Halifax. Once there, *Oakville* began workups and Murchison was put in charge of the 4 inch gun crew. On January 8, 1942 the ship set off on her maiden voyage as part of the Western Local Escort Force (WLEF) and performed convoy duties between New York and Newfoundland until June of that year (Livingston 45-48). The next month, the ship sailed to the south Atlantic to protect oil shipments coming from the Caribbean to Canada. It was there that the Murchison would have his first real taste of combat.



Oakville's 4-inch gun plus ratings posing for a picture (Sean E. Livingston Collection, Image Courtesy Robert Waddell)



HMCS Oakville, Caribbean Sea (Sean E. Livingston Collection)

On the evening of August 27/28, 1942 HMCS *Oakville* engaged a U-Boat (*U94*) in the Windward Passage – a strait in the Caribbean Sea between Cuba and Hispaniola. Early in the battle, Murchison managed to land a 4-inch shell on *U94*'s 88mm deck gun, taking it clean off the U-boat (Livingston 57). At a critical moment, with *Oakville* closing on the enemy, Murchison disabled the surfaced U-boat's primary attack system, preventing the enemy from returning fire. It was quite the feat and executed in heavy swells – Force 4 with whitecaps (Livingston 53). *U94* was eventually boarded by two of *Oakville*'s crew and momentarily captured before succumbing to her wounds.

The U-boat sank at 0400 (GCT) (Livingston 63).

After the battle, Murchison was awarded a Mention in Dispatches (MID). His citation read:



“Displaying coolness, skill and efficiency in action while in charge of a 4-inch gun, Able Seaman Gordon by promptness in bringing his gun into action in an engagement with a U-boat caused damage to the enemy ship and thus made a substantial contribution to the result of the engagement. (Livingston 70)”

On March 26, 1943 Murchison was transferred back to *Stadacona* and, after passing his proficiency examination, was both promoted to Acting Leading Seaman and awarded a Good Conduct Badge (GCB). In May, he was sent overseas to HMCS *Niobe* in Greenock, Scotland and the next month moved to HMS *Pembroke*, the Royal Naval

Barracks at Chatham. He returned to *Niobe* mid-July and was finally posted back to sea, joining the Tribal Class Destroyer HMCS *Huron* for her commissioning. Murchison was about to shift theaters of war.

On August 12th, *Huron* embarked to Scapa Flow and later that month rescued a Blackburn B-24 Skua Pilot who was forced to ditch just off the Orkney Islands. The next month, *Huron* joined the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla and on October 1st escorted an arctic convoy on the Murmansk Run. *Huron* returned to Scapa Flow where, on the 11th, the ship sustained damage from a collision with an oil tanker. *Huron* made for Leith, Scotland, and remained there until fully repaired in November, but Murchison wouldn't be aboard when the destroyer went back to sea. On November 10th he was reprimanded for being “absent from place of duty” (Service Record). The ship was undergoing an exercise and Murchison was missing from his action station. Ten minutes later, he was found drunk in the mess. He was docked a day's pay, deprived of his GCB, disgraced back to Able Seaman, and had to forgo his daily rum ration for a month (Service Record).



Murchison was transferred to the “C” Class Destroyer *Restigouche*, returning to *Niobe* on Christmas eve. On March 3, 1944 he joined the Tribal Class Destroyer HMCS *Athabaskan*, which was assisting the 10th Destroyer Flotilla. Murchison soon found himself back in action – *Athabaskan* took part in two convoy interception “Tunnel” patrols, three rounds of protecting allied shipping in the English Channel, and several night exercises (Burrow & Beaudoin 75). By April, *Athabaskan's* duties increased in preparation for the Allied invasion of Normandy. Day and night the ship took on escort duties and operations against enemy shipping (Burrow & Beaudoin 79). On April 25/26th, *Athabaskan* took part in yet another Tunnel, this time chasing down an enemy convoy and assisting in the sinking of an Elbing class destroyer, *T-29*, just off Ushant. Murchison would have been working one the guns that sent multiple rounds into the enemy vessel (Burrow & Beaudoin 80-83). In the early hours of the 27th, *Athabaskan* chased some enemy E-boats, although they managed to escape in a fog bank before the Tribal could fire a shot (Burrow &



Beaudoin 84). Then, on the 29th, *Athabaskan* along with HMCS *Haida*, conducted another patrol and intercepted *T-24* and *T-27*. Unfortunately, during the battle, *Athabaskan* was torpedoed north of Ile de Bas, likely by *T-24*, and sank. 128 of her crew perished and 23-year-old Murchison was among them. His body was never recovered.

Murchison's mother was presented with a Memorial Cross, as well as with her son's honours: the 1939-45 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal (with clasp), the War medal, and MID. Able Seaman Lloyd Murchison Gordon is commemorated on the Halifax Memorial, panel 11, and appears on page 318 of the Second World War Book of Remembrance.

Prepared By:

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