

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

RCN SERIES

PART V

H.M.C.S MATANE

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River Class Frigate of 1500 tons  
on active service from 1943 until  
the end of the war in Europe.

KEN ANNETT

H.M.C.S. MATANE

*Matane, January, 1944, typical of the first 15 RCN frigates, with single 4-inch forward and no clinker screen to her stack*

FOREWORD

Previous articles of "GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY" have recalled the following Royal Canadian ships and bases:

<u>NO.</u>	<u>TITLE</u>
311	HMCS BONAVENTURE
312	HMCS GASPÉ I AND GASPÉ II
313	HMCS RESTIGOUCHE
340	HMCS FORT RAMSAY

The following articles of the series have references to the geography and history of the Gaspesian river and town of Matane:

<u>NO.</u>	<u>TITLE</u>
049	THE SEIGNIORY OF MATANE
147	HARRISON OF MATANE
273	ROCHELAIS AT MATANE

The RCN River Class Frigate, MATANE, bore proudly the name of a major river and progressive community of the St.Lawrence coast of Gaspesia.

H.M.C.S.MATANE

A staunchly built fighting ship which operated through some of the most exciting days of the second world war, the Canadian frigate, MATANE, survived a direct hit by a glider bomb and eventually returned safely home to Canada. Only one other Canadian warship was hit by a glider bomb during the war. That was the Tribal Class Destroyer,ATHABASKAN, which also made her way safely to port only to be sunk by torpedoes and gunfire in the English Channel a few weeks later.

MATANE was launched at the Canadian Vickers yards in Montreal on May 29, 1943, and was commissioned on October 22 of that year. The frigate, with a displacement of nearly 1,500 tons and more than 300 feet long, had only recently been introduced into the Royal Canadian Navy as a larger, more powerfully armed and swifter successor to the corvette, which had carried the burden of the Battle of the Atlantic for so long. When there was talk during the war of a "super corvette" being produced in Canadian shipyards, the frigate was the ship to which reference was being made.

NAME.....	MATANE
CLASS.....	RIVER CLASS FRIGATE
BUILDER.....	VICKERS
COMMISSIONED.....	OCTOBER, 1943
DISPLACEMENT.....	1,445 TONS
LENGTH.....	301 feet 6 inches
BREADTH.....	36 feet 7 inches
DRAUGHT FORWARD.....	11 feet 6 inches
DRAUGHT AFT.....	14 feet 4 inches
MAIN ENGINES.....	STEAM RECIPROCATING
FULL SPEED.....	19.0 KNOTS
ENDURANCE.....	7,200 nautical miles at 12 knots
ARMAMENT.....	1-4", 1-12 pdr or 2-4" guns

MATANE went through working up exercises off the coast of Nova Scotia in December and sailed from Halifax on battle duty on December 27, 1943, with a group of warships searching for a U-boat which had been lurking off the mouth of Halifax harbour and which had sunk several ships including the minesweeper, H.M.C.S. CLAYOQUOT. The U-boat proved to be an elusive one, equipped with every device to avoid detection, and got away.

She was attached shortly afterwards to a striking group, operating at that time off the east coast of Canada, and which later proceeded overseas. On one occasion she located a U-boat and made several attacks, but the German submarine managed to dive deep and get away. On another, she rescued the survivors of a Sunderland aircraft.

The duties of MATANE overseas were chiefly in the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel, both areas seeing plenty of action during the invasion and the months that followed.

MATANE, during the assault on the Normandy beach-head, took part in offensive sweeps of the Channel patrolling off German-held French ports, sometimes coming under the fire of German shore batteries. She became a front line casualty on July 20, 1944.

The group of which MATANE was senior ship was operating off the approaches to the English Channel on that day. A German plane had been seen shadowing the group and the men on the Canadian ship were both surprised and puzzled, for there wasn't much of Hitler's Luftwaffe left. However, aerial cover by Mosquito planes was arranged until eight o'clock in the evening.

An hour later there was an explosion astern of the group and a terrific column of water spouted skyward. The crew of the MATANE thought it was a spent torpedo, but "action stations" were immediately manned. Then they saw the planes breaking through the cloud cover above them.

A German Dornier had released a glider bomb, which wobbled for a moment and then dived straight for them. There was no chance of escape. The bomb hit the stern portion of the ship, ploughed through the quarterdeck and exploded in the sea beside the engine-room. Two men disappeared, another was blown 100 feet into the air. In all, four died and eleven were seriously wounded.

Officers and men on the bridge thought at first the stern had been blown from the ship until they hear the anti-aircraft guns there continuing to fire, Engine-room plates had been torn open and the sea had poured in; oil poured out of the gap and clouds of steam rose into the air. But the transverse bulkheads held.

Another plane swooped down and released a glider bomb, like the first, this one fell clear of the ship and exploded harmlessly 100 feet away. Three other glider bombs were directed at the motionless ship, but all were wide misses.

When it was found she would safely float, MATANE was slowly towed back to England by the frigate, H.M.C.S. MEON, while two other Canadian frigates, STORMONT and the famous sub-killer, SWANSEA, guarded her against further attack.

Repair facilities were crowded in the United Kingdom during the post-invasion period and it was April, 1945, before MATANE put to sea again as a fighting ship. Part of the time, however, was taken in equipping her for tropical warfare, with a view to her entering the war against Japan.

The war ended and on June 17 MATANE steamed from Greenock, Scotland, carrying, in addition to her own crew, army officers and other personnel for repatriation. She proceeded to Canada by way of the Panama Canal, arriving at Esquimalt on July 14.

Just a month after her arrival at Esquimalt Japan surrendered. MATANE was decommissioned on February 11, 1946 and turned over to War Assets Corporation for disposal the same day.

She was sold in 1947 and her hull sunk in 1948 as part of a breakwater at Oyster Bay, British Columbia.

# MATANE



Le Vieux Phare de Matane

## MATANE

Commissioned at Montreal on October 22, 1943, *Matane* arrived at Halifax November 13 and began working up in St. Margaret's Bay, completing the process in Bermuda. In April, 1944, she joined EG 9, Londonderry, as Senior Officer's ship, thereafter serving mainly on escort and patrol duty in U.K. waters. She was present on D-Day. On July 20 she was hit by a German glider bomb off Brest and towed, badly damaged, to Plymouth by HMCS *Meon*. In April, 1945, she completed eight and one-half months' repairs at Dunstaffnage, Scotland, worked up at Tobermory and, on May 13, sailed from Greenock to escort convoy JW.67 to North Russia. She was detached on May 16, however, to help escort 14 surrendered U-boats from Trondheim to Loch Eriboll. In June, after one round trip to Gibraltar as convoy escort, she left Londonderry for Esquimalt via Halifax. She arrived at Esquimalt in July and on February 11, 1946, was paid off into reserve there. She was sold in 1947 and her hull sunk in 1948 as part of a breakwater at Oyster Bay, B.C.