

GASPÉ OF YESTERDAY

RCN SERIES-PART II

HMCS GASPÉ I

HMCS GASPÉ II

KEN ANNETT

HMCS GASPÉ

Class - Minesweeping, modified Basset
class

Builder - Morton

Commissioned - 21 Oct 1938

Paid off - 29 July 1945

Displacement - 692 tons

Extreme length - 162' 7"

Extreme breadth - 27' 7"

Draught - 10'

Main engine - steam reciprocating
(coal)

Full speed - 12.5 knots

Armament - 1-4" gun, other weapons,
minesweeping gear, S.A.

Battle Honours - Atlantic - 1939-1945



Gaspé, 1940

GASPÉ

Commissioned at Quebec on October 21, 1938, *Gaspé* was at Halifax when hostilities broke out. Throughout the war she served with Halifax Local Defence Force on local minesweeping duties. She was paid off at Halifax on July 23, 1945, and sold into mercantile service in 1946, becoming the Shanghai tug *Sung Li*.

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF HMCS GASPE

The first GASPE was one of the thirteen ships in commission with which the RCN entered the Second World War. When she was built, the only minesweepers available for the protection of Canadian port approaches were three trawlers, veterans of the Great War, 1914-1918. These were now considered suitable only for service as gate-vessels and as a result, plans were made to build four new minesweepers.

In 1935, the Royal Navy had constructed two vessels, HM Ships BASSET and MASTIFF and the RCN decided to build the new Fundy Class minesweepers to the same design. These were FUNDY, COMOX, GASPE, and NOOTKA, the last later to be re-named NANOOSE.

These ships were 162' 3" in overall length, being 150' between perpendiculars. Of 27' 7" greatest breadth, they drew 14' in extreme draft. According to Jane's Fighting Ships, they displaced 460 tons, 696 tons when fully loaded. Powered by triple-expansion engines with an Indicated Horse Power rating of 950, these vessels, single-screwed, attained a speed of 12.5 knots. They were fitted with Scotch Marine Boilers and had a bunker capacity of 180 tons of coal. A four-inch gun was mounted on the forecastle and the minesweeper's complement in wartime was 33.

HMCS GASPÉ was built at Quebec by the Morton Engineering and Drydock Company at a contract price of \$268,200.00. However, it was estimated in 1945 that the operationally completed cost of the vessel and her stores amounted to approximately \$370,000.00. The ship underwent trials at Halifax in October 1938 and was commissioned in the RCN on the 27th of that month.

Throughout the Second World War, HMCS GASPÉ saw service with the Halifax Defence Force being daily employed in sweeping the approaches and harbour entrance of Halifax. In addition, she was occasionally used for local escort duties. At various times, she was refitted at other Nova Scotian ports and therefore was required to carry out some minesweeping operations in the vicinity of such ports as Pictou and Liverpool. Fitted with a Single Oropesa Sweep, she operated with other ships of her class as well as with Bangors and Western Isles Trawlers in formation sweeping. There is perhaps no better way of describing the arduous and for the most part monotonous yet essentially important service of these little ships than by quoting a sentence from GASPÉ'S sailing orders of 3 June, 1943, for operations off Halifax: "Sweep is to be carried out irrespective of weather!" Six days later, GASPÉ was on the track of a suspected U-boat. She hung on grimly and transmitted this succinct signal: "Still in touch. Am out of depth charges".

Flying her pennants J-94, HMCS GASPE arrived at Sydney, 15 July 1945, for destoring. Two weeks later she was turned over to War Assets Corporation at Sorel, for disposal. Later that year the four Fundy Class minesweepers were sold to Marine Industries Limited at Montreal. At last report (1947), HMCS GASPE had been converted to a towing tug for Ming Sung Industrial Co. Ltd. of Shanghai, China.

HMCS GASPE (II)

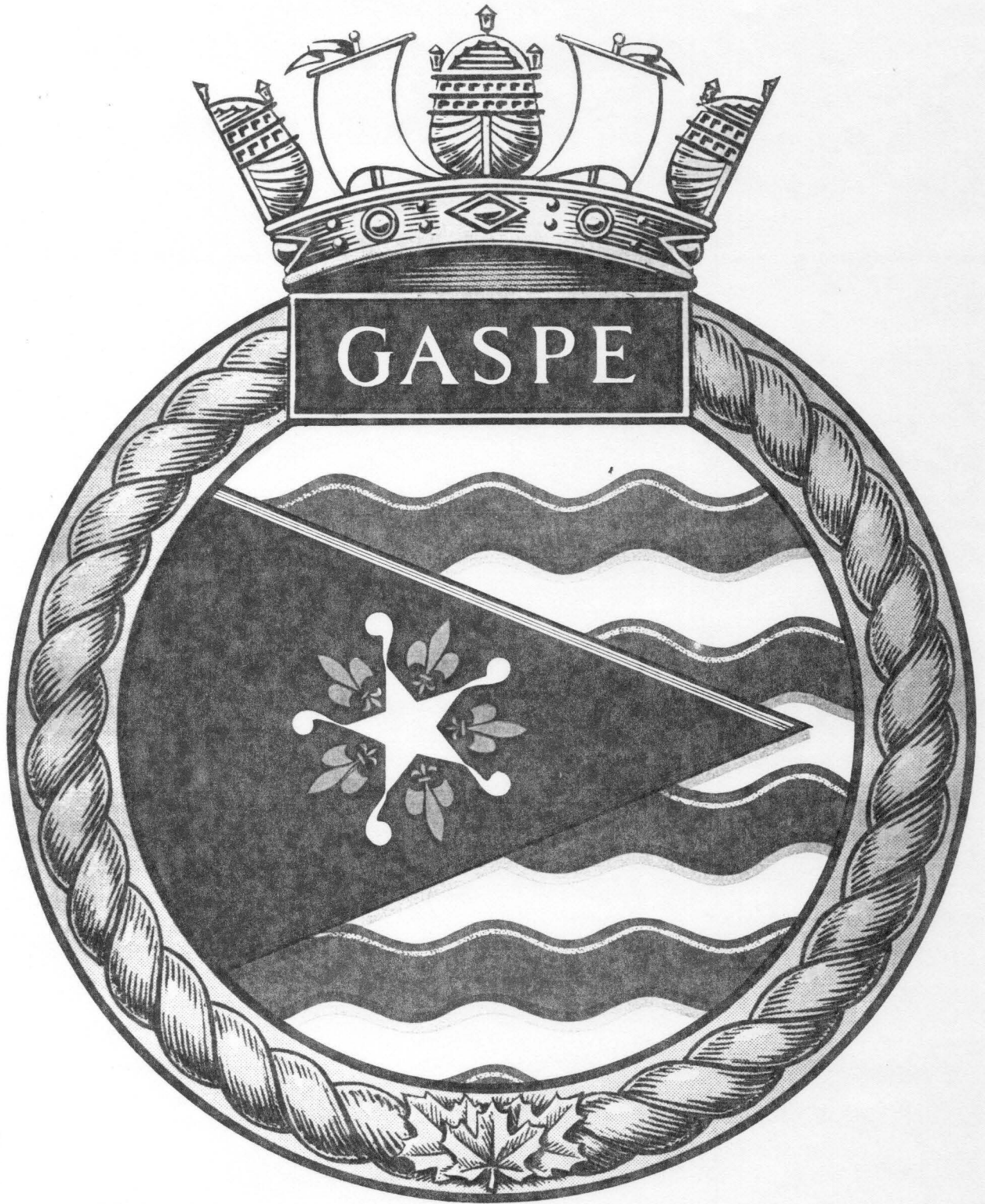
The 140-foot Coastal Minesweeper HMCS GASPE is the second of that name to serve in the Royal Canadian Navy. The first GASPE, also a minesweeper, received her name from the peninsula between the river St. Lawrence and the Bay of Chaleur.

The origin of the word Gaspé itself is disputed. Most investigators agree that it is from the Micmac word "Gaspeg" meaning "end" or "extremity". This is substantiated by its presence in the Indian names for Yarmouth and Cape Breton, both of which areas are land-mass extremities. Others, however, connect the name with that of Gaspar Cortereal, the Portuguese navigator, who visited this coast about the year 1500. Again, Gaspé is associated by some with Caspe, a community in Aragon, Spain, from which Basque fishermen came to these shores in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The second GASPÉ, though a minesweeper, is of different construction to her predecessor. Of 370 tons displacement, she has an overall length of 152 feet, a beam of 28 feet, and draws 8.5 feet of water. Powered by Diesels, her twin propellers drive her at a maximum speed of 16 knots. Her main armament is a 40 millimetre gun and the ship's complement is 5 officers and 39 men. GASPÉ'S skeletal structure is of an aluminium alloy, the hull being wood planked. One of 14 ships of the Gaspé Class, HMCS GASPÉ was laid down in the yards of the Davie Shipbuilding and Repairing Co. Ltd., at Lauzon, Quebec, 21 March 1951. Launched 12 November the same year, the ship was christened by Madame Hugues Lapointe, wife of the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Two years later, HMCS GASPÉ, the first post-war minesweeper for the Royal Canadian Navy, was commissioned at an impressive ceremony at Lauzon, 26 November 1953. The White Ensign that was hoisted was an historic battle flag, the ensign of HMS SIDMOUTH, the Bangor minesweeper that led the Canadian assault on Dieppe in 1942. On the same day and in the same yard, the frigate HMCS TORONTO was also commissioned. On this occasion the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, the Honourable Gaspard Fauteux addressed the ship's company. The band of HMCS MONTCALM was present at both ceremonies.

Trials completed, HMCS GASPÉ slipped from the shipyard jetty 0900, 6 December, and headed down the St. Lawrence bound for Halifax and her role as senior ship of the newly formed First Canadian Minesweeping Squadron.



HMCS GASPÉ

SHIP'S BADGE

Blazon: On a field barry wavy of ten Argent and Azure, a pile Gules proceeding from the dexter side, upon which a mullet Argent pointing to the dexter chief, with "commas" of the same issuing from the points of the mullet, and between them five fleurs-de-lis Or.

Significance: The red triangular-shaped device is intended to symbolize the Gaspé Peninsula, jutting out into the Atlantic, and its shores which form the Gaspé Basin or Bay after which this ship is named.

The star device depicted is one that occurs frequently in Basque decoration. The "commas" are in fact the "Oviphile" sign. This Basque device is in reference to the historical claim that Basque fishermen discovered Newfoundland in the fifteenth century and later the Gulf of St. Lawrence including Gaspé before Jacques Cartier planted a cross there. These Basques went there to hunt whales and fish for cod. The fleurs-de-lis refer to Cartier and the pioneer French settlers in Gaspesia.

The origin of the word Gaspé is disputed. Many writers claim it is from the Micmac meaning "the end" or "extremity", referring to the northern limits of Micmac territory. Others derive it from Gaspar Cortereal, the Portuguese navigator who visited this coast about the year 1500. Other writers connect Gaspé with Gaspe, a community in Aragon, Spain, from which Basque fishermen came to these waters in the fifteenth century.

Thus the significance might be summarized as follows:

- (a) the red colour of the "pile" refers to the redmen (Micmacs) who first inhabited this area;
- (b) the mullet with "oviphile", to the Basques; and
- (c) the fleurs-de-lis to Cartier and the earliest French settlers in Gaspesia.

Ship's Colours: Red and White.

Battle Honours: ATLANTIC 1939-45

HMCS GASPE - SECOND OF NAME

When GASPE sailed from Davie Shipbuilding to Halifax, N.S., she became the senior ship to the First Canadian Minesweeping Squadron on 10 December, 1953. She spent most of the first year in service performing various tasks, including trials and experiments and undergoing various modifications.

In the year 1955 the GASPE led the Squadron on a southern cruise to the West Indies and the United States. During this cruise the Squadron engaged in exercises which involved USN minesweepers from the base at Charleston, South Carolina, and paid a visit to the US Naval School of Mine Warfare at Yorktown, Virginia.

The summer of 1956 was spent in exercises, such as the NATO exercises: SWEEP CLEAR 1 in April, CORDEX V in July and NEW BROOM in September. The annual southern cruise began in November and followed the usual routine, including a visit to Charleston for USN-RCN exercises. The Squadron returned to Halifax on 10 December.

The new year opened with another successful southern cruise when, on 24 January 1957, GASPE led the Squadron back to Charleston to join the USN in an exercise off the Virgin Islands. Shortly after returning to Halifax, GASPE went in for refit on 7 March. The ship was gradually immobilized, and following the completion of post refit trials, was paid off into the custody of the Commodore Superintendent, HMC Dockyard, Halifax on 22 August, 1957. The following day she was towed to the Naval Armament Jetty at Dartmouth, and there she remained, until transfer to the Turkish Navy. There she was renamed TRABZON on March 31, 1958.