

Roy Beverly McLeod
Royal Navy
World War II
Service No. D/JX181713

Born: 20 April 1906

Place of Birth: Bay Roberts

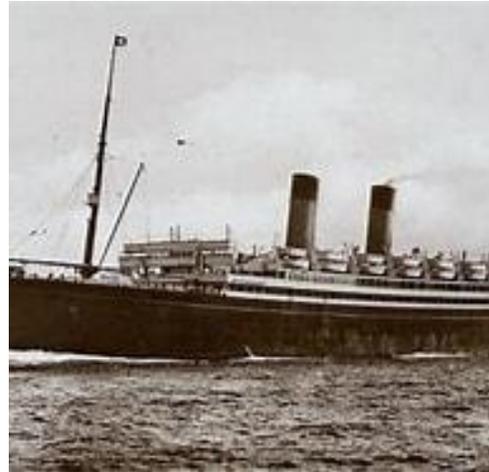
Parents: Dr. T. C. and Gertrude (?) McLeod

The 1921 Newfoundland census for Bay Roberts shows Roy at 15 and his sister Gertrude 17 years old. Both are living at home with their father, who is a local doctor for the area, although he is originally from Nova Scotia. He is a widower at this time and employs a housekeeper, Charlotte Brown from Harbour Grace to keep house and care for his children.

Roy enlisted in the Royal Navy early in World War II and was serving aboard the HMS *Laurentic* in November of 1940 when tragedy struck.

The story of the HMS *Laurentic*

*Information received from Don McNeill,
Ireland
November 30, 2016*



*“The S.S. *Laurentic* was launched on September 10th, 1908. It was built by Harland & Wolff in Belfast, the same shipyard that would launch the infamous *Titanic*, just a few years later. Like *Titanic*, she was also a White Star Line steamer, built to service the booming trans-Atlantic passenger trade.*

*Weighing some 15,000 tonnes, and with a length of 525 feet, *Laurentic* could carry 1660 passengers, and was capable of a top speed of 20 knots. Her maiden voyage began on April 29, 1909, and went from Liverpool to Montreal, a route that would become a regular one for the luxury steamer.*

*But her service as a passenger-liner would be short lived. Shortly after the First World War broke out in 1914, *Laurentic*, like so many other civilian ships, was drafted into war service. Because of her size and speed, she was requisitioned as a transport ship, ferrying soldiers and war materials around the globe. It was while carrying out these duties that *Laurentic* would meet her end.*

*In the dead of winter, on January 24th, 1917, *Laurentic* set sail from Liverpool bound for Halifax, in Canada. It was a normal trans-Atlantic run, one in which she carried 475 men, as well as some 3,211*

ingots of gold. The gold, valued at the time at some five million pounds, would be used to buy much-needed munitions to help with the war in Europe.

As it steamed around the northern coast of Ireland, an order was given for Laurentic to put in at Lough Swilly, a sheltered inlet in County Donegal. Captain Reginald Norton eased the huge vessel to moorings off the town of Buncrana, where four sailors who had contracted spotted fever were taken from the ship. In the safe waters of the Swilly, Captain Norton permitted a brief shore leave for some of the crew.

Only a few years earlier, Lough Swilly had been home to the British Grand Fleet, and was still a thriving naval base serving ships headed for the Atlantic. This base made the waters outside of Lough Swilly a target for German U-Boats, the captains of which prowled in the waters along the coast, laying mines or hoping to make a victim of a passing ship.

In the gathering darkness of late afternoon on January 25th, the SS Laurentic nosed out of Lough Swilly, toward the open sea. She passed through the boom that stretched across the Lough, protecting the waters from the U-Boat threat. On her starboard side loomed the great guns of Dunree Fort. On her port side flashed the lighthouse on Fanad Head.

“It was dark and bitterly cold with a black rolling frost,” one sailor on Laurentic recalled. “The ship increased speed to sixteen knots. It was about 6pm, with flurries of snow. There was a sudden explosion, followed quickly by another.”

The SS Laurentic had struck two German mines. Within twenty minutes the great liner

sank, barely enough time for lifeboats to be lowered into the frigid waters. For many, however, the lifeboats were of no help. Some 354 men died from wounds, drowning, or exposure in the dreadful weather conditions, which at the time of sinking was described as a full-blown snowstorm.

Only 121 survivors made it safely to shore that night. In the days that followed, the largest known funeral in Buncrana’s history would grip the seaside community, while for months afterwards the bodies of Laurentic’s dead washed up on coastlines in Donegal and beyond.”

Roy was one the casualties of the sinking of the HMS Laurentic. He was 34 years old at the time. A memorial to him can be found at the Upper Faham (St. Mura’s) Church of Ireland Churchyard CCWC.