

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

Born: 20 April 1906

Place of Birth: Bay Roberts

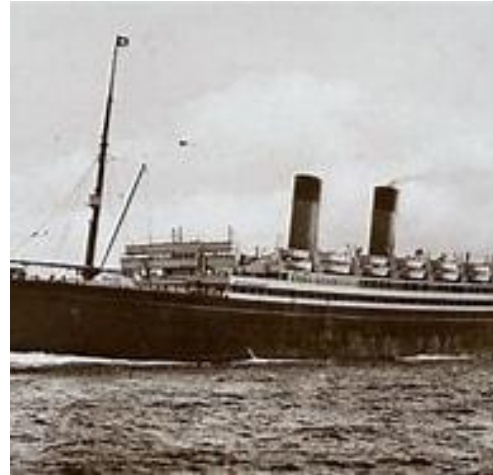
Parents: Dr. T. C. and Gertrude (?) McLeod

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 Bunrana, 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 Bunrana’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 CWGC.

"The Navy's Great" Writes A Naval Recruit

LETTER FROM ROY B.
McLEOD

The Editor of the Bay Roberts Guardian has received the following letter written on Mar. 15th, from Roy B. McLeod, of Bay Roberts, who is now serving in the Royal Navy somewhere in England. Roy writes as follows:

"Thanks a lot for "Guardians" which arrived a few days ago. I assure you nothing could be more welcome. All the Bay Roberts boys had the pleasure of reading them. After we finished we passed them to the fellows. There was all the news we wanted, after that the ads.

"Good to see hockey is started again. Wish the team the best of luck in the games, and talking of sport I saw some

great football games. Friday I am taking a run up to London. I will be staying till Monday. Woe betide me if I don't get back on time.

"The Navy's a great place. All the bunch like it very much. We are having a pretty good time now, but will be going on patrol duty shortly. We have finished our training. Everybody here think very highly of the Newfoundlanders. . . .

"All over here are working. Women are fitting into men's jobs and you could hardly believe the work they are doing unless you could see for yourself. I see your W.P.A. is doing great work. It seems a pretty good Men's Committee and the Ladies, led by such a veteran, will no doubt equal their effort of 1914.

From Bay Roberts Guardian
13 Apr 1940

"Well, old man, thanks once again, and, as they say over here, All the Best.

ROY McLEOD.
Somewhere in England,
Mar. 15, 1940.

Editor's Note: Thanks, Roy, for your interesting letter. We would be glad to hear more from you and other local boys over there. Drop us a line at any time, and if there is anything of interest we will be glad to pass it along through these columns.—Asst. Editor.

Roy B. McLeod Believed Killed

News was received here on Thursday that Roy B. McLeod, of Bay Roberts, Able Seaman, in the Royal Navy, is missing, presumed killed on war services. Roy was well-known, not only here at Bay Roberts but throughout Nfld., and his many friends will regret to hear this sad news. He was the son of the late Dr. T. C. McLeod, and was about 37 years of age. He joined the Royal Navy last fall and left here early in January. It is believed that he was serving on the armed merchant ship "Laurentic," which was sunk by enemy action some time ago.

His sister, Gertrude, (Mrs. Judson Bartlett), is now residing at St. John's.

1941

Memorial Service For Men Who Paid Supreme Sacrifice

A Memorial Service for three young men of Bay Roberts,—Harris Mercer, Sutherland Snow and Roy McLeod—who laid down their lives in the present war, will be held in Central United Church on Sunday, Jan. 12th, at 2.45 p.m. and will be conducted by Rev. J. L. Reynolds, M.A.

As Sutherland Snow was a member of Victoria L.O.L. No. 3, and Harris Mercer a member of Victoria Band, the Orange Association will attend this service in a body. Brethren from other neighbouring lodges are also invited to attend.

It is also expected that representatives of the G.W.V.A., and the Nfld. Patriotic Assn., will also be present.

Order of Service

The order of Service at Central Church, which will include the favourite hymns of the three young men, is as follows:

Organ Prelude.

Choir: Anthem.

Hymn: 541—"At even when the sun was set."

Prayer.

Choir: Anthem—"The Old Rugged Cross."

Scripture.

Hymn: 497—"O Safe is the Rock".

Sermon—Rev. J. L. Reynolds.

Hymn: 525—"O valiant hearts."

Benediction.

National Anthem.

IN MEMORIAM

Roy Beverley McLeod has paid the supreme sacrifice. Such a sentence can become rather trite in wartime, but not to those who love and respect him about whom it is said.

The news of his death has caused sorrow and grief to visit the hearts of three pals who counted his companionship and friendship as treasures that cannot be valued. Unashamedly copious tears fell from their eyes. They had talked about and hoped for his return; their lives would have been so much richer. But where mortality for Roy Beverley is denied them, death has not and cannot take from them the memories of pleasant associations; they will still hear him sing, see him laugh accompanied by his characteristic hand gesture, and remember in reminiscence those numerous characteristics that were uniquely Roy.

His personality was as a healing balm; it was forceful, not puffed up, and patient withal. His three buddies knew and understood him, but were sometimes disallowed to reach the depths of some of his philosophies. His rich heredity had given him great potentialities that waited development, but perhaps, being not materially minded, he hid his light under a bushel.

His many friends and acquaintances will regret to hear of his passing, and will join with his three comrades in extending to his sister, who loved him with a true sisterly devotion, deepest and profoundest sympathy in this time of sorrow.

A fitting epitaph for Roy Beverley McLeod is a verse from Laurence Binyon's poem "For The Fallen", which I have taken the liberty to change to the singular:

"He shall grow not old, as we
that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary him, nor
the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun
and in the morning

We shall remember him.

—G.M.

Believed Killed



Able-Seaman Roy McLeod

Able Seaman is Reported Missing

The Commodore, Naval Barracks, Devenport, has reported to the Recruiting Headquarters that Able Seaman D/JX181713 Roy B. McLeod is missing presumed killed on war services. His next of kin is his sister, Mrs. G. Bartlett, at present living in St. John's. The late Able Seaman McLeod is son of the late Dr. McLeod of Bay Roberts.