



William Joseph "Billy" Neville

Royal Navy (First Contingent)

Service No: C/JX 173321

World War II

Born: 13 August 1918

Died: 19 January 1942 (At Sea)

Place of Birth: North River, Newfoundland

Parents: Richard and Grace (Reid) Neville.

Billy Neville was one of seven boys born to Richard and Grace Neville.

However, for most of his childhood, he grew up being raised by his grandmother and other family members. This was a result of his mother's death during childbirth in 1932, and his father spending a lot of time away working.

Growing up, Billy and some of his brothers became interested in boats. Billy and his brother, Arthur, spent years fishing out of Black Tickle, Labrador which made them prepared and gave them skills to use in the future. They were always

surrounded by a hard-working family and were raised to be energetic and strong.

By 1939, the Second World War had begun, and the Neville boys were eager to answer the call to defend their country.

William and his brother, Arthur "Art" Neville, signed up for the Royal Navy in 1939. They were among the First Contingent of two hundred men who were immediately sent to England for training in the same year of their enlistment.

After a few years of training and postings, Billy Neville became a naval gunner on the Canadian National Steamships liner the R.M.S Lady Hawkins.

In January 1942, the boat was on its way to the Caribbean when U-66 off the Carolinas torpedoed it.

Over 250 lives were lost that day, including William Neville's. He was declared "missing while on passage."

William Neville's name is enshrined on the Chatham Naval Memorial in Kent, England dedicated to Royal Navy personnel lost at sea during the First and Second World Wars.

The tragic loss of Billy's life was devastating for his family, but his story and bravery will always be remembered by family today.

Source Used:

<https://www.saltwire.com/newfoundland-labrador/news/a-north-river-familys-story-of-sacrifice-327976/>



The Chatman Naval Memorial, Kent, England

Missing while on passage in S.S. Lady Hawkins (Halifax). Torpedoed by German U-boat 66, off Cape Hatteras. U-Boat 66 was later sunk by US Aircraft and escort ship Buckely West of Cape Verde Islands, May 6th, 1944.



Billy was awarded the following medals for his service:



1939-45 Star Atlantic Star War Medal NL Volunteer Medal

From Bay Roberts Guardian 02 Dec 1944

IN MEMORIAM
NEVILLE—In loving memory of Able Seaman William Neville who was drowned on Nov. 27th, 1942, when the s.s. "Lady Hawkins" was torpedoed and sunk, and A|B Arthur Neville, who was drowned while on war service in January, 1943.
—Inserted by their father, Richard Neville, North River.

Below is a letter sent to Billy's father from the Captain of the H.M.S Circassia, a ship on which Billy served.

From The Bay Roberts Guardian 09 May 1942

**LATE NORTH RIVER
SAILOR PRAISED BY
FORMER CAPTAIN**

**Captain of H.M.S. Circassia
Writes in High Terms of Late
Seaman Wm. Neville**

The following letter from Captain E. V. Lees of H.M.S. Circassia, was recently received by Mr. Richard Neville of North River, whose son, A.B. William Neville, after serving on the "Circassia", lost his life when the Canadian liner "Lady Hawkins" was sunk on her way to Bermuda late last fall. The letter speaks for itself:

H.M.S. Circassia,
C/o G.P.O., London,
12th March, 1942.

Dear Mr. Neville,— It was with the greatest distress that we heard of the loss of your son in the "Lady Hawkins" and I write to offer you my most sincere sympathy.

As in all similar cases there has been much delay before we could get confirmation or otherwise of the actual facts, hence the delay in my writing to you.

Your son is a real loss to the service and particularly to all of us in "Circassia" where he was deservedly popular and a real good working hand and ship-mate.

I know how little use a letter can be in providing comfort on such a sad occasion but I do wish to assure you how much we all feel for you in your great loss.

Yours most sincerely,
E. V. LEES, Captain.