

# HMCS *Prince Robert*: The Career of an Armed Merchant Cruiser

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## Introduction

HMCS *Prince Robert* was one of three identical ships used as armed merchant cruisers (AMCs) by the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) during the Second World War. On the eve of war, Canada had but six modern destroyers, with no prospect of additional ships for some time. To fill the desperate need for escorts, the Naval Service clutched at *Prince Robert* and her two sister liners as an expedient in a time of crisis; yet, by war's end she would be one of the most sophisticated ships of the RCN. Much like the citizen sailors who manned her, she signed up for the duration, saw service worldwide, and returned to civilian life much changed by the experience of war.

The career of the *Prince Robert* shows quite effectively the changing roles of the AMC during the Second World War and the vital niche that these ships filled. This account of the *Prince Robert* has three main objects: to detail the genesis of the AMC in its Canadian context; to explain the roles and missions that AMCs were expected to fulfil; and, to show how the *Prince Robert*, as an example of her class, fulfilled them. Further, the story of the *Prince Robert's* war service, in Canadian waters and abroad, sheds light on the policies of the Naval Service, how the RCN handled the technical challenges of the widening war, and how it cooperated with allied navies. For the *Prince Robert* was unique among RCN ships: after her initial conversion, she was radically refitted twice; her mission changed totally in the middle of the war; and, she was the most travelled of any RCN vessel. If for no other reason, these facts make her noteworthy.

## The Genesis of Canada's AMCs

HMCS *Prince Robert* was classed as an armed merchant cruiser (AMC). An AMC is simply a fast liner that is requisitioned and armed by the government in wartime for naval service, manned by a naval crew. Its usual duties are to patrol trade routes, convoy merchant ships, and intercept warships that may be engaged in commerce-raiding against friendly shipping. The conversion of liners to AMCs frees regular cruisers to support fleet actions and to patrol the more dangerous shipping lanes, in that order of priority. An AMC is a cheap way of rapidly increasing the number of surface units available to the navy as escorts.

Long before Canada had a navy the Admiralty saw her as a possible source of AMCs. At the First Colonial Conference, 4 April to 9 May 1887, Sir Sandford Fleming, eager to promote the strategic value of the new Canadian Pacific Railway, offered that, "any fast mail steamers which the Canadian Pacific might in future operate across the Pacific would be available for use as armed merchant cruisers in time of war."<sup>1</sup> At the 1909 Imperial Conference, L. P. Brodeur, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, proposed the conversion of merchant ships to AMCs as an expedient for local defence. The Admiralty rejected the idea, possibly in the hope that Canada would create a real navy. However, in 1911, Sir William White, a former Director of Naval Construction for the Admiralty, (1885-1902) made an unofficial visit to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden. He discussed naval policy with Borden and suggested that Canada could contribute to the common defence by subsidizing suitable large mail steamers of speeds



*HMCS Prince Robert, in the Georgia Strait, shortly after her 1943 refit. (NAC PA 147131)*

greater than 18 knots for use as AMC's during a war. Subsidization would permit the government to approve the plans before the ships were built, to allow for the incorporation of a stiffened structure for mounting the guns. These ships would protect Canadian commerce and trade routes while the Royal Navy husbanded cruisers for the inevitable large fleet actions with Germany.<sup>2</sup> The scheme resembled today's American Civil Reserve Air Fleet, which subsidizes a number of civilian jumbo-jets with large cargo-loading doors and stiff floors that can accommodate outsize military cargo in times of need.

Although Borden seems to have been warm to the idea, and even mentioned it in a cable to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, on 22 March 1913, the endeavour collapsed with the failure of the Naval Aid Bill in the Senate.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the Admiralty did arm three Canadian Pacific liners, the *Empress of Asia*, the *Empress of Japan*, and the *Empress of Russia* as AMC's during the Great War.<sup>4</sup>

Not surprisingly, the issue of AMC's surfaced again during the interwar period. Commerce raiders, such as the German cruiser *Emden*, had met with some success during the Great War, and the Admiralty assumed that such a threat would recur in any future conflict. In 1927 the Admiralty requested the Under Secretary of State for the Dominions to gain Canada's agreement for the pre-positioning of guns and other stores in Canada sufficient to arm four AMC's on the west coast. Their proposed employment was "to prevent American contraband trade with Japan," in the event of a war between the Empire and Japan.<sup>5</sup> Similar proposals were made to Australia and New Zealand. Pre-positioning would give the Dominions the capability to press AMC's into service long before a similarly converted ship, dispatched from Britain, could arrive on station.<sup>6</sup> Canada accepted the proposal, which cost very little, (storage only) and over a ten year period the Admiralty laid down the appropriate arms and equipment.<sup>7</sup>

By 1932 the Canadian government began to give some slight attention to the Naval Service, and to the War Book, wherein some "suitable government and privately owned vessels were earmarked as auxiliaries," should the need arise.<sup>8</sup> As the decade progressed, and the war clouds loomed darkly on the horizon, the government considered the question of Canada's naval defence more seriously. In 1935, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Commodore Percy Nelles, assessed the naval threat to Canada for the Minister for Naval Services. Nelles foresaw possible raids on shipping by enemy AMCs, submarines, or possibly light cruisers, and he proposed a minimum force of six modern destroyers as a defence.<sup>9</sup> However, the idea of converting Canadian ships into AMCs for the RCN, was not far from his mind.

### The *Prince Robert* as an AMC

The ships that had caught the eye of the Naval Service were three ordered in 1929 by Canadian National Steamships from the Cammell Laird shipyards, Birkenhead, Scotland. CN named them *Prince Robert*, *Prince David*, and *Prince Henry*, not after royalty, but as a counterpoint to Canadian Pacific's Princess fleet. Purchased at a cost of over \$2,000,000 dollars in 1930, the *Prince Robert* was a small liner of 6,893 tons gross displacement, 385 feet in length. She was capable of 23 knots, but at a more sedate 15 knots she had an endurance of 6,000 miles. Her three decks made her a fairly high ship, and her cargo spaces, car storage and staircases meant that she lacked the watertight integrity desirable in a ship of war. Nonetheless, she and her two sisters were the most suitable Canadian registered ships available for conversion to AMCs.<sup>10</sup> Nelles moved twice, in 1937 and again in 1938, to prevent their sale to foreign shipping interests in order to keep them in Canada.<sup>11</sup> Nelles also ensured that the War Book provided for gaining the authority from the Privy Council to requisition such ships.<sup>12</sup>

When the Second World War broke out, the Admiralty asked the Naval Service to arm certain British registered liners as AMCs, using the stocks deposited in Canada during the 1930s. Work commenced 3 September 1939 on SS *Letitia* at Montreal, and on the P & O liner *Rajputana* at

Esquimalt. The conversion was rapid, with HMS *Letitia* sailing on 25 November, and HMS *Rajputana* sailing on 29 December.<sup>13</sup> In all, the Admiralty requisitioned 51 liners as AMCs, representing 773,000 tons of the finest passenger shipping in the British Empire.<sup>14</sup> All, save one, were large ships, in the 11,000 to 22,000 ton range.<sup>15</sup> Conversion was straightforward. Shipyards removed as much inflammable material as possible, and installed ballast, 6-inch guns, and a rudimentary fire-control system. However, the result was a high-sided, fast rolling gun-platform, from which accurate gunfire was very difficult.<sup>16</sup> As the master of the liner SS *Transylvania* remarked after she was taken into RN service, "[a] merchantman must always be an indifferent fighting ship, however gallant the men who man her."<sup>17</sup>

Canadian plans for the Prince ships were more ambitious than a simple modification. The naval staffs plans called for removing the liners' top three decks, fitting a light cruiser superstructure, and mounting four 6-inch guns along the ships' centre-line.<sup>18</sup> As Canada owned neither the guns nor the equipment for the conversion, Naval Service Headquarters (NSHQ) signalled the Admiralty proposing to draw guns from pre-positioned stocks.<sup>19</sup> The Admiralty agreed to the conversion of the ships in short order.<sup>20</sup> By 3 September 1939, an Order-in-Council gave the Naval Service the authority to requisition ships, and on the 19th, the War Appropriations Act approved \$10,000,000 for the first shipbuilding programme.<sup>21</sup> At first the Naval Service had wanted to charter the ships, but as the scale of the modifications required became apparent, it decided to buy the ships outright, and in December 1939 negotiated with CN for their purchase. The haggling went on for some time, but finally they agreed upon a price of \$700,000 for the *Prince Robert*.<sup>22</sup>

SS *Prince Robert* was taken in hand at Burrard Dry Dock, Vancouver on 9 February 1940. The shipyard ripped apart the luxurious lounges of the upper decks where King George VI and Queen Elizabeth had strolled during their transit from Victoria to Vancouver the previous May. In their place came a light cruiser superstructure, four 6-inch Mk.VII guns on 20 degree mountings, two 3-inch high-angle (HA) Mk.I anti-aircraft guns, two Lewis guns, and

four .5-inch machine guns.<sup>23</sup> A rudimentary fire control system was installed, as was service accommodation for 22 officers and 219 ratings.<sup>24</sup> The first of the three AMCs finished, HMCS *Prince Robert* was commissioned on 31 July 1940, at a cost of \$755,300.<sup>25</sup>

The AMCs, stripped of their civilian finery, daubed with grey and armed with ancient guns in odd positions, faced a life that was potentially quite short. The Admiralty expected German surface raiders to attack British shipping, using their 'pocket-battleships' of the *Deutschland* class, cruisers, and disguised armed merchant raiders. Therefore, the Admiralty sought to prevent the escape of German surface forces into the Atlantic by patrolling the exits, and in particular the northern exits between the Faeroe Islands and Iceland, and the Denmark strait.<sup>26</sup> The Admiralty manned this "northern patrol" with AMCs of the Royal Navy, and although these large, fast liners filled the gap during a time of desperate need, they paid the price before the guns of the German navy. *Scharnhorst* sank HMS *Rawalpindi* on 23 November 1939, *Admiral Scheer* sank HMS *Jervis Bay* on 5 November 1940, and U-boats accounted for eight AMCs in 1940 alone.<sup>27</sup> Nor could the cost be measured solely in terms of ships lost. By official estimate, the conversion of liners caused Britain to forego one and a half to two million tons of imports before the fall of France, and the AMCs had the potential of transporting 100,000 troops at a time when troopships were at a premium.<sup>28</sup> Yet, one can hardly fault the Admiralty for failing to foresee the fall of France or the need for American troops to cross the Atlantic. In 1939/40 the conversion of liners to AMCs provided desperately needed ships to close the gaps in the patrol lines.

The prospect of an armed merchant raider appearing in the waters off Canada's Pacific coast concerned the RCN in 1940, and HMCS *Prince Robert* was expected to combat this threat.<sup>29</sup> These raiders bore the outward appearance of merchant ships, but they mounted five modern 5.9-inch guns, torpedo tubes, and a scouting aircraft, carefully concealed behind painted canvas screens.<sup>30</sup> They carried sufficient flags and fake superstructure to mimic up to three or four neutral ships on the Lloyd's register, allowing them either to pass as harmless, or else come within close range of their quarry without being

suspected. They were deadly fighters, for their modern guns ranged 20,000 yards as against 14,200 yards for an AMC. So it was that the raider *Thor* sank the AMC HMS *Voltaire* on 4 April 1941, after thrashing HMS *Alcantra* and HMS *Carnarvon Castle* in 1940.<sup>31</sup> Even proper fighting ships were vulnerable; the cruiser HMAS *Sydney* managed to sink the raider *Kormoran* on 19 November 1941 near Perth, Australia, but was herself sent to the bottom with the loss of all hands.<sup>32</sup>

In the fall of 1940, HMCS *Prince Robert* remained the only RCN ship available to protect shipping on the west coast. The threat of raiders occupied her there for almost the next two years. Fortunately for Canada, and *Prince Robert*, German raiders were unlikely to roam as far as the west coast when there were easier pickings to be found elsewhere. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt's order of 5 September 1939, creating a Neutrality Patrol and a Pan-American Neutrality Zone in the waters surrounding the United States and South America, influenced German deployments. Although raiders did enter the zone on occasion, they generally stayed clear, on instructions from Hitler.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Canada's west coast became an isolated and constricted hunting ground, and the Germans stayed away.

If raiders posed little threat in the immediate vicinity of the west coast, their presence in the Pacific was still problematic. The Admiralty chose to keep a strict watch on German supply ships in neutral ports as one means of combatting the raider threat. These supply ships had taken refuge in neutral ports at the onset of war. On receipt of a coded message they would sally out and rendezvous with a raider. One such ship was the *Weser*, sheltering in the Mexican port of Manzanillo, waiting to re-supply the raider *Orion*.<sup>34</sup> In September 1940, the Commander-in-Chief America and the West Indies requested that NSHQ sail *Prince Robert* to patrol off Manzanillo and intercept the *Weser*. The Commanding Officer Pacific Coast (COPC) ordered *Prince Robert* to sail forthwith.

Since commissioning under pennant number F56 on the 31st of July, the *Prince Robert* had been at Esquimalt, and had barely started her work-ups. She did one trial shoot with her 6-inch guns on 11 September, then headed south to

Mexico in what her captain, Commander C.T. Beard, RCN, called, "a very unready state."<sup>35</sup> She was aided by a minor piece of deception: a fake story planted by Naval Intelligence in the Seattle edition of the Vancouver Sun stating that *Prince Robert* would not be out of refit for some time. A Nazi agent in Seattle obligingly wired the information to the captain of the *Weser* in Manzanillo.<sup>36</sup> Sure enough, on the night of 25 September the *Weser* sortied, and due to some skilful seamanship *Prince Robert* surprised her right outside the three mile limit. The *Prince Robert* fired but one shot, a starshell, and seized the freighter so quickly that her crew made no attempt to scuttle or burn the ship. The *Weser's* captain later told Commander Beard that he had thought *Prince Robert* was only a Mexican coast-guard cutter, and so was taken unawares. It was a glorious start to *Prince Robert's* career.

It is just as well that no fighting took place, for *Prince Robert's* armament was desperately inadequate. Nominally, the three Prince ships were the most powerful units in the RCN. However, their 6-inch guns were 40 years old, having been salvaged from the casemates of scrapped *King Edward* class battleships, while the Great War vintage 3-inch HA guns were of little use against modern aircraft.<sup>37</sup> Problems with die 6-inch armament were common. The guns in "A" and "B" turrets sometimes failed to run-out after firing, and in 1941 the captain, Commander Hart, RCN, complained that "A" gun could not be trained without the assistance of at least five ratings pushing against the muzzle.<sup>38</sup> On another occasion the recoil mechanism on a 3-inch HA gun failed due to metal fatigue.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, the years of governmental neglect could not be made up overnight, and as a result more modern armaments were simply not available in Canada in 1940-41. So *Prince Robert* sailed on as she was, toiling away on west coast escort and patrol.

The remainder of 1940 and die spring of 1941 saw *Prince Robert* patrolling off the South American coast on Admiralty orders and visiting various neutral ports to keep an eye on the German shipping bottled by the British blockade. At the request of the New Zealand Naval Board, *Prince Robert* was assigned in the spring of 1941 as an escort for SS *Awatea*, which was bringing airmen from Australia and New Zealand to Canada for the British Commonwealth Air

Training Plan.<sup>40</sup> *Prince Robert* refitted at Esquimalt during the summer of 1941, and in October joined up once again with *Awatea* to carry the ill-fated Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers to Hong Kong. On the return trip, *Prince Robert* cleared Pearl Harbour three days ahead of the Japanese attack, never approaching closer than 500 miles to the Japanese fleet. COPC sent them word of the calamity at 1147 hours 7 December 1941.<sup>41</sup>

The entry of the Japanese into the war gave new impetus to the problems of west coast defence. NSHQ despatched HMCS *Prince David* to Esquimalt immediately, and HMCS *Prince Henry* followed within five months. By May 1942, west coast naval strength stood at three AMCs, three corvettes, five minesweepers, and three armed yachts.<sup>42</sup> HMCS *Prince Robert* entered a minor refit in February 1942. The addition of asdic for the detection of submarines, splinter matting for protecting the bridge, SW1-C radar for surface warning, and four hand served 20 mm Oerlikon guns for close-in anti-aircraft defence brought her complement up to 24 officers and 302 men.<sup>43</sup> With these changes NSHQ considered her suitable for coastal patrol duties.

NSHQ harboured no illusions about either the threat or the fighting value of the AMCs. NSHQ assigned the ships the following tasks: "...first, to provide objectives which are vital to our war effort with efficient close protection; and second, to provide mobile forces capable of proceeding with the utmost dispatch to any threatened point."<sup>44</sup> However, another mission statement put a high value on a visible presence:

1. To guard focal shipping points in the Northeast Pacific, particularly off BC.
2. To patrol sheltered waters where enemy vessels might hide along the coast.
3. To reassure the public by their presence in the absence of any other warships.
4. To obviate American pressure on sparse Canadian naval forces in the area.
5. To make credible publicized threats against the enemy.<sup>45</sup>

The Naval Service hoped that the sight of three large, impressive looking, Canadian warships in the Straits of Georgia off Vancouver would calm the public's fears of a Japanese attack. They could

do little else. By the end of 1941 the German surface raiders had shot their bolt and were no longer a threat. The three Princes, barely adequate against a raider, certainly had little potential with their ancient guns against units of the Japanese Imperial Fleet. Yet, they still fulfilled a useful political, vice operational role for Canada.

Fate, and the eagerness of the COPC, intervened to find *Prince Robert* more challenging duties. Japan seized the Aleutian islands of Kiska and Attu in June 1942, and it did not take the Americans long to prepare their riposte. *Prince Robert's* role in the affair would be both the occasion for a minor controversy and the catalyst that brought about her second career. At a June naval conference in San Francisco, COPC (Commodore Beech, RCN) had been asked by US General De Witte if the RCN could provide any assistance for the upcoming operation against Kiska. COPC had held out the possibility of anti-submarine patrols, but made no promises, nor did he inform NSHQ, preferring to wait for the visit of the Chief of the Naval Staff from 4-10 July

in Esquimalt. They discussed the matter, COPC suggesting that the Princes and two corvettes might be offered up, to which the CNS agreed in principle. Nothing more was heard until the USN naval liaison officer raised the matter on 15 August; then, on 16 August, the US Commander North-West Sea Frontier signalled:

How many escort and anti-submarine vessels are you willing to spare for Alaska project? Desire ships report 20 August at Kodiak...<sup>46</sup>

Due to the short notice, COPC issued sailing orders immediately, informing NSHQ after the fact.

Mr. Angus MacDonald, Minister for Naval Services, informed the Cabinet War Committee of COPC's actions on 26 August, noting that, "...it was conceived to be part of [COPC's] duty to be of assistance, where possible, to American forces."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, this was generally so; however, Commodore Beech had exceeded the provisions of the North American defence plan ABC-22.

*Canada's first anti-aircraft ship, at a British naval base, January 1944. (NAC PA 163947)*



Although it was not discussed at the meeting, ABC-22, Section IV, Task Four, paragraph 21, "Defend Alaska and Protect Its Sea Communications within the Coastal Zone," had the sub-task in paragraph 25, "Canada, Navy - Provide sea transport. Protect sea communications in the Canadian Coastal Zone."<sup>48</sup> The task COPC had agreed to was clearly beyond the Canadian Coastal Zone. The Prime Minister was perturbed, and remarked that, "Commanding Officers must understand that the Minister concerned, and ultimately the War Committee, had final responsibility in matters of this kind."<sup>49</sup> Equally irritating was that NSHQ had experienced great difficulty in getting any information from the Americans about their plans or the enemy forces involved.<sup>50</sup> There was one last telling comment before the committee passed on to weightier matters. The Minister for Naval Services, "...stated that it had been pointed out on his instructions specifically to the US commander that the Canadian AMCs were not regarded as real fighting ships suited for this duty."<sup>51</sup>

Whether suitable or not, *Prince Robert* proceeded directly to patrol off Kodiak on 17 August. For three months she endured ghastly weather, fog, and treacherous currents while escorting convoys from Kodiak to Dutch Harbour. While *Prince Robert* was engaged in this demanding and necessary work, the future of the three Prince ships was being decided in Ottawa and London.

### HMCS *Prince Robert* as an Auxiliary Anti-Aircraft Ship

The day of the armed merchant cruiser in the Second World War was now over. Escorts were available in sufficient numbers such that it was no longer justifiable to risk these large, valuable ships with their puny armaments on the open ocean. Of 51 AMCs, by 1943 fifteen had been sunk, 26 converted back to troopships, and the remainder retained in other duties.<sup>52</sup> For Canada's Prince ships, the question of new roles and new armaments had been a topic of discussion between the Admiralty and NSHQ. After considering an Admiralty offer of four slightly newer Mk.XII 6-inch guns for each vessel, NSHQ declined, preferring to mount lighter, quick-

firing guns. NSHQ chose a configuration of five twin 4-inch HA/LA mountings capable of eighty degrees of elevation. The advantages over the old 6-inch mountings were numerous: greater range, a heavier broadside due to the higher rate of fire, and most importantly, the guns were effective against aircraft.<sup>53</sup>

The Admiralty had accepted the idea of arming escorts with twin 4-inch HA/LA mountings with some reluctance. Senior naval officers favoured the larger 4.7-inch guns which gave hitting power for surface actions. But at Narvik German dive bombers had easily beaten the 40 degree mountings of Tribal class destroyers, and since the fall of France and the extension of German air cover over the Western Approaches, aircraft and U-boats had eclipsed surface forces as threats.<sup>54</sup> The Admiralty's change in armament doctrine became apparent in HMS *Lance*, an L class destroyer completed in 1941 with 4-inch HA/LA mountings. She proved extremely successful in both HA and LA roles.<sup>55</sup> Arming *Prince Robert* with five twin 4-inch mountings, suitable secondary armament, and a modern fire control system would make her an extremely powerful anti-aircraft escort.

Canada's Naval Board decided on conversion of the three Princes in September 1942.<sup>56</sup> Its proposal to arm the ships with five twin 4-inch mountings, suitable secondary armament, and a modern fire-control system reflected not only the ascendancy of the air threat, but the RCN's desire to find a useful role for the ships. The Admiralty finally settled the matter in January 1943, by officially requesting that one Prince ship [*Prince Robert*] be re-equipped as an anti-aircraft ship, and the other two as Landing Ships Infantry (Medium).<sup>57</sup> All would be used under RN control in Europe.

*Prince Robert* began her conversion at Burrard Drydock, Vancouver, in February 1943. NSHQ chose the west coast dockyard as it was much less pressed for work and labour than east coast dockyards, and had better access to materials. Burrard executed the modifications specified in the Admiralty plans with commendable skill, using Canadian workers. They machined gun platforms for five Mk.XIX HA/LA mountings, each boasting twin 4-inch Mk.XVP guns. It was truly a Canadian production: the



*Aft view of HMCS Prince Robert in 1943. The three twin 4-inch gun mountings of the aft group are clearly visible. (NAC PA 145618)*

mountings were made in Trenton, Ontario; the guns were the first 10 off the line from Sorel Industries, Sorel, Quebec; and the fuse-setting machinery was made by Reliance Gear Works in Vancouver, B.C. Secondary armament consisted of two 4-barrel, 2-pounder Mk.VII pom-poms, and six 20 mm hand-operated Oerlikon guns. The installation of a Rangefinder Director Mk. V, a Fuse Keeping Clock Mk.III\*, a Fire Control Box Mk.II, a Gyro Roll Corrector Mk.VII, and an Automatic Barrage Unit Mk.I provided *Prince Robert* with a relatively sophisticated fire control system. Radar information came from a 272 Mk.III Surface Warning set, a 285 gun-ranging set, and a SW2-C radar set. The SW2-C was a modified version of the Canadian SW1-C that incorporated an Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) function capable of discerning friendly vessels or aircraft from unfriendly ones.<sup>58</sup> The ship's complement mushroomed to 33 officers and 405 ratings.<sup>59</sup> With the exception of building Tribal-class destroyers, the refit of the *Prince Robert* was

probably the most complex task undertaken by a Canadian shipyard during the war.

*Prince Robert* was recommissioned on 7 June 1943 as an auxiliary anti-aircraft ship, and after work-ups sailed for England, reaching the Clyde in mid-August. For the next year *Prince Robert* was under the operational control of the RN, employed as an anti-aircraft escort on the UK-Gibraltar run, and in the Mediterranean. She added a powerful anti-aircraft defence to any convoy she escorted, but this power came at a price. The new armament meant that *Prince Robert* was now top heavy, displacing 7,243 tons, and riding 3 feet 8 inches below her designed deep loading marks. Without the water-tight division of a fighting ship, she was sure to capsize quickly, if damaged.<sup>60</sup>

NSHQ signalled the Admiralty in early August authorizing them to make any additions or alterations necessary for fighting efficiency. As a result, a team from the RN Gunnery School, HMS

*Excellent*, inspected the ship.<sup>61</sup> They reported *Prince Robert* to be generally well fitted out and efficient, but made several recommendations with respect to radar, armament, and fire control.<sup>62</sup> By no means were all of these implemented, but the British replaced the Canadian SW2-C radar with a 291 air warning unit; they installed two type 242 IFF sets and an Air Plotting table; and, they installed six additional Oerlikon guns, giving a total of seven for each side. Her captain, Captain A.M. Hope, RCN, considered that, allowing for work-ups, *Prince Robert* would be ready for action by 18 October 1943.<sup>63</sup>

*Prince Robert's* time of testing would soon be upon her. Allied naval and air forces had soundly defeated the U-boats in the North Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay during the summer of 1943. This defeat brought on some belated cooperation between the Luftwaffe and the U-boats in the Bay of Biscay during the months of September through November, as the German Navy Commander, Admiral Doenitz, sought to regain the offensive by attacking convoys on the UK-Gibraltar run. It was these very convoys, passing through the Bay of Biscay, which *Prince Robert* was tasked to defend.

The Luftwaffe threw two new weapons into the fray, in the form of the Hs293 radio-controlled glider bomb and the SD1400X radio-controlled bomb, better known as the 'Fritz-X'. The former had a 1,000-pound warhead for use against merchant ships or unarmoured escorts, while the latter had a 3,000-pound warhead to pierce the decks of armoured warships.<sup>64</sup> In May 1943, Admiral Doenitz had advocated using the new weapons in a mass-attack on Gibraltar sometime after June 1943, when sufficient numbers had been stock-piled. Hitler considered such a move impractical due to the difficulty in overflying Spain and security concerns should one fall into Allied hands. Instead, he ordered the weapons to be used to make up the shortfall in sinkings by U-boats.<sup>65</sup> German aircraft could only reach the Bay of Biscay convoy routes, yet, in what can only be considered a piece of ineptitude on the part of the Luftwaffe High Command, the Hs293 was fed into the battle piecemeal. On 27 August 1943, the Tribal-class destroyer HMCS *Athabaskan* was the first to suffer, when Do-217 bombers of Kampfgeschwader (KG) 100 hit her with an Hs293 glider bomb. A frigate, HMS *Egret*, blew

up after being hit by a glider bomb during the same attack.<sup>66</sup> Despite these successes, the Luftwaffe was not prepared to follow up its advantage. The Do-217 was only an interim carrier for the weapon, and the Luftwaffe awaited the arrival of the new HE-177 bomber before renewing the aerial offensive.<sup>67</sup> On 25 October 1943, KG 40 arrived in south-west France at Bordeaux-Merignac, equipped with HE-177/A5 aircraft capable of carrying the Hs293.<sup>68</sup> The *Prince Robert* was soon to meet them in battle.

In mid-November Doenitz threw his forces into combat against a 66-ship convoy, SL139/MKS30, that was proceeding from Gibraltar to England through the Bay of Biscay. On the 16th, as they sailed about 200 miles southwest of Cape St. Vincent, under escort by seven ships of the 40th Escort Group, a long-range FW-200 reconnaissance aircraft sighted them. Doenitz laid three successive patrol lines of U-boats across their path. By 18 November the battle had been joined, and the U-boats got the worst of it. For the next three days, SL139/MKS30 battled its way homeward. German losses were high: HMS *Exe* sank U-333 on the 18th; a 179 Squadron Wellington sank U-211 on the 19th; HMS *Nene*, HMCS *Calgary*, and HMCS *Snowberry* sank U-536 on the 20th; and HMS *Foley* and HMS *Crane* sank U-538 on the 21st.<sup>69</sup> The British suffered damage to HMS *Exe*, which had left one propeller embedded in the hull of U-333 after ramming her; the sloop HMS *Chanticleer* lost her stern to an acoustic torpedo, but struggled back to the Azores; and, U-boats shot down two anti-submarine aircraft on the 21st.<sup>70</sup>

It had been the Admiralty's practice to have *Prince Robert* sail from her base at Plymouth to escort convoys between England to Gibraltar, and vice versa. After several uneventful convoys the Admiralty ordered *Prince Robert* into Plymouth on 19 November for repairs to her asdic dome. After putting much of the crew ashore on leave, the Captain received an order at 1900 hours from Western Approaches Command to make ready to sail immediately in support of SL139/MKS30. A mad scramble ensued to both round-up the crew and repair a leak in number 3 boiler, but by 0400 hours on the 20th *Prince Robert* had cleared Portsmouth harbour, southbound for the Bay of Biscay.<sup>71</sup>

The Luftwaffe struck SL139/MKS30 at 1527 hours, 21 November when 20 HE-177 aircraft of KG 40 attacked with glider bombs.<sup>72</sup> FW-200 aircraft joined in with high level bombing. The Germans dropped glider bombs at intervals of 4 to 5 minutes, and at 1558 hours a glider bomb hit and mortally damaged the M.V. *Marsa*. The escorts, reinforced to 22 ships, engaged the aircraft with gunfire. *Prince Robert* arrived as the attack was developing and took her normal station astern of the convoy, opening fire immediately.<sup>73</sup> The attackers released sixteen glider bombs during the battle, twelve of which seem to have been directed against the straggler, M.V. *Marsa*.<sup>74</sup> The *Prince Robert* engaged three separate HE-177 aircraft making attacks on the convoy, damaging one, and preventing it from launching its weapon. The HE-177s released their weapons at 14,000 yards range and 7,000 feet altitude. After the bomb fell from the aircraft, its rocket motor ignited, accelerating it to 370 miles per hour. The rocket cut out after 12 seconds, whereupon the bomb dove down at a 45 degree angle towards its target. The operator in the launching aircraft guided the bomb, placing the bomb and the target on the aircraft's port side. The bomb then flew at low level, about 50 feet, as the operator tried to manoeuvre it into the side of the ship. With an impact speed of approximately 450 miles per hour and a 1,000-pound warhead, a hit from an Hs293 was deadly.<sup>75</sup> *Prince Robert* was fortunate in arriving just as the battle commenced. Had German reconnaissance planes spotted an anti-aircraft ship with the convoy, the attackers would doubtless have concentrated on sinking her as a first priority.<sup>76</sup> Her timely arrival seems to have surprised them.

*Prince Robert* engaged the HE-177 control planes with her 4-inch armament, firing 333 rounds in all. At one particularly tense moment a glider bomb headed towards the *Prince Robert*, and was engaged by the short-range armament. Fortunately, it passed close by *Prince Robert* and achieved a near-miss on a merchant ship 1,000 yards away on the tail of the convoy's port column.<sup>77</sup> The Gunnery Officer, Lieutenant-Commander R.I. Hendy, later recalled that he had difficulty getting radar ranges for the HE-177, as the radar operator tended to track the glider-bomb instead.<sup>78</sup>

The attack ceased at 1705 hours. The results tallied as follows: one ship badly damaged and abandoned, one ship damaged but seaworthy, and one escort damaged; as against three German aircraft shot-down, (two by a patrol plane), and three damaged.<sup>79</sup> The volume and accuracy of the anti-aircraft fire from *Prince Robert* and the few frigates of the escort appears to have disconcerted the attackers. By the same token, the ability to use a "stand-off delivery kept the aircraft casualties low, considering that only one aircraft was lost to anti-aircraft fire. Nevertheless, the ships got through. The escort forces of SL139/MKS30 won a clear victory over the combined aerial and U-boat forces of the Reich. As S.W. Roskill stated in *The War At Sea*, "[t]he victory of the sea and air escorts had indeed been resounding, and the long-awaited co-operation of the Luftwaffe with the U-boats had not achieved the results hoped for by Doenitz."<sup>80</sup> When the Luftwaffe tried again, on 26 November, to attack another convoy off Bougie, it lost four HE-177s during the action and another three from forced landings. Daylight attacks on shipping were henceforth abandoned.<sup>81</sup>

For *Prince Robert* the duty of escort continued on, taking her along the convoy routes to Gibraltar, and into the Mediterranean during 1944. As she went about her uneventful, but important, routine, plans were being made in London and Ottawa which would see her refitted once more, and sailing in yet another theatre of war, the Pacific. As early as November 1943 the Admiralty considered refitting *Prince Robert* as a Flagship for an Escort Carrier Force to be sent to the Pacific, but decided against it due to her lack of armour and the lack of time in which to effect the necessary radar upgrades.<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless, the expectation that *Prince Robert* would be refitted was firmly fixed in the Admiralty, and once refitted the only logical place to employ her was the Pacific.

## HMCS *Prince Robert*: Anti-Aircraft Cruiser for the Pacific

Re-fitting the *Prince Robert* as an anti-aircraft cruiser for deployment to the Pacific theatre required a considerable leap in sophistication for her fire-control, radar, and communication systems. The gunnery inspection report of HMS *Excellent* and the earlier message from NSHQ authorizing the Admiralty to make any additions and alterations necessary for efficiency had provided the initial shove which had got the idea of another refit in motion. Ships officers spoke directly to RN authorities about further changes to *Prince Robert*, and the RN assumed on its part that these conversations were official requests from the RCN, which they were not.<sup>83</sup> Thus, when the Admiralty proposed, at a meeting of the Canadian Joint Staff Mission with the British Chiefs of Staff in London on 19 May 1944, that *Prince Robert* be part of the Canadian contribution to the Pacific, they did so on the

assumption that she would be extensively refitted.<sup>84</sup> On 11 October 1944 the Cabinet War Committee decided *Prince Robert* would go to the Pacific.<sup>85</sup> The RCN was not opposed to the refit, but believed that the Admiralty had done all the staff work. NSHQ discovered, to its chagrin, that the plans drawn up by the Director of Naval Construction (RN) at Bath were not Admiralty approved, and that no Staff Requirements had been raised for the refit. The Director of Naval Construction at NSHQ lamented that, "as the *Prince Robert* was to all intents and purposes a RN ship..." the RN should have raised the Staff Requirements.<sup>86</sup> He then pointed out the deficiencies of the *Prince Robert* with respect to top weight and lack of watertight division. His final comment was, "[t]he procedure which has led to the present conversion shows that divided control between Admiralty and NSHQ is unsatisfactory, and that in future the responsibility for A[dditions] and A[Iterations], etc., for RCN ships under RN administration must

*HMCS Prince Robert arrives in Esquimalt, B.C. carrying Canadian personnel liberated from Japanese prisoner-of-war camps, 20 October 1945. (NAC PA 116788)*



remain with NSHQ."<sup>87</sup> DNC's frustrations were understandable; they stemmed from having to delay the completion of two Tribal-class destroyers in order to prepare the paperwork and drawings for *Prince Robert*.<sup>88</sup>

Administrative difficulties aside, there was an obvious need for a modern anti-aircraft cruiser if the RCN was to fight Japan. In September 1944, *Prince Robert* returned to Canada, and on 20 December was paid off into refit at the Burrard Dock in Vancouver. There she was fitted with an Action Information Office roughly equivalent to that of a modern destroyer, a combined Operations and Bridge plotting table, a simplified Air Directing room for fighter direction, and a host of new radar equipment. A barrage director and automatic barrage unit were fitted aft for the control of the aft 4-inch guns. Perhaps the most significant omission was that of Remote Power Control for the main guns, which would have allowed the director to train the guns remotely.<sup>89</sup> The main armament remained ten 4-inch Mk.XVI\* guns in twin HA/LA mountings, but secondary armament changed to two power-operated quadruple pom-poms, two power-operated twin 20 millimetre Oerlikons, five single Oerlikons, and four 40 millimetre power-operated Boffin guns. All Oerlikon and Boffin guns featured gyro-stabilized reflector sights, similar to those employed in fighter aircraft.<sup>90</sup> When commissioned on 4 June 1945, *Prince Robert* was outgunned only by the RCN's new cruisers, *Uganda* and *Ontario*. Unlike the cruisers, however, *Prince Robert* was a Canadian effort.

As fate would have it, *Prince Robert* arrived in the Pacific too late to see any action against Japan. Her captain, Captain W.B. Creery, RCN, represented Canada at the surrender ceremonies in Hong Kong, and the ship had the ironic task of transporting former prisoners of war from Hong Kong back to Canada. Once home, there was no question of keeping *Prince Robert* in service. Not only did she lack the speed to keep up with the fleet carriers, cruisers and destroyers of the RCN's post-war dream navy, but the inadequacies of her merchant hull, with its lack of watertight division, and her excessive topweight, made it unconscionable to keep her in service as a fighting ship. *Prince Robert* was paid off to War Assets for disposal on 18 January 1946.<sup>91</sup>

## Back to Civvy Street

*Prince Roberts* conversion into an AMC for the RCN in 1940 had been in line with sixty years of naval thought which saw the conversion of fast liners into armed ships of war as a partial solution to the problem of Canada's naval defence. Canada's failure to acquire the guns and equipment necessary to execute even the modest plan of converting three ships had put NSHQ in the embarrassing position of asking permission of the Admiralty to use the weapons that had been put aside for British ships. That *Prince Robert* never met an armed foe during her duty as an AMC was fortunate, indeed, for her armament was obsolete and unsuited to the task of hunting down and destroying raiders. It was only when rearmed as an anti-aircraft ship that she took her rightful place in the fighting line of the RCN.

The carriers, cruisers, and fleet destroyers of the post-war RCN faded relatively quickly from the scene, but *Prince Robert* left a legacy. When Canada's Tribal-class destroyers refitted in the 1950s, their 4.7-inch mountings were removed, and in their place were the 4-inch HA/LA guns of an anti-aircraft ship. *Prince Robert* served on in civilian life until 1962, when, as *SS Lucania*, she was scrapped by her Italian owners. Like so many wartime ships, she went unnoticed at the end.

## Notes

1. Gilbert Norman Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada*, Volume I, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952), pp.69, 73.
2. Tucker, I, p.205.
3. Tucker, I, pp.207-208.
4. Tucker, I, p.73.
5. Letter, Admiralty to the Under-Secretary of State Dominions Office, 2 February 1927, Directorate of History (DHist) File D0117/56.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, and Gilbert Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada*, Vol II, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952), p. 10.
8. Tucker, I, p.353.
9. Memorandum, CNS to Minister of Naval Service, 30 October 1935, NS 1017-10-18, Vol I, DHist File Prince Ships 8000. See also, Marc Milner, *Canadian Naval Force Requirements in the Second World War*, ORAE Extramural Paper No. 20, (Department of National Defence, 1981), p.3, in which the threat is expanded to include battleships, cruisers, "armoured merchant cruisers," and "large, heavily gunned submarines."

- (CNS Memorandum D-26, 12/02/37, PAC, RG 24, II B5, Vol 37),
10. Ship's description from Bill Johnson, *The Prince Robert*, (Sydney: VIP Graphic Studio, 1988), pp.3-4,
  11. Minute, CNS to Minister of the Naval Service, 21 September 1942, DHist file Prince Ships 8000; also, Anonymous unpublished narrative, "The Prince Ships, 1940-1945," u.d., p.3, DHist file Prince Ships 8000. A CN official is quoted as saying that CN had been "prevented from selling [the Prince ships]."
  12. Milner, p. 10. The Prince ships were not mentioned by name in the War Book; rather, the authority sought was to requisition civilian shipping in general as the situation demanded. War Book, (Provisional), Amended to May 1939, Chapter VI, Article 2, and Appendix IX, copy in C.G. Powers' papers, Queen's Archives, D2002, Box 67.
  13. Tucker, II, p. 10.
  14. C.B.A. Behrens, *Merchant Shipping and the Demands of War*, (London: HMSO, 1955), p.51n.
  15. *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1922-1946*, (New York: Mayflower, 1980), pp.81-82.
  16. David Bone, *Merchantman Rearmed*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1949), pp.28-29.
  17. Bone, p.29.
  18. Memorandum, CNS to Deputy Minister of the Naval Service, 22 December 1939. DHist file Prince Ships 8000.
  19. Signal 1809/9 NSHQ to Admiralty, 9 September 1939, and signal 2111/16 NSHQ to Admiralty 16 September 1939, DHist file Prince Ships 8000. The first signal proposed conversion of Prince David and North Star (ex-Prince Henry, now owned by Clarke Steamships); the second proposed the Prince Robert.
  20. Signal, Admiralty to NSHQ, 26 September 1939; "The Prince Ships," p.5. The Admiralty initially agreed to the conversion of two ships; the third was agreed to on 8 January 1940. The Admiralty had suggested *Prince Henry* and *North Star*, (ex-Prince David.) for conversion, but the Naval Service chose *Prince Robert* as it was in much better condition than the other two ships.
  21. Tucker, II, p.9.
  22. Tucker, II, pp.34-35.
  23. The term, "20 degree mounting," refers to the angle above the horizontal to which the gun could be elevated. 20 degree mountings were considered low-angle, or LA; 40 or 50 degree mountings were considered high-angle, or HA. Some mountings allowed the gun to achieve both low and high-angle fire, and hence were referred to as LA/HA.
  24. *Conway's*, 82; Memorandum CNS to Deputy Minister of the Naval Service, 22 December 1939, DHist file 111.1 (D11).
  25. Tucker, II, p. 136.
  26. Captain S.W. Roskill, *War at Sea, 1939-1945*, Vol I, (London: HMSO, 1954), p.45.
  27. Great Britain, Admiralty, *Ships of the Royal Navy, Statement of Losses During The Second World War*, (London: HMSO, 1947), passim.
  28. Behrens, pp.217, 223.
  29. Memorandum, CNS to Deputy Minister for Naval Services, 15 September 1939, DHist file NSS 8700-314/3 Vol I, Prince Robert Movements.
  30. Richard S. Pattee, "The Cruise of the German Raider Atlantis," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol 75, no. 12, (December, 1949), pp. 1323-1333.
  31. *Conway's*, p.82.
  32. Richard S. Pattee, "The German Raider Kormoran-Sydney's Nemesis," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol 76, no. 12, (December 1950), pp. 1-11.
  33. Roskill, I, p. 112. Although Roskill states, "the American President's order brought little advantage to our cause," the maps on facing pages 279, 383, and 545 show, that except for one or two occasions, the armed merchant raiders stayed clear of the zone.
  34. Roskill, I, p.607.
  35. Johnson, p.7.
  36. Clipping *Time Magazine*, 4 December 1950, DHist file NSS-1037-41-2 Vol I, "Weser."
  37. Johnson, p.5. Also, Tucker, II, p.37.
  38. Letter, Commanding Officer HMCS Prince Robert to Commanding Officer Pacific Coast, 14 July 1941; also Letter Commanding Officer HMCS Prince Robert to Commanding Officer Pacific Coast, 25 October 1940, in DHist file COPC C8800-314/3 Vol I. One rating recalled seeing the guns run out with the aid of block and tackle as late as 1942.
  39. HMCS Prince Robert, Report of Proceedings 1-31 August 1942, in DHist file NSS 1926-314/3 Vol I.
  40. "The Prince Ships," pp. 16-17.
  41. Johnson, p. 10, which shows a chart with the tracks of Prince Robert and that of the Japanese fleet. Post-war claims by ex-crew members that they had sighted the Japanese fleet prior to the attack, and that Prince Robert had signalled the information to COPC gave rise to a great flurry of work by RCN historians during the early 1950s. After much investigation the claim was discounted. DHist file "Prince Ships 8000" contains the correspondence.
  42. "The Prince Ships," p.43.
  43. Memorandum to Naval Historian NS 8200-300 (Ships), 7 June 1956, in DHist File 111.1 (D11). For a discussion of the problems with SW1-C radar, see, David Zimmerman, *The Great Naval Battle of Ottawa*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989). As a navigation aid, the SW1 -C proved invaluable when *Prince Robert* deployed to Alaskan waters in the fall of 1942.
  44. Chief of Staff Submission to the Minister of National Defence, 19 February 1942, NSS 1014-1-3, Vol I, as cited in "The Prince Ships," p.43.
  45. Johnson, p. 11.
  46. Signal Com NW Sea Frontier to COPC, T.O.D. 1943/16, 16 August 1942; Letter COPC to CNS, NS 1650-3(1) 20 August 1942, DHist file Prince Ships 8000; also "The Prince Ships," 49-50.
  47. Power's papers, Queen's University Archives, Box 38, Vol IV, Cabinet War Committee Minutes, 26 August 1942.
  48. Power's Papers, Box 69, File D-2020 ABC 1 Plan.
  49. Cabinet War Committee, 26 August 1942.
  50. C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Government: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), p.321.
  51. Cabinet War Committee Minutes, 26 August 1942.
  52. *Conway's*, p.82.
  53. "The Prince Ships," p.56.
  54. Edgar J. March, *British Destroyers*, (London: Seeley Service, 1966), p.62.
  55. Alan Ravan and John Roberts, *British Warships of The Second World War: A Folio of Authentic Scale Drawings, First Series*, (London: Conway's Maritime Press, 1971), p.18.
  56. "The Prince Ships," p.57.

57. Memorandum NS 1057-5-3, Director Operations Division to Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, 29 January 1943, in DHist File Prince Ships 8000.
58. W. E. Knowles Middleton, *Radar Development in Canada: The Radio Branch of the National Research Council of Canada, 1939-1946*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1981), p. 18.
59. Armament figures from Memorandum to the Naval Historian, 7 June 1956, NS 8200-300 (Ships), DHist File 111.1 (D11); and Report of Gunnery Inspection by HMS *Excellent*, 2 August 1943, DHist File Prince Robert 8000-1, vol 1; and DHist Photographic Record File, Prince Robert. For a description of generally how the fire control system operated, see March, p.384, and Alan Raven and John Roberts, *British Battleships of World War Two*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1976), pp.379-380.
60. Signal, NSHQ to Admiralty 271835Z September 1943; and, Memorandum Director of Naval Construction to Chief of Naval Equipment and Supply, Staff 15/ 11 / 44 8060 -300(t), in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1, vol 1.
61. Signal NSHQ to Admiralty 031540Z August 1943, in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1, Vol 1.
62. "Report of Gunnery Inspection by HMS *Excellent*, 2 September 1943," in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1, Vol 1.
63. HMCS Prince Robert, Report of Proceedings for September 1943, in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1, Vol 1.
64. One casualty of the Fritz-X was HMS *Warspite*, severely damaged on 16 September 1943 off Salerno. The bomb pierced her armoured deck, travelled through number 4 boiler room, and exploded in her double-bottom. An Italian battleship, the *Roma* had been sunk earlier that summer with the same weapons. Raven and Roberts, *British Battleships*, p.371.
65. Great Britain, Admiralty, *Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs, 1943*, (London: HMSO, 1947), p.47; also, Werner Baumbauch, *The Life and Death of the Luftwaffe*, (New York: Coward-McCann, 1960), p.95.
66. Captain S.W. Roskill, *The War at Sea, 1939-1945, Vol III, Part 1*, (London: HMSO, 1960), p.30; Len Burrow, *Unlucky Lady: The Life and Death of HMCS Athabaskan, 1940-1944*, (Stittsville: Canada's Wing's, 1982), pp.42-43.
67. Baumbach, p.96.
68. William Green, *The Warplanes of the Third Reich*, (London: MacDonald, 1970), p.345.
69. Roskill, Vol III, Map 3 facing page 49.
70. Roskill, Vol III, p.51.
71. DHist Narrative, "Operation of HMCS Prince Robert, Escort of MRS 30 and SL 139 through the Bay of Biscay, 20 to 25 November 1943," DHist file 8000-1 Prince Robert.
72. "Extract from Narrative of Senior Officer 40th Escort Group in HMS *EXE* Report of Proceedings to Captain (D) Greenock Dated November 26th, 1943," DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1; Green, p.345.
73. Letter M. 013632/43, Captain A.M. Hope to Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, 23 November 1943, in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1.
74. Narrative, HMS *Exe*; Green, p.345.
75. Report of Attack by Enemy Aircraft, D0538, HMCS Prince Robert, 21 November 1943, in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1; Letter Captain Hope to Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, 23 November 1943, in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1; and, Alfred Price, *Luftwaffe Handbook, 1939-1945*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1977), pp.50-51.
76. Anti-aircraft ships suffered the highest percentage losses of any RN warship lost to air attack in the European theatre, 64 per cent, (Atlantic and Mediterranean). It seems probable that pilots picked them out in order to make later attacks on other vessels easier. See Tweed Wallace Ross, Jr., *The Best Way to Destroy a Ship: The Evidence of European Naval Operations in World War II*, (Manhattan Kansas: MA/AH Publishing, 1980), p.71.
77. Report of Attack by Enemy Aircraft, 21 November 1943.
78. Interview, Commodore (retired) R.I. Hendy, 18 January 1994. RN doctrine called for hitting the control aircraft rather than trying to hit the bomb.
79. Claims, as usual, are problematic. While there is no doubt about the ships, the claims of enemy aircraft shot down varies. A note, "Casualties Among Ships and Aircraft, Convoys SL139/MKS30, During Air Attack," in DHist file 8000 Prince Robert, Vol 3, gives a total of 3 to 6 aircraft lost, and 3 to 6 damaged, 2 being shot down by an escorting Liberator, 1 damaged by a Liberator, and 2 damaged by a Sunderland. The only claim for Prince Robert is one aircraft damaged. Roskill, Vol III, 52, gives only 3 aircraft lost, as does Green, p.345.
80. Roskill, III, pp.52-53.
81. Green, p.345.
82. Admiralty PD 0260/43 dated 11 November 1943, in DHist file 1 /17193 Escort Carrier Assault Flagships.
83. DNC to CNEC, 15 November 1944.
84. Tucker, II, p.99.
85. Tucker, II, p.101.
86. DNC to CNEC, 15 November 1944.
87. DNC to CNEC, 15 November 1944.
88. Naval Staff minute 255, 11 August 1944, in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1, Volume 1.
89. Signal GS 154-5-35, Chief Naval Mission Overseas to NSHQ, 14 October 1944, in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1, Vol I.
90. Signal, NSHQ to C-in-C British Pacific Fleet, 091335Z Jul 45, in DHist file Prince Robert 8000-1, Vol I.
91. Tucker, II, p.520.

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