

THE SINKING

OF THE

H.M.H.S.

LLANDOVERY CASTLE



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Issued by authority of Director of Public Information  
OTTAWA.

## The Sinking of the H.M.H.S. Llandoverly Castle.

(Note.—The Honourable the Minister of Overseas Military Forces of Canada, Sir Edward Kemp, K.C.M.G., having made careful inquiries into the sinking of H.M.H.S. *Llandoverly Castle* on June 27, has authorized publication of the following article. The information contained therein has been obtained and verified by personal interviews with the survivors and affords convincing evidence of the deliberate intent and foul motive of this latest German outrage on non-combatants.)

### HOW THE NURSES DIED.

“Unflinchingly and calmly, as steady and collected as if on parade, without a complaint or a single sign of emotion, our fourteen devoted nursing sisters faced the terrible ordeal of certain death—only a matter of minutes—as our lifeboat neared that mad whirlpool of waters where all human power was helpless.”—Extract from Sergeant A. Knight's story of the destruction of the *Llandoverly Castle*.

Official verification of the facts surrounding the sinking of H.M.H.S. *Llandoverly Castle* confirm two main points—the supreme devotion and valiant sacrifice of the medical personnel and the ship's company, whose courage and resignation were in keeping with the proudest traditions of the British Army and Merchant Marine Service; and the utter blackness and dastardly character of the enemy outrage on this defenceless institution of mercy—a crime surpassing in savagery the already formidable array of murders of non-combatants by the Germans.

### DELIBERATE MURDERS.

Deliberate in its conception, every circumstance connected with the incident reveals the German in the light of the cunning murderer who employs every foul means of destroying all traces of his despicable crime.

No other explanation can be attached to the systematic attempts of the submarine to ram, shell and sink the life-boats and wreckage floating helplessly with their two hundred and fifty-eight unfortunate victims, one hundred and sixteen miles from land—a work of destruction so successfully performed that only one boat, containing twenty-four survivors, escaped.

This list of survivors includes only one officer and five other ranks of the hospital personnel of ninety-seven, and the official story of Major T. Lyon, Sergt. A. Knight, Private F. W. Cooper, Private G. R. Hickman, Private S. A. Taylor, and Private W. Pilot, all of the Canadian Army Medical Corps, is a stirring record of the perfect discipline of all ranks and the loading and floating of the lifeboats in the face of every possible obstacle.

Through it all nothing stands out more brilliantly than the coolness and courage of the fourteen Canadian nursing sisters, every one of whom was lost, and whose sacrifice under the conditions about to be described will serve to inspire throughout the manhood and womanhood of the whole Empire a yet fuller sense of appreciation of the deep debt of gratitude this nation owes to the nursing service.

At the outset it is well to consider the circumstances under which these fourteen nurses were engaged on hospital ship duty.

The majority of these volunteered for service at the very outbreak of hostilities in 1914, came to England and France with the First Canadian Division, had seen active service, chiefly in casualty clearing stations in France throughout the intervening period, and recently had been transferred to transport duty by way of change, and what would under ordinary conditions prove a rest.

For many months, and, in some cases, two years, these sisters had endured the hazards of the shelled areas in France, splendidly contributing to the efficiency of our Medical Service. How magnificently they faced the



final ordeal on that awful evening of June 27 is simply, yet graphically, related in the story of Sergt. A. Knight, the non-commissioned officer of the C.A.M.C., who took charge of life-boat No. 5, into which the fourteen nurses were placed.

"Our boat," said Sergt. Knight, "was quickly loaded and lowered to the surface of the water. Then the crew of eight men and myself faced the difficulty of getting free from the ropes holding us to the ship's side. I broke two axes trying to cut ourselves away, but was unsuccessful.

"With the forward motion and choppy sea the boat all the time was pounding against the ship's side. To save the boat we tried to keep ourselves away by using the oars, and soon every one of the latter were broken.

"Finally the ropes became loose at the top and we commenced to drift away. We were carried towards the stern of the ship, when suddenly the poop-deck seemed to break away and sink. The suction drew us quickly into the vacuum, the boat tipped over sideways, and every occupant went under.

#### NOT A SINGLE COMPLAINT MADE.

"I estimate we were together in the boat about eight minutes. In that whole time I did not hear a complaint or a murmur from one of the sisters. They were supremely calm and collected. Every one was perfectly conscious. There was not a cry for help or any outward evidence of fear. In the entire time I overheard only one remark, when the matron, Nursing Sister M. M. Fraser, turned to me as we drifted helplessly towards the stern of the ship and asked:—

"Sergeant, do you think there is any hope for us?"

"I replied, 'No,' seeing myself our helplessness without oars and the sinking condition of the stern of the ship.

"A few seconds later we were drawn into the whirlpool of the submerged afterdeck, and the last I saw of the nursing sisters was as they were thrown over the side of the boat. All were wearing life-belts, and of the fourteen two were in their nightdress, the others in uniform.

"It was," concluded Sergt. Knight, "doubtful if any of them came to the surface again, although I myself sank and came up three times, finally clinging to a piece of wreckage and being eventually picked up by the captain's boat."

To hundreds of officers and men of the Canadian Overseas Forces the name of Nursing Sister Miss Margaret Marjorie ("Pearl") Fraser will recall a record of unselfish effort, a fitting tribute to this nation's womanhood.

Volunteering for active service in the C.A.M.C. on September 29, 1914, Miss Fraser went to France with the First Canadian Division, and for almost three years had been on duty in casualty clearing stations.

In that time not a few of her patients had been German wounded. Many times had she been the first to give a drink of water to these parched enemy casualties. Many a time had she written down the dying statements of enemy officers and men, transmitting them to their relatives through the Red Cross organization.

Her faithfulness was only typical, however, of that service for humanity exhibited by every one of these precious fourteen lives sacrificed in this latest act of Hunnish barbarity.

Major Lyon, Sergt. Knight, and the other four survivors of the hospital ship, Pte. T. W. Cooper, Pte. G. R. Hickman, Pte. S. A. Taylor, and Pte. W. Pilot are agreed that the *Llandoverly Castle* was torpedoed without warning, was displaying the regulation hospital ship lights, went down within ten minutes after being struck, and that for upwards of two hours the German submarine repeatedly attempted to blot out all trace of the crime by rushing to and fro among the wreckage and firing twenty shells or more from its large gun into the area where the life-boats were supposed to be afloat.



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That one boat survived is not the fault of the enemy, for at least three efforts were made to run it down, in addition to shell fire directed towards it.

On June 17 the *Llandoverly Castle* had arrived at Halifax with six hundred and forty-four military patients. She started on her return voyage on June 20, carrying her crew and hospital unit establishment of seven officers, fourteen nursing sisters, and seventy-six other ranks.

Ideal summer weather prevailed. All went well and uneventfully until Thursday evening, June 27.

"At 9.30 p.m. the night was clear," states Major Lyon. "All lights were burning, with the large Red Cross signal prominently displayed amidships. Most of the medical personnel had not yet retired. Without previous warning or sight of any submarine the ship was struck just abaft the engines at No. 4 hold.

"There was a terrific explosion, badly wrecking the afterpart of the ship. Immediately all lights went out. The signal to stop and reverse the engines was without response, all the engine-room crew evidently being killed or wounded. Consequently the ship forged forward, but was gradually forced down by the head.

### PARADED IN PERFECT ORDER.

"Quickly the captain found by investigation that No. 4 hold was completely blown in, and the ship could not remain afloat. The order was given to lower the lifeboats on either side.

"In perfect order the officer commanding, Lt.-Col. T. H. MacDonald, paraded his personnel at the various boat stations. The extreme slope of the decks by this time, and the continued forward movement of the ship, made the launching of the lifeboats a matter of great difficulty."

According to the survivors, at least two boats were swamped in this operation.

With reasonable certainty, however, it can be stated that in the brief ten minutes before the ship submerged every one had been taken off save those killed by the explosion.

Major Lyon was one of the last to leave the ship. He had gone to his cabin to obtain a torchlight. Approaching the deck he met the captain and the second officer. They discovered a boat hanging in the falls, with its after-end in the water.

They launched it successfully, pushed away with the captain, the second officer, the fourth officer, Major Lyon, one C.A.M.C. other rank and a few of the ship's company on board. They had moved on but thirty or forty feet when the *Llandoverly Castle* disappeared.

The boat at once proceeded to rescue work, cruising about in the midst of the floating wreckage and picking up survivors.

Living eye-witnesses of the tragedy assert that at least two other lifeboats got clear of the sinking ship, and it is possible that others were successfully launched on the other side.

The appalling scene in the water in the two hours following the disappearance of the *Llandoverly Castle* baffles description, and the mind is stupefied by the exhibition in that period of savagery and callousness on the part of the commander and crew of the submarine.

On all sides survivors were crying for help. Many were clinging to pieces of wreckage floating about the area of the disaster. Within twenty minutes the captain's boat had picked up eleven from the water, including three other ranks of the C.A.M.C.

They were going to the rescue of two others when the submarine appeared, and according to Major Lyon ordered them to leave these drowning men and come alongside, threatening to fire with the submarine naval gun in case of refusal.



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### NO SURPRISE THAT IT WAS A HOSPITAL SHIP.

"Come alongside," was the order given in English, and emphasized by a revolver shot across the bows.

The second officer shouted, "We are picking up men from the water."

"Come alongside at once," repeated the voice from the submarine, and when the lifeboat held on its way another revolver shot was fired at it, coupled with the threat that next the big gun would be brought into operation.

The captain's boat thereupon left the drowning men and pulled alongside the submarine. The latter's commander seemingly expressed no surprise when the captain stated it was the hospital ship *Llandoverly Castle* that had been sunk. The accusation was then made that the ship was carrying eight American flying officers.

On hearing there was a C.A.M.C. officer in the boat, the submarine commander ordered him to be brought on board. The order was executed very roughly, and with such plain intention to cause an injury that a small bone in Major Lyon's leg was broken.

Major Lyon was accused of being an American flying officer. He denied the charge, and gave his rank and corps. He was then taken to the conning tower, the accusation of being a flying officer repeated, and asked how much ammunition the ship was carrying.

"I replied," states Major Lyon, "that it was purely a hospital ship, and that we had never carried ammunition at any time.

"I was then ordered back to the lifeboat, and we pushed off. We had gone only about fifty yards when they headed for us again and asked for me. They then took on board the second and fourth officers, questioned them, and placed them back in the lifeboat.

"Then we got the sail up and made some way. Suddenly we saw the submarine coming at us at full speed. There was no doubt of their intention to ram us. She missed us by less than two feet.

"Had we been stationary we certainly would have been submerged.

"We continued on our way and were distant probably half a mile when we heard shell fire. I can recall at least twelve shots presumably in the area where the lifeboats and survivors were supposed to be. One shell came very close to our own boat.

"After thirty-six hours afloat we were rescued by a torpedo-boat destroyer about forty-one miles from the Irish coast, and taken to Queenstown, coming on to Plymouth on Sunday, June 30.

### MAJOR LYON'S STATEMENT.

"I can emphatically state," concluded Major Lyon, "that the submarine made no attempt to rescue any one, but on the contrary did everything in its power to destroy every trace of the ship and its personnel and crew.

"All I can say on behalf of the submarine crew is that they were coolly polite in their questions to us."

Another survivor, Pte. G. R. Hickman, left the sinking ship in No. 7 lifeboat, which was sighted by the submarine about one and a half hours after the *Llandoverly Castle* disappeared. This boat was brought alongside and Pte. Hickman taken on board the enemy vessel.

He was asked in English to give the name of the ship, and was taken below to write the name in a book. When he had done so the German officer checked the name in a book which he produced from a desk.

Pte. Hickman was asked if there had been any American flying officers on board. He replied "No," and gave particulars of its being a hospital ship with only the medical personnel on board. Later Pte. Hickman was put off the submarine into the captain's life-boat when the latter came alongside.



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Sergt. Knight bears further testimony to the persistent efforts of the submarine to blot out its crime by cruising many times a zig-zag course through the area filled with wreckage and lifeboats at a speed of probably sixteen knots an hour.

He himself was swimming towards lifeboat believed to be No. 19, which had got safely away, when he noticed this boat being shelled. There was a fairly heavy swell on the water at the time, and he was carried into a trough. When he came to the crest again the boat he had seen being shelled had disappeared.

Eventually while floating on a piece of wreckage he was picked up by the captain's boat. Sergt. Knight's opinion is that at least twenty shells were fired by the submarine into the vicinity of the wreckage.

### THROWN OFF SUBMARINE.

When he first saw the submarine approach the captain's lifeboat, in his dazed condition, he mistook it for a British rescue boat. He dived alongside it, gripped a rope and pulled himself aboard. Four or five members of the crew asked him what he wanted, speaking in English.

He was promptly thrown back into the lifeboat by four of these men.

The evidence of Ptes. Pilot, Cooper and Taylor only serves to emphasize the career of wanton destruction engaged in by the submarine following the disappearance of the *Llandoverly Castle*. They were in the water about an hour, floating on wreckage until taken into the captain's boat.

They verify the statement that the medical personnel and ship's crew, except those killed by the explosion, succeeded in getting off the ship. They witnessed the efforts of the submarine to smash or sink the lifeboats in the water, and later the shelling of the entire area.

They are agreed there could be only one motive for this—to run down every survivor and destroy every possible evidence of the ship and its equipment. For two hours there were cries from all directions for help, none of which received any response from the crew of the submarine.

From eleven o'clock Thursday night, all through Friday and Friday night, until Saturday morning at nine-thirty, this one surviving lifeboat kept on its way towards the Irish coast, covering some seventy miles by alternately sailing or rowing until piked up by H. M. destroyer *Lysander*.

The *Llandoverly Castle* had been in the service of the Canadian Government as a hospital ship since March of this year. She had made four voyages to Halifax, and with a tonnage of 11,200, afforded special facilities for the transport and care of wounded soldiers.

The Officer Commanding, Lieut-Col. T. H. MacDonald, C.A.M.C., of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, had seen considerable service with the Embarkation and Discharge Depot, was for some time on the Standing Medical Board of the Office of the A.D.M.S., London Area, and later served with No. 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital, France.

On her last outward voyage to Halifax, the *Llandoverly Castle* carried six hundred and forty-four military patients, one officer and twenty-six other ranks being stretcher cases, fourteen officers and six hundred and three other ranks of a less serious nature. Fourteen of the cases were tubercular and thirty-seven mental.

On the return voyage there were, of course, no military patients nor any passengers, save her crew, and the regular hospital unit establishment.

It seems unnecessary to assert that the accusation of the German submarine commander, that the *Llandoverly Castle* had on board American flying officers or munitions of war, is pure fiction. The regulations covering the control of hospital ships were being observed, both in spirit and the letter.

Further, it is clear there was no ground whatever for mistaking the ship for anything other than what she was—a ship immune by every law of war and peace from attack or molestation.

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The list of medical personnel given herewith is as the *Llandoverly Castle* left England on her outward voyage to Halifax. Captain W. A. Hutton, Pte. B. Bonner and Pte. J. F. La Fontaine were taken off the strength.

With these three exceptions and the six survivors—Major Lyon, Sergt. Knight, Privates Hickman, Pilot, Cooper, and Taylor—the list of casualties is believed to include the entire medical personnel, though there is till hope, very remote, that some others may have escaped death by having been left at Halifax, either through illness or by reason of having been granted leave of absence. Concerning this, however, there is no official record from Canada.

### OFFICERS WITH H.M.H.S. "LLANDOVERY CASTLE."

RANK.	NAME.	INITIALS.
Lt.-Col.	MacDonald	T. H.
Major	Davis	G. M.
Major	Lyon	T.
Captain	Enwright	W. J.
Captain	Hutton	W. A.
Captain	Leonard	A. V.
Captain	Sills	G. L.
Hon. Capt. and Chaplain (attached)	McPhail	D. G.

### NURSING SISTERS LOST.

NAME.	RANK	DATE OF APPOINTM't.	NEXT-OF-KIN.	ADDRESS OF NEXT-OF-KIN.
Campbell, Christine	N/S	27/8/1915	Angus Campbell (Brother).	P.O. Box 707, Victoria, B.C.
Douglas Carola Josephine	N/S	8/2/1915	Mrs. H. V. Morse (Sister).	Swan River, Manitoba, Canada.
Dussault, Alexina	N/S	29/9/1914	M. Dussault (Father).	673, Cadieu St., Mont- real, Canada.
Follette Minnie	N/S	29/9/1914	Mrs. O. A. Follette (Mother).	Ward's Brook, Cumber- land Co., N.S.
Fortescue, Margaret Jane	N/S	6/5/1915	Miss G. Fortescue (Sister).	c/o Manager, Bank of Montreal (West End Branch, Montreal), Canada.
Fraser, Margaret Marjory	N/S	29/9/1914	Mrs. D. C. Fraser (Mother).	122, Athabasca St. E., Moosejaw, Sask.
Gallaher, Minnie Katherine	N/S	25/9/1915	Mrs. M. E. Gallaher (Mother).	Regent St., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
McDiarmid, Jessie Mabel	N/S	27/8/1915	J. McDiarmid (Uncle).	Ashton, Ontario, Canada.
McKenzie, Mary Agnes	N/S	1/4/1916	T. C. McKenzie (Father).	290, McPherson Ave., Toronto, Canada.
McLean, Rena	N/S	29/9/1914	Senator J. McLean (Father).	Souris, Prince Edward Island.
Sampson, MacBelle	N/S	29/9/1914	H. A. Sampson (Father).	Duntroon, Ont., Canada.
Sare, Gladys Irene	N/S	1/4/1916	Mrs. A. G. Sare (Mother).	101, Chomedy St., Montreal, Canada.
Stamers, Anna Irene	N/S	4/6/1915	Mrs. S. L. Stamers (Mother).	171, Waterloo St., New Brunswick, Canada.
Templeman, Jean	N/S	4/6/1915	J. Templeman (Father).	218, Strathcona Ave., Ottawa, Canada.



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OTHER RANKS ON BOARD.

2498951	A/Sgt.	Brown, D.	6815	Pte.	Isaac, S.
536451	Pte.	Anderson, J.	535449	"	James, W. L.
33251	"	Barker, F.	195880	"	Kelly, R. C.
536234	"	Baker, A.	43640	"	La Fontaine, J. F.
02568	"	Bentley, J. A.	439605	"	Moore, J. E.
521017	"	Bonner, B.	526600	"	Murray, J.
524507	"	Bristow, J. F. W.	536277	"	McPherson, E. M.
524309	"	Bloomfield, B.	644511	"	Nash, G. E.
50972	"	Bonnell, H.	213382	"	O'Neill, R.
526671	"	Curtis, J. H.	467562	"	Pateman, J. C.
536448	"	Clark, J.	81693	"	Patton, H.
536231	"	Clark, F.	69	"	Pilot, W.
962	"	Cates, W. F.	1390	"	Pollard, F. D.
522907	"	Cooper, F. W. W.	50089	"	Purcell, J.
536023	"	Cowie, W.	525545	"	Porter, J.
536282	"	Daley, K.	910940	"	Roseboro, K.
536338	"	Duffie, D. W.	524579	"	Renyard, A.
418883	"	Dunlop, A.	525169	"	Rogers, J.
50879	"	Eaton, J. C.	03676	"	Smuck, D. R. N.
523897	"	Elsley, H. C.	51098	"	Sutherland, H.
645609	"	Falconer, R. D.	213383	"	O'Neill, N.
50946	"	Foley, J. B.	527654	"	Smith, E. C.
536288	"	Hickman, G. R.	400171	"	Steen, R. A.
535505	"	Goldberg, M.	644708	"	Sanders, V.
536315	"	Spittal, J. A.	536477	"	Sacre, W. B.
536403	"	Sanderson, R.	536236	"	Williams, F. C.
536249	"	Scribner, C. J.	527642	"	Wilson, A.
527999	"	Sanders, W. H.	526511	"	Carter, N. R. S.
872626	"	Sayyae, F.	528654	A/Sgt.	Knight, A.
536437	"	Taylor, S. A.	823369	A/L/Cpl.	Dawson, W. A.
530063	"	Williams, R.	33354	"	Harlock, M.
2098858	"	McDonald, L. H.	524306	"	Shipman, L.
770053	"	Hannah, J.	522922	"	Gemell, W. H.
33079	"	Harris, B.	34408	A/S/Sgt.	Evans, H. P.
536276	"	Harrison, H.	33653	Cpl.	Jackson, W.
524248	"	Harvey, G.	421033	Pte.	Angus, H. T.
406314	"	Hoskins, C. H.	523324	"	Richards, P.

Later.

An unofficial cable has been received by the Director of Medical Service, Canadian Contingents, from an American Atlantic port, stating that Captain G. L. Sills has been landed safely there, having been picked up at sea by a west-bound ship.